

BOOK NOTICES

La enfermedad de la Mariscala. By JUAN B. LASTRES. (Lima: Extracted from *Revista de Ciencias*, 1942. Pp. 52. Index. Illus.)

Among the most interesting figures of republican Peru is that of Doña Francisca Zubiaba Bernaldes de Gamarra, wife of the Great Marshal and President of that republic, Don Agustín Gamarra, in the years 1829-1833. In her life she stirred up the most opposite passions. Her contemporaries hated or idolized her, the former being more numerous than the latter. Forgotten for a century, her figure is now presented with singular attractiveness, for the different facets of her character arouse the interest of all who pretend to study her personality.

Dr. Lastres, who has dedicated himself with special zeal to the study of nervous diseases and the psychic maladjustments manifested in Peru in colonial times, now concerns himself with this notable woman. Because, first of all, it is necessary to note that Doña Francisca de Gamarra, whom her contemporaries called "La Mariscala," suffered attacks of epilepsy, and, supplied with the arsenal of knowledge which modern science affords him, the doctor now observes the strange case of this woman who appeared to possess within herself the gift of intrigue and command.

Dr. Lastres makes a true dissection of the personality of Señora Gamarra, undertaking to establish the causes which disturbed her health and contributed to form her character and to make her what in reality she was. The study is composed of eleven short chapters, in the first of which he sketches the life of the protagonist to enter presently into the investigation of heredity, somatic characteristics, character, temperament, and psychic abnormalities of Señora Gamarra. Dr. Lastres believes, in view of the symptoms observed, that he is treating of a congenital syphilitic with hyperthyroid. It was public and notorious that "La Mariscala" suffered from epileptic convulsions, but notwithstanding these afflictions which came over her, and in spite of the fact that epilepsy often deranges or debilitates the mental faculties—as the author points out—Doña Francisca retained to the end of her short life an admirable lucidity and perfect memory of what happened to her. And this illness was not a hindrance to her in dominating the political scene during a time and in imposing her will upon those surrounding her.

This little study, which we may call psycho-pathological, serves to increase the slight bibliography which we have on this interesting woman. Although Abraham Valdelomar wrote a succinct novelized biography of her some twenty years ago, "La Mariscala" of Peru still awaits the great biography worthy of her incomparable personality, full of terrible ambitions, but of a unique originality in the American world.

EMILIA ROMERO.

Mexico, D.F.

El gaucho y sus detractores. Defensa de las tradiciones argentinas. Revindicación del gaucho. By LUIS C. PINTO. (Buenos Aires: "El Ateneo," 1943. Pp. 213.)

"Like the Cid Campeador, the gaucho will win battles even after death." So writes José Roberto del Río in his prologue to this new study of the gaucho by Luis C. Pinto.

As the sub-title indicates, the book is a "revindication." The author attempts to explain the various uncomplimentary terms applied to the gaucho person in the days before the passing of time turned its romantic glow upon the theme. He describes and evaluates the importance of the gaucho rôle in a pastoral colonial society, in wars for freedom from British invader and from Spanish rule, and in the revolutionary chaos of rival caudillo times.

But the distinctive value of this book is its emphasis upon the spiritual importance of the gaucho theme in Argentine national consciousness. Symbol of Argentine love of liberty, the gaucho lives on, an integral part of the Argentine soul. Any "detraction" of that symbol is "anti-Argentine."

MADALINE W. NICHOLS.

Washington, D. C.

Nueva geografía de Costa Rica. By JORGE LEÓN. (San José, C. R.: Soley y Valverde, 1943. Pp. 182, illus., paper.)

The book opens with a survey of local geographical exploration and study which serves at the same time as an enlivening commentary on the ample bibliography appended to the text. From the rudiments of Rafael Francisco Osejo, the first attempt at a geographical description of Costa Rica, printed in 1833, to the present work, the natural and human features of the land have been the object of study by a long line of foreign and native scientists and travelers, some of them among the most distinguished in the field. Osejo's brief exposition