

For I have abundant proofs of the incompatibility of their conduct with the rights and peace of the United States.

In the Executive Message of the 23d December, it is told us, in addition to some other facts:

"The Hudson's Bay Company have also several depots, situated on watercourses, in the interior of the country; the principal one is at Fort Vancouver, on the northern bank of the Columbia river, about eighty or one hundred miles from its mouth. It is known, by information recently obtained, that the English company have a steamboat on this river, and that they have a saw-mill, and are cutting timber on the territory claimed by the United States, and are shipping it in considerable quantities to the Sandwich Islands."

The President did not see fit to communicate the particulars of the "information recently obtained;" but we reach these by the memorial from Mr. William A. Slacum, the agent employed by the Government to obtain information concerning the settlements in the Oregon, which memorial was presented to the Senate on the 18th December, 1837, in aid of a claim preferred by Mr. Slacum. This document exhibits in detail the facts that the Hudson's Bay Company have a military post on the Columbia; that they supply munitions of war to the Indians; that they seek to alienate the Indians from us; and that they occupy the country as if it were theirs: illustrating, also, the great value and importance of that country, as well for itself, as for its uses in the trade of the Pacific seas. It exhibits a fact, also, which I commend to the notice of Mr. O'Connell, who heaps such unmeasured invective on the People of this country because of the existence of slavery in a portion of the United States; namely, that, while Great Britain is applauding herself on the emancipation of the African race in her West India Colonies, the Hudson's Bay Company is introducing a new form of slavery in the Northwest, by applying it extensively to the American Indians. That this abuse is practised by the Hudson's Bay Company cannot excuse the British Government, any more than the perpetration of similar and worse abuses in Asia by the East India Company.

There is, in the document before me, (Sen. Doc. 1828-'9, No. 67,) a great body of evidence similar to that of Major Pilcher, which I have quoted, consisting of letters of Gen. Ashley, W. L. Sublette, Mr. Astor, Gen. William Clark, Gen. Cass, &c. showing how fatal the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company is to our own free trade. I will read an extract from one of these letters, (that of Mr. Cambreleng,) with his consent. This letter, addressed to Mr. Benton, and dated January 12, 1839, says:

"I have in my possession the actual returns of the furs collected by the Hudson's Bay Company for the year 1823, which, according to a valuation made by one who has a thorough knowledge of the trade, amount to \$94,879 85. The shares of that company have increased from £60, or 40 per cent. below par, to £240 sterling, or 140 per cent. above par. The business of the company has continued to increase at the rate of from 60 to \$100,000 annually. The prosperous condition of the Hudson's Bay Company may be attributed, in some measure, to the advantages enjoyed by the British traders, who procure their manufactures without duty, while the American traders pay 40 per cent. and upwards; and who can send their furs to the American market, while our traders pay a duty in the British market. But the most important advantage enjoyed by the Hudson's Bay Company is the admirable harbor at the mouth of the Columbia, which we virtually and unfortunately granted them by our treaty of 1818. That settlement at the mouth of the Columbia river is now the centre of an immense trade in furs, and, unless we take some step to place our traders on an equal footing with the British, and secure to the former the privilege of trading in safety within our own dominions at least, our Indian trade must decline, and we must make up our minds to surrender the whole Indian country to Great Britain."

This grievance, the injurious influence of the Hudson's Bay Company upon our fur trade in and about the Rocky Mountains, on both sides of them, has been earnestly represented to Congress by the Legislature of Missouri, as well as in the communications of the individuals above mentioned. It is fully disclosed, also, in Washington Irving's Astoria. He says, with particular reference to the Oregon Territory:

"In our hands, beside the roving bands of trappers and traders, the country would have been explored and settled by industrious husbandmen; and the fertile valleys bordering the river, and shut up among its mountains, would have been made to pour forth their agricultural treasures to contribute to the general wealth."

"In respect to commerce, we should have had a line of trading posts from the Mississippi and the Missouri across the Rocky Mountains, forming a high-road from the great regions of the West to the shores of the Pacific. We should have had a fortified post and port at the mouth of the Columbia, commanding the trade of that river and its tributaries, and of a wide extent of country and seacoast, carrying on an active and profitable commerce with the Sandwich Islands, and a direct and frequent communication with China."—(Astoria, vol. 2.)

Mr. Irving also justly condemns the conduct of our Government in leaving this matter so long unsettled, and says:

"Every year this litigated claim is growing into importance. There is no pride so jealous and irritable as the pride of territory. As one wave of emigration after another rolls into the valley of the West, and our settlements stretch towards the Rocky Mountains, the eager eyes of our pioneers will pry beyond, and they will become impatient of any barrier or impediment in the way of what they consider a grand outlet of our empire. Should any circumstance, therefore, unfortunately occur to disturb the present harmony of the two nations, this ill-adjusted question, which now lies dormant, may suddenly start up into one of belligerent import, and Florida become the watch-word in a contest for dominion on the shores of the Pacific."—(Astoria, vol. 2.)

Mr. Irving recurs to the subject in a later work of his (the narrative of Captain Bonneville's expedition,) in which he exhibits the value of the fur trade and fisheries, and the agricultural capabilities of the Oregon Territory; and upon the political question says:

"Though the [Hudson's Bay] Company, by treaty, have a right to a participation only in the trade of these regions, beyond the Rocky Mountains, and are, in fact, but tenants at sufferance; yet have they quietly availed themselves of the original oversight, and subsequent supineness of the American Government to establish a monopoly of the trade of the river [Columbia] and its dependencies; and are adroitly proceeding to fortify themselves in their usurpation, by securing all the strong points of the country."

"Nor is it likely the latter [the American traders] will ever be able to maintain any footing in the land, until the question of territorial right is adjusted between the two countries. The sooner that takes place, the better. It is a question too serious to national pride, if not to national interest, to be slurred over; and if every year is adding to the difficulties which environ it."

"The resources of the country ** in the hands of America, enjoying a direct trade with the East Indies, would be brought in to quickening activity, and might soon realize the dream of Mr. Astor, in giving rise to a flourishing commercial empire."—(Rocky Mountains, vol. 2.)

The convention of 1818 is any thing but reciprocal in its actual operation. Not only did it give the use of the river Columbia to Great Britain, we getting nothing in return—not only did it enable the British traders to introduce goods into the interior of the continent free of duty: those of our traders having paid duty, and so to undersell just; us in all trade with the Indians—but, in addition to all and this, under cover of the convention, the British flag dominates over the whole country; and at Fort Vancouver, about one hundred miles up the river, is a regular military post, a fixed establishment of several hundred persons. Can the United States send and establish a military post on the Columbia, without giving notice of the termination of the convention? I suppose there may be gentlemen who will say we cannot. And yet Great Britain has done this, without giving notice to us. Am I to be told that the Hudson's Bay Company has done this, and not the Government? I reply, that the British Government cannot and shall not separate itself from the acts of this Company. That game England played long ago in the East Indies, conquering millions after millions there, and throwing all the blame of the fraud and violence by which the conquests were gained upon the servants of the East India