

Mr. Jared Sparks among the beautifully arranged papers of the department in which he had discovered the letter, and on the map he beheld—with surprise and consternation as an American citizen—a strong red line marking the boundary exactly as claimed by the British Government. This discovery he communicated to the American Department of State, and the knowledge of these facts—the private and secret knowledge of these facts—was in possession of Mr. Daniel Webster during his negotiations with Lord Ashburton. Efforts were made subsequently to show that no positive evidence identified the map found as the map referred to in the letter to the Count de Vergennes, but of this no one concerned seems to have had any moral doubt. Secondly, it was contended by Sir Robert Peel, who did his best to defend the honour of Mr. Webster, that, taking all the facts as they were alleged, Mr. Webster was not bound to produce testimony adverse to his own case. Finally, that Lord Ashburton also had a map—one preserved in the Library of George III. if we understand Sir Robert Peel's explanation rightly—on which the boundary was marked as claimed by the Americans, and that he refrained from putting this map in evidence during the negotiations. The two reservations however were not parallel. The map of which Lord Ashburton had cognizance was a map of no special authority. How a boundary line came to be marked upon it nobody seems to have known. In the Foreign Office, meanwhile,* there was a map showing the boundary according to the British claim. Lord Ashburton was undoubtedly justified in discarding his map as of no substantial importance. How far Mr. Webster was equally justified on his side is a subject about which different opinions will be formed. The authority of the map brought to his knowledge was certainly very great; all but overwhelming. That map was, at the very least, to quote the language of Senator Rives, an embarrassing document. It seems clear that Mr. Webster, representing the American Government in the negotiations with Lord Ashburton, must, at any rate, have thrown overboard all thoughts of procuring a *just* settlement of the dispute. He struggled to obtain, not that to which he thought he had a right, but all he thought it possible to procure by defeating the rights of others.

Besides disposing of the Maine Boundary question, Lord Ashburton's treaty settled a dispute that had arisen in connexion with our efforts for the suppression of the slave

trade. Although the negotiations connected with our territorial difficulties in Oregon will claim attention directly as constituting a natural sequel to those on the Maine boundary, it is worth while to notice that, even in reference to this minor dispute, growing out of the African slave trade, the usual rule which has governed our diplomacy with the United States was observed. The position we took up at the outset of the difficulty was simple and reasonable; our claims were substantiated by convincing despatches, and in the end, we gave way through fear of the consequences that might ensue if we refused.

By the treaty of Ghent the American Government had subscribed to a promise that they would use their best endeavours to promote the entire abolition of the slave trade. The British Government, in order that the collective strength of humane nations might be employed against the trade to the best advantage, endeavoured to persuade all the powers to adopt a mutual right of search. In 1824 a treaty to this effect was drawn up by British and American plenipotentiaries, but it was never ratified, owing to a desire on the part of the United States Government to vary the geographical limits to which it referred. Our Government protested against the principle of varying a treaty on its ratification, and the negotiations fell through. In 1831 and 1833 we concluded treaties giving us a mutual right of search, with France. But the disposition of the American Government changed. It is not necessary to trace the explanation. The state of the question in 1842 was that the British Government had been pressing the United States to accept the right of search in vain. Meanwhile peculiar difficulties had arisen on the African coast. Without a mutual right of search with America we could not interfere with American slavers, and we never claimed to do this. But it constantly happened that, in endeavouring to clude pursuit, slavers of other nationalities hoisted the American flag. What our naval officers contended was that, whatever flag might be hoisted, they had at least a right to board vessels and ascertain that they really belonged to the nationality whose ensign they employed. Of course the American Government had nothing to say to any treatment we might bestow on foreign vessels hoisting the American flag fraudulently; but they advanced a claim that must, if recognised, have paralysed the action of our anti-slave trade squadron. They declared that, under no circumstances, must American vessels be even visited and asked their nationality by British naval officers. The mere act of inquiry they professed to regard as an outrage. It was manifest

* Lord Palmerston's speech.

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