

who in 1792 got into an inlet, which he presumed to be the Columbia river, was captain of a ship trading along the north-west coast. He neither discovered the river, nor explored it, nor took possession of it. It is more than certain that he never even saw it. He entered the inlet, ascended twelve miles, to a bay where he was weather-bound for ten days—at a distance of sixteen miles from the entrance to the river*—and then departed upon his trading concerns, to dodge about for furs, utterly innocent of all claim to the glory of being handed down to posterity in the pages of history. Indeed, his name would never have been heard of had it not been for the generous allusion made to him by Vancouver, in his narrative published six years afterwards. Disentangling the question, therefore, of all doubts as to discovery, settlement, and possession—seeing that we had taken possession of this territory, and entered into a convention with Spain, the original discoverer, for the recognition and security of our rights, before the United States knew anything about the Oregon Territory, or could have reached it if they had, we reduce the American claim to the simplest possible basis, which we are willing to accept in the very terms put forward by the Americans themselves.

Having shown that in 1793, and for several years afterwards, the United States not only possessed no interest whatever in the Oregon Territory, but had no suspicion that they ever should possess any, Mr. Greenhow goes on to state when it was, and under what circumstances, they acquired the right which they have only lately asserted for the first time in full.

"The position of the United States, and of their government and people," says Mr. Greenhow, "with regard to the north-western portion of the continent, was, however, entirely changed after the 30th of April, 1803, when Louisiana, which had been ceded by Spain to France in 1800, came into their possession by purchase from the latter power. *From that moment the route across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific lay open to the Americans*; and nothing could be anticipated capable of arresting their progress in the occupation of the whole territory included between these seas."

In this passage there are two very distinct assertions: I. That, in 1803, the United States purchased Louisiana from France; II. That the consequence of this purchase was to throw open to them the whole route to the Pacific. The first is a matter of fact, upon which we are all agreed; for there is no doubt that the United States purchased Louisiana from France. The second is a deduction from the first, and, like all deductions, must depend for its validity on the soundness of the premises. If the purchase of Louisiana threw open to the Americans the territory west of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, then Louisiana must have extended over the whole of that region. The question is—Did Louisiana occupy that extent—a space on the west of the map nearly equal to the whole of the United States on the east? Upon the answer to this question—upon the actual boundaries of the country known by the name of Louisiana in 1803—the American claim to the Oregon Territory, mainly, if not altogether, depends.

If France sold to the United States any territory west of the Rocky Mountains, France must

have been in possession of such territory. Now France derived her right solely from a cession previously made to her by Spain. But we have already seen that Spain possessed no such right herself, and, therefore, could not cede it to France: consequently, France could not sell any such territory to the United States. She could not sell that which she did not possess.

In order, however, to ascertain clearly and circumstantially, what were the original Spanish rights from whence this cession descended, it will be necessary to revert to the discovery of the Oregon Territory, and to trace the foot-prints of adventure and settlement from that time to the moment when the United States first set up this imaginary claim. Having exhausted this branch of the inquiry, we will recall the reader to the point from which we start on this unavoidable excursion in the argument.

It is necessary to observe, for the better understanding of the mere question of discovery, that the whole of the Oregon coast lies between the forty-second and fifty-fourth degrees of latitude.

In 1578, Drake discovered this coast to the forty-eighth degree—about two degrees above the mouth of the Columbia. Mr. Greenhow endeavors to discredit this fact; but his motive is too transparent, and his evasive treatment of the subject too obvious, to demand any exposure at our hands. The fact itself, however, although we hold it to be indisputable, is of no importance whatever. We can afford to make the United States a present of all the advantages we could possibly derive from it. If our right to the Oregon Territory rested upon priority, it could be established beyond all cavil. But mere discovery gives no title to possession; and as we made no settlement in Oregon for upwards of two centuries afterwards, the long interval would have been equivalent to an abandonment of the country, if during that period any other government had thought proper to appropriate the soil. But no government did so appropriate the soil: and even waiving our claim on the ground of discovery, we are prepared to assert it on the ground of settlement. We were the first settlers in Oregon—the first to assume the rights of sovereignty over the country;—more than that, we were the *only* settlers there, as we shall show presently, when the federal government purchased Louisiana from France.

Of the Spanish navigators in these waters, the first who is admitted on all hands to a place in the discussion is Juan Perez. He sailed from Mexico in 1764, and the first land he saw was in the 54 parallel of latitude. But he could not land, and sailing to the southward was driven out to sea. He again made land in latitude 47° 47', and coasted home, having literally made no observations whatever. This expedition was considered to be so disgraceful a failure, that the Spanish government suppressed the account of it; and even Mr. Greenhow, in his hesitating way, allows that the discovery of Nootka Sound "is now, by general consent, assigned to Captain Cook."

In 1776, another expedition of two vessels was fitted up under the command of Bruno Heeceta, and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, who succeeded to the command of the second vessel after they had put out to sea. It is unnecessary to detail the vicissitudes of a voyage in which the commander, says Mr. Greenhow, "certainly acquired no laurels." The highest point made was the fifty-eighth degree of latitude; and having

* Vancouver, ii.