

Here is the confession of Vancouver himself, that there was no intention of interfering with the territorial rights of Spain, and that no special advantages were sought for by Great Britain. It is the highest evidence, the evidence of contemporaneous exposition, against the claims of the British Plenipotentiary, and it demolishes the whole fabric of the British title, so far as it is built on Vancouver's explorations.

While on this part of the subject, I desire also to call the attention of the Senate to the manner in which the Oregon question has been discussed in the British Parliament by some of the most distinguished members of both branches of that body. I wish to do so, for the purpose of correcting great inaccuracies, and also for the purpose of showing how imperfectly the subject appears to be understood by those who, from their elevated positions, are under the strongest moral obligations to possess themselves of the truth, in order that the public mind of Great Britain may not be misled and inflamed on their high authority.

In the House of Lords, on the 4th of April last, immediately after the reception of the President's inaugural speech, the subject was brought forward by the Earl of Clarendon, not in the usual form of a call on her Majesty's Ministers for information, but in pursuance of a notice which he had given on the preceding day of his design to invite the attention of the House to the question. In the course of his remarks, he undertook to give a sketch of the claims of Great Britain and the United States to the territory of Oregon. I shall, in respect to the former, quote his own words from the London Times, a source to which we may confidently look for an accurate report of his lordship's remarks. I shall confine myself strictly to the question of title in all I have to say in reference to these debates, avoiding carefully all allusion to the offensive language with which they were in some instances connected:

"In the first place, my Lords, if priority of discovery could constitute title, our claim would be unquestionable; for Sir Francis Drake, when he first visited that country in 1558, found all the land unappropriated, and took possession of it, giving it the title of New Albion. I do not mean to say that this constitutes a claim; but owing, subsequently, to a seizure of British vessels at Nootka, and to a dispute which arose in consequence, it was arranged by the treaty of the Escurial that the subjects of the contracting parties should not be molested in fishing and making settlements in parts not hitherto occupied. In 1792, the country adjacent to the Columbia river was taken possession of by Cook, and was explored in 1813 by the Northwestern Company, now called the Hudson Bay Company, who established themselves in Port St. George, under the government of British laws, continuing to the present day, and being the first establishment in that country of a lawful and national character, and recognised as such by foreign States."

the extract in the text, denying the intention of laboring "for the advantage of any particular sovereign." And it was so satisfactory that, as Vancouver says, "On Monday, the 4th, I received a letter from Señor Arrillaga in reply to my letter, in which he was pleased to compliment me upon my ingenuousness," &c.

In the paragraph I have read, there are numerous errors in the statement of facts, and I must ask the indulgence of the Senate while I point some of them out.

1. Sir Francis Drake arrived on the northwest coast of America in 1579, and not in 1558, as stated by Lord Clarendon, making a difference of twenty-one years in point of time. If this error of date, which may possibly be typographical, were the only one, I should not have troubled the Senate with any reference to it. But there are graver misapprehensions in this statement. It will be seen, that though Lord Clarendon does not venture to refer to Sir Francis Drake's visit to the northwest coast as constituting a title of itself, he presents it as evidence of "priority of discovery." Sir, that navigator can, in no just sense, be said to have visited the disputed territory of which Lord Clarendon was speaking. The territory commences at the 42d parallel of latitude, and runs north to 54° 40'. Sir Francis Drake landed at 38°. He sailed along the coast north of this parallel, according to the best authorities, only as high as 43°. Nor can his visit, in any just sense, be regarded as a discovery. The country, including the bay of St. Francisco where he landed, was previously known. It had been seen thirty years before as high as the 43d parallel by Ferrelo, who was sent out by the Viceroy of Mexico, for the express purpose of exploring and extending the dominion of Spain over it; and it was taken possession of at or near the very point where Drake landed, and at various others, long before the Government of Great Britain claimed any right of possession, growing out of this pretended discovery, and the visits of her navigators to the northwest coast.

Besides, Drake's expedition was in the nature of a piratical enterprise, and not an enterprise of legitimate warfare. England and Spain were at peace. It is true, the two sovereigns, Elizabeth and Philip, were engaged in secret plots against each other—the former by fomenting disturbances in the Low Countries, and the latter by setting on foot rebellions in Ireland; but it was several years later before these intrigues broke out into the open hostility, of which the chief incident was the destruction of the invincible Armada. (Sir, the contradiction of terms is the work of history, not mine.) Yet Elizabeth, after Drake's return to England, on the application of the Spanish ambassador complaining of his piracies, restored a portion of the booty he had taken, and by this restitution admitted the unlawfulness of his expedition. It is only necessary to look into Hume to see in what light it has always been viewed by the eye of legitimate history. Sir, it should need some boldness, one would think, to set up a claim even to "priority of discovery" on the basis of a transaction like this.

2. Lord Clarendon states that the country adjacent to the Columbia river was taken possession of in 1792 by Captain Cook. Sir, Captain Cook never saw the Columbia river, or landed in the immediately-adjacent country. His visit was to Nootka Sound, on the island of Quadra and Vancouver, separated from the continent by the Strait of Fuca. His voyage is referred by Lord Clarendon to the year 1792. It was, in fact, made in 1778, fourteen years before the Columbia river was entered or even certainly known to exist. Ten years after