

New Books

from sooners

and the university of oklahoma press

THE BIRDS AND THE BEASTS WERE THERE by Ken Kraft

Doubleday

Ken Kraft, '57, writes in the vein of the Jean Kerr school of homefront humor. His wit is neither as rapid fire nor as razor sharp as Mrs. Kerr's and his books haven't cracked the best seller barrier with such spectacular results, but Ken Kraft is great fun anyway and I for one hope he keeps the light but entertaining tales coming.

The Birds and the Beasts lacks even the loose story line which held his earlier *Land of Milk and Omelets* together, but if you liked that one (and I did) you will enjoy this one as well. Each chapter deals with one of the many "problem pets" that have complicated Kraft's life from youth to manhood. You have the feeling that Kraft is trying to convince you that he is a perfectly normal fellow who leads a fairly tranquil life—until contact with the animal world brings him disaster. Indeed each incident does have the air of the familiar about it—as if something similar had happened to each of us but just didn't seem particularly funny at the time. Perhaps that's why it's doubly enjoyable to be able to laugh (or smile) at Kraft's misfortunes.

Kraft swears that he himself doesn't hate animals. I read the book—and if he doesn't, I can't help wondering why he doesn't.

—CJR

BOOTS AND SADDLES by Elizabeth B. Custer with introduction by Jane R. Stewart

University of Oklahoma Press

The terrible hardships, loneliness and pure wretchedness of life on an Army cavalry post in the Dakota territory is brought forth graphically in *Boots and Saddles or Life in the Dakotas with General Custer*. Written in 1885 by the widow of General George Armstrong Custer, the book is still one of the best on life in the days of the famous Indian wars.

Taken strictly for what it is—a description of everyday life on the bleak Army posts—Mrs. Custer's book is a fine piece of work. Her writing is colorful, interesting and genuine. Taken as a look at her husband, it is a biased (to say the least) account of "Yellow Hair." Jane Stewart's introduction is as interesting as the rest of the book,

and she does an excellent job of pointing out how Mrs. Custer dedicated her life to perpetuating a picture of her husband as the perfect man as well as the perfect soldier. All the controversial aspects of Custers' life are omitted from her writings. Even the disastrous "Last Stand" is scarcely mentioned. Miss Stewart explains that this one woman, more than any other single person or event, kept the Custer legend from becoming more tarnished than it is today.

Whether you believe that Custer was a bungler and blowhard, or are convinced that he is one of our country's great heroes, or if you are just a fan of his era of our history, you will enjoy this book.

—SRP

NEGLECTED AREAS IN FAMILY LIVING by Thomas Earl Sullenger

Christopher Publishing House

Thomas Earl Sullenger, '20ba, '20ma, is a former instructor at the University, having taught community organization after receiving his O.U. degree. He also holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Missouri. During World War I he served in the Navy medical corps and received national recognition for his work with the first Americans known to be suffering from the then newly-named "shell-shock."

Sullenger's latest work is, as the title implies, a look at some of the areas that he feels the average marriage or family relations course textbook misses. The book is a collection of writings taken from various sources, with Sullenger's instructions and comments on the different sections. Some of the selections are taken from such well-known writers as Vance Packard and Eric Johnston.

One of the most interesting parts is a chapter devoted to the family meal. Authored by Sol W. Ginsburg, this selection delves into "The Psychological Aspects of Eating." Ginsburg attempts to show that "personality traits such as timidity or aggressiveness, tidiness or sloppiness, stinginess or generosity" can be closely related to early eating experiences of the individual. He examines several different types of "eaters" and shows how their backgrounds are responsible for the way they eat.

If nothing else, this section can provide

you with an interesting guessing game for the next time you eat out. You may discover all sorts of fascinating facts about your dinner companions.

—SRP

THE LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY HARDIN, As Written by Himself, with introduction by Robert C. McCubbin

University of Oklahoma Press

If you are tired of getting violence and murder via the television screen alone, try the brief but bloody autobiography of John Wesley Hardin, No. 16 in the O.U. Press' Western Frontier Library.

Certainly the life of John Wesley Hardin has its place in any series of Western Americana, for his name is foremost among the quick-draw, shoot-em-between-the-eyes heroes of the West who are so popular today. And Wes Hardin shot all his men right between the eyes, or in close proximity thereof, if his story can be taken as truth.

The most interesting thing about this work is the complete incredibility of it all. Scan the book's jacket and you see that in the 10 years between his first killing in 1868 at the age of 15, and his final capture and imprisonment, Hardin killed more than a score of men in personal combat. But after reading the book, you will swear that the number must be double that, since he seems to be giving vivid details of a new killing on every other page.

Hardin's numerous murders (and that is certainly what the great majority must be termed) were accomplished through a combination of a great dexterity with his pistols, and an amazing accuracy once he got them into action. His gun notches came both by way of mass killings and single encounters.

Hardin regards the taking of human life with a chilling calm. On page after page he tells of his killings with no more remorse than if he had just swatted a fly. If all contained is true, Hardin was quicker than a rattler, and his marksmanship made Annie Oakley look pale by comparison. A suspicion lingers that perhaps he was carried away with his own legend and that most of his victims died as did Hardin himself—shot in the back of the head.

—SRP