

of nineteenth-century America. The greater part of the *Journal* of 1826, however, was written in England and Scotland. Apart from the interest a reader may have in Audubon's efforts to publish his drawings in almost life size, the *Journal* provides a portrait of life among the upper classes of British society at the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. And it contains profiles of notable men and women whom Audubon met and saw with the perceptive eye of an artist. The economist John R. McCulloch, the critic and writer Francis Jeffrey, merchant and civic reformer William Rathbone IV of Liverpool and members of his family, the historian William Roscoe, and Lord Stanley (Earl of Derby) are among the many members of British society whom Audubon described.

Audubon had a curious trait, often apparently in all innocence, of being unable to distinguish fact from fancy. With respect to details of his own early life he was frequently a harmless but, to the scholar, an annoying prevaricator. Miss Ford has identified and often clarified these slips between fact and fiction. Few of these lapses, however, pertain to the *Journal* of 1826.

To the social historian and the student of Anglo-American relationships, the *Journal* affords a valuable documentary case of friendships and interactions between Britons and Americans—in business, natural science, and scholarship in the early nineteenth century. Audubon's wife (Lucy Bakewell) had many well-placed relatives in England, and Audubon was himself an unusually interesting personality. But these do not appear to have been the factors that were of greatest assistance to his mission. There is evidence throughout the *Journal* of a great interest in America among the British upper classes and in the notable artistic achievement in natural history represented by Audubon's portraits of birds and animals. Without this interest and sympathy, expressed in tangible support, the monumental *Birds of America* might never have been more than a rare and highly perishable set of drawings; and its influence on American attitudes toward nature could never have reached the extent permitted by the printed reproduction.

The volume concludes with a set of letters by Audubon written during the period of the *Journal* and with letters of introduction written on his behalf by Henry Clay, Vincent Nolte, Thomas Stewart Traill, and others. The book is published with the high-quality design and typography that distinguishes the work of the University of Oklahoma Press.

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*The Oregon Question: Essays in Anglo-American Diplomacy and Politics.*  
By Frederick Merk. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967.  
Pp. xiv, 427. Map, notes, index. \$7.95.)

Samuel Flagg Bemis, the distinguished scholar of American diplomacy, used to tell his graduate students that Frederick Merk's magnificent investigations of the Oregon Question, which appeared over many years in articles

and a monograph, were all "chapters in search of a book." Merk, he used to say, should bring these materials together, for the Harvard historian had a great theme and clearly was its master. This recourse has now been taken in the present volume which contains the collected essays together with the monograph from the Harvard series—*Albert Gallatin and the Oregon Problem*—and four new essays. It is gratifying indeed to see how all these researches have fitted together. The book is definitive, if one may use an overworked word.

Merk traces the Oregon Problem beginning with the explorations of Captain Robert Gray in 1792. Serious American claims began with Gray's discovery of the Columbia River. The area in dispute—generally called Oregon—gradually narrowed to the vast stretch of land between the present-day upper boundary of California, the forty-second parallel, and the present-day southern boundary of the Alaskan panhandle, the line of "fifty-four-forty." There was not much Anglo-American argument over the land below the Columbia, which was deemed probably American, and that above the forty-ninth parallel, which American negotiators usually considered British. The essence of the problem was the land to the north and west of the Columbia River, the present-day western two-thirds of the state of Washington. The British sought this latter territory, and the Americans repeatedly offered the forty-ninth parallel, in 1818, 1824, 1826-1827, and 1845. When extremists in the United States agitated for "All Oregon" to the southern boundary of Alaska, President James K. Polk in 1845-1846 seemed at first to join them; but he backed off and took the forty-ninth parallel, almost the same line proposed by Albert Gallatin and Richard Rush in the negotiations of 1818.

The "fifty-four-forty men" were enraged at the prospect of a compromise, so they thought, in Oregon; and not least of the President's critics was Senator Edward A. Hannegan of Indiana. In 1846 the senator already was addicted to alcohol, which problem later proved his complete undoing; and it may be that its baleful influence drove him into the following remarks about Polk:

So long as one human eye remains to linger on the page of history, the story of his abasement will be read, sending him and his name together to an infamy so profound, a damnation so deep, that the hand of resurrection will never be able to drag him forth. He who is a traitor to his country, can never have forgiveness of God, and cannot ask mercy of man. . . . I have only to add, that so far as the whole tone, spirit and meaning of the remarks of the Senator . . . are concerned if they speak the language of James K. Polk, James K. Polk has spoken words of falsehood, and with the tongue of a serpent (p. 382).

It was an intricate negotiation, as full as its oratory; and the details are impossible to set out in a review. They are, though, the sort of details which will engross students of history. (They are not of course for the reportedly new students of history who desire to master the Big Ideas and not the details—without which the Big Ideas are invisible.) Merk's fascination with his grand subject shines through these pages.