

subject of all? Insistence on purpose turns the historian into a prophet—and that is another profession." This work deserves the attention of all serious practitioners of the art of history and those with only a casual interest will simply find the book delightful to read.

The Ambidextrous Historian: Historical Writers and Writing in the American West, by C. L. Sonnichsen. (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1981. pp. 120, notes, bibliography, index, \$9.95 cloth.)

This book is an absolute delight to read, full of the wit and wisdom of Sonnichsen. The author, currently senior editor of the *Journal of Arizona History* and author of several books about the American Southwest, is not a "professional historian." However, he is well prepared to address the reasons for the current malaise in history and suggest a remedy. Most historians will admit that their discipline is sick. The recent decline in membership of professional historical groups and the lack of interest by the general public are a few symptoms of this illness. Sonnichsen says one of the major reasons for this problem is the way professionally trained historians present their research. He makes a valiant claim for allowing the "grassroots historian" to have the opportunity to write and publish more. He also thinks the professional historian should devote more time to local history. He claims that graduate students in history are taught to follow one commandment—"Be thou Dull!" and what is needed is a return to putting imagination and poetry back into historical writing. "Call no man historian unless he makes you feel." The true historian must be "ambidextrous" and willing to bring varied experience to his work and utilize other disciplines. "What does he know of history who only history knows?" The book contains a delightful chapter in which the author sympathizes with reference librarians and their plight of receiving hundreds of requests from pupils to send all the information they have about a given topic (the spoon-feeding method). He has chapters which give advice for getting your own research published by smaller presses or university presses, since many "eastern publishers are only interested if it will sell in Connecticut." He also exhorts historians to be kind to editors—the necessary evil. The book is full of very sound advice which should be seriously considered by all historians. For a long time, "grassroots historians" have needed a spokesman—now they have one in Sonnichsen.

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