

nificent job, with greater precision and drive than Ormandy–Tabernacle Choir. But for beauty, power, and breadth of “sound” the nod must go to the Tabernacle Choir.

If you’re an Ormandy fan ← and a Romantic — you’ll like this Beethoven. But more enduring are apt to remain those of Mengleberg, Toscanini, Klemperer, and Walter, in that order.

## SHORT NOTICES

*Highlights in Mormon Political History.* By J. Keith Melville. Charles E. Merrill Monograph Series in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. II. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967. viii + 99. Paper, \$1.50.

Judging from its title and its brevity, some readers will assume that this book is merely one more of those capsule accounts of the past which college students find so valuable at examination time. They will be wrong. *Highlights in Mormon Political History* is not a synopsis of the major events in state and national politics in which the interests of the Latter-day Saints have been involved. Instead, it is a detailed study of two important episodes in the history of the Mormons in politics: the congressional election of 1848 in Iowa and its aftermath, and the Compromise of 1850.

To most Mormons, western Iowa in 1847 was just a way station on the journey to the Promised Land. Still, so many Saints stopped there that the frontier character of the region soon disappeared, and by early 1848, with the district somewhat settled, the Mormons asked that the laws of the state be extended over them. Before the area could be organized into a county, however, the Church was once again entangled in state politics. In Iowa, as in Illinois a decade earlier, the strength of the Whigs and the Democrats was so nearly equal that the Mormon vote was a matter of concern to both parties. This time the Saints settled on the Whigs.

The resulting political imbroglio is examined with care in the first section of Dr. Melville’s book. Using the Journal History of the Church and copies of clippings from Iowa newspapers, he describes the bargain that was made between the church leaders and the Whigs, and then explains what happened when that agreement was carried out. A few mysteries remain — we still don’t know, for example, whether Orson Hyde managed to get the Whigs to pay for the printing press as well as the paper he needed to begin publication of the *Frontier Guardian* — but in general, the story of how the Saints were affected by politics while they were in Iowa is now clear.

There is so much fresh information in this first study that both the serious student and the general reader will find it useful. The essay on “The Mormons and the Compromise of 1850,” on the other hand, will be of greater interest to those who don’t already know how Brigham Young and the Mormons tried to influence Congress with regard to a political dispensation for the Great Basin. The sources — especially correspondence and other material found in the Church Historian’s Office — are quoted at greater length than

heretofore, but Dr. Melville's interpretation of these events differs little from previously published accounts. The conclusion here, as in Dale Morgan's "The State of Deseret" and Leland H. Creer's *Utah and the Nation*, is that the problem in 1850 was not so much religious prejudice as it was the extension of slavery into the territories.

It is sometimes difficult to bring articles which treat different phases of the same subject together in book form without losing perspective and continuity. In this case, both of the articles are concerned with the political activities of the Mormons in approximately the same period, and yet there is practically no correlation between the two, particularly with reference to what happened in Washington concerning the votes of the Iowa Mormons and what happened there with regard to the Saints from Utah. Without careful attention to chronology it is easy to miss the intriguing, and possibly significant, fact that the Congressional debates on the Iowa election of 1848, in which the Saints were loudly accused of selling their votes, came less than three weeks before the very same members of that same House of Representatives were to consider the matter of membership in the 31st Congress for a delegate from the State of Deseret.

While this is not a fully unified history of the political experience of the Latter-day Saints from 1847 to 1850, it is still a book which should be read. Concentrating as they do on limited sets of circumstances and events, these essays highlight the political process *within* the Mormon community, and for that reason are valuable indeed. In view of the considerable current effort to make Mormonism equal Americanism, it is good to find such a striking reminder that the Latter-day Saints were a peculiar people not just because some of them practiced polygamy, but because nearly all of them held some pretty unorthodox ideas about politics. In the course of recounting these two attempts the Saints made to accommodate themselves to the American political system, Dr. Melville reveals, almost inadvertently, but as plainly as anyone ever has, that there simply was no separation of church and state in early Mormon society and thought.

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*A Collection of Inspirational Verse for Latter-day Saints.* Volume I edited by Bryan B. Gardner and Calvin T. Broadhead, Volume II by Calvin T. Broadhead. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publishers, 1963, 1967. 146 pp. (Vol. I); 113 pp. (Vol. II); \$2.50 each.

It seems to this reviewer that there have been many books of this type published: easy, well-known rhymes that we have listened to from pulpits many times (though some of the best-known and most quotable like Kipling's "If" have not been included). I am sure they have their place. A few lines of pithy verse — much of it lays no claim to being poetry — can often put across a point comprehensively and quickly. And that verse may be recalled often in a situation calling for easy preachment.

Still, the very disparity of the contents contained here proves much has been written by immortal poets that is as easily quoted, as readily recalled, as

some of the more trite, mechanically rhymed verses used. For here, along with too many anonymous lines, we find Shakespeare: "This above all to thine own self be true . . ." and others: Goethe, "Begin it," Alexander Pope, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Coleridge, John Donne, Whitman. And the worst poem of my favorite poet, Emily Dickinson: "If I could keep one heart from breaking. . . ." It is her most quoted and most sentimental poem because, of course, it is not true. Who could want to live a life merely to return one bird to its nest, or even keep one heart from breaking?

I was pleased to find some old "friends" that meant something to me in the past. One that begins, "God has not promised skies always blue. . . ," and goes on "But he has promised strength for the day. . . ." (Though, with 30,000 suicides a year in America . . . well, one wonders.) No young person could be anything but helped by such lines as, "I have to live with myself and so, I want to be fit for myself to know," etc.

Yet, I rather doubt that the average high school or college student will turn to this type of thing as his forebears did. They know that "life is real," but they're learning for themselves whether it is "earnest" or not. Sadly, perhaps, they are aware that there are few absolutes and are not easily taken in by platitudes.

It is my hope that we are producing in the Church a new type of writing that is affirmative without being didactic or sentimental; that is not merely incomprehensible for obscurity's sake, or ugly; that will speak for our people in refutation of the life-ends-not-with-a-bang-but-a-whimper school, which, after all, makes all of us inane, snivelling cowards. In its way, this book (or books) is such an affirmation, albeit an old-fashioned one, and as such would be a good addition to the L.D.S. home library.

Let me mention again that there are too many "anonymous" poems; the names of many authors could have been found with a bit more searching. A writer deserves what credit there is to be had. The two volumes of *Heart Throbs* could have provided some names; any music store could have given the name of the writer of "Bless This House."

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*Ordeal in Mexico: Tales of Danger and Hardship Collected from Mormon Colonists.* By Karl E. Young. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968, xii + 265 pp.

This book is a collection of stories about the exodus of the Mormons from Mexico. The Church had long been engaged in one of the greatest demonstrations of organized civil disobedience in American history; and after the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, it even advised some of its members to leave the country. By 1912 eight Mormon communities were thriving below the border from El Paso. The turbulence of the Mexican Revolution then forced the colonists to flee back to the United States for safety. This is the story of a courageous people, and it deserves telling.

The author, a professor of English at Brigham Young University, bases his account for the most part upon interviews with participants in the events of 1912. He has let the colonists speak for themselves, and the heart of the book consists of edited versions of their reminiscences. This method has the advantage of giving the reader vivid, immediate impressions, but it has the disadvantage of any autobiography: it lacks the analysis and perspective which a mature historian can bring to his work. The author, however, has not attempted to write a standard, professional history. He instead has deliberately selected stories which seemed "to contain as many as possible of the elements of imaginative literature." Thus he should not receive criticism for failing to write a work conforming to contemporary canons of historical scholarship.

Professor Young intended to "give closeups of common people whose lives were seriously altered by the Mexican revolution. The hardships they endured, the chances they took and lost, or won, the quiet fortitude with which they headed into trouble. . . ." He accomplishes his purpose. A picture of sober, hardworking men fleeing from anarchy emerges. The warring Mexicans sorely need the goods of the energetic Saints. Rather than fight the revolutionists, the local Church leaders advised retreat across the Rio Grande. Again the image of Mormons on the move from violence provides stirring examples of loyalty and courage. Concealed rifles, cattle thieves, and Mexican gunmen add more of the stuff of good drama. The numerous photographs and the general format of the book furthermore make for an attractive presentation.

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