

For these reasons, the committee has adopted the opinion, that the forty-ninth parallel of latitude was actually established by the commissioners under that treaty. It may not be unimportant here to observe, that this forty-ninth parallel is not a random line, arbitrarily selected, but the one to which France was entitled upon the well-settled principle that the first discoverer of a river is entitled, by virtue of that discovery, to all the unoccupied territory watered by that river and its tributaries.

We have seen that, by the treaty of 1763, the Mississippi, from its source, was adopted as the line of demarcation between the British and French possessions. Louisiana then extended north as far as that river reached; in other words, it stretched along the whole course of the Mississippi, from its source, in about latitude forty-nine, to its mouth, in the Gulf of Mexico, in latitude twenty-nine. By the stipulations, then, of this treaty alone, without calling in the aid of the previous treaty of Utrecht, the northern boundary of Louisiana is clearly recognized as a line drawn due west from the source of the Mississippi: we say due west, because the east line alone of the boundaries of Louisiana being specifically and in express terms established by the treaty, her surface can only be ascertained by the extension of that whole line in the direction in which her territory is admitted to lie. This simple and only practicable process of giving to Louisiana any territory under the treaty, fixes as the whole of her northern boundary a line running due west from the source of the Mississippi, which may, for the purpose of this argument, be fairly assumed as the forty-ninth parallel, without injustice to any party.

Having thus ascertained the northern boundary of Louisiana, it becomes important to inquire what were its western limits, as between Great Britain and France: we say between Great Britain and France, because here another competitor appeared, (we speak of 1763,) in the person of the King of Spain, upon whose title we shall insist, if we fail to establish that of France.

The treaty of 1763 professing to establish, and actually establishing lines of demarcation between the contiguous territories of the contracting parties, it cannot be denied, except upon strong proof, that all the boundaries about which any dispute then existed, or subsequent disputes could be anticipated, (that is, where their respective territories touched each other,) were then definitely adjusted and settled. These territories are known to have touched on the north and on the east; and accordingly in those quarters we find the lines clearly described. Is it not evident, that had they touched in other points, had there been other quarters where questions of conflicting claims might have arisen, the lines in those quarters also would have been fixed with equal precision? But to the south and west there is no allusion in the treaty; an omission conclusive of the fact that in those directions Great Britain had no territory contiguous to Louisiana. But Louisiana extended, by the stipulations of the treaty, west from the Mississippi; and Great Britain, having no territory or claim to territory which could arrest her extension in that direction, is precluded from denying that the French title covered the whole country from that river to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

The parties to the treaty of 1763 made partition of almost the whole continent of North America, assigning to England the territory east of the Mississippi, and north of the forty-ninth parallel of latitude. No claim was at that time advanced by Great Britain to territory in any other quarter of this vast continent; a very pregnant conclusion against the existence of any such claim. Her Government, ever vigilant for the increase of her territory, with a view to the extension of her commerce, manifested upon the occasion of this treaty an avidity of acquisition which the continent was scarcely large enough to satisfy. Never very nice in scrutinizing the foundation of her pretensions, nor over scrupulous in the selection of means to enforce them, she was at this juncture in a position peculiarly auspicious to the gratification of her absorbing passion of territorial aggrandizement. Conqueror at every point, she dictated the terms of peace, and asserted successfully every claim founded in the slightest pretext of right. Still no title is either advanced, or even intimated, to possessions west of the Mississippi.

Mr. Cushing, of Massachusetts, in a report from the Committee on Foreign Relations, to the House of Representatives, made January 4, 1839, has the following