

MR. BUCHANAN'S LETTER.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

Washington, August 30, 1845.

The undersigned, Secretary of State of the United States, deems it his duty to make some observations in reply to the statement of her Britannic Majesty's envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, marked R. P. and dated 29th of July, 1845.

Preliminary to the discussion, it is necessary to fix our attention upon the precise question under consideration, in the present stage of the negotiation. This question simply is, were the titles of Spain and the United States, when united by the Florida treaty on the 22d of February, 1819, good as against Great Britain to the Oregon territory as far north as the Russian line, in the latitude of 54 degrees 40 minutes? If they were, it will be admitted that this whole territory now belongs to the United States.

The undersigned again remarks that it is not his purpose to repeat the argument by which his predecessor, Mr. Calhoun, has demonstrated the American title "to the entire region drained by the Columbia river and its branches." He will not thus impair its force.

It is contended on the part of Great Britain, that the United States acquired and hold the Spanish title subject to the terms and conditions of the Nootka Sound Convention, concluded between Great Britain and Spain, at the Escuria, on the 28th October, 1790.

In opposition to the argument of the undersigned, contained in his statement marked J. B. maintaining that this convention had been annulled by the war between Spain and Great Britain, in 1796, and has never since been revived by the parties, the British plenipotentiary, in his statement marked R. P. has taken the following positions:

1. "That when Spain concluded with the United States the treaty of 1819, commonly called the Florida treaty, the convention concluded between the former power and Great Britain, in 1790, was considered by the parties to it to be still in force.

- And 2. "But that, even if no such treaty had ever existed, Great Britain would stand, with reference to a claim to the Oregon territory, in a position at least as favorable as the United States."

The undersigned will follow, step by step, the argument of the British plenipotentiary in support of these propositions.

The British plenipotentiary states "that the treaty of 1790 is not appealed to by the British government, as the American plenipotentiary seems to suppose, as their 'main reliance' in the present discussion;" but to show that, by the Florida treaty of 1819, the United States acquired no right to exclusive dominion over any part of the Oregon territory.

The undersigned had believed that ever since 1826, the Nootka Convention has been regarded by the British government as their main, if not their only, reliance. The very nature and peculiarity of their claim identified it with the construction which they have imposed upon this convention, and necessarily excludes every other basis of title. What but to accord with this construction could have caused Messrs. Huskisson and Addington, the British commissioners, in specifying their title, on the 16th December, 1826, to declare "that Great Britain claims no exclusive sovereignty over any portion of that territory. Her present claim