

was lowered, and the stripes and stars floated again over Astoria. This is our American title. Does it give to us the exclusive sovereignty and right of soil in the Columbia valley? By international law, a Government can acquire title, in an unoccupied country, by discovery, if it be followed up in a reasonable time by exploration and settlement. Have we brought ourselves within this rule? Gray discovered in 1792; Lewis and Clarke explored in 1805; Astor founded a settlement in 1811. Do not these events follow in a reasonable time after each other, the remoteness and difficulty of access of the country considered? Can Great Britain show as good a title to the valley of the Columbia? Sir, if she can, she has not done so. What, sir, is the extent of the valley of the Columbia? The head waters of its southeast branches reach the Mexican line in latitude 42°; the northwestern branches stretch to 54° 40'. But this carries the argument further than I proposed, having proposed to argue the title as far as the Nootka only. To this I will add the title of contiguity. Oregon lies coterminous with the whole western frontier of the United States; it lies between us and the Pacific ocean. It hems us in on the entire western frontier of the Republic. It is highly important to us for agricultural and commercial purposes. It is almost indispensable to us for our national defence and safety. From Britain, the other claimant, it is remote. She can desire it only for national aggrandizement and the pride of empire. She needs it not for the national safety or national existence. If these facts bring us within the principles of title "by contiguity," as recognised by international law, then upon that principle we claim it. Allow me, sir, to add one other evidence of title to Oregon; I introduce it by way of plea in bar to Great Britain. In the sixteenth century Great Britain, by charters, granted to the colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts all lands lying between certain parallels of latitude across this continent, "from sea to sea." All the territorial rights which Britain then had, rested in the colonies between the limits mentioned from the Atlantic to the Pacific. These chartered limits embrace all, or nearly all, of Oregon. In 1776, these colonies were rebels; in 1783, they were victors, treating on terms of national independence and national equality with their former sovereign. By the treaty of 1783, Britain acknowledged their independence, and left them in the full and peaceable enjoyment of all the territorial rights, as granted to the colonies by the charters, without any reservation or exception.

The colonies to which these grants were made, have since ceded all their territorial rights beyond certain limits, to the United States, where the title is now vested. The question now comes up between Britain, the grantor to the colonies, and the United States, as assignee of the colonies who were the grantees of Britain, under the hand and seal of her King. Can we not, then, successfully set up in bar of Britain's claims, the titles granted by her King, signed, sealed, and delivered, in 1609, and 1620, and by her again ratified and confirmed in 1783, against any claim she can now make? By her charters she conveyed all the rights she then had, and by the same grant she estopped herself from afterwards acquiring any further rights in the country, unless by purchase or by conquest, neither

of which she now pretends to claim. I will add, sir, one more muniment of title, and the last: it is the title of the gentleman from Illinois, "inevitable destiny." There is more in this argument, sir, than appears upon the surface. If, by political derelictions, arising either from political ambition, sectional jealousies, cupidity, avarice, party hostility, foreign attachments and foreign interests, we should lose Oregon now, by inevitable destiny it will be recovered. Sir, nations, like men, pass through infancy to the vigor of manhood, and then the decrepitude of hoary age. If we are true to ourselves and preserve our glorious Union, when our vast and fertile empire shall sustain its fifty million of freemen, the sails of our commerce whiten every wave, and our navy ride triumphantly on every sea, then, sir, we will win on the battle-field what we may this day lose in the council-chamber. Thus will inevitable destiny give us Oregon. Upon these five several grounds I bas our rights in and title to Oregon, and leave each of himself to decide upon the force and effect of the proof adduced.

Mr. Chairman, before I proceed to state the evidence upon which Britain rests her claim and pretensions in Oregon, allow me to notice one important fact, which is now a matter of history and cannot be denied. It is this, that in all the diplomatic discussions which have taken place between the two Governments in relation to Oregon, from the treaty of Ghent in 1814, down to the year 1820, England based her claims exclusively upon the discoveries of her navigators. The Nootka convention was never named in these discussions until Mr. Rush, the American Minister, introduced it in 1826. In 1826 Britain changed ground; she abandoned her claims by discovery as the sole grounds of her title, and planted herself upon the Nootka convention. And why, sir, was this change? The reason is obvious. The discussion of this question lead the Ministers of the two Governments to trace back their claims respectively to their origin in the log-books, daily journals, and contemporaneous writings of the several navigators upon whose discoveries the title of the claimants must stand or fall. Before this investigation the British title faded away, and its inevitable overthrow was foreseen by her statesmen: the American title grew brighter and stronger at every step. The British negotiators, to avoid defeat, in 1826 changed ground, and took shelter behind the Nootka convention, upon which the title on her side is now mainly rested.

I shall now proceed to state the claims and pretensions of Britain to Oregon, as she has made them, during the thirty years negotiation on the subject, first by discovery and exploration of her navigators, and, secondly, by virtue of the Nootka convention. In the early part of her negotiation, and whilst Great Britain predicated her claims upon discovery and exploration, she commenced with the voyage of Sir Francis Drake. Sir, what was that voyage? On the 13th of December, 1577, Drake sailed from Plymouth, England, ostensibly for a voyage to Egypt, but really, as the sequel proved, on a predatory excursion against the Spanish settlements in America. In September, 1578, he arrived in the Pacific near the Spanish settlements there, and after plundering their towns and ships, and filling his vessels

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