

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

DEFENSE OF THE MECKLENBURG DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. An exhaustive review of and answer to all attacks on the Declaration. By James H. Moore, Stone and Barringer Company, Charlotte. All bookstores or from publisher, \$1.50.

The approaching celebration of the 134th anniversary of the signing of the Mecklenburg Declaration, and the intention of President Taft to be present on that occasion have revived interest in the country at large in the spirited document which furnishes the reason for the exercise. The book before us was noticed in this column last spring, but the occasion seems opportune for calling attention to it again; and it is the more proper so to do as several of our contemporaries to the north and east (we are used to Palmetto sneers and jibes) have seen fit to allude to the incident as a "myth." This attitude of the editorial mind finds a climax in the utterance of "The Youth's Companion" when it speaks of the "exploded myth."

Now, a myth in order to be classed as "exploded," must be groundless; it must have no reasonable basis of probability to rest upon. Mr. Moore in his review of all the questions connected with the paper shows at least that there is some ground to believe that on the 20th of May, 1775, the citizens of Mecklenburg declared themselves absolved from all allegiance to the British crown and in consequence free and independent; and that further, on the 21st of May in that same year, a duly authorized committee framed a form of government for the county which is expressed in such language as to furnish a strong presumption of some previous and more definite action. Space forbids the abstracting of Mr. Moore's line of argument. Only some of the more salient features of it can be brought out in this article. The book is clear, impartial and quite brief. All who are interested in the matter will well refer to the trouble by a perusal of the volume.

First, let us run briefly over what Mr. Moore believes to have been the course of events in Mecklenburg and elsewhere during that eventful spring and summer. The aggression of the British ministry worked the American colonies to a pitch of frenzy such as the fiercest Indian barbarities had failed to produce. The culminating act of a succession of tyrannies came in the passage of the Boston port bill, which practically reduced Massachusetts to the condition of one of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the ancient Persian empire. The colonists from New Hampshire to Georgia possessed sufficient political acumen to understand that the cause of one was the cause of them all, and in every community men were resolving that such things should not and would not be put up with.

Col. Thomas Pelk, commander of the Mecklenburg militia, believing that the time had come when it was necessary to take counsel what to do, issued a call, summoning each of his companies to send two delegates to a meeting in Charlotte on the 19th of May. This assembly came together, and while they were calmly discussing the constitutional rights of free-born Englishmen, there came from the North most direful news. At Lexington, just one month before their meeting, American farmers had contested a stricken field with regular British infantry and in the end, driven them in rout to their headquarters.

Instantly all was confusion. There was no more discussion of constitutional rights. The ancestors of these men had won with Braxton Braxton, and had followed the fortunes of Montrose to defeat. They were careful to observe the forms of the law while it was time; but the "shot heard round the world" was a signal to them that the time for action had arrived. A committee was appointed, a declaration of their abrogation from their erstwhile allegiance framed and adopted. In order that the fabric of society should not fall in ruins, they declared that they were ready to continue to exercise their functions until superseded by subsequent arrangement; they furthermore appointed another committee to frame a scheme of government and to send forth such a time as this should be arranged for by the Philadelphia Congress.

This committee met on the 31st and framed a set of twenty resolutions with a preamble, establishing the forms of English government as they were then understood, but without deriving their authority from the Crown. The significance of the relation of these two papers, that of the 20th and that of the 31st, to each other will be noted later.

The authors of the next step of the 20th desired to place their action before the Congress at Philadelphia and for this purpose engaged Captain James Jack, of Charlotte, to ride express to that city with the document and deliver it to the King's Carolina delegation. This Captain Jack did, and returned later bearing a reply to the Mecklenburgers from Messrs. Caswell, Hooper and Hewes, the aforesaid delegates.

Such in brief is Mr. Moore's account of the proceedings. For each step he cites his authorities whether it be a matter of fact, or of what seems to him necessary inference. His style is absolutely impartial; like a judge in his charge to a jury, the author dispassionately reviews the evidence and leaves the decision to the reader. We do not believe that Messrs. Hoyt, Salley, et al., will be convinced by his statements. But we do not believe on the other hand that any sane man, after reading the passages referred to, could possibly declare that the matter was settled beyond the peradventure of a doubt; that there is no evidence whatever in support of the genuineness of the paper of the 20th; in a word, that the city of Charlotte is in a few days solemnly to commemorate an "exploded myth."

It is a difficult proceeding to cull from the mass of evidence which Mr. Moore has collected in support of the genuineness of the fine old paper and in refutation of attacks upon it. Just what it will be best to mention in the limited space which can be allowed here. The points that may be mentioned below are in no sense intended to form a complete wall of defense. They are selected rather with the hope that their perusal may lead to a deeper study of the subject, and a more accurate appreciation of the truth of history.

First, let us look into an attack, which, because of its admitted source, has caused many to accept its view-point without further investigation. In 1819 a controversy arose over the Declaration and United States Senator Nathaniel Macon, of North Carolina, took the pains to delve into the matter and to have the result of his labors published. This article fell under the eye of John Adams, who had never heard of the event before. What he thought of it is best told in his own words. Carefully perusing the

may be mentioned, viz., that the Mecklenburg Declaration plagiarizes from Jefferson's. In a most careful and scholarly analysis of the two, our author demonstrates the fact that the phrases common to both were certainly original with neither, but that the common phraseology of the common people. These last were loud in their cries for independence long before their leaders put a thought upon the matter. This arose doubtless from the fact that the responsibility for the move must rest upon the shoulders of the Congress and that if it proved to be a wrong step the humbler folk would not suffer therefor. This part of the little volume before us is extremely able and convincing.

Take, furthermore, the language of the two papers, adopted by the Mecklenburgers in May, '75. The second nowhere distinctly declares independence, but in every paragraph assumes it as an accomplished fact. What more natural than to explain this otherwise inexplicable omission from the later paper, on the ground that every one knew that independence had been declared eleven days before, and that it was therefore out of place to repeat such a declaration? It seems that the opponents of the genuineness of the paper of the 20th have here a somewhat difficult nut to crack.

Among the many interesting features of yet unmentioned lack of space compels us to mention but a single one. In 1804 there was discovered in the archives of the Moravian church at Bethania, a most interesting bit of evidence. This record was kept by Traugott Bagge, and purported to record public events of interest to the Moravians down to 1779. In it we read under the year 1775 a paragraph the translation of which is as follows:

"I cannot leave unmentioned at the end of the 1775 year that already in the summer of 1775 the County of Mecklenburg in North Carolina declared itself free and independent of England, and made such arrangements for the administration of the laws among themselves, as was later the Continental Congress made for all. This Congress considered these proceedings immature."

Attention should here be given to the fact that the contemporary annals states that the Mecklenburgers both declared themselves free and independent of the British crown and government for the administration of government. The opponents of the Declaration tell us that these phrases both refer to the document of the 31st of May and offer no support to the paper of the 20th. Apart from the plain, simple language necessitated by this view, it is hard for the said opponents to get around the fact that their paper of the 31st nowhere declares independence, although that is precisely what Bagge tells us was done. Obviously Bagge had in mind both papers, describing the earlier in his first clause and the later in the second.

One of the most interesting sections of the "Defense" is devoted to the names of the Mecklenburgers. Attention should here be given to the fact that the contemporary annals states that the Mecklenburgers both declared themselves free and independent of the British crown and government for the administration of government. The opponents of the Declaration tell us that these phrases both refer to the document of the 31st of May and offer no support to the paper of the 20th. Apart from the plain, simple language necessitated by this view, it is hard for the said opponents to get around the fact that their paper of the 31st nowhere declares independence, although that is precisely what Bagge tells us was done. Obviously Bagge had in mind both papers, describing the earlier in his first clause and the later in the second.

The title of this novel is taken from the Democratic slogan in the campaign of 1844, which resulted in the election of James K. Polk to the presidency of the United States. Its significance was that the United States would make good its claim to the Oregon country as far North as 54 degrees and 40 minutes of latitude, in the war with Great Britain, which claimed the same territory. After the election had been carried, it was discovered that Uncle Sam was so involved with his Mexican neighbor on the southwest as not to be able to spare any room for fighting on the Canadian border, consequently the territory established at the forty-ninth mile was made and the Oregon bountiful it he deserves the thanks of his Whoa-Haw Trail and Oregon, and around the means by which this compromise was effected.

The mind of this reviewer, the present volume in distinct advance upon "The Mississippi Bubble." Its characters appear more life-like, its parallel of latitude where it is at this early constructed romance woven plot is very much better constructed and most important of all, the author has found the tact which makes his deepest entertainment. The conquest of the Far West by the American pioneer is a matter to inspire the most stolid soul, and while we cannot go so far as the author does when he declares that it surpasses the march of the Ten Thousand, and equals the migration of the Israelites, its historical importance, none the less his enthusiasm in describing it is quite understandable. In the middle of his story he digresses to paint the most vivid picture we have met with of the caravans crossing the plains and entering into possession of the Oregon country. It cannot be gainsaid that this breaks the continuity of the story most palpably, but with what a retentive gain! The reader has his attention distracted from the intrigue of cabinets and diplomats for a moment to have it fixed on one of the most obvious and thrilling movements of the nineteenth century. It is the very philosophy of history that Mr. Hough gives us in the chapters entitled "The readers no less than for his charming story."

The love story in the book is rather unusual. The heroine is an European, an aristocrat who is a diplomatic spy in the pay of Great Britain. The hero is John C. Calhoun's private secretary. He is on the eve of being married. She, on the contrary, conceives for him one of those passions as rare as a herculean, which beginning with a ferocious

jealousy of his finances, ends with rising to such a height of noble usefulness as to become her salvation. Such a theme could hardly fail to afford scope for genuine romance, and genuine romance it is which Mr. Hough presents.

Two things of the political side of the work merit attention. The first is the powerful pictures drawn of John C. Calhoun. Scant justice has hitherto been done the Great Nullifier, and we believe that work such as this will aid in rehabilitating his reputation with the people at large; with the students of American history it has never suffered. The other is the very unflattering account given of President Polk. It is evident that the author has taken a leaf from the book of a certain august personage at present hunting big game, in his view of this statesman. It is quite as unjust as un-historical.

One point remains to be mentioned. At the head of the chapters, the author has run a series of quotations, all dealing with the powerful, though obscure influence of the gentler sex upon the making of history. The thought is far from original, but it is profoundly true, and not unlikely to be underestimated in one's view of any particular period.

ATTEMPT TO BREAK JAIL. Cloer Brothers Make Good Use of a Stateville Lank.

The Cloer brothers made another attempt to saw out of their cell this week. Wednesday afternoon a fellow-prisoner reported to Mrs. Connelly, the jailer, that the Cloers had a small saw with which they were trying to saw out, and Sheriff Deaton was notified. The sheriff found that the prisoners had succeeded in sawing in two the chain which had held them to the floor since they have been shackled, and had also sawed one of the bars of the cell. The cell was searched thoroughly but the saw could not be found and the Cloers refused to tell where it is. Heavier shackles have been placed on them and Mr. Bruce Lelander will guard their cell until after court.

The Hudson. Puck. The Hudson river consists of two strips of advertisements as far as the eye can reach, including a body of water filled with tugboats, microbes, and floating folks of other descriptions.

Henry Hudson first discovered this famous river on his way to Troy to pay his creditors. He was in a bad mood and he was out to be lauded after a long sea voyage.

Stepping ashore at the foot of Twenty-third street he gave orders to put up a city that for magnificence and corruption should never be equalled. He then passed to West Point, started a mad hunt for gold, and then rested at Albany, where he opened the bureau of franchises, otherwise known as the State Legislature.

No doubt in the near future the Hudson will be used as a race course for automobiles. At present it is occupied with the duty of keeping New Jersey apart from New York.

Presume the Higher Motive. Warrenton Record. If the President has in mind the elevation of the Federal judiciary of the State, and the removal of it as far as possible from partisan politics he is to be commended for the Democratic appointments he is making to these positions, but if he is doing it in order to try and build up a strong Republican party in the South, why his actions are liable to severe criticism and will be resented by the true men of the Southland.

Depends on Who's Boss. Montgomery Advertiser. "This project of talking to Mars," says a prominent Alabama State Capital, "doesn't interest the eligible maidens of the land. They would rather have the young men talk to Pan." That's about the worst yet.

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Round Trip Rate

Lv Greensboro . . . 6:00 a. m. \$2.95  
Lv High Point . . . 6:36 a. m. 2.50  
Lv Thomasville . . . 6:52 a. m. 2.33  
Lv Salisbury . . . 7:57 a. m. 1.55  
Lv China Grove . . . 8:21 a. m. 1.35  
Lv Concord . . . 8:54 a. m. .85  
Ar Charlotte . . . 9:45 a. m.  
Returning, leave Charlotte 8:30 p. m.

Lv Morganton . . . 6:00 a. m. \$3.10  
Lv Connelly Springs 6:28 a. m. 3.10  
Lv Hickory . . . 6:51 a. m. 2.50  
Lv Newton . . . 7:16 a. m. 2.20  
Lv Claremont . . . 7:28 a. m. 2.20  
Lv Taylorsville . . . 7:00 a. m. 2.05  
Lv Hidenite . . . 7:15 a. m. 2.05  
Lv Stony Point . . . 7:26 a. m. 2.05

Lv Statesville . . . 8:10 a. m. 1.55  
Lv Mooresville . . . 8:48 a. m. 1.10  
Lv Mount Mourne . . . 8:55 a. m. 1.10  
Lv Davidson . . . 9:03 a. m. .85  
Lv Cornelius . . . 9:06 a. m. .85  
Ar Charlotte . . . 9:55 a. m.  
Returning, leave Charlotte 8:15 p. m.

Lv Chester . . . 7:00 a. m. \$1.55  
Lv Rock Hill . . . 7:47 a. m. .95  
Lv Fort Mill . . . 8:07 a. m. .70  
Lv Statesville . . . 8:50 a. m. .50  
Ar Charlotte . . . 8:50 a. m.  
Returning, leave Charlotte 9:00 p. m.

Tickets on sale May 17th, 18th and 19th, and for trains arriving at Charlotte by 1:00 p. m. May 24th; with final limit May 23rd, 1909. For full information call on any ticket agent, or write R. L. VERNON, D. F. A., Charlotte, N. C.

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