

Government, and accompanied by corresponding measures, must necessarily lead to immediate collisions, and probably to war. Yet, a war so calamitous in itself, so fatal to the general interests of both countries, is almost universally deprecated, without distinction of parties, by all the rational men who are not carried away by the warmth of their feelings.

In the present state of excitement, an immediate amicable arrangement is almost hopeless; time is necessary before the two Governments can be induced to recede from their extreme pretensions. In the mean while, nothing, as it seems to me, should for the present be done, which might increase the excitement, aggravate the difficulties, or remove the only remaining barrier against immediate collision.

The United States claim a right of sovereignty over the whole territory. The pretensions of the British Government, so far as they have been heretofore exhibited, though not extending to a claim of absolute sovereignty over the whole, are yet such as cannot be admitted by the United States, and, if persisted in, must lead to a similar result.

If the claim of Great Britain be properly analyzed, it will be found that, although she has incidentally discussed other questions, she in fact disregards every other claim but that of actual occupancy, and that she regards as such the establishment of trading factories by her subjects. She accordingly claims a participation in the navigation of the river Columbia, and would make that river the boundary between the two Powers. This utter disregard of the rights of discovery, particularly of that of the mouth, sources, and course of a river, of the principle of contiguity, and of every other consideration whatever, cannot be admitted by the United States. The offer of a detached defenceless territory, with a single port, and the reciprocal offers of what are called free ports, cannot be viewed but as derisory. An amicable arrangement by way of compromise cannot be effected without a due regard to the claims advanced by both parties, and to the expediency of the dividing line.*

An equitable division must have reference not only to the extent of territory, but also to the other peculiar advantages attached to each portion respectively.

From and including Fuca Straits, the country extending northwardly abounds with convenient seaports. From the 42d degree of latitude to those Straits, there is but one port of any importance—the mouth of the river Columbia—and this is of difficult and dangerous access, and cannot admit ships of a large size. It is important only as a port of exports. As one of common resort for supplies, or asylum, in case of need, for the numberless American vessels engaged in the fisheries or commerce of the Pacific, it would be almost useless, even if in the exclusive possession of the United States. It must also be observed, that the navigable channel of the river, from its mouth to Puget's island, is, according to Vancouver, close along the northern shore. Great Britain proposes that the river should be the boundary, and that the United States should be content with the possession of the port it offered, in common with herself. It is really unnecessary to dwell on the consequences of such an arrangement. It is sufficient to say that, in case of war between the two countries, it would leave the United States without a single port, and give to Great Britain the indisputable and exclusive control over those seas and their commerce.

The first and indispensable step towards an amicable arrangement consists in the investigation, not so much of the superiority of one claim over the other, as of the question whether there be sufficient grounds to sustain the exclusive pretensions of either Government.

* I allude here only to the compromise proposed by Great Britain. Her actual claim, as explicitly thus stated by herself, to the whole territory, limited to a right of joint occupancy, in common with other States, leaving the right of exclusive dominion in abeyance.