

he must have been very competent; and whether his expeditions were, or were not, as outstanding as that they were very meritorious.

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The Gold Rushes. By W. P. Morrell. Adam and Charles Black, London, 1968. 427 pp. U.K. price: 42s.

The Gold Rushes was first published in 1940 as a volume in the Pioneer History series. This second edition includes textual revision and fresh bibliographical material. The casual prospector may readily locate the revisions by the lighter leading of the type and occasional disjunction of margins, but the uneven appearance of the revised pages will not be a source of joy to the bibliophile. Nor have the publishers taken care with the additional bibliographical notes appended to chapters: the note on page 42 is misplaced and belongs on page 73; that on page 73 belongs on page 410 where it properly appears; the note which should have been placed on page 42 has presumably been lost somewhere between mine and stamping battery. The revisions, while numerous, have not involved substantial recasting of the text and the pagination of the 1940 edition is preserved as are the original maps. In all other respects the second edition is uniform with the first.

Professor Morrell's preface to the 1940 edition explains his purpose: 'There seems to be no book in any language attempting a synthesis of all the gold rushes as an aspect of the expansion of the European peoples.' Nor is there still, save for this solitary monograph. Indeed, it was not until 1963 that academically respectable syntheses appeared of the major gold and silver rushes in the United States.¹ The first comprehensive historical monographs on the mining industry in Australia and the gold mining industry in New Zealand were published coincidentally in the same year.² Though a great deal has been written about gold rushes since 1940, especially during the flush of centennial gold fever beginning in California in 1948, much of it is of local interest only, too much of it is written by unsystematic fossickers and too little by academic historians able to see beyond the next gully. In 1963 Geoffrey Serle, author of a history of Australia's greatest gold colony during its (first) golden age, remarked upon his good fortune 'that Australian historians have singularly neglected the Victorian gold rushes . . .'.³ Despite the productivity of popular chroniclers it is remarkable how little the main outlines of the story have been changed and this, coupled with the rarity of the out-of-print first edition, is justification enough for a moderately revised second edition of *The Gold Rushes*.

Yet the book depends upon more than its uniqueness. Considering its range (from ancient times to the twentieth century) and its sweep (from

¹ Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West 1848-1880*, New York, 1963; and William S. Greever, *The Bonanza West*, Norman, 1963. These books supersede the popular treatment in Glenn C. Quiett, *Pay Dirt: A Panorama of American Gold Rushes*, New York, 1936, and the capricious selection of topics in T. A. Rickard, *A History of American Mining*, New York, 1932.

² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, Melbourne, 1963, and J. H. M. Salmon, *A History of Goldmining in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1963.

³ Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, Melbourne, 1963, preface.

Brazil to the Yukon, and Siberia to New Zealand), *The Gold Rushes* is a marvel of compression, relevance and scholarly competence. It is nicely balanced between narrative, brief description of mining techniques and analysis of the wider effects of the discoveries. Where the source material is thin the author displays his rare historical sense for drawing the most likely conclusion: a number of his scholarly guesses have been confirmed by recent research, especially with regard to goldfield population and gold production figures. Perhaps the subject deserves a brighter treatment than Professor Morrell gives. An English reviewer of the first edition speaks of him as 'writing in the same grave and prosaic tone which a medieval chronicler uses to record the romance of the Crusades'. Yet clarity, sobriety and precision are real virtues in a field where the secondary material often perpetuates the romanticism of Bret Harte rather than the prosaic realities of contemporaries like John S. Hittell in California, R. Brough Smyth in Victoria and Vincent Pyke in Otago.

The Gold Rushes should interest students of New Zealand history, not simply because of our part in the series (New Zealand produced almost 10% of the total world gold product in the eighteen-sixties), but because several of the major rushes were to the empty regions of the Pacific borderlands. The Pacific dimension to New Zealand history is well illustrated by the cycle of rushes which began with California in 1848, was continued with New South Wales and Victoria in 1851-52, British Columbia in 1858, New Zealand and Queensland in the eighteen-sixties and concluded in the eighteen-nineties with Alaska and the Yukon. One would have welcomed more information than Professor Morrell provides on the number of New Zealand settlers who crossed to California after 1848 and to Australia in the eighteen-fifties, on the technological indebtedness of New Zealand to the two parent goldfields, and on New Zealand's contributions to the gold mining industry in the latter nineteenth century. Perhaps this is one of the weaknesses of the book: interchanges among the gold regions are only sketchily indicated while comparisons are suggested but seldom developed.

The fresh bibliographical entries in the 1968 edition are selective and make no pretence at completeness. One sympathises with the author here, particularly in the American sector where a great deal has been published since 1940. Some additions to Professor Morrell's additional notes may however be noted: the discussion of the Spanish mining frontier in the New World would have been enriched by Robert C. West's two brilliant monographs, *The Mining Community in Northern New Spain* (1949) and *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia* (1952); Theressa Gay's monumental biography of the Californian discoverer, *James Marshall* (1967), perhaps appeared too late for inclusion, likewise Marvin Lewis, ed., *The Mining Frontier* (1967) and Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps* (1967); Robert L. Kelley's *Gold vs Grain* (1959) deserved citation for its discussion of the evolution of hydraulic mining in California. Nancy Keeling's *Gold Fever* (1967), an anthology of contemporary material on the Australian gold rushes, was also too recent for notice, but neither Charles Bateson's *Gold Fleet for California* (1963) nor Joy Monaghan's *Australians and the Gold Rush* (1966) is mentioned. Despite their limitations, both books are useful for the relationships between California and Australasia. Though Geoffrey Blainey's articles and monograph are noted, Professor Morrell has evidently not accepted Blainey's argument that it was awareness of the old regalian right of the Crown to precious metals

rather than official fears of convict disturbances that explains why early Australian gold discoveries failed to issue in a gold rush. A statistical summary of world gold production and of the individual contribution of the various gold regions would have made a useful appendix. Such material is at hand in Robert H. Ridgway's *Summarized Data of Gold Production*, Washington, 1929. Finally, in one other respect *The Gold Rushes* is unique. It is surely the only book on the subject which refuses to employ the fine graphic material available. A single sketch, daguerreotype or photograph can often illustrate, better than several pages of text, a mining technique or a mining appliance.

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The West Coast Gold Rushes. By P. R. May. Pegasus Press, Christchurch. Second Revised Edition, 1967. 560 pp. N.Z. price: \$5.00.

WHEN this book was first published in 1962 it was received with acclaim by reviewers and public. Its excellent production, its ample size, its wealth of illustration and merits as a piece of historical writing, combined with a remarkably low price (\$3.75), all helped promptly to sell out the first edition.

Textually, the second edition is almost identical with the first. The most substantial additions are a new and useful appendix on the discovery of the Haast Pass, an extension of the admirable bibliography to bring it up to 1966, and more photographs to expand the already excellent illustrations. There is one notable subtraction from the earlier edition: the omission of the detailed source notes to every chapter, which occupied twenty pages of the 1962 edition.

It is a pleasure (and a welcome duty in a carping age) to underline Mr. May's very considerable achievements. The book is a prodigy of dedicated, scrupulously careful, exhaustive and extremely well-organised historical research: it shows a remarkably detailed command of the sources; and those who proffered the few corrections referred to in Mr. May's note to the second edition must have been few indeed. Scholarly integrity at this basic level is a very notable virtue — there is no superficial skimping in the basic construction of this book. Further, it exhibits the author's warm human sympathy, indeed loving involvement with his subject, an attractive, pleasing thing which comes across strongly to the reader. And it has many characteristics to commend it with the *genre* of picaresque narrative local history — facts, masses of them; colour, much of it strong and vivid; and a good human story. Within the limits of this *genre* the book is excellent, indeed surely a model of its kind.

Nevertheless, this *genre* has notable limitations, in my view serious ones, so far as the discipline of history is concerned. Given that what Mr. May has done he has done very well, what are the shortcomings of his enterprise?

Mr. May's book is that of a romantic and an optimist, and is not without a tinge of bluff heartiness. It is not a book beset by problems, or agonizings: it accepts things as they were and does not probe or question much. As such it falls into a category of historical writing which has a limited,