

of Chastellux he concluded, for example, that Chastellux "arrived in the New World, consequently, with the most favorable prejudices, and he left with his opinion undiminished" (p. 110), a statement which hardly gives one a hint of the caustic criticisms which that particular traveler showered upon a variety of persons and conditions in America.

There are few serious typographical errors, and the book is attractive in format and print. The bibliography is inadequate and disappointing although perhaps the lay reader would regard a list of the original source materials as superfluous. In spite of these objections, the book is eminently worth reading, clearly written, and altogether fascinating.

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Half Horse Half Alligator: The Growth of the Mike Fink Legend.

Edited by Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956. Pp. ix, 289. Frontispiece, illustrations, bibliography. \$5.00.)

The editors published a biography of Mike Fink in 1933. In this earlier volume they produced a lively word portrait of one of backwoods America's most fabulous characters. Up until that time it was difficult to tell for sure whether Mike Fink was man or legend. Associated with him was the half-horse, half-alligator personality which whooped and sweated its way up and down the western rivers. Mike in fact epitomized a great mass of humanity which beat and poled its way into the pages of history with fist, hard head, loud bragging, close spitting, and keen-eyed marksmanship.

The Mike Fink legend was not a part of a single frontier, but of several. He was active in the upper Ohio in the years of the great international struggle for colonial possession of this continent, he helped open the great Ohio Valley to traffic, and then he followed the Mississippi and Missouri upstream to the Rocky Mountain Indian and fur empires.

Scarcely a moment of Mike's life could be considered a quiet one; even as a hunter the woods offered him a threat to both life and happiness. The editors have searched diligently through the contemporary literature to find the literary traces of this man who was as unliterary as a rotten cottonwood stump.

Mike Fink became a central character in early American writing. A list of the sources used in this book indicates how widespread the literature of this frontiersman became. Almost as fascinating as the literature itself is the fact that so many really capable chroniclers of the frontier scene found in Mike Fink a symbol of the arduous task of subduing wild country for the safety of women, children, preachers, and schoolhouses. The editors have woven their selections into a cohesive pattern of evolution. It is fortunate that two scholars so well grounded in this area of American literature have undertaken this meticulous task. They have traced the creation of an American figure who gave a touch of personal color to the whole process of breaking ground for a national civilization.

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