

explicitly confined to the decision of which was the line of highlands described in the treaty of peace of 1783, yet, instead of pursuing any range of highlands whatever, he advised that the line should run along the bed of a river, and actually divided the territory in dispute between the parties by "the middle of the deepest channel of the St. John's."

The undersigned might content himself, in answer to the present proposition, with a reference to the observations contained in his last note to Mr. Pakenham, of the 3d ultimo. In that, it was plainly intimated not only that there are "other conclusive reasons for declining the proposition," independently of the one which had been prominently stated, but it was expressly asserted as the belief of the President, "that any attempt to refer this question to a third power would only involve it in new difficulties."

The undersigned will, however, proceed to state a single reason which, apart from the intrinsic difficulty of selecting a suitable arbitrator, as well as other considerations that might be adduced, is conclusive on the mind of the President against a reference of this question to arbitration, in any form which can be devised, no matter what may be the character of the arbitrator—whether sovereign, citizen, or subject: This reason is, that he does not believe the territorial rights of this nation to be a proper subject for arbitration. It may be true that, under peculiar circumstances, if the interest at stake were comparatively small, and if both parties stood upon an equal footing, there might be no insuperable objection to such a course. But what is the extent of territory in dispute on the present occasion? It embraces nearly thirteen degrees of latitude along the northwest coast of the Pacific, and stretches eastward to the summit of the Rocky mountains. Within its limits several powerful and prosperous States of the Union may be embraced. It lies contiguous, on this continent, to the acknowledged territory of the United States; and is destined, at no distant day, to be peopled by our citizens. This territory presents the avenue through which the commerce of our western States can be profitably conducted with Asia and the western coasts of this continent, and its ports the only harbors belonging to the United States to which our numerous whalers and other vessels in that region can resort. And yet, vast as are its dimensions, it contains not a single safe and commodious harbor from its southern extremity until we approach the 49th parallel of latitude.

It is far from the intention of the undersigned again to open the discussion of the conflicting claims of the two powers to the Oregon territory. It is sufficient for him to state the continued conviction of the President that the United States hold the best title in existence to the whole of this territory. Under this conviction, he cannot consent to jeopard for his country all the great interests involved, and by any possibility, however remote, to deprive the republic of all the good harbors on the coast, by referring the question to arbitration.

Neither is the territory in dispute of equal, or nearly equal, value to the two powers. Whilst it is invaluable to the United States, it is of comparatively small importance to Great Britain. To her, Oregon would be but a distant colonial possession, of doubtful value, and which, from the natural progress of human events, she would not probably long enough enjoy to derive from it essential benefits; whilst to the United States it would become an integral and essential portion of the republic. The gain to Great Britain she would never sensibly feel; whilst the loss to the United States would be irreparable.