

on discovery, exploration, and settlement, are, in point of principle, equally valid with those of the United States.

Let us now see how the comparison will stand when tried by the relative value, importance, and authenticity of each.

Rejecting previous discoveries north of the 42d parallel of latitude as not sufficiently authenticated, it will be seen on the side of Great Britain, that in 1778, Captain Cook discovered Cape Flattery, the southern entrance of the straits of Fuca. Cook must also be considered the discoverer of Nootka Sound, in consequence of the want of authenticity in the alleged previous discovery of that port by Perez.

In 1787, Captain Berkeley, a British subject, in a vessel under Austrian colors, discovered the straits of Fuca.

In the same year, Captain Duncan, in the ship "Princess Royal," entered the straits, and traded at the village of Classet.

In 1788, Meares, a British subject, formed the establishment at Nootka, which gave rise to the memorable discussion with the Spanish Government, ending in the recognition, by that power, of the right of Great Britain to form settlements in the unoccupied parts of the northwest portion of the American continent, and in an engagement, on the part of Spain, to reinstate Meares in the possession from which he had been ejected by the Spanish commanders.

In 1792, Vancouver, who had been sent from England to witness the fulfilment of the above mentioned engagement, and to effect a survey of the northwest coast, departing from Nootka Sound, entered the straits of Fuca; and after an accurate survey of the coasts and inlets on both sides, discovered a passage northwards into the Pacific by which he returned to Nootka—having thus circumnavigated the island which now bears his name. And here we have, as far as relates to Vancouver's island, as complete a case of discovery, exploration, and settlement, as can well be presented, giving to Great Britain, in any arrangement that may be made with regard to the territory in dispute, the strongest possible claim to the exclusive possession of that island.

While Vancouver was prosecuting discovery and exploration by sea, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, a partner in the Northwest Company, crossed the Rocky mountains, discovered the head waters of the river since called Frazer's river, effected a passage to the sea—being the first civilized man who traversed the continent of America from sea to sea in those latitudes. On the return of Mackenzie to Canada, the Northwest Company established trading posts in the country to the westward of the Rocky mountains.

In 1806 and 1811, respectively, the same company established posts on the Tacouche, Tesse, and the Columbia.

In the year 1811, Thompson, the astronomer of the Northwest Company, discovered the Northern head waters of the Columbia, and following its course till joined by the rivers previously discovered by Lewis and Clarke, he continued his journey to the Pacific.

From that time till the year 1818, when the arrangement for the joint occupancy of the territory was concluded, the Northwest Company continued to extend their operations throughout the Oregon territory, and to "occupy," it may be said, as far as occupation can be effected in regions so inaccessible and destitute of resources.

While all this was passing, the following events occurred which constitute the American claim in their own proper right.

In 1792, Gray entered the mouth of the Columbia river.

In 1805, Lewis and Clarke effected a passage across the Rocky mountains, and discovering a branch of Columbia river, followed it until they reached the ocean.

In 1811, the trading post or settlement of Astoria was established at the mouth of the Columbia, on the Northern side of that river.

This post or settlement passed during the last war into British hands by the voluntary act of the persons in charge of it,—a fact most clearly established. It was restored to the United States in 1818, with certain well authenticated reservations; but it was never actually re-occupied by American citizens, having, from the moment of the original transfer or sale, continued to be occupied by British subjects.

These are the acts of discovery, exploration, and settlement, referred to by the United States as giving them a claim to the valley of the Columbia, in their own proper right.

The British Government are disposed to view them in the most liberal sense, and to give to them the utmost value to which they can in fairness be entitled; but there are circumstances attending each and all of them which must, in the opinion of any impartial investigator of the subject, take from them a great deal of the effect which the American negotiators assign to them as giving to this country a claim to the entire region drained by the Columbia and its branches.

In the first place, as relates to the discovery of Gray, it must be remarked that he was a private navigator, sailing principally for the purposes of trade, which fact establishes a wide difference, in a national point of view, between the discoveries accomplished by him and those effected by Cook and Vancouver, who sailed in ships of the royal navy of Great Britain, and who were sent to the northwest coast for the express purpose of exploration and discovery.

In the next place, it is a circumstance not to be lost sight of, that it was not for several years followed up by any act that could give it value in a national point of view; it was not in truth made known to the world either by the discoverer himself or by his government. So recently as the year 1826, the American plenipotentiaries in London remarked, with great correctness, in one of their

reports, that "respecting the mouth of the Columbia river, we know nothing of Gray's discoveries but through British accounts."

In the next place, the connexion of Gray's discovery with that of Lewis and Clarke is interrupted by the intervening exploration of Lieutenant Broughton, of the British surveying ship "Chatham."

With respect to the expedition of Lewis and Clarke, it must, on a close examination of the route pursued by them, be confessed that, neither on their outward journey to the Pacific, nor on their homeward journey to the United States, did they touch upon the head waters of the principal branch of the Columbia river, which lie far to the north of the parts of the country traversed and explored by them.

Thompson, of the British Northwest Company, was the first civilized person who navigated the northern, in reality the main, branch of the Columbia, or traversed any part of the country drained by it.

It was by a tributary of the Columbia that Lewis and Clarke made their way to the main stream of that river, which they reached at a point distant, it is believed, not more than two hundred miles from the point to which the river had already been explored by Broughton.

These facts, the undersigned conceives, will be found sufficient to reduce the value of Lewis and Clarke's exploration on the Columbia to limits which would by no means justify a claim to the whole valley drained by that river and its branches.

As to settlement, the qualified nature of the rights devolved to the United States by virtue of the restitution of Fort Astoria has already been pointed out.

It will thus be seen, the undersigned confidently believes, that on the grounds of discovery, exploration, and settlement, Great Britain has nothing to fear from a comparison of her claims to the Oregon territory, taken as a whole, with those of the United States.

That reduced to the valley drained by the Columbia, the facts on which the United States rest their case are far from being of that complete and exclusive character which would justify a claim to the whole valley of the Columbia; and

That, especially as relates to Vancouver's island, taken by itself, the preferable claim of Great Britain, in every point of view, seems to have been clearly demonstrated.

After this exposition of the views entertained by the British Government respecting the relative value and importance of the British and American claims, the American Plenipotentiary will not be surprised to hear that the undersigned does not feel at liberty to accept the proposal offered by the American Plenipotentiary for the settlement of the question.

This proposal, in fact, offers less than that tendered by the American Plenipotentiaries in the negotiation of 1826, and declined by the British Government.

On that occasion it was proposed that the navigation of the Columbia should be made free to both parties.

On this nothing is said in the proposal to which the undersigned has now the honor to reply; while, with respect to the proposed freedom of the ports on Vancouver's island south of latitude 49°, the facts which have been appealed to in this paper, as giving to Great Britain the strongest claim to the possession of the whole island, would seem to deprive such a proposal of any value.

The undersigned, therefore, trusts that the American Plenipotentiary will be prepared to offer some further proposal for the settlement of the Oregon question more consistent with fairness and equity, and with the reasonable expectations of the British Government, as defined in the statement (marked D) which the undersigned had the honor to present to the American Plenipotentiary at the early part of the present negotiation.

The undersigned, British Plenipotentiary, has the honor to renew to the honorable James Buchanan, Secretary of State and Plenipotentiary of the United States, the assurance of his high consideration.

R. PAKENHAM.

HON. JAMES BUCHANAN, &c.

(J. B. 2.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
Washington, August 30, 1845.

The undersigned, Secretary of State of the United States, deems it his duty to make some observations in reply to the statement of Her Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, marked R. P., and dated 29th July, 1845.

Preliminary to the discussion, it is necessary to fix our attention upon the precise question under consideration, in the present stage of the negotiation. This question simply is, were the titles of Spain and the United States, when united by the Florida treaty on the 22d February, 1819, good as against Great Britain, to the Oregon territory as far north as the Russian line, in the latitude of 54° 40'? If they were, it will be admitted that this whole territory now belongs to the United States.

The undersigned again remarks that it is not his purpose to repeat the argument by which his predecessor, Mr. Calhoun, has demonstrated the American title "to the entire region drained by the Columbia river and its branches." He will not thus impair its force.

It is contended, on the part of Great Britain, that the United States acquired and hold the Spanish title subject to the terms and conditions of the Nootka Sound convention, concluded between