

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1992

Review of The Dashing Kansan: Lewis Lirulsay Dyche, the Amazing Adventures of a Nineteenth-Century Naturalist and Explorer

Mary Liz Jameson

University of Kansas, Lawrence

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Jameson, Mary Liz, "Review of The Dashing Kansan: Lewis Lirulsay Dyche, the Amazing Adventures of a Nineteenth-Century Naturalist and Explorer" (1992). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 688.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/688>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Dashing Kansan: Lewis Lindsay Dyche, the Amazing Adventures of a Nineteenth-Century Naturalist and Explorer. By Bill Sharp and Peggy Sullivan. Kansas City: Harrow Books, 1991. Notes, selected bibliography, index. xiv + 222 pp. \$19.95.

The nineteenth century was a time of environmental contrasts: vast expanses of virgin wilderness were unexplored, and yet lands and the animals inhabiting them were in danger of extinction. As revealed by Sharp and Sullivan, Lewis Lindsay Dyche was a man who helped to shape the preservation of our natural heritage. If not for the perseverance and foresight of scientists such as Dyche, the only remnants of our wilderness would be those that stand lifeless in museums.

Dyche was of pioneer origins—his mother and father moved from Virginia to the Kansas prairie soon after he was born. As a boy he hunted, trapped, fished, and visited Indians who camped near the family farm. Although he had little formal schooling as a youth, he aspired toward education and enrolled at the nascent University of Kansas at Lawrence. Through dedication, determination, and the support of other scientists of his day, Dyche became a legend—he explored and collected on the western frontier, explored the North Pole with Cook and Peary, created new precedents for wildlife taxidermy, and developed radical new conservation programs.

Little was known about conservation in the 1900s, and biologists such as Dyche sought to preserve animal species in museums. In Dyche's youth bison, antelope, and deer were plentiful in Kansas, but by the early 1900s Dyche observed that "Large game animals ha[d] completely disappeared. Wild turkeys ha[d] likewise become extinct, and the prairie chickens [we]re confined to a few counties in the western part of the state and [we]re threatened with extinction" (158-59). Part of Dyche's mission was to collect every North American mammal for public display. In a time when television and film were not available, these displays were magical.

Dyche's wildlife panorama was the center of attention at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and remains the centerpiece at the University of Kansas Natural History Museum. In his later years, Dyche became a vehement conservationist, and as a game warden, implemented several rigid (but essential) game regulations.

Sharp and Sullivan have creatively amalgamated Dyche's biography from field diaries, letters, newspaper articles, and scientific papers. This well written and researched book will be enjoyable, enlightening, and appealing for naturalists, conservationists, historians, museologists, Kansans, and the explorer in all of us.

MARY LIZ JAMESON
Snow Entomological Museum
University of Kansas, Lawrence