

tending to the Rocky Mountains, upon which a favorable report was returned by Mr. Poinsett. That report I have already had the honor to cite to the Senate in my opening remarks upon this bill, when it first came up for consideration this session. When next I brought it forward, the foreign negotiations with Lord Ashburton, which ended in the late treaty, were about to be set on foot; and I was urged by all political parties not to embroil them with another difficulty, by a renewed effort to bring about the occupation of the territory. To these wishes I reluctantly yielded, consenting to wait for the results of the promised diplomacy. That diplomacy has suffered the occasion to pass almost without an allusion to the subject; and still, as before, the cry is, "Not now! wait a little longer! presently! By-and-by we are certain to bring the whole business happily through, if you will not press it now!" Such has ever been the encouragement, or the argument, with which the measure has, for above twenty years, been met; and the Senator from South Carolina will, therefore, see that the purpose has been pursued with everything that could give it forecast, and that no indiscreet measure or issue has been pressed against Great Britain, or urged upon the Senate. It has been held back not only until it became, in point of time, appropriate, but indispensable, if we are ever to accomplish the object at which we aim.

The main subject was urged on the attention of Congress in President Tyler's first annual message, where it is also strongly sustained by the auxiliary reports of the Secretaries of War and the Navy; and the same recommendation was once more presented to Congress in the reports of Secretaries Spencer and Upshur, at the beginning of this session. The country is indebted to Mr. Pendleton for an excellent report in 1842, to the House of Representatives, accompanying a bill even stronger than the one now under discussion.

This succinct history of the measure must certainly acquit the committee of any indiscreet haste, any inconsiderateness, any precipitateness of plunging Congress into premature debate, or a rash issue with Great Britain; particularly as both Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison had originally been in favor of some action.

As to the apprehended effects of debate here, the Senator, I think, exaggerates to himself the national irritation which may be so produced. Great Britain—herself accustomed to the most unrestrained parliamentary discussion—surely better understands how debate, and the heats into which it naturally runs, are to be viewed. It is by our action—not our speeches—that Great Britain will be influenced. I shall therefore continue to speak, as I have spoken, freely; well convinced that what we say of her here will be of no more serious consequence in London, than what she says of us, in her legislative wrangling, is of weighty influence upon us.

I understand the Senator's objections to the bill to be three-fold: first, that it would, in its main provisions, be an infraction of the conventions of 1818 and 1827; secondly, that, when carried into effect, it must plunge us into all the expense of a remote military occupation; thirdly, that the territory itself is valueless, and must prove a disadvantage, not only through the enormous expense it must entail upon us, but by dispersing our population, from whose concentration alone a progressive and an elevated civilization is to be expected.

The Senator will pardon me if I say that the true scope of his remarks yesterday proves him greatly to undervalue a territory as yet little known in his quarter. There is a mass of documents and information in regard to it, in which I am compelled to suppose him not versed. Even putting the minutest facts out of view, however, and supposing surface-sterile, there are in its favor high and various elements of commercial value, of future mercantile greatness, which I thought certain to strike a mind as capable as his of embracing these important considerations. It is plainly, at no distant day, the destined avenue of a great trade from our territories to the Pacific and the East. It does he less overlook its present and past importance. The inertness of our policy has already forfeited to us more than ten millions of legitimate trade. By the sheer neglect of our Government, our trade on that coast—formerly affording at least a million—has been snuffed, under the operation of the existing treaty, to dwindle to some two thousand dollars a year. Examine, sir, the returns of our fur-trade, from the first settlement on the Columbia, by Astor, down to the present time; and you will find that it has sunk to the paltry amount here mentioned, and that all the auxiliary commerce which was connected with it—the trade from that coast to China—is extinct.

These are matters easily established by documentary evidence before me, so copious that I do not tax the patience of the Senate with its reading. I will venture only to cite a single document at letter, addressed to me by Mr. Pierce, while engaged in this trade of the Northwest:

"Boston, May 1, 1842

"Sir: Thinking it may be interesting or important to you to know some of the late operations and present plans of the British Hudson Bay Company in the North Pacific ocean, I beg leave to present to your notice some facts in relation to the same, and which have come to my knowledge from personal observation, or from sources entitled to the fullest credit.

"All that extensive line of coast comprehending the Russian possessions on the northwest coast of America, from Mount Elias south to the latitude of 54 deg. 40 min. north, (the last being the boundary line between the Russian and American territories,) together with the sole and exclusive right or privilege of frequenting all ports, bays, sounds, rivers, &c. within a territory, and establishing forts and trading with the Indians, has been leased or granted by the Russian-American Fur Company to the British Hudson Bay Company for the term of five years from January, 1842, and for which the latter are to pay annually, four thousand fur seal skins, or the value thereof in money, at the rate of thirty-two shillings each—say £6,400 sterling, or \$30,720.

"In the abovesaid lease the Russians have, however, reserved to themselves the island of Sitka, or New Archangel; which place, you probably are aware, the Russians have large settlements—the depot and headquarters of their fur trade with the Fox Islands, Aleutian Islands, and the continental shore westward of Mount St. Elias. All the trading establishments of the Russians lately existing at Tungass Stickene, and other places within said territory, leased to the Hudson Bay Company, have of consequence been broken up. Thus the Hudson Bay Company, not content with monopolizing the heretofore profitable trade of the Americans, of supplying the Russian settlements on the Northwest coast, have now completely cut the off-also from all trade with the most valuable fur regions in the world.

"Whether the arrangements made between the Russians and English, above alluded to, are conformable to the treaties stipulating between the United States on the one part, and those nations respectively on the other, I leave to your better knowledge and judgment to determine.

"With the doings of the Hudson Bay Company at Pugget's sound and the Columbia river you are doubtless fully informed; but those, however, lately commenced by them in California, I do not admit of my saying a few words.

"At San Francisco they have purchased a large house, situated for a trading establishment and depot for merchandise; and they intend this year to have a place of the same kind at each of our principal ports in Upper California. Two vessels are building in London, intended for the same trade—that is, for the coast

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