

Campaigning with King: Charles King, Chronicler of the Old Army, by Don Russell, edited by Paul L. Hedren. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. xxix, 187 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, bibliography of Charles King's books, index. \$25.00 cloth.

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In *Campaigning with King*, editor Paul Hedren provides an introduction, modernizes footnotes, and offers bibliographies on Charles King and the first editions of King's books. Otherwise, the biography Don Russell wrote in 1933 but failed to publish appears as first written. Hedren believes the manuscript is worthy of publication because Russell knew King personally, and "no one can ever again have a personal friendship with so remarkable a figure from the Old West" (xxix).

Charles King, a lifelong resident of Milwaukee, was indeed a remarkable son of the Middle West. Although he was a graduate of West Point, a soldier of the high plains, a brigadier general during the Spanish-American War, and a fifty-year veteran of the Wisconsin National Guard, most Americans before the turn of the century knew King as the author of thrilling novels about the Indian-fighting army. During his brief service with the Fifth Cavalry Regiment in the mid-1870s, King served with notable western figures such as George Custer, George Crook, and Buffalo Bill Cody.

Following his retirement from the army in 1879, Charles King drew on his military experience to create a successful literary career depicting the frontier army. From the early 1880s through 1914 King turned out three to five books a year, largely novels and collected short stories. His most lasting work was nonfiction, however, the classic *Campaigning with Crook: The Fifth Cavalry in the Sioux War of 1876* (1880). King's fiction was formulaic and highly romanticized but popular all the same. Today's military historians often rely on it to learn more about the social life and mores of the old army.

Don Russell was more taken with the junior officer's experiences fighting Indians and the fact that, however briefly, King had been in the presence of the likes of Abraham Lincoln, Winfield Scott, and Ulysses S. Grant as well as Cody, Crook, and Custer. Much the larger portion of this work deals with that aspect of King's life. Russell relied largely on the garrulous old soldier, whom he met in 1929 when writing the biography. This is unfortunate, for Charles King had a propensity to exaggerate his own importance in many affairs. In effect, this is King's life as he told it to Don Russell. Paul Hedren's introduction, bibliographical essay, and published articles on King are more reliable and useful to those interested in the West than this book is.

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