

BOOK REVIEWS

Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal. Remarks Connected with the Fur Trade in the Course of a Voyage from York Factory to Fort George and Back to York Factory 1824-1825; together with Accompanying Documents. [Harvard Historical Studies, XXXI.] Edited with an Introduction by FREDERICK MERK. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931. Pp. xxxvi, 370. Pocket map. \$4.50.)

This is a work of outstanding significance to students of the early history of the Oregon Country. The journal reproduced in this volume is, as Professor Merk aptly observes, "a memoir of trade and of empire." It carries us to the Far Northwest in the critical years immediately following the union of the rival British fur-trading companies in 1821; reveals the low estate to which the fur trade west of the Rocky Mountains had fallen; and discloses the workings of the fertile brain of an ambitious young man eager to build up a profitable business in a region from which his superiors were seriously considering the advisability of withdrawing. The visit of George Simpson to the Valley of the Columbia in 1824-25 marks the beginning of a new era in the history of that region. With Simpson came Dr. John McLoughlin, destined to be regarded by later generations as the "Father of Oregon"; with the former came also constructive imagination and the executive competency to initiate far-reaching business reforms. The economic consequences of the new policies instituted by Simpson at this time may be ascertained in part by comparing his journal of 1824-25 with his *An Overland Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*. The diplomatic significance of the new developments is pointed out by the editor in the introduction to the present volume.

The book is divided into three parts. In an introductory essay of thirty pages Professor Merk passes in review the early history of the Hudson's Bay Company, summarizes the story of the rivalry and open warfare of that concern with the North West Company of Montreal, and describes the reorganization which took place after the mutual exhaustion of the combatants had brought about peace and a merger of interests. Then follows a brief sketch of Simpson and a summary account of the energy and business acumen he displayed for the reorganized Hudson's Bay Company, as Governor of the Northern Department of Rupert's Land, in rehabilitating the

Company's trade in the territories east of the Rockies. With this task in the way of accomplishment, Simpson turned his attention to the trade in the Oregon Country.

The second part of the volume is a reproduction of Simpson's journal of a voyage from York Factory to Fort George (Astoria) and of the return journey to Norway House. He left York Factory on August 15 and was at Norway House before the middle of the following June. The journal portrays its author as a tireless worker, a business man obsessed with the desire for material success, a leader prone to drive himself and his subordinates to the limit. As a traveler, Simpson probably was unrivalled in the fur-trading epoch. The speed with which he crossed the continent, an accomplishment which afforded him real satisfaction, suggests to the reviewer nothing comparable save the voyages of Alexander Mackenzie.

Although the entire journal will be perused with interest, the part which particularly will appeal to the readers of this *Quarterly* begins on page 41, where Simpson's entries tell of his crossing the forty-ninth parallel into the present State of Washington, and ends on page 140, when on his return journey he passes into what is now British Columbia, after having "Lined out the Site," near the Kettle Falls of the Columbia, of a new establishment which he named Fort Colvile. Within these hundred pages will be found descriptions of the posts he visited, comments (sometimes sarcastic and severe) on the state of the trade and on the persons connected therewith, observations on the country and its aboriginal inhabitants, and projects for reorganizing and enlarging the trade of the department. Knowing the sequel, one must commend much of what he did. But it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he was over-severe in his judgment of some of the men in the Company's employ. For instance, it is with a feeling of astonishment that one comes upon his reference (page 46) to Alexander Ross as "a self sufficient empty headed man." The reviewer had formed no such opinion of him; and it is interesting to observe that Professor Merk thinks Simpson's judgment of Ross "somewhat harsh" (page 351). It should be remembered that Simpson at this time was still a young man. The passing years had not yet brought him to the point of questioning his opinions of others or of softening the tone of his condemnations; nor had they yet given him broad sympathies and a full understanding of life. All about him he saw evidences of careless business methods, of lack of attention to what he considered the best interests of the Company. Against all this his

Scotch nature revolted, and to his journal he confided thoughts which were perhaps not always well considered.

In the third part of this volume is a collection of documents (Appendix A, pp. 175-344) confined, with two exceptions, to the years 1822-1830. This part also contains (Appendix B, pp. 345-360) a series of editorial notes.

Of the significance of these documents it is difficult to write in brief compass. They supplement as well as furnish a setting for the journal. They have value for the student of diplomacy as well as interest for the student of the early economic history of the Pacific Northwest. As has been mentioned above, Professor Merk emphasizes the relation of British trade in the Far Northwest to Oregon diplomacy (page xxx). And on this subject probably no one can speak with greater authority than he (see his "The Oregon Pioneers and the Boundary," *American Historical Review*, XXIX, 681-699). Nor does he pass over in silence the significance of the documentary references to the farming operations set on foot by Simpson in the Department of the Columbia. But it was no part of his task to develop this subject in detail. It may here be noted, however, that Simpson's journal and the accompanying documents do make a slight contribution to a much needed history of agriculture in the Oregon Country. The materials now available for the early chapters of this desired study are fragmentary and widely scattered. A few such documents have been published in the *Oregon and Washington Historical Quarterlies*; others have appeared in the *Transactions* of the Oregon Pioneer Association. And from the writings of early travelers in Oregon and from government documents some things of value may be learned. But most of the sources are still unpublished. Of such, the writings of the pioneer missionaries of Oregon would bear careful examination. And in the libraries of the Pacific Northwest are small collections of manuscripts relating to this subject (see C. W. Smith, comp., *A Union List of Manuscripts in the Libraries of the Pacific Northwest*). But the great body of the needed source material is stored away in the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company. Until this depository is freely opened to historians, no one can write an accurate, detailed history of the agricultural operations of the Hudson's Bay and Puget's Sound Agricultural Companies in the Pacific Northwest.

In the numerous annotations which greatly enhance the value of the volume under review, the reader will discover references to the scholarly work which others have done in this field. There is frequent mention in the footnotes of material which has appeared

either in the *Washington Historical Quarterly* or in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. Mr. T. C. Elliott's account of Spokane House is specifically cited (page 43).

The comments and explanations of the editor show evidence of painstaking scholarship at every stage. The documents accompanying the journal are well chosen and arranged. Although Professor Merk asserts the hand of the censor was laid upon his transcripts, it is not evident to the reviewer that the value of the work has been impaired thereby. The book is well printed, free from typographical errors, and of convenient size. In a pocket attached to the back cover is inserted a reproduction of the Arrowsmith Map of North America, dated 1824, but showing pen alterations of a later date. There is an index of eight pages.

J. ORIN OLIPHANT

Alexander Mackenzie's Voyage to the Pacific Ocean in 1793. By ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, ESQ. Historical Introduction and Footnotes by MILO MILTON QUAIFFE. (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1931. Pp. 384.)

The Lakeside Press issued at Christmas time a beautiful edition (384 pp. duodecimo) of Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean in 1793*, with an introduction and a few notes by the editor, Milo Milton Quaife.

The introduction is well done and is as complete as the space, 16 pages, would allow. It remarks that the date of Mackenzie's birth is unknown; but in the obituary notices it is stated as 1755. Mackenzie's two expeditions were in reality one: it was the same object that was sought in each case—the road to the Pacific. His name "Disappointment" shows that the river flowing out of Great Slave Lake would, he thought, bring him to Cook's Inlet. The exact termini of Mackenzie's voyage of 1792-1793 have been identified and marked by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada: viz., Fort Fork and Mackenzie's Rock.

The edition is worthy of the voyage. It is well printed, on good paper, nicely bound, has a map of the route, a picture of the explorer, and a real index.

F. W. HOWAY

John Jacob Astor, Business Man. By KENNETH WIGGINS PORTER. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931. Two volumes, pp. 1353. \$10.00.)

The Pacific Northwest is fortunate that Harvard's Graduate