

military men of Spain in Mexico during the closing years of the revolution. And the index is a valuable guide to both place and person.

JOHN RYDJORD.

University of California,
Los Angeles.

Mexican Gold Trail: The Journal of a Forty-Niner. By GEORGE W. B. EVANS. Edited by GLENN S. DUMKE. [Huntington Library Publications.] (Los Angeles: Anderson & Ritchie: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1945. Pp. xx, 340. Illustrations. \$5.00.)

To the enthusiastic student of overland migration in America, the publication of any forty-niner diary is an exciting event. No matter how brief the entries or how awkward the wording, he reads each page with mounting eagerness. He never knows but that the next line will reveal some long-sought name, some word which will fix a camp site or a river crossing. For the average reader, on the other hand, the usual journal of overland travel holds no such charms. He finds that the laconic entry "Made fifteen miles today—poor grass, no wood" quickly palls when repeated on page after page. He wants human drama, and he seldom finds it in these bare recitals.

Not all forty-niner diaries, however, are of this sketchy, dry-as-dust type. The overland trip to California was dramatic in its very essence, with its struggle of men—and women—against distance, against mountain and desert, against sun and storm, and against human frailty and cussedness. When the events of this journey were set down by a person who knew how to observe, who enjoyed expressing himself, and who was not afraid to record his own reactions to places, happenings, and persons, the result was a journal which a century later still delights the specialist and the general reader alike. The publication of such a diary serves both history and literature. *Mexican Gold Trail* is such a diary.

George W. B. Evans was not a trained writer. He was a young lawyer who set out in 1849, with thousands of others, to seek his fortune in the gold fields of California. During the long overland journey and for a year after reaching the gold regions, he faithfully recorded each day's events in his journal. The words stand exactly as he wrote them down when he sat around the evening campfire or rested a few minutes under a cottonwood tree. He never had time to polish his phrases, to refine out all the fresh enthusiasm, the appreciation of natural beauty which enhances nearly every page. An occasional sentence may be incomplete, but who can resist the charm of a writer who finds a road full of bear tracks reminding him of "the trail left by a company of bare-

foot Negroes," or who rides beside the ocean whose "roaring is music through the day"?

It was still winter when Evans left Defiance, Ohio, as a member of the "Defiance Gold Hunters' Expedition." After descending the Ohio and Mississippi by steamboat to New Orleans, the group went by water to Port Lavaca, on Matagorda Bay. The overland route from this latter place was not the usual one employed by the forty-niners who started from Texas. Passing through Victoria, San Antonio, and Eagle Pass, they crossed into Mexico. Near Santa Rosa they left the road to Saltillo and struck directly westward over the mountainous wastelands of northern Coahuila. By way of a pass which Evans called the "Santana" they reached Presidio San Carlos and, eventually, Chihuahua. From this point the route was the better-known one through Guadalupe Pass, down the Gila River, across to Warner's Ranch, and on to Los Angeles. Continuing north up the California coast, the party, by now much changed from the original fifteen, turned inland through the Livermore Pass and reached the Mariposa Diggings at the end of October, 1849, almost eight months after leaving Defiance. Evans failed dismally in his search for golden wealth, and sickness forced him to seek employment in San Francisco and Sacramento. The ill-health which plagued him on the overland journey grew continually more severe during his stay in California, and one can feel that Death had him in her grip as he wrote the last entry in his diary during a cholera epidemic in Sacramento. A note in another hand reveals that he died almost six weeks later, at the age of thirty-one.

Historically, *Mexican Gold Trail* is of considerable importance. While diaries kept on the southern routes to California are by no means rare, they are relatively few when compared with the numbers available for the northern trails. Each one, therefore, makes a proportionally larger contribution to our knowledge of the gold rush. The Evans journal is particularly valuable for its vivid description of the little-known route through the "Santana" Pass. Throughout northern Mexico, Evans was greatly intrigued with the customs and culture of the inhabitants, and his pages covering this portion of the trek abound in lively pictures of ranches and towns, of fandangos and funerals, of soldiers and mule-skinners. He met and recorded the names of a number of American traders in northern Mexico, throwing light upon a relatively little-known phase of our commerce during this period. His comments on the warfare between the Mexicans and the frontier Indians are caustic and revealing. In California, Evans gives us some excellent glimpses of localities along the coastal road. His impressions of several prominent personalities, such as Lafayette H. Bunnell and John A. Sutter, are

interesting. His diary also provides one of the very best descriptions of life in the Mariposa mining region. The feeling of the times is in his writing, and, perhaps best of all, he bothered to record very little hearsay material.

As usual with Huntington Library publications, *Mexican Gold Trail* leaves little to be desired from the point of view of the bookmaker's art. The editing by Dr. Dumke has been executed with scholarly thoroughness; the introduction and notes are adequate but, it is gratifying to observe, not so lengthy as to detract from the main text.

JOHN A. HUSSEY.

Berkeley, California.

Memoirs of Elisha Oscar Crosby. Reminiscences of California and Guatemala, 1849-1864. Edited by CHARLES ALBRO BARKER. [Huntington Library Publications.] (Los Angeles: Anderson & Ritchie: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1945. Pp. xxvi, 119. Illustrations. \$2.75.)

Elisha Crosby was a young lawyer who went to California with one of the first groups of gold seekers early in 1849, and decided to remain after receiving a fabulous fee for some minor legal services. His reminiscences are a series of short, lively sketches, dealing with his voyage by way of the Isthmus of Panama, with conditions in the first weeks of the gold rush, and with various episodes in his public career. The author describes the framing of the first state constitution, in which he participated, and the establishment of the state government. There is one essay severely criticizing the treatment accorded to Mexican land titles in California.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the book is the author's account of his service as minister resident in Guatemala during the United States Civil War. Crosby was friendly with Rafael Carrera and apparently saw little to criticize in his regime, although he mentions several episodes to illustrate the dictator's ruthless treatment of his opponents. Carrera "allowed no oppression" and "was always mindful of the rights of the common people, especially of the Indians." Furthermore, he was friendly to the United States and did what he could to prevent the use of Guatemalan ports by Confederate cruisers. His attitude was different from that of the church and of some of his aristocratic lay supporters who, as Crosby thought, secretly favored the French invasion of Mexico because they feared that the expansionist South might succeed in obtaining its independence.

Crosby failed in one of the chief purposes of his mission, which was to obtain consent for the establishment in Central America of a colony of free Negroes from the United States. This scheme, he said, had been