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**Review of *A Dose of Frontier Soldiering: The Memoirs of Corporal E. A. Bode, Frontier Regular Infantry, 1877-1882* Edited by Thomas T. Smith**

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written some two to seven years after his discharge from the United States Army. The editor of the memoirs, Thomas T. Smith, stresses the uniqueness of Bode's remembrances, and he is right in many ways. Most other memoirs of the army for the same period are by officers or their wives attached to the cavalry rather than the infantry.

Perhaps Corporal Bode was also a unique person. The fact that he was literate and wrote memoirs should not imply that most of his comrades were literate also. Smith may be overgeneralizing when he uses Bode as an example to attack historians who have claimed that the post-Civil War army was primarily made up of poor whites who were semi-literate. Even the editor admits that in the frontier army up to one-third of the soldiers deserted and many were imprisoned. Smith, an army man himself, writes that the 1870s army was probably as good as the army one hundred years later, an army confronted with drug, racial, and discipline problems. That may be true, but the soldiers of only twenty years ago were not the literate and educated elite of America either.

For anyone interested in the "big picture" of what happened in the American West ten or fifteen years after the Civil War, Bode's memoirs will prove disappointing: he was not involved in any of the major campaigns in any meaningful way and reveals nothing not already known. If one is interested in a soldier's—although an exceptional one's—views of some of his superior officers, or Indians, or mostly about the daily duties of an infantryman, Bode offers a good dose of "frontier soldiering." There is also useful primary material here on the 1870s and the social history of the military.

Although the book reads with ease and looks well edited, it is difficult to think of it as a "book." Thomas Smith's fourteen pages of introduction are more spellbinding than the memoirs they introduce. There is just not much to catch the reader's interest in Bode's story. The book's dust jacket is illustrated with a

*A Dose of Frontier Soldiering: The Memoirs of Corporal E. A. Bode, Frontier Regular Infantry, 1877-1882.* Edited by Thomas T. Smith. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. Introduction, illustrations, bibliography, index, notes. x + 237 pp. \$29.95.

*A Dose of Frontier Soldiering* is a diary-like memoir of German-born Emil Adolph Bode

pair of socks; one can almost smell their sweat while reading this diary.

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