

title should be definitively adjusted. Though these several claims conflicted with each other originally, they acquired mutual strength in the same hands; as if three persons claim the same estate—one by deed or devise, another by inheritance, and a third by possession—the union of all in one person, by purchase or otherwise, would result in the best of titles. Thus much, treating it as a dominion founded on discovery and exploration, and partial occupation.

But, in another point of view, this combination of titles becomes yet more important. Having planted her foot on the shore of Hudson's bay, Great Britain claims, against all the world, that she may stretch the other to the Rocky mountains; and the claim is admitted by the rest of the world. Nay, it is from Hudson's bay that her establishments have extended across the continent. Sir Alexander Mackenzie led the way in 1793, and the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company followed in it, until they had gradually intruded themselves into the valley of the Columbia—not from the Pacific, but proceeding from the Atlantic; and the civil jurisdiction of the British subjects dwelling beyond the Rocky mountains depends this day in *the courts of Upper Canada, by the acts of Parliament of 43 Geo. III, ch. 131; and 1 and 2 Geo. IV, ch. 66.* Which is in conformity with the fact hereinbefore stated, that, prior to the treaty of Versailles, the English Government claimed and granted to the Pacific, by virtue of her possessions in New England and Virginia.

And a pretension of this nature, however extravagant it may seem at the first blush, grows out of the necessities of self-preservation. Great Britain, when she gained a lodgment on the coast of the Atlantic, readily saw, and her colonies soon learned by disastrous experience, how dangerous it would be to them to have a hostile foreign power establish itself behind them. For the same reason that it was important to the British colonies to exclude, if they might, any power from taking possession in their rear, it was important to the French colonies on the Mississippi to prevent any other power from establishing itself in their own rear. Hence they claimed (and rightfully, according to the received law of nations) to have the exclusive dominion, and the right of excluding the entrance of any foreign colonization westward of them, until they should reach some other European power having a better title than theirs; and west of them there was none such, except Spain.

And the precise extent of prolongation by contiguity, to which an actual settlement gives right, must have some relation to the magnitude and population of that settlement, and to the facility with which adjoining vacant lands may promise to be occupied and cultivated by such a population, as compared with any to come from elsewhere; and this, in addition to the considerations of national security.

Important as these principles were to the infant colonies of France and Britain, and strong as are the claims of this nature we derive from the treaties of those two powers, those principles are yet more important, and those claims stronger, in reference to the existing state of North America, and our own position as the leading power of this continent. Who shall undertake to define the limits of the expansibility of the population of the United States? Does it not now flow westward with the never-ceasing advance of a rising tide of the sea? Along a line of more than a thousand miles from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, perpetually moves forward the western frontier of the United States. Here, stretched along the whole