

greater facility of access to the mountain-bound territory of Oregon.

The consequence is, that nearly the whole civilized population consists of the servants and settlers of the Hudson's Bay Company. M. Mofras says, that there are about 200 Americans grouped upon the river Ouallamet; he estimates the servants in the immediate employment of the company at 100 more (calculated by Mr. Greenhow at 400,) and the French Canadians at 3000. This division of the population is clearly incorrect, if it be intended to imply that these French Canadians are independent settlers; but the actual numbers, on the whole, are probably accurate enough. The remaining population is composed of native Indians, scattered over the face of the country. It is nearly impossible to ascertain their numbers. They were formerly very numerous, but successive visitations of small-pox, fever, and ague, have swept them away so rapidly, that they are now reduced to a mere remnant. Mr. Greenhow says, that the whole of the native tribes, and all other persons inhabiting Oregon, together, do not exceed 20,000. We are inclined to regard this statement as in excess; but we have no means of approximating more closely to the fact. There is no doubt, however, that some of the Indian tribes are extinct, and the rest not likely, under the influence of white civilization, to bring up their physical statistics to their ancient average.

Two rather important inferences may be drawn from these statements. First, that geographical proximity gives to British America a complete command over the Oregon Territory. Second, that the Oregon Territory is now, and has been for upwards of a century and a half, since the incorporation of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose power has gone on gradually increasing, and consolidating, and acquiring a more systematized form up to the present hour, under the direct influence of the British. These facts, if they do not enter into the abstract question of right, at issue between England and the United States, form, at least, material elements in the discussion, and add considerable force to the claim on the part of Great Britain.

Let us now examine the question of right set up between the two countries, strictly confining ourselves to the historical points upon which alone it can be adjudicated. But we cannot avoid observing at the outset that the claim to the entire sovereignty over Oregon by the American government is of recent birth. Up to 1814, they were satisfied with asserting a claim to joint occupancy; up to 1827, they never asserted a right of any kind beyond the forty-ninth degree; in 1843, the president announced, to the astonishment of the world, that the whole territory belonged to America; and in 1844, a bill was actually brought into congress, "to organize a territorial government in the Oregon Territory, and for other purposes!" This bill, which pledges the government to do that which the government cannot do without violating an existing treaty with England, comes before the senate in December next. We believe it will be thrown out, because, in the interval, all reasonable people will have time to comprehend the extent of its perfidious impracticability; but whether it be thrown out or not, it must remain forever in evidence against the United States, as an instance of that indecent contempt of all honorable obligations, for which they have been of late years so unhappily conspicuous.

The origin of the American claim to the Oregon Territory cannot be more precisely stated than in the words of Mr. Greenhow, the ablest of the American writers on this subject. We choose his statement, because it relieves us from all suspicion of misrepresentation, and enables us to avoid the possibility of unconsciously coloring the facts by any inadvertent expression of our own feelings and convictions. After having informed his readers that the "discovery" of the Columbia river by Gray, an American, was not made known until 1798, by the publication of Vancouver's narrative, and that no one then, or for many years afterwards, thought the river, or anything connected with it, could ever become interesting to the United States, he proceeds to lay down the actual limits of the States at that period.

"The territories of the United States were at that time (1798) all included between the Atlantic Ocean on the east, and the Mississippi river on the west. In the north were the British provinces; in the south lay Florida, belonging to Spain; and beyond the Mississippi the Spaniards also claimed the vast region called Louisiana, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico, northward and north-westward to an indefinite extent. Thus, all communication between the states of the Federal Union and the Pacific was completely cut off, by the interposition of countries possessed by foreign and unfriendly nations."

It is obvious, then, that up to 1798 the Oregon Territory never entered into the wildest dreams of the United States, and that whatever real or imaginary claims they may have upon it must have arisen since.

But at this point it will clear the inquiry of any possible perplexity on the score of prior discovery, to observe that, in 1778, before the Federal Union was called into existence, the whole coast of the Pacific was explored by Cooke up to the forty-eighth degree; that, in 1787, Berkeley and Dixon, both English navigators, explored the Strait of Fuca and Queen Charlotte's Island; that, in 1787, Lieutenant Mears surveyed the Strait of Fuca and Nootka Sound, where he established a factory, and took possession of the circumjacent country in the name of his Britannic Majesty; that in 1792, 1793, and 1794, Vancouver, who was sent out expressly by the English government, surveyed and sounded every mile of that intricate coast; that, in 1792, Broughton, Vancouver's lieutenant, explored the Columbia river, as far as 100 miles upwards, and took possession of it in the name of his sovereign; and that, in 1793, when most of the north-west continent was unknown, M'Kenzie, an officer in the Hudson's Bay Company, conceived the stupendous project of traversing the whole continent from coast to coast, and executed it with a courage and sagacity unparalleled in the history of discovery. The honor of having originally discovered the Columbia belongs to the Spaniards. Heceta, in 1775, was the first person who gazed upon its waters. All this time the whole region was a *terra incognita* to the people of the United States. They knew nothing about it all the time our navigators were exploring and surveying the coasts, and taking possession of the country. The only other nation that ever possessed a scintilla of a right to possession in those latitudes, or that ever pretended to such a right, was Spain; and the rights of Spain and England were finally declared and settled in 1790, by a treaty, called the Convention of the Escorial. The American "discoverer," Gray,