

THE OREGON QUESTION.

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I had been a pioneer in collecting facts and stating the case. The only materials within my reach consisted of the accounts of voyages previously published, (including that of Maurelle, in Barrington's *Miscellanies*,) of the varied and important information derived from Humboldt's *New Spain*, and of the voyage of the *Sutil* and *Mexicano*, the introduction to which contains a brief official account of the Spanish discoveries. The statement of the case was the best I was able to make with the materials on hand, and may be found defective in many respects. Since that time manuscript journals of several of the voyages have been obtained at Madrid. New facts have thus been added; others have been better analyzed, and some errors rectified. Arguments which had been only indicated have been enforced, and new views have been suggested. The subject, indeed, seems to be exhausted; and it would be difficult to add any thing to the able correspondence between the two Governments which has been lately published.

Ministers charged with diplomatic discussions are not, however, in those official papers intended for publication, to be considered as philosophers calmly investigating the questions, with no other object but to elicit truth. They are always, to a certain extent, advocates, who use their best endeavors to urge and even strain the reasons that may be alleged in favor of the claims set up by their Governments; and in the same manner to repel, if not to deny, all that may be adduced by the other party. Such official papers are in fact appeals to public opinion, and generally published when there remains no hope to conclude for the present an amicable arrangement.

But, though acting in that respect as advocates, diplomatists are essentially ministers of peace, whose constant and primary duty is mutually to devise conciliatory means for the adjustment of conflicting pretensions, for the continuance of friendly relations, for preventing war, or for the restoration of peace. It has unfortunately happened that, on this occasion, both Governments have assumed such absolute and exclusive grounds, as to have greatly increased, at least for the present, the obstacles to an amicable arrangement.

It is morally impossible for the bulk of the people of any country thoroughly to investigate a subject so complex as that of the respective claims to the Oregon territory; and, for obvious reasons, it is much less understood by the great mass of the population in England than in the United States. Every where, when the question is between the country and a foreign nation, the people at large, impelled by natural and patriotic feelings, will rally around their Government. For the consequences that may ensue, those who are entrusted with the direction of the foreign relations are alone responsible. Whatever may be the cause, to whomsoever the result may be ascribed, it appears, from the general style of the periodical press, that, with few exceptions, the people, both in Great Britain and in the United States, are imbued with the belief that the contested territory belongs exclusively to themselves, and that any concession which might be made would be a boon to the other party. Such opinions, if sustained by either