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The Sooner Magazine

Agitation for labor legislation in Oklahoma originated with the coal miners since they and the railroad workers were the first large groups in the Territory. The miners came into conflict with the railroads, principal owners or lessors of the mines; and strikes were frequently broken by the railroads importing Lithuanian and other alien strike-breakers. The Oklahoma Federation of Labor came into existence as the Twin-Territory Federation of Labor December 28, 1903 and since that time has assumed the leadership in endeavoring to obtain adequate progressive labor legislation. At first, the organization was dominated by the miners but gradually, as the greater industrialization continued, the constituent elements changed.

There is a curious anomaly in Oklahoma which Doctor Ryan in this able study points out. Oklahoma was primarily an agricultural state, at least in so far as politics reflects the sociology of the state. Consequently, much needed legislation in the early days was defeated by the farmers or by the legislators afraid of the supposed power of the farmers because such legislation was claimed to be ineffective on farms and hence, class legislation. Another curious point was some of the methods taken to escape observance of such labor laws as were passed. There was one instance in which railroads for a while showed machiavellian skill: a law had been passed requiring letters of dismissal to employees quitting their jobs. The railroads maintained their “black lists” and when an employee resigned or was fired who appeared on that list, he would be given his letter of dismissal and qualification, as required by law. When he presented the letter to the executive of another railroad, the latter would hold the letter to the light; if it showed a watermark of a man with his head cut off, then the applicant was on the “black list.” As soon as labor discovered this tactic, it secured an amendment requiring letters of dismissal to be written on paper satisfactory to the laborer.

There is much profitable reading in this book for Oklahomans interested in the development of labor. Not only that, but the volume offers a footnote on Oklahoma sociology extremely valuable to any student of Oklahoma’s history and development.

Art of the Berbers


In 1926 Jeanne d’Ucel and her husband, Oscar Brousse Jacobson, traveled through North Africa studying the country, the Berbers, their customs and art. In this country of a varying climate, untouched by outside influences, they found hard headed, utilitarian people expressing their philosophy of life in an unphilosophized and spontaneous manner. Because of their continual fight for existence against the relentless climate their expression of beauty has been limited almost wholly to articles of most necessity. Typical of these are the indispensable water jug, the blanket, the rug, firearms and jewelry.
This paradoxical race, hard, vindictive,avaricious, fanatical, but proud, fearless, industrious, sensitive to the poetry of nature and a-thirst for beauty, reveals its soul through its art—its design of the straight line, the sharp angle and the martital diamond.

Since the Berbers have no literature, no written language, and their history is lost in legend, Jeanne d'Ucel had to depend much upon her fine knowledge of symbolism in tracing the origins and historical background of the designs and forms of a people who hand down their customs, designs and color harmonies from mother to daughter, from father to son, for generations. An endless re-search into Phoenician design, Roman history and design, history of the Moorish invasion of Spain, and the history of the great Caucasian country for a background for this history of Berber art. It is easier to understand the devotion with which the women make and deco-rate their pottery, laboriously and lovingly weave their blankets and rugs, elaborately decorate their furnishings, and create their ornaments when one learns that pottery is used for storing water and foods, for cooking utensils, dishes, gifts and ornaments; that their textiles are their principal furniture, their ornaments are their sole protection; and their jewelry their wealth. The making and the decorating of these articles has remained unchanged for two thousand years, at least. The patterns applied are not only traditional but hereditary in each village and in each family. The Berber girl of today fashions her commodities as her mother's mothers fashioned them before Christ.

This book is written in a style that is exquisitely simple. It is a history of a people and their art that is told in an amazingly delicate and interesting manner. The end papers and jacket by Oscar Brousse Jacobson add both humor and beauty to the physical book which is a fine example of the typographer's art. Every lover of craft, admirer of beauty, or collector of fine books should add this book not only to his library but to his reading list as well.—Donnorsy Kirk.

The west—old and new

No literary interest has been as sustained probably as that in the west; and here we have in attractive form an anthology which includes the early writers on the west such as Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Robert Louis Stevenson and the later ones like Stanley Vestal, Oliver LaFarge, Frank B. Lindeman, Will James, Elinor P. Stewart, Glenn Hughes. Designed for use in schools, with biographical and study notes, questions and reading lists, the volume nevertheless is one which any lover of the west might well own for pleasure as well as for profit.

The western "urge" has passed the stage when it is a flare. Our friends in Texas are carefully studying Texas and western history in clubs, supplemented by careful bibliographies and other aids. Mr Coleman, who is a member of the English faculty of the University of Montana, has sensed the new kind of interest and has prepared for school use a surprisingly complete picture of the development of our west. And by the west one must think of the Great West; Montana as well as Oklahoma, California as well as New Mexico. By careful divisions, based on the historical development of the west, Mr Coleman takes us through the Indian lands, follows the explorers and the trappers, sees the settlers and the missionaries at work, watches the cattle barons and the homesteaders come to vex them; and concludes with the west as it is today.

An unfortunate error occurs in the notes regarding the name of Stanley Vestal who appears on the faculty of the University of Oklahoma as Walter S. Campbell, not, as in Mr Coleman's volume, "W. S. Chapman." 

Deceptive cognates

Undoubtedly cognates offer a major blind for translators either of Spanish or English; it is so easy to accept the Spanish word as being merely another spelling of the English word of the same ancestry, or vice versa. Doctor Scatori, associate professor of romance languages in the university, and an authority on the diaries of Juan Bautista de Anza, founder of San Francisco and later Governor of New Mexico, which were edited and annotated by Dr Alfred B. Thomas and published in January by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Folk-lore contest
The first annual folklore contest is to be sponsored by the Oklahoma Folklore society and will be open to students in Oklahoma colleges and high schools. Entries will be received to January 1, 1933, by Dr B. A. Botkin, editor of Folklore, a Regional Miscellany, published by the University of Oklahoma Press. All material must be of oral origin. Manuscripts should include names of informants consulted and the material may be submitted in form of collections, or creative or critical interpretations. Subjects may include animal and plant lore, superstitions, luck signs, taboos, omens, legends, square dances and ghost stories, Doctor Botkin announces.

Shooter mentions
Dr Elgin E. Groseclose, '20 arts-sc., contributing editor of The Sooner Magazine, has resigned as associate editor of Fortune and is at present engaged in personnel surveys for large eastern corporations.

The American Mercury, June
Tentative publication date for Sitting Bull, by Stanley Vestal (Prof. Walter S. Campbell) has been set for September by Houghton-Mifflin.

The Papal library at Rome has requested Forgotten Frontiers, the diaries of Juan Bautista de Anza, founder of San Francisco and later Governor of New Mexico, which were edited and annotated by Dr Alfred B. Thomas and published in January by the University of Oklahoma Press.

The University of Oklahoma has presented a copy of The Partition of Turkey, a Diplomatic History, 1913-1923 by Dr Harry N. Howard, to the permanent library of the League of Nations at the Hague, Holland. The volume, requested by the peace foundation, is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.