

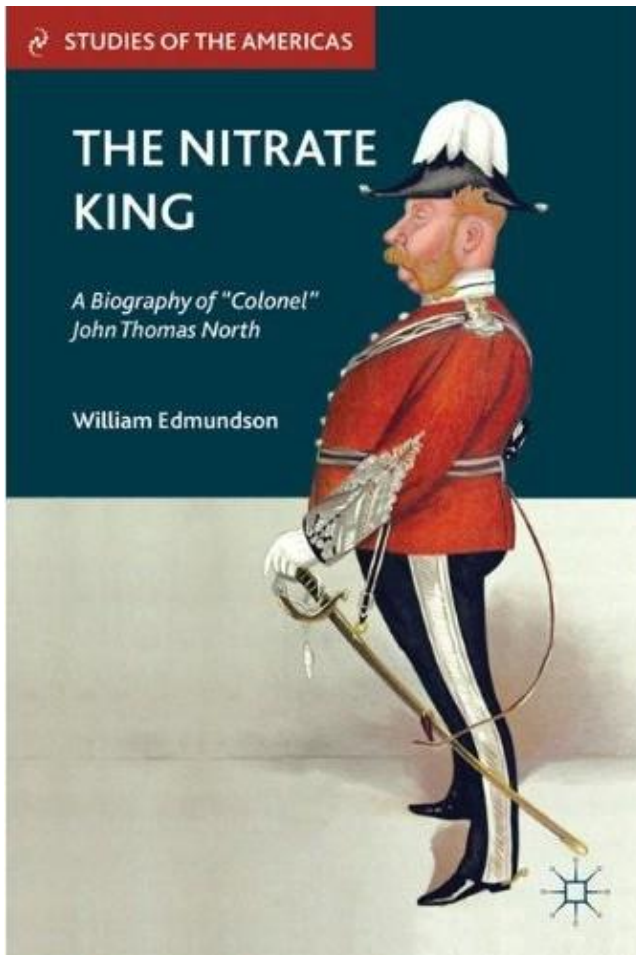
The Nitrate King

A biography of 'Colonel' John Thomas North

William Edmundson

STUDIES OF THE AMERICAS

Edited by Maxine Molyneux, *Institute for the Study of the Americas,*
University of London School of Advanced Study



"The Nitrate King". Cromolithograph from *Vanity Fair*,
by "Spy" (Lesley Ward), November 2, 1889.

The book:

This is the first book-length biography of John Thomas North (1842-1896), known as 'Colonel North' in Britain and throughout the world as 'The Nitrate King'. I have used sources in Britain and Chile to trace North's spectacular life from mechanic in Leeds, through thirteen years in Peru and Chile, to become one of the richest and best-known men of his generation, and the first Honorary Freeman of Leeds. While writing my previous book – *A history of the British presence in Chile* – I was struck by the fact that North is today almost completely forgotten in Britain, and remembered in Chile only to be vilified as the archetypal predatory capitalist. My book calls for a reevaluation, and examines several controversies—principally the enduring allegations that North helped manipulate the War of the Pacific, and was active in triggering the Chilean Civil War of 1891. The book describes North's business investments; his re-invention as country gentleman at Avery Hill mansion; and his generosity, including the gift of Kirkstall Abbey to the city of Leeds.

***Nominated by Palgrave-Macmillan for the PROSE Award 2011 [biography] -
The American Publishers Awards for Professional and Scholarly Excellence.***

Biographical note:

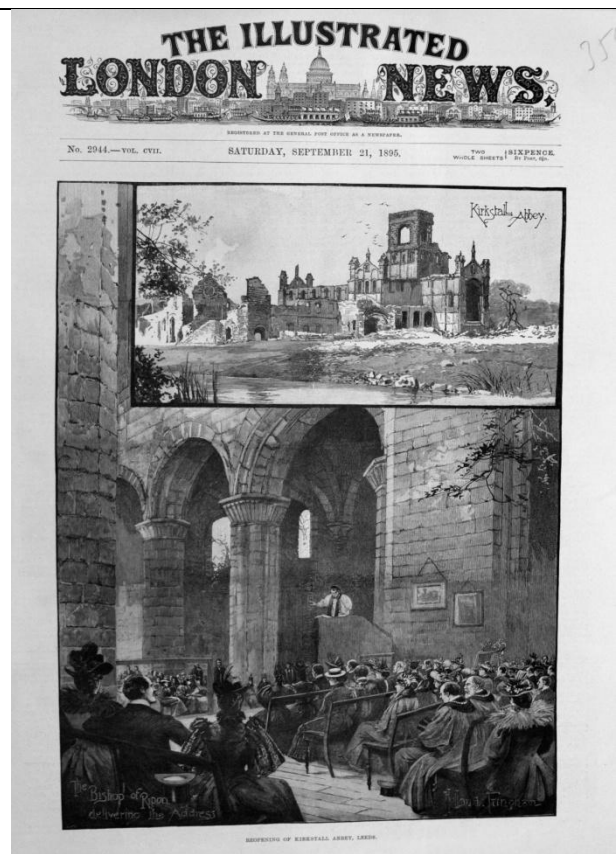
William Edmundson works as a consultant and writer in Recife, Brazil, following a career in teacher training and management with the British Council that has taken him to Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and his most recent appointment as Director Cuba. Fluent in Spanish (and Portuguese), he started research into the history of the British presence in Chile while Director of the Chilean-British Institute in Concepción. William Edmundson is the author of *A history of the British presence in Chile* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), and of several articles on the subject, in English and Spanish, both in Chile and in Britain.

Reviews:

"Well-written . . . and contributes new information about North's life and the relation of that life to the economic development of Chile."—Michael Monteón, Professor of History, University of California, San Diego.

"William Edmundson's *The Nitrate King* is a revealing, entertaining, and long-needed biography of one of the nineteenth-century's most flamboyant and controversial international capitalists—'Colonel' John Thomas North . . . I read this book straight through. It is uncluttered by disciplinary jargon or moralizing, despite the wealth of serious academic sources consulted"—Brian Loveman, Professor of Political Science, Emeritus, San Diego State University.

Preface: '*John Thomas North: a reappraisal*'.
Juan Ricardo Couyoumdjian, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago.



The Illustrated London News, September 21, 1895

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Available in the UK on Amazon.co.uk and at the Waterstone's internet site, and in the USA copies can be purchased on Amazon.com and at Barnes & Noble.com.