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**PAPERBOUNDS**

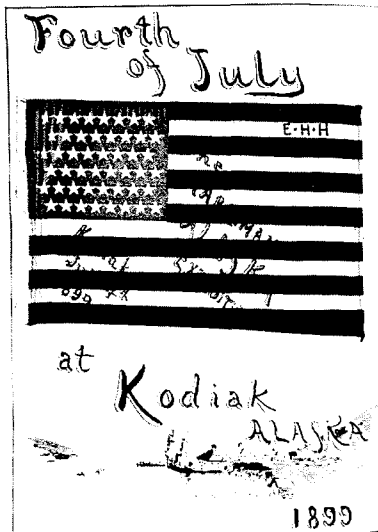
**LOOKING FAR NORTH: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899.** By William Goetzmann and Kay Sloan. Princeton, 1983. 244 pp. \$8.95

This beautifully written account describes one of the last great privately sponsored scientific expeditions of the 19th century. A luxurious adventure by steamship up the coast of Alaska in the summer of 1899, it was financed and led by railroad tycoon Edward H. Harriman. Mixing reconnaissance with recreation, the magnate was considering the prospects for a railway that would connect Alaska (via a long tunnel beneath the Bering Straits) to Siberia and "circle" the world. Guests and crew, 126 souls in all, included Harriman's family, artists, physicians, photographers. Present were two dozen of the nation's leading scientists, among them geologist Grove Gilbert and naturalist C. Hart Merriam. Three pioneers of the conservation movement, notably John Muir, rounded out the group. The expeditioners discovered two of the Alaskas that we know today: "one, the

stunning pristine land of forests and mountains and magnificent glaciers, the other, a last frontier, being invaded by greedy, rapacious, and sometimes pathetic men." The authors, both professors of American studies at the University of Texas, relate the scientific achievements of the journey, but their book's main appeal lies in its evocation of a few brief months at the century's end when the good ship "George W. Edler" became a kind of floating "think tank," full of eminent Victorians of the American variety.

**IN THE SHADE OF SPRING LEAVES: The Life and Writings of Higuchi Ichiyo, a Woman of Letters in Meiji Japan.** By Robert Lyons Danley. Yale, 1983. 335 pp. \$10.95

In the rush to Westernization that came with the Meiji Restoration (1867-1912), many Japanese writers flocked to embrace contemporary European literary styles, abandoning their own classical traditions. Ichiyo (1872-1896) never compromised her art in this way. Weaving entries from Ichiyo's journal into his own biographical narrative and translating nine of her stories, Danley, an Orientalist at the University of Michigan, traces her development from an imitator of classical models into a realist of a distinctively Japanese stamp. Ichiyo's first tales relied on the literary conventions (wordplay, allusion, and ritualized plots) of the Heian period, epitomized by Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji* (ca. 1000 A.D.). Yet perhaps her middle-class family's declining fortunes prevented her work from becoming a series of pale, stylistic echoes. A youth spent in Tokyo's seamier quarters, amid brothels and bustling shops, introduced her to a harder world. Her later stories, including "Encounters on a Dark Night," focused on orphans, misfits, and prostitutes, people who shared the impoverished conditions that led to Ichiyo's own



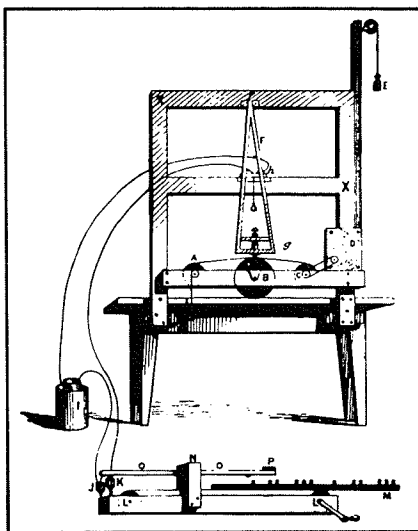
death (of tuberculosis) at age 24. Appearing in these stories were characters whom another great Meiji writer, Mori Ogai, praised as "real human individuals" superior to "those beastly creatures of Ibsen and Zola."

**A GOOD MAN IN AFRICA.** By William Boyd. Penguin, 1983. 312 pp. \$3.95

Morgan Leafy, protagonist of this novel, may be one of the more engaging Everymen to emerge in recent English fiction. On his first diplomatic assignment to the tropical African state of Kinjanja, Leafy is letting his unruly appetites, particularly for drink and women, get the better of him. A "dose" contracted from his African mistress brings a quick end to his courtship of the chief of mission's attractive, vacuous daughter. More seriously, Leafy's lechery exposes him to the blackmailing schemes of a local politician. Boyd, a lecturer at Oxford, describes the cancerous progress of corruption—and the men who resist or submit to it. He also describes the disorderly urban hodgepodes that grow in postcolonial Africa like "some ominous yeast culture, left in a damp cupboard by an absent-minded lab technician." Boyd's touch is comic, but, like Graham Greene, he explores a serious theme: the moral education of an average, sensual man.

**EMULATION AND INVENTION.** By Brooke Hindle. Norton, 1983. 162 pp. \$5.95

The development of the steamboat and telegraph tells much about invention in early America and about the general



workings of mechanical ingenuity. While there were two earlier American pioneers of the steamboat (James Rumsey and John Fitch), it took the American painter and artisan, Robert Fulton, to bring all the parts together in an efficient, workable design. The overlap of technology and the arts was also epitomized by Samuel Morse, the portraitist and NYU professor who in 1832 designed the first telegraph on a canvas-stretcher. The artist's skill in copying, redefining, and conceiving images is crucial to the inventor, argues Hindle, a Smithsonian historian, and was recognized as such 100 years ago. He shows, in pictures as in text, that technology and art are at bottom always linked. A sense of their connection enabled 19th-century Americans to fill a relatively undeveloped, unregulated environment with images that worked.