Between Book Ends

EAGLES OF TWO CONTINENTS, by Leslie Konnyu. (Cooperative of American Hungarian Writers, 60 pgs., paperbound, $1.25)

"Eagles of Two Continents" is a story of Americans of Hungarian birth, experienced in Hungary's War of Independence (1848-49), who took part in the Missouri Campaign of the Civil War. More than a score of such men aided the Union as officers in that campaign. They were among some 800 Hungarians who served the Union, an unusually high proportion of the 4000 Hungarian immigrants of that period.

Some of the most distinguished were Maj. Gen. Alexander Asboth, Colonels John T. Fiala, Cornelius Fornet, Joseph Nemeth, Robert J. Rombauer, Nicholas Perczel and Charles Zagonyi, and Joseph Pulitzer of New York, who fought in four battles and later settled in Missouri. Several of these men were killed or wounded in the campaign.

Leslie Konnyu has a clear insight into what prompted these immigrants to serve their adopted land. They had, of course, a pride in their military skill; but traditional virtues of patriotism, a love of principles and of freedom also motivated them. They quickly felt they belonged to America and had a stake in her future. Many other characters enter the story: Generals Lyon and Sigel, General and Mrs. Fremont, General Grant and the Hungarian artist Frank Dominick who saw and painted the Battle of Lexington in September 1861. (Dominick's letter describing the battle comprises a chapter of this narrative.) Other battlegrounds and towns form the setting: Camp Jackson, Wilson's Creek, Carthage and Springfield. The story has much credible, if fictitious, dialogue and swiftly changes scenes and characters to heighten interest. Like most other Civil War buffs, Konnyu has read extensively on the subject and has searched old and new documents to give his tale a tone of true history.

Charles Guenther

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