

the Flathead and Kootanie tribes on the head waters or main branch of the Columbia, and were gradually extending them down the principal streams of that river; thus giving to Great Britain in this particular, as in the discovery of the mouth of the river, a title of parity at least, if not of priority of discovery, as opposed to the United States. It was from these posts that, having heard of the American establishment forming in 1811 at the mouth of the river, Mr. Thompson hastened thither, descending the river to ascertain the nature of that establishment. As the words 'in the same and subsequent year,' are rather indefinite, the dates of the occurrences above mentioned will be stated somewhat more exactly. Lewis and Clarke reached the Pacific ocean, after exploring the Columbia River from one of its most eastern head waters in the Rocky Mountains to its mouth, on the 15th of November, 1805. In the spring of 1806, as will hereafter be shown, Mr. Simon Frazer, and other persons in the employment of the Northwest Company, crossed the Rocky Mountains through the great gap near the 56th degree of latitude, and established the first British trading post west of that chain, on Frazer's Lake, about two degrees further south; but no evidence has been obtained that British subjects had ever visited any part of the country drained by the Columbia, above the falls of that river, before the summer of 1811. In that year, Mr. Thompson, astronomer of the Northwest Company, and his party, on their way down the stream, for the purpose of anticipating the Americans at its mouth, did build some huts on the northern branch, and did there open trade with the Flathead and Kootanie Indians; and from these posts Mr. Thompson did, indeed, hasten down to the ocean, where he, however, found the citizens of the United States in full possession." Suppose the possession by Thompson and Lewis and Clarke to have been simultaneous, as alleged by the British ministry, the committee is clearly of opinion that even such possession, strengthened by our prior discovery, gives us the better title.

Having thus established in the United States the priority both of discovery and possession, the committee proceeds to a consideration of the events which followed the occupation of Astoria by the British, in December, 1813. By the first article of the treaty of Ghent, it is agreed that "all territory, places, and possessions, whatsoever, taken by either party from the other," etc., "shall be restored without delay." Astoria, having been taken from the Americans during the war, was included in the stipulations of this article, and was restored to the United States, through their agent, J. B. Prevost, Esq., in the following manner:

"In obedience to the commands of his royal highness the Prince Regent, signified in a dispatch from the right honorable the Earl of Bathurst, addressed to the partners or agents of the Northwest Company, bearing date the 27th of January, 1818, and in obedience to a subsequent order, dated 26th of July, from W. H. Sheriff, Esq., captain of his Majesty's ship *Andromache*, we, the undersigned, do, in conformity to the first article of the treaty of Ghent, restore to the Government of the United States, through its agent, J. B. Prevost, Esq., the settlement of Fort George, on the Columbia River. Given under our hand, in triplicate, at Fort George, on the Columbia River, this 6th day of October, 1818.

"F. HICKEY,
Captain of his Majesty's ship *Blossom*
"J. KEITH,
of the Northwest Company."

I do hereby acknowledge to have this day received, in behalf of the Government of the United States, the possession of the settlement designated above, in conformity to the first article of the treaty of Ghent. Given under my hand, in triplicate, at Fort George, Columbia River, this 6th day of October, 1818.

"J. B. PREVOST,
Agent for the United States."

It is true that, in the dispatch of Earl Bathurst, and in Lord Castlereagh's instructions to the British minister at Washington, a reservation is made, that the surrender