

The Fisheries Treaty.

SPEECH

OF

HON. GEORGE F. HOAR,
OF MASSACHUSETTS,

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Tuesday, July 10, 1888.

The Senate having under consideration the Fisheries Treaty in open executive session—

Mr. HOAR said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I make no apology for entering early upon this discussion. This is the oldest question in our foreign relations. The question of the rights of her fishermen has mingled with the history of Massachusetts from the beginning, as their skill and courage have been from the beginning a chief part of her glory and pride. One of the half dozen most famous passages in English prose is that where, more than a hundred years ago, the greatest of English orators, in his last appeal to save England from the madness of her tyranny, paid his eloquent homage to these husbandmen of the sea. It will never become stale or commonplace to American ears. It is often quoted, but we may well repeat it, since the wit of man can not mend it.

Mr. Edmund Burke said:

As to the wealth which the colonies have drawn from the sea by their fisheries, you had all that matter fully opened at your bar. You surely thought these acquisitions of value, for they seemed even to excite your envy; and yet the spirit by which that enterprising employment has been exercised ought rather, in my opinion, to have raised your esteem and admiration. And pray, sir, what in the world is equal to it? Pass by the other parts and look at the manner in which the people of New England have of late carried on the whale fisheries. While we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice and behold them penetrating into the frozen recesses of Hudson's Bay and Davis Straits, whilst we are looking for them beneath the Arctic Circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold; that they are at the antipodes and engaged under the frozen circle of the south. Erikland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and resting place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries; no climate that is not witness to their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland nor the activity of France nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise ever carried this most perilous mode of hard industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people—a people who are still, as it were, but in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood. When I contemplate these things, when I know that the colonies in general