

*Zachary Taylor.* By BRAINERD DYER. [Southern Biography Series.] (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1946. Pp. viii, 455. Illustrations. \$4.00.)

This pleasing biography carefully and fairly traces the career of the hero of Buena Vista from his birth into one of the first families of Virginia to his death in 1850 while president of the United States. Coming from the Kentucky frontier, Taylor entered the army through a political appointment. The reader gains an insight into American military politics and military organization, and into the War of 1812, the Black Hawk War, and the Seminole War in which Taylor was brevetted brigadier general and named "Old Rough and Ready." On two brief occasions, he served on the southwestern frontier, participating in the Indian removals and commanding the troops on the Texas border pending annexation. Greater detail and interest are devoted to Taylor's command in southern Texas at the outbreak of the Mexican War and the general's victories at Palo Alto, Resaca de Palma, Monterrey, and Buena Vista (a hundred years ago). The political difficulties of the general's command—he was a Whig serving under a Democratic administration—made this war hero attractive to the Whig Party as its presidential candidate in 1848. The author seems to have missed Daniel Webster's possibly apocryphal judgment that "after this, no American is safe from being named for the presidency." During the canvass Taylor opposed the annexation of all of Mexico and even favored the Río Grande and the line of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ . He was a weak president, inexperienced in internal politics; but he managed to act strongly in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. The Cuban filibusters of López in 1849 and 1850 met energetic opposition by Taylor's government. Nonetheless United States citizens captured by the Spanish and the case of Juan Francisco García y Rey created an embroglio threatening war. The gold rush to California emphasized British and United States difficulties respecting Nicaragua and the project of an inter-oceanic canal. Of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty which adjusted these difficulties for a time, Secretary of State Clayton said: "It liberates all Central America from foreign aggression and it will . . . be hailed as a declaration of Central American independence" (p. 361). The book focuses closely on Taylor, skimps the larger aspects of Taylor's environment. The author did not feel it indispensable to use Mexican sources on the Mexican War. The book is based mainly on official United States sources. It is primarily of interest to students of political history.

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