

The Horses of the Conquest. By R. B. CUNNINGHAM GRAHAM, Edited by ROBERT MOORMAN DENHARDT, Illustrations by J. CRAIG SHEPARD. (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949. Pp. xvii, 145. Illustrations, bibliography. \$5.00.)

A re-edition of a work originally published in England in 1930. An attractively presented volume with additional notes by the editor, an expert on the horse in the Americas. Unfortunately, he has not attempted comment on some of the vagaries of the genial author, nor are the pages of the book free of typographical errors. Illustrations are purely decorative rather than instructive. The volume, like all the works of Cunningham Graham, should be read by all who aspire to some acquaintance with the spirit of the various Hispanic-American frontiers.

C. C. G.

Books of the Brave. By IRVING A. LEONARD. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949. Pp. xiii, 381. Illustrations. \$5.00.)

The fascinating thesis of this massive and learned volume is to show how the conquerors of America were steeped in the popular literature of the novels of chivalry—the equivalent for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the movies and detective stories for our modern masses—and how the power of suggestion of these romances led them to transfer to the New World many myths (El Dorado, the Amazons) and to name some of the marvels they encountered in the vocabulary of these fictions. For some years, we Spanish Americans have been indebted to Professor Leonard for the patient and polished scholarship with which he has studied, and continues to study, unpublished and little suspected chapters in our cultural history. He is a citizen of the United States who investigates in the industrious and exemplary tradition of a José Toribio Medina or of a García Icazbalceta. Together with the Argentine scholar, Torre Revello, he was a pioneer in tracing, in such old and forgotten papers as the bills of lading and ships' manifests in the archives of the Casa de Contratación and of American custom houses, the books shipped from the Peninsula which escaped inquisitorial purges and were read in private and convent libraries of Spanish America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Based on this widespread and intensive research, Leonard's studies serve to establish an image of the intellectual interests of the men of the colonies and to point out new and unexpected channels in the history of ideas and of letters. Some of Leonard's studies, like that devoted to Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, the prototype of the colonial *savant* in the age of the baroque and a living *trivium et quadrivium* of the learning of the era, have already achieved irreplaceable value.

Leonard has shown—and this constitutes for me one curious stimulus in his work—that behind the law and the official rule, colonial culture had something like another hidden face. Creole cleverness found means to circumvent that which appeared absurd or anti-modern in many provisions of the Spanish government. Fearful of their inflammatory effect on the creole imagination, the Crown wished to restrict the trade in books to the New World and ordered, for example, that “no viniesen a América libros de romance y materias profanas.” All of Título XIV of the *Recopilación de Leyes de Indias* was devoted to the most inquisitorial censorship of books. That the Americans should pray much and avoid vain imagination was the prudent legal precept of the monarchy. Nevertheless, among the boxes, barrels, and bundles which poured out of the holds of ships and upon the beaches of Havana, Veracruz, Cartagena, Portobelo the most fascinating books were hidden. Beside the inevitable *Flos Sanctorum* and the ponderous theological treatise, a *Selva de Aventuras*, or some outrageous *History of Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers*, books of verses, of comedies, always managed to slip through. Leonard proves in an excellent chapter of his latest book that a large part of the first edition of the *Quijote* (the edition of Juan de la Cuesta, 1605) was distributed in America and was read in the most remote corners of the Indies. One merchant alone, one Juan de Guevara, resident in Cartagena in that year of 1605, received 262 copies, and 100 were sent to another, Antonio de Toro. In this way, *Don Quijote* was to be Americanized to such an extent that scarcely two years after its first appearance and in the distant Andean city of Cuzco a great masque and public procession was celebrated in which the gentle knight and his fat servant promenaded the streets of the town “lanza en ristre” to the delight of the *cuzqueños*. After them, in colorful company followed the priest, the barber, the bachelor, and the Princess Micomicona. Every householder already knew, if only from hearsay, of the real-fantastic episodes in the novel and were thus able to appreciate this popular dramatization.

And Leonard's investigation indicates how, from the most beplumed captain to the commonest soldier, the conquistadores had steeped themselves in the books of chivalry and sometimes identified extraordinary American realities with the phantasies in their novels. California, that rich North American country, is so-called because there appears in the *Sergas de Esplandián* an isle of that name, where the Queen Calafia reigns with her redoubtable feminine army. Attempts were made to locate that Amazonian land—the most fierce and cruel matriarchate invented by fancy—in the most diverse places in our continent: Juan de Grijalva believed, in 1518, that it was in some part of the peninsula of Yucatán; Cristóbal de Olid supposed that it was to be found in Colima;

and when Francisco Cortés (a soldier of Don Hernán) visited a certain native queen or *cacica* in Jalisco who ruled her tribe without a male consort and whose amorous goings-on do not appear to have been entirely canonical, he thought that he had found, at long last, that very Queen Calafia. In the palace, if we can call it that, of the bronzed chieftainess, served by women, the soldiers gave themselves over, like modern Lancelots,

“Nunca fuera Lanzarote
de damas tan bien servido.”

to the most carefree festival.

The Spanish soldiers of the conquest were always disposed to live adventures as unusual and fantastic as those of the novels of chivalry. That popular literature of extraordinary episodes achieved its greatest diffusion in the very years that intervened between the discovery of the New World and the occupation by Spain of the great native empires of Mexico and Peru. *Tirante el Blanco* was published in 1490, two years before the first voyage of Columbus; *Amadís de Gaula*, in 1508; *Palmerín de Oliva*, in 1511. These heroes of the knightly tales, conquerors and founders of incredible kingdoms, had their own peculiar dynasties. The deeds of Clarián, of Lisuarte, and of Belianis were continued by the second and third of the same names. Curiously, the abundance of these books appears to have halted, or at least to have diminished, at the dawn of the seventeenth century. If the enormous outpouring of energy and of almost unbelievable will by Spain during the century of the discoveries found an illusory popular mirror in these fables, the time had now come for the beginnings of a literature of reflection and disenchantment. Miguel de Cervantes began to write the *Quijote*. Already, for the melancholy spirit of the foremost writer of the language, external action alone, the vanity of adventure for its own sake in the style of a Palmerín or a Lisuarte, was not enough. The real battle of the Knight of la Mancha is not that in which he uses his poor battered helm and cardboard visor; it is waged in his soul. It is (for the wise reader of the *Quijote*: a work growing out of crisis, twilight of chivalry, and evidence, too, of the most wideawake modern consciousness) a battle for the moral world; a reconstruction within the tortured spirit of that sublime madman of all the concepts and norms on which human justice is founded.

The counterpart of this problem is not studied in Leonard's book. One would like to know also (Oh ye learned ones!) what material from America made its way into the novels of chivalry, and how the disappointment of that greatest illusion—that of the New World,—expressed itself in the humane melancholy of the *Quijote*.

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