

breaks — the rules of history writing; who in his field has a better right?

In further analysis of Dr. Hunt's selections one may say that they are not necessarily the most interesting or most surprising or most controversial events, although such qualities abound. Rather, they are as announced in the book title: decisive. One need not expect, therefore, any discoveries based on new research. What one can expect is interpretation, boiled and simmered and finally distilled into the essence of the veteran author's evaluation of the story and the destiny of his beloved California.

Readers of the *QUARTERLY* have had the opportunity of reading these chapters as they appeared serially, but every student of the State history will want to have the collection in one attractive volume. Brought together thus, the essays arch over the full expanse of California's story in a surprisingly satisfactory manner. For the young student they serve as a good introduction, whetting his appetite for broader searching. For the more experienced reader they provide a good refresher course, and possibly a new point of view. For both categories of students the carefully done, chapter-by-chapter bibliography is a valuable addition. Dr. Gustave O. Arlt's thoughtful *Introduction* and the fifteen plates contribute to the pleasure and utility of the volume.

This is Volume 4 in the *Society's Special Book Publications* Series. Again Lorrin L. Morrison has designed and produced a book to satisfy those who are proud to own worthwhile literary works in enduring editions finely crafted.—*Robert W. King.*

DESERT VOICES, *A Descriptive Bibliography*, by E. I. Edwards. (The Westernlore Press, Los Angeles, 1958) Pp. xxviii, 215. \$12.50

E. I. Edwards, writer, book collector, business consultant, does not belong to that band of timid bibliographers who describe their compilations as being "selective" — a word that serves as a shield against the shafts of critics who find favorite books missing.

Instead, out of his twenty years of following desert lore and literature, he boldly states that his purpose in *Desert Voices* is to present "all the known books on our California deserts with sufficient comment on each to stimulate the urge for exploratory reading."

While no one man could quite achieve that aim, the book Edwards has produced is a magnificent achievement.

Desert Voices is no mere listing of books. It is an assemblage in one fat, happy, and handsome volume of one man's reactions to

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the vast material written about the areas described as the Mojave (including Death Valley), the Colorado (including Borrego, Imperial, and Coachella Valleys) and the High Desert country (embracing Morongo and Yucca Valleys, the Joshua Tree regions and Twentynine Palms.) Occasionally Edwards is content with a spare listing — title, author, date of publication, publisher, number of pages, and a thumbnail account of the contents — when he feels that is all the item requires or deserves. Frequently, in his enthusiasm, he writes a review, somewhat lengthy, commenting in detail, expressing authoritative and candid approval or disapproval, and noting the format. This makes the book uneven but adds to the pleasure of the reader. Edwards' appraisals are apt to be on the favorable side, for the whole subject matter of the desert fills him with relish and each book adds something to the rich fare.

Desert Voices, with its huge coverage and its personal treatment, is entertaining and immensely useful. Read it carefully if you want, thumb it through with casual pauses, or save it for reference — however it is used, *Desert Voices* is an invaluable addition to anyone's library of Western Americana.

While excluding newspaper items and most magazine articles — though four pages are devoted to Philip Johnston's contributions to *Touring Topics* and *Westways* — this bibliography has an important and extended appendix. Here Edwards offers a checklist of books containing only casual reference to California deserts; enumerates diaries and journals of pioneer desert crossings; and itemizes a grouping of scientific and technical books and publications.

There is an understanding *Foreword* by Harold O. Weight, desert authority and writer, who also contributes photographic illustrations.

No small part of the attractiveness of the volume is due to Paul Bailey's effective design.—*W. W. Robinson.*

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE WEST, by Oscar Lewis (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1958.) 306 pp. \$5.00

Oscar Lewis is one of those facile writers who have become purveyors of "western history" to the masses. Their writing seldom lacks excitement, color, or romance. They possess the basic skills of the best professional writers. They often stress the heroic, the exotic, and the bizarre and their works occasionally reach real dramatic intensity. Only rarely, however, do they focus the reader's attention upon those wearing and routine processes of daily life that