

a convenience to both sides if these were settled; both would gain, and neither the one nor the other would lose.

Slight as these difference are, unforeseen circumstances may arise to magnify their importance. The events leading up to the Oregon Award are worth considering in detail, as they illustrate so well the profundity of historical causes, and the insensible degrees by which nations are eventually brought at least to the verge of war. The Oregon dispute was bound up with the question of slavery, and slavery in turn was governed by the invention of the cotton-gin, by which a wide movement of population was created.

By this contrivance, which was devised by Eli Whitney in 1793, the seeds of the cotton were separable from the fibre. The use of the cotton-gin permitted profitable production of the short-fibred variety of cotton from the uplands of the Southern States. In 1811 Alabama produced no cotton; in 1834 the crop was larger than that of Georgia or South Carolina, and the population of the State had doubled. Slave holding and cotton growing went together, and as they advanced, the free population was obliged either to buy slaves or move north-westward. This movement was joined by the great migration along the Erie Canal and the Lakes as far west as Oregon, and as far north as the Canadian boundary.

New territory was desired, not so much for its value, as for the opportunity of creating new States in which slavery would be adopted as an institution, and the States in which it was prohibited would accordingly be put in a minority. When the Bill for the organization of Oregon was passed in 1848, it excluded slavery, ostensibly in accordance with the "conditions, restrictions, and prohibitions" of the North-West Ordinance of 1787, but in reality by a recognition of the dangerous principle of "squatter sovereignty," under which the people of the territory had already forbidden slavery within its territories. If they could forbid it, they could also allow it. The Oregon dispute really had its origin