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that, if this extravagant and wantonly ob-
structive claim were admitted, the conse-
quences would be fatal to the success of our
humane enterprise on the African coast. If
our officers were bound under no circumstan-
ces to visit an American vessel it was clear
that they could not venture to go on board any
doubtful vessel with the American flag, lest
she might be American. This was repeatedly
pointed out in despatches to Mr. Stevenson,
the American Minister in London; and both
Lord Palmerston and Lord Aberdeen made
it clear that we did not claim to interfere
in any way with those rights which the United
States Government reserved in refusing to
concede the mutual right of search.*
With quiet irony Lord Palmerston observed
in one despatch:—

'The cruisers employed by her Majesty's
Government for the suppression of the slave
trade must ascertain by inspection of the pa-
pers the nationality of vessels met with by
them under circumstances which justify a
suspicion that such vessels are engaged in the
slave trade, in order that if such vessels are
found to belong to a country which has con-
ceded to Great Britain the mutual right of
search, they may be searched accordingly, and
that if they be found to belong to a country
which, like the United States, has not conceded
that mutual right, they may be allowed to pass
on free and unexamined, and so consummate
their intended iniquity.'

It can scarcely be said that the American
minister during any part of this negotiation
advanced any argument to justify the un-
friendly and obstructive attitude that the
United States Government had taken up.
Indeed it would have been impossible for
him to show that the simple right of visit or
inquiry which we claimed, not in our own
interests, but in those of humanity, was
either injurious or insulting to American
commerce. It was no new right which we
sought to enforce; we merely wished to fol-
low an established custom, the application of
which to American vessels subjected them
to no inconvenience or annoyance worth
speaking of, while it was absolutely essen-
tial to the efficient police of the seas. As
we said in reference to the Maine boundary
question, so we may say again in reference
to this difficulty concerning the right of visit,
the circumstances under which we were placed
were such that any government, tenacious of
its rights and occupying the position in which
we were placed, would have refused to yield.
On the other hand, the circumstances under
which the American Government was placed
were such that any government, moderately

forbearing in disposition, would certainly
have given way in a similar situation. But
the actual course of events was this:—By
the treaty of 1842 the British Government
bowed to the exorbitant claims of the Go-
vernment of the United States, and consented
that the American merchant marine
should be invested with a quasi-sacred char-
acter, belonging, according to Lord Aber-
deen, to the vessels of no other nationality.
In return for this somewhat ignominious
concession the American Government under-
took to station a force of its own on the Afri-
can coast, so that vessels with an American
flag might be overhauled by American men-
of-war. This inadequate arrangement was
held for the sake of peace to be a satisfac-
tory compromise of the dispute.

Lord Ashburton effected no settlement of
the Oregon question. Our difficulty with
the United States concerning the limits of
British and American jurisdiction in the west,
proved, however, no less threatening to the
peace of the two countries than the ques-
tions affecting the boundary at its eastern
extremity. The territorial claims of the
United States to country west of the Rocky
Mountains seem first to have been put for-
ward at the conferences which took place in
London subsequent to the Treaty of Ghent.*
If we go back to the time of the treaty of
1783, it will be found that the United
States sought no empire beyond the Rocky
Mountains. But in 1818 enlarged views
had already dawned upon the minds of
American statesmen. Feeling their way by
degrees, the American representatives in
London, at the date we mention, proposed
that England and America should come to
an understanding concerning the territory
west of the Rocky Mountains. The United
States, they said, 'did not assert a perfect
right' to any of that territory, an admission
which they could hardly have avoided mak-
ing at the time, but one which it is worth
while to remember in connexion with the
subsequent progress of the negotiations. To
meet the views of the United States, Eng-
land agreed to a convention, signed in Octo-
ber, 1818, recognising a joint occupancy.
The convention laid down this understand-
ing:—

'The country to the west of the Rocky
Mountains claimed by either party, with its
bays, harbours, navigation of rivers, &c., shall
be free and open for ten years to the two pow-
ers, it being well understood that this agree-
ment shall not prejudice any claim of either
party, or of any other power or state to any

* The correspondence is partly republished in
the 'Annual Register.'

* The Oregon question is discussed at length
in the 'Quarterly Review' for March, 1846.