

Book Reviews

ETIENNE BRULE: Immortal Scoundrel, by J. H. Cranston. The Ryerson Press, Toronto, Canada. Illustrated. Pp. XIII and 144. \$3.

Students of history may be familiar with the name Etienne Brule. It is questionable if the average Canadian or American is aware of the tremendous contribution made by this man to the early exploration of the North American Continent. The magnificence of his exploits as an explorer have been subdued in the writings of the 17th century historians. Many of those writers, Jesuit priests who came to the New World with Champlain, were quick to remember his scandalous conduct while he lived with the Indians. They mentioned too his infamous part in the betrayal of Champlain to the British admiral, Kirke. But few recorded his amazing trips into the unknown wilderness that is now Ontario, or told of his early travels into the north-easterly portions of the United States.

In 1935 Mr. Cranston, editor of the *Toronto Star Weekly* for 22 years, moved to Midland, Ont., centre of the old Huron Indian homeland. His interest in early Indian history led him to the discovery of Etienne Brule. Through extensive research he uncovered a wealth of material about this man who deserves to be ranked with Champlain, Marquette, Radisson, Cartier and other immortals of exploratory fame.

In addition to effecting many discoveries, which included at least four of the five Great Lakes, Brule was in a class by himself for at least one other reason. He was the first white man, insofar as history can determine, who lived with North American Indians and was accepted by them as one of their own kind. His knowledge of Indian customs and languages was invaluable to the early settlers of New France in establishing a liaison which ultimately led to the first fur trade.

Mr. Cranston has made a noteworthy contribution to Canadian history in writing this book. He has utilized his material as he found it—there has been no attempt to minimize Brule's wanton conduct, or to establish him as a hero. The author's aim has been to give a courageous and astonish-

ing explorer his just dues. This reviewer is of the opinion that Mr. Cranston has done so. H.E.B.

TRADER KING, by Mary Weeks. School Aids and Textbook Publishing Co. Ltd., Regina, Sask. Illustrated. Pp. 184. \$1.

Though not a pretentious-looking book, this text contains much that will be of interest to those who like to read of the early fur-trading days in Canada. It is the rugged tale of a rugged individual, W. Cornwallis King, who served 40 years in the North-West Territories with the Hudson's Bay Company.

Narrated in the first person, it yields a reality that is both entertaining and convincing. Mr. King, however, speaks from the viewpoint of an adventurer in a colony owned by his native land, and occasionally there is a breath of arrogance in his account of colonial relations.

The author exhibits a trained ability in maintaining continuity, and though there are several side-trips into legend and incident matters, the story never loses its main thread or theme. The information supplied concerning the history and construction of the famous York boats, the customs and habits of the Loucheux Indians is enlightening, and the listing of rations distributed to employees of the Hudson's Bay Company cannot fail to impress the reader with the fact that provisions had to be handled with extreme care to make them last the season.

Other data embrace adventures with the Red River brigade, trading with the Indians, establishing Fort Nelson, the importance of Cumberland House in fur-trading days, all interestingly presented.

One fault is the misleading treatment of the rebellion of 1885. Any person not familiar with Canadian history might gather from the remarks of the HBC secretary in his talk with King—"the Company is powerful enough to put down any uprising"—, and subsequent mention of the affair, that the Company was chiefly responsible for quelling the disturbance. Further, Mr. King also questions whether there are anywhere today "men of the breed of those Red River voyageurs", implying that their grim tenacity and courage