

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life and Dairy of John Floyd, Governor of Virginia, an Apostle of Secession, and the Father of the Oregon Country. By CHARLES H. AMBLER, PH.D. (Richmond, Va. Richmond Press, Inc. 1918. Pp. 248. \$2.00.)

John Floyd was by birth and ancestry a child of the frontier. His ancestors were among the pioneer settlers who pushed the westward advancing fringe of settlement in rapid succession from the Tidewater Section of Old Virginia, into the Piedmont, across the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Alleghenies, and into Kentucky where Floyd was born. Near Louisville, on April 24, 1873, twelve days before his birth the father had fallen a victim to the savage foe that resisted the advancing frontiersmen. Young Floyd managed to acquire something of a college education, read medicine with a Dr. Ferguson, of Louisville, and finally graduated from the course in medicine in the University of Pennsylvania and settled down to practice in Virginia. When the war of 1812 broke out Floyd entered the regular army as surgeon, with the rank of major, and continued his service in that capacity until he was elected, in 1814, to the general assembly of Virginia.

Three years later he was sent to Congress from the famous Abingdon district which he continued to represent for twelve years. With Floyd's attitude on political issues in general we are not concerned here, but his early interest and activity connected with Oregon entitles him unquestionably to "the credit of first proposing in Congress the actual occupation of the Columbia River country by the United States Government, of promoting its settlement and organizing it as a territory with the name Oregon."

Floyd's family knew George Rogers Clark and William Clark intimately, a first cousin, Charles Floyd, was a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition, so that it is not hard to understand Floyd's interest in Oregon. In December 1820 he introduced a resolution asking for the appointment of a committee to "inquire into the situation of the settlements on the Pacific Ocean and the expediency of occupying the Columbia River." The resolution passed and Floyd as chairman of the committee presented a report which was accompanied by a bill authorizing our occupation of the Columbia River. Floyd's information regarding Oregon was largely supplied by others and his argument for our claims to Oregon rested largely on our rights under the Louisiana Purchase. Nothing came of the report,

the subject being not even discussed in Congress, but Floyd had opened the way to a discussion which came later. When Floyd's report was handed by the President to John Quincy Adams for his consideration, Adams recorded his opinion that it "was a tissue of errors in fact and abortive reasoning, of individual reflections and rude invectives. There was nothing," he added, "could purify it but the fire."

Floyd continued his efforts at the next session. First he introduced his resolution, then called for an estimate of the expenses involved in a survey of the harbors of the United States on the Pacific Ocean and finally introduced a bill authorizing and requiring the President to occupy the "territory of the United States" on the waters of the Columbia River. The bill also made provision for the extinguishment of the Indian titles and for the making of land grants to settlers. Floyd's efforts were again without result so far as Congress was concerned but President Monroe in his annual message of 1822 referred to Oregon and the question was definitely before the country. Again he introduced his bill and this time it led to perhaps the most animated and enlightening debate of the session. Floyd's remarks showed very clearly that he had used the intervening years in gathering a vast amount of material on the Oregon question.

Finally, in the session of 1823-4 Floyd succeeded in getting his bill through the House but the mighty efforts of Benton, of Missouri, and Barbour, of Virginia, failed to get a respectful hearing for it in the Senate. Floyd, with the aid of able lieutenants, continued his efforts, however, during his congressional career. In 1838 Senator Linn, of Missouri, took up the work Floyd left unfinished and the Oregon question was eventually pushed into the broader stream of national politics where it became a national issue in 1844.

Floyd became Governor of Virginia in 1830, less than a year after he closed his congressional career, and retired to private life in 1834. The three remaining years of his life were years spent largely in political opposition to Jackson, years in which Floyd became "an apostle of discontent." He died Aug. 16, 1837. The latter half of Dr. Ambler's book reprints the diary of Floyd written between March 1831 and February 1834 and is replete with illuminating comments on the political situation of the time. Prof. Ambler's work is exceedingly well done and every student of the History of the Pacific Northwest will welcome his chapters on Oregon and gratefully enroll him among the contributors to the history of Old Oregon.

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