

the Miami Indian language. He helped put on a permanent footing the Indiana Historical Society (becoming its secretary) and the Indiana State Library (serving four years as state librarian). He assisted in establishing a system of local public libraries in the state and was a major influence in the state Democratic party. He helped to reform the government of Indianapolis; lobbied successfully for the secret ballot; and, to eliminate corruption, proposed a new, Progressive constitution for the state. The latter action, while not successful, gave its most prominent supporter, Hoosier Governor Thomas R. Marshall, sufficient national acclaim to be elected vice-president of the United States in 1912.

This brief and readable biography is a contribution to the history not just of Indiana but of the United States. Drawing upon the resources that his subject did so much to preserve, Boomhower has performed a task worthy of his subject.

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Reverend Joseph Tarkington, Methodist Circuit Rider: From Frontier Evangelism to Refined Religion. By David L. Kimbrough. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997. Pp. xxi, 218. Illustrations, appendix, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

Readers of this journal should find David L. Kimbrough's study of the grandfather, indeed the family, of Booth Tarkington of considerable interest. Carefully researched, lavishly documented, full of intriguing anecdotes and asides, the volume will repay careful attention.

The problems are few—the mistaken declaration that Methodist classes chose their own leaders, exhorters, and even circuit riders (p. 3); the failure to recognize John Fletcher's *Checks* (1835) as a centerpiece of Methodist apologetics (p. 48); the interpretation of "location" as moving to another circuit instead of leaving the itinerancy altogether (p. 66); the failure to explain Joseph Tarkington's role as presiding elder, his most important ministerial office (pp. 102ff.); the equation of early nineteenth-century seminaries (secondary schools) with later theological seminaries. These few problem stand out because of the otherwise erudite treatment of Methodism. The bibliography and citations are quite remarkable, ranging from obscure early accounts to the most recent interpretive breakthroughs.

More vexing is the organization of the volume, which chronicles the life of Tarkington and depicts through his experience the transformation of Methodism from plain-style frontier, dualistic evangelicalism into a genteel faith. Both tasks invite a chronological narration, in which direction Kimbrough in fact proceeds successfully

for the first third of the volume. And at times thereafter he advances conference year by conference year. The introduction details the character of frontier Methodism, and the conclusion, in briefer fashion, describes its genteel outcome. Those sections are quite instructive. Chapter one covers "Joseph Tarkington's Birth and Early Life," and chapter two continues the theme of the introduction—"Religion in Early Indiana." In these chapters and also in chapter three, "The Tarkington Family Moves to Indiana," Kimbrough builds rather nicely around the Tarkington autobiography.

As his sections on Tarkington's ministerial career unfold, however, Kimbrough occasionally uses flashbacks and asides that interrupt the narrative and provide information or insight that could well have been used earlier. For instance, as Tarkington is being drawn from the role of class leader into preaching and is taken to his first conference, Kimbrough provides an excursus on the earlier development of Methodist conference structure (p. 57) that might more readily have come in chapter two. At the end of the chapter (p. 67), he makes a similar reversion in time, here to provide membership statistics for Methodism. In "A Young Preacher Weds," Kimbrough understandably recalls the deceased Francis Asbury's injunctions that his preachers not marry, but he then reverts to a discussion of the married estate among clergy from Cotton Mather on and of female percentages among church members during and after the Revolution. Kimbrough uses Tarkington's involvement with temperance in the later 1830s to rehearse the movement's earlier emergence (pp. 90-93). After settling Tarkington in Greensburg, Indiana, in 1851, Kimbrough devotes the bulk of the chapter (pp. 109-18) to various indices of Methodist gentility, ranging from the 1830s to the 1880s for data and detail. Tarkington's roles in semi-retirement also invite thematic flashbacks (pp. 139, 142, 143, 150).

In a more vexing defiance of chronology, Kimbrough carries the reader through the 1830s and 1840s, proceeding conference year by conference year, without probing the growing sectional and slavery crises. He slides over 1844 entirely, without mentioning the traumatic division of the church, and recounts Tarkington's traveling to conference in 1845 with Bishop L. L. Hamline and editor Charles Elliott, both central actors in the crisis, without comment. All such discussion is postponed to the next to last chapter, "A Preacher Faces Slavery and the Civil War," in which the author ranges over the entire course of Methodist history. For a book that seemingly tries to hold issues together, the isolation of this topic is strange and unfortunate. It is also unfortunate that a rich and insightful volume is marred by relatively trivial problems.

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