

same time, the thermometer registered 49° above zero.

Mr. Denison, a veteran newspaperman, has put a tremendous amount of work into this book. Four years were spent in research. In addition he secured the help of several authorities on life in Alaska. The result is more than a text-book. It is a story which reveals that pioneer days are still ahead for some intrepid souls, that romance is where you find it.

Generously illustrated with photographs and maps, it provides a fund of information for prospective settlers and students. Librarians will find it of particular value as a reference work. H.E.B.

WELLS FARGO, by Edward Hungerford.

Random House of Canada Ltd., Toronto, Canada. Illustrated. Pp. XVI and 274, including bibliography and index. \$4.75.

Though the name Wells Fargo is synonymous with the West, the sub-title of this book, "Advancing the American Frontier" is perhaps more descriptive of the reading matter. For here is the story of the pioneer West in the United States, and in compiling it, the author has done an excellent job.

Wells Fargo parallels the Hudson's Bay Company of Canada in that it played such an important part in shaping the destiny of the country in which it operated. Spawned in the brains of shrewd business men, Wells, Fargo & Company was formed as a "joint stock association express company" in 1852, three years after the first great gold strike in California.

It started functioning in San Francisco, and under careful management soon assumed the characteristics of a fatherly octopus with tentacles reaching in every direction along well-chosen routes, servicing the people in mines, towns and cities. Its main concern was gold—the shipping of the precious metal from the mines to the market, but it delivered mail and parcels, and for a time was one of the strongest banking firms in the country.

Wells Fargo fought and conquered its many competitors, was quick to learn and use to advantage the knowledge gained by that costly experiment, the Pony Express; carried out a ceaseless campaign against

highwaymen and bandits. The coming of the railroad was another problem, and in this the visionary powers of the company's executives fell down badly, for they invested heavily in stagecoaches even as the Iron Horse was chugging doggedly across the country into new territory, forecasting the doom of such equipages. Realizing their mistake too late, they however recapitulated by buying railroads.

The book is a chronicle of sharp business coups, glamorous adventure in Concord stagecoaches, violent death and daring hold-ups on pioneer trails, while through it all runs an impressive record of courage and loyalty.

Readers will enjoy the numerous descriptive passages depicting life in those days, and the accounts of epics such as Louis Remme's famous ride—700 miles on horseback in six days to save \$12,500 during the panic of 1855. Such things make history and on the written page as they are here, they set the pattern for the makings of a fine book. That is exactly what Mr. Hungerford has accomplished. E.J.D.

THE CANADIAN WEST IN FICTION,

by Edward A. McCourt. The Ryerson Press, Toronto, Canada. Pp. VI and 131, including bibliography and index. \$3.

In the preface, the author tells us that "the purpose of this book (is) to examine some of the prose fiction written about the Canadian West, by native Westerners and others, and to attempt an estimate of the success with which it re-creates the prairie way of life". It would be well for readers to keep this in mind. Mr. McCourt is critical, and one might be led to believe that he has surveyed all western fiction with a somewhat jaundiced eye.

In effect the author tells us that the great Canadian novel of prairie life has yet to be written. No doubt there are many who will disagree with him. The yardstick of success by which we measure a novelist is graduated according to the individual point of view. This reviewer has always held that a novelist who tells a good story in a convincing and pleasing style, and who incidentally enjoys considerable financial remuneration from his work, is a success. That the story might still be a best-seller