

BLACKFOOT CLAIM

Fur Trade

Report accompanying H. R. 45, 16th Congress, <sup>2nd</sup> 1st Session.

Thursday, January 25th. 1821

1821

Occupation of the Columbia River.

Mr. Floyd, from the committee appointed on the 19th ultimo to inquire into the situation of the settlements on the Pacific Ocean, and into the expediency of occupying the Columbia River, made a detailed report, accompanied with a bill to authorize the occupation of the Columbia River, and to regulate the intercourse with the Indian tribes within the United States and territories thereof; which bill, by leave of the House, was reported, read twice, and committed to a Committee of the Whole to-morrow. The report is as follows:

The Committee to whom was referred the resolution of the 19th of December, 1820, to inquire into the situation of the settlement upon the Pacific Ocean, and the expediency of occupying the Columbia River, report: That they have carefully examined the subject referred to them, and, from every consideration which they have been able to bestow upon it, believe, from the usage of all nations, previous and subsequent to the discovery of America, the title of the United States to a very large portion of the coast of the Pacific Ocean to be well founded; nor have they been able to ascertain that any other Government than Spain has made claim to any part of it, from Cape Horn to the sixtieth degree of north latitude.

When this continent was first made known to Europe, by the bold and enterprising genius of Christopher Columbus, it seemed

for a long time conceded that the Spanish monarchy, which alone could be prevailed upon to listen to his plans and propositions, was most entitled to the benefits resulting from the successful issue of his undertaking. Though Ferdinand and Isabella, who, at that time, filled the throne of that country, did not rest their title upon the tacit consent of other nations, or even upon their armies or fleet, which was, at that period, formidable, and well provided; but, instructed by the example of the Portuguese, who had obtained a grant for all countries east of the Azores, from pole to pole, they obtained a similar grant from the Roman Pontiff of all the territories they wished to occupy west of the same point, as the superstition of the times conferred on him a right of dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth. Thus, in virtue of his power, as the vicar and representative of Jesus Christ, did Alexander VI, in 1493, grant to the Crown of Spain, in full right, all the countries inhabited by infidels, which they had or should discover.

Enormous as the power was, which the Popes then exercised, it was recognized and submitted to by the monarchs of that day, and considered as having vested in Spain a title which they deemed completely valid, and authorized her to extend her discoveries and establish her dominion over a great portion of the new world. The Spanish Crown, as well as individuals, the subjects of that power, continued to fit out ships for voyages of discovery, and, in the space of a few years, had visited various parts of the coast of America, from the Gulf of Mexico, to many degrees south of the equinoctial line, taking possession, according to the customs of

that day, in the name of the Spanish King. Nor was their zeal for discovery confined to the Atlantic shore alone; parties, under daring and enterprising leaders, penetrated far into the interior of the continent, and even to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, wresting by violence the rich Empires of Peru and Mexico from the peaceful and legitimate sovereigns who reigned over them, and annexed them to the Crown of Spain, by the triple title of conquest, discovery, and the grant of the Pope.

So well satisfied do the rest of Europe seem to have been of the rights of Spain, derived from such high authority, that they permitted her to progress unmolested in her career of discovery and conquest for many years, until she had acquired the undisputed possession of most of the Atlantic coast of South America, and the whole shore of the Pacific, as high as the northern extremity of California, and, as they affirmed, after they came in possession of Louisiana, to a point far to the northward of that.

Though discoveries were frequently made of countries among the most beautiful and fertile, where nature seemed to invite the industry of man to the enjoyment of luxuriant abundance, yet none seemed to arrest the attention of either Government or people, but those which contained the precious metals; this morbid thirst for gold may be the cause why no settlements were made north of California, as no metal of that description is believed to be found in that region.

About this time it became the interest of the British Crown to think differently on the subject of religion from the See of Rome, and, separating entirely from it, assumed the right of annex-

ing to their Crown all the territories discovered by their subjects, and of bestowing them by charter upon individuals. To this end, grants were issued by Elizabeth in the year 1578 and 1584, the one to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the other to Sir Walter Raleigh, which were limited to a certain number of leagues, but those issued in 1606, 1608, and 1611, by James I, in the charters for Virginia, were declared to embrace the whole extent of country from thirty-four to forty-five degrees of north latitude, extending from sea to sea, always excepting the territories of any Christian Prince or people.

It is believed that when these charters were granted by the Monarchs of England, they were not well apprized of the extent of the country, they were giving away, but from their reservations, in regard to the title of Christian Princes or people, they were apprized of the title of Spain upon the western ocean, though not informed of its extent; as it is evident from the words Christian and infidel often occurring, both in the charters of the Monarchs and the bulls of the Pope, the legitimate sovereigns, as well as people of this country, in that day, were considered as possessing no rights. With whatever care they avoided collisions with each other respecting territory which might produce a war with a power equally skilled in the military art with themselves, they were not scrupulous in dispossessing the natives of both Americas of their country, all of whom were as brave, as generous, and magnanimous as themselves, and some of whom as far advanced in civilization and the arts of peace, though not professing to be Christians or skilled in war.

The opinion of Europe undergoing another change upon the subject of discoveries in unknown regions, they were now reduced to a more definite and reasonable extent, consequently, in a few years, a third mode of obtaining territory came to be admitted by all as the basis on which they could safely rely for a just decision of their claims, should difficulties present themselves; and one which, to a moderate extent, gave to all nations the benefit of their own labors. By this rule, too, all the territory thus acquired was vested in the State rather than the Crown, which Spanish jurisprudence, under the authority of the Pope seemed to consider.

Hence, the power which discovered a country was entitled to the whole extent of soil watered by the springs of the principal river or water course passing through it, provided there was settlement made, or possession taken, with the usual formalities, in the name and on the behalf of the Government to whom the individual owed allegiance. Though the tacit consent of all seemed to yield the sovereignty from sea to sea, where no settlement or express possession was had of an intermediate country; and such right was held good to the whole extent, but not wholly confirmed until another settlement was made at a distinct point upon the same territory beyond the water of the first, or so distant as not manifestly to encroach upon the establishments of the coast; other powers, though, might avail themselves of the failure of the first to occupy another principal stream, or distant point, and become vested with a full right of sovereignty. This seems to have been the condition of America until the close of the war of 1812; since which time all treaties have yielded to the

different powers, in full right, all they claimed, either by settlement, or from the failure of others to occupy the principal streams when they might do so. There is now no longer territory to be obtained by settlement or discovery; and if there should be any difficulty, it will be where the different limits of the different powers shall be fixed.

Impressed with a belief, that, under this mode, valuable possessions might be added to the French Monarchy, it is presumed Sieurs Joliet and Marquette penetrated the unknown wilderness from Canada, and discovered the Mississippi so long ago as the year 1673, and explored it down to the Arkansas. Perhaps, encouraged by their success, a few years after, Hennepin visited those regions, and pursued that river to its mouth. His representations, with other considerations, two years after, induced M. de la Salle and M. Tonti to descend that river with a considerable force to the Gulf of Mexico, and they are believed to have built the fort during that trip, the bricks and other remains of which are now to be seen on the first high ground on the west side of the Mississippi, below the mouth of the White River.

After this period, in 1685, M. de la Salle, being on his return from France, landed on the west side of the Rio Colorado in the bay of St. Bernard, and planted a considerable colony there, taking possession, in due and solemn form, in the name of the French King. Such were the discoveries which gave to France the country called Louisiana, from the Rio Grande del Norte, being the next great river to the west of that settlement, along the mountains of Mexico and Spain west, as the

western limits, and California as the eastern boundary. That France, and all other nations interested in its boundary, considered it in the same light, is ascertained in various ways, to the conviction of the most incredulous.

In consequence of these settlements and discoveries of the French, Louis XIV granted, by letters patent, in the year 1712, to Anthony Crozat, the exclusive commerce of that country, and defines its boundary, declaring that it comprehends all lands, coasts, and islands, situated in the Gulf of Mexico, between Carolina on the east, and Old and New Mexico on the west. The French title to these boundaries is further established by the Chevalier de Champigny, who lived in the country, and declares Louisiana to extend to the Rio Grande del Norte, and the mountains of Mexico. This appears to be the opinion of other writers, who, it is presumed, had the most intimate knowledge of the subject, and among them we find that intelligent statesman, the Count de Vergennes, in a work entitled an Historical and Political Memoir of Louisiana, where he says, it is bounded by Florida on the east, and by Mexico on the west. The same extent is assigned to it by Don Antonio de Alcedo, an officer of high rank in the service of Spain, entitled "Diccionario Geografico Historico de las Indias Occidentales o America." Don Thomas Lopez, geographer to the King of Spain, in a map published in 1762, is of the same opinion, which is supported by the opinion of De Lisle, of the Royal Academy of Paris, in the year 1782.

Upon the testimony of so many respectable writers, many of whom were in the employment of both France and Spain, not to mention the authority of D

tion the authority of Du Pratz, it is believed the United States may with safety rely, they having, by the Treaty of Paris of 1803, become possessed of the French title. If, however, there exists any obscurity in the boundary of that province, Spain, with whom it is supposed the title conflicts, has no right to claim any benefit arising from it, as all the writers and geographers above referred to agree in fixing Mexico, New Spain, the Rio Grande del Norte, and the mountains of Mexico, as the true boundary anterior to the treaty of 1763. If she, then, by treaty, obtained from France that country, with these limits, as asserted by France, and different ones not being stipulated for by her, she cannot now, with any shadow of justice, propose others. Moreover, Spain by the Treaty of St. Ildefonso, retroceded this same country to France, with the same extent of boundary it had when originally in her possession, thereby confirming to France, without doubt, all she originally claimed particularly, as no notice is there taken of the invalidity of the original French title to the full extent of their claim; at all events, it is believed, if there was difficulty in regard to it, during this last transfer would have been the time to adjust it; or, by the law of nations, it is thought, as well as candor and good faith, she has not, or ought not, to be permitted to insist upon other boundaries. That law, in one place, declares, that "if the party making them (Meaning grants or sessions) fails to express himself clearly or plainly, it is the worse for him; he cannot be allowed to introduce, subsequently, restrictions which he has not expressed."

It is proper, before this part of this subject is passed over, to remark, that, from the examination of the best records of the times, from the discovery of American until the year 1763, the bull of the Pope rather gave a title to the country, the coast of which had been examined by the Spaniards, than confirmed, beyond the participation of other nations, the hemisphere west of the Azores; but, where an extensive coast had been discovered by them, and no settlement attempted previous to 1763, that coast, and its extended interior, has been considered the property of the nation so discovering it; or discovering the interior, the unoccupied coast becomes a part.

Great Britain, as was her interests, maintained for a long time the old notion of a right to grant by charter all the countries from sea to sea, where it did not interfere with the territory of any Christian Prince or people; and her obstinate adherence to that system is considered as largely contributing to the production of the war of 1755, when she was opposed by France and Spain, as granting away almost all Mexico and the French possessions, both claiming much of the intermediate country, and the coast of the Pacific. Great Britain, at the close of that war, abandoned her pretensions, and gave manifestations of her sincerity, by revoking the first charter granted to Georgia, and in the second, in 1764, limited it to the Mississippi, and agreed, in 1763, to limit her whole territory to that river in the west.

When territory has been acquired, as already shown, upon any coast, and the same coast is actually settled, or occupied by another power, at such a distance as not manifestly to encroach

upon the first, the point equidistant from either is considered as the utmost limits of each. This principle, it is believed, was fixed and settled by all the most important treaties which have engaged the powers of Europe in affairs appertaining, in any way, to possessions in this country and, it is believed, was acted upon and sanctioned, not only by the treaty of 1763, but, in some measure, by that of Utrecht, in 1713.

Spain, by virtue of her original discovery, and actual settlement in Mexico, together with her title to Louisiana, claimed the Pacific Coast of North America, as high up as the sixtieth degree of north latitude; and, to enforce her claim, in the year 1789, sent a ship-of-war up the coast to capture or drive from those waters several English vessels fitted out in the East Indies by English merchants, upon their own authority, and at their own risk, to trade with the natives in that quarter. This service was performed by Martinez, of His Catholic Majesty's Navy; and, in the year 1790, became the subject of a message from the British King to his Parliament. Although much debate ensued, and some resentment was expressed towards Spain for her treatment of the British subject, who were made prisoners, yet no claim was alleged on the part of England to territory there. Great Britain, in the course of that transaction, seems to have recognized the claim of Spain, and was willing to treat for the enjoyment of privileges on that coast, which she obtained, and was, by stipulations, invested with the further right to fish even as low down as the Gulf of California.

The Spanish Monarch, being in possession of the French title,

regardless of that which the United States had obtained, according to the mode last adopted, felt great confidence in his negotiations with the British Government, in the year 1790. But the territory, the title to which gave that confidence, has since, by the Treaty of Paris, come into the possession of the United States, and it is believed the Treaty of St. Ildefonso confirmed to France the full extent originally claimed, Spain taking no notice of the original error, if any, existed.

Under this view of the case, the United States, being possessed of the title of France, and, by a just application of the law of nations, that of Spain too, if she ever had any, leaves them the undisputed sovereignty of that coast, from the sixtieth degree of north latitude down to thirty-six, which is believed to be the situation of the mountains of Mexico, alluded to in all the authors and charts before referred to. If, however, there should remain a doubt, that doubt is relieved by a reference to the subordinate principle recognized by the Treaties of Utrecht and Paris, in 1763. When we know that all the formalities deemed necessary in the possession of a newly discovered country have been complied with on the part of the United States; that, in the years 1785-'6, an establishment was made at the mouth of the Columbia River, by Mr. Hendricks, the full and entire benefit of whose courage, enterprise, and success, results to this Union; and that at a later day, in 1805, Messrs. Lewis and Clark, executing the desires of this Government, again visited the Columbia and the Western ocean, twelve miles from which they built Fort Clatsop, yet to be seen —

these establishments made by the United States, not so near the settlements of California as manifestly to encroach upon them, entitled them to the whole country north of the Columbia River. And, in applying the principle known to govern in such cases, the point equidistant from the Spanish actual settlements and the mouth of that river is the true point at which a line drawn separating the two countries should commence. The actual settlements of Spain are believed to have been, at that time, upon the Colorado of California in latitude 32 degrees north; but, even supposing the point to be the extreme south of the claim of the United States which is believed to be 36 degrees, then the line of separation would fall at 41 degrees. And, if any doubt arose as to the claim of the United States to the full extent of the Spanish title, to the north of Fort Clatsop, so high as 60 degrees of latitude, there could remain no doubt as far as the equidistant point, which would be at the completion of the 53d degree of latitude, leaving us 12 degrees of coast on that ocean.

From every information that can be obtained, worthy to be relied upon, our coast on the Pacific, for years past, has been the theatre of much individual enterprise, stimulated by the rich returns of numerous whale ships and the great profit of the fur trade, together with the flattering accounts of Messrs. Lewis and Clark, relative to the resources of the interior, though no regular trade or well-organized system of commerce existed until the year 1810, in the course of which year a vessel was fitted out in the City of New York, well supplied with provisions and seed of every

description necessary in a permanent occupation of the coast, which they contemplated. This little colony consisted of a 112 men when it arrived in the Columbia; and after ascertaining its surroundings, they removed some miles above Fort Clatsop, and built the town of Astoria where a portion of them cultivated the soil, whilst the others engaged in the fur trade with the natives. The soil was found to be rich, and well adapted to the culture of all the useful vegetables found in any part of the United States; as turnips, potatoes, onions, rye, wheat, melons of various kinds, cucumbers, and every species of pease. In the course of a year or two, it was believed their interests would be promoted by cultivating and securing the friendship and confidence of the tribes inhabiting the waters of that great river; to which end the town of Astoria was maintained by about thirty men, whilst the rest established themselves at five other points, to become fixed stations, to raise their own vegetables, trade with the natives, and receive supplies of merchandise from the general depot of Astoria, and to return to it the fruits of their labor. One of these subordinate establishments appears to have been at the mouth of Lewis's River; one at Lantou; a third on the Columbia, six hundred miles from the ocean, at the confluence of the Wantana River; a fourth on the East Fork of Lewis's River; and the fifth on the Multnomah. Thus situated, this enterprising little colony succeeded well in all their undertakings, nor met with but one misfortune which seemed to partake largely of that kind which had, for a long time, so certainly and so unseen, been inflicted upon our western inhabitants; this was the loss of the Tonquin, a vessel they had taken from New York, whilst trading down the coast, where in time

past, she had been, in common with the ships of some European powers, enjoying the friendship of the natives. This confidence had by some means been destroyed, and, whilst they induced many of the ship's company to go on shore, many of their own number went on board the ship, and suddenly attacking the crew, the whole were destroyed, as well as the vessel. This, though a great affliction to the survivors on the Columbia, did not dishearten them, as other vessels were expected soon to arrive, and, with these expectations, they continued their trade, which, becoming profitable, they were the less inclined to abandon. But the operations of the war of 1812, which took place between the United States and Great Britain, were destined to mar their prosperity. That Government, it appears, dispatched a vessel of war called the Raccoon, to destroy or possess Astoria, which, by the assistance of the Indians, influenced by the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies of fur traders, they were easily enabled to do; and have, from that period to the present time, continued to reside at it as well as on the river above, though a messenger or agent was sent by the authority of the United States to receive, and did receive, that post for them, at the close of the late war.

From every reflection which the Committee have been able to bestow upon the facts connected with this subject, they are inclined to believe the Columbia, in a commercial point of view, a position of the utmost importance; the fisheries on that coast, its open sea, and its position in regard to China, which offers the best market for the vast quantities of furs taken in those regions, and our increasing trade throughout that ocean, seems to demand immediate attention.

The fur of every country which has produced it, has been ever esteemed one of its most valuable commodities, and has long held a rank among the most profitable articles of commerce; it was much sought for even in the days of Tatila, a Visigoth, who <sup>reigned</sup> ~~rained~~ in Italy about the year 522, at which time they drew their supplies from the Suetons, who inhabited that part of Europe called Sweden. The Welsh set a high value on them as early as the time of Howel Dda, in 940, and, from its being first an article of dress, used only by the poorer class of the community, it by gradually extending **itself** came to be one of luxury of the highest value, in which kings and princes vied with each other in their costly magnificence and display; their clothes were not only fashioned of them but even their tents were lined with the finest varieties. Such was the display of the Cham of Tartary, when he was visited in his tent by Marco Polo about the year 1252. It had become so much in use and so high in price, that Edward III, in the year 1337, deemed it expedient to prohibit its use to any but those who could afford to spend a hundred pounds a year, without detriment to their property. At that day, having exhausted those parts of Europe which had supplied them, the price increasing with a growing demand, they were obliged to seek them elsewhere, and procured their supplies from the north of Asia. This, for a long time, poured into the adjoining parts of Europe immense sums, as it was in that direction they were brought to market. This trade, so valuable, to that part of the world, had no competition, nor were other sources of supply even known until Francis I, of France, in the year 1514, sent Jacques Curtis, of St. Malloes,

to make discoveries in this country. That gentleman entered the St. Lawrence, and exchanged his merchandize for fur, which was the commencement of a feeble trade, that was continued until the year 1608, when Samuel Champlain went some distance up that river, and laid the foundation of the town of Quebec, as a trading establishment, and commenced a system which, however, did not greatly flourish until the year 1649. But very soon after that country came into the possession of England, this trade was cherished and greatly increased, and the dominion of the Hudson's Bay enabled her not only to supply Russia itself, and all of Europe, but even to send it to Turkey, and round the Cape of Good Hope to distant China, That trade which had destroyed all competition, and, in the hands of well regulated companies, was capable of enriching an empire, had yielded a part of its profits to the skill and industry of individuals upon our western shore; that skill and that industry has withered not for the want of fostering care, but justice and protection.

The fur trade of Canada has long been conducted by well organized companies; and, although they encountered infinite difficulties, yet the great profit of their business enables them to overcome them, and to divide a considerable percentage. All those articles intended as supplies for the Indians are shipped at Montreal and carried far into the interior, through lakes, and rivers, and difficult streams, until they arrive even in the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains. The increasing wealth derived from this source, induced a large increase of capital, and corresponding exertions to obtain a more extensive knowledge of the rivers and lakes through which their merchandise was to be

carried, and a more extensive acquaintance with the natives, among whom they were eventually to be disposed of for furs, the produce of the labor of the savage. With views of this kind, small parties have been dispatched at different times, from the year 1774 until the year 1793, to examine the rivers of the west. At the period last mentioned, one of those parties, under the direction of Alexander McKenzie, penetrated even to the western ocean, thereby greatly adding to their stock of useful knowledge in that branch of commerce, which they have not failed duly to appreciate. Notwithstanding the great difficulties which the British furs encounter from the embarrassment of their commerce by their different systems of exclusive privilege, these companies find it a source of vast profit, far exceeding anything known in the United States; this, too, when the merchandise is so much advanced in price from the distance and the numerous obstructions. The enhanced value of the articles, and their difficulties in transporting them, may be fully understood, when it is known the tract of transport is equal to three or four thousand miles, through more than sixty lakes, some of them very considerable in extent, and numerous rivers and the means of transportation are bark canoes. Furthermore, these waters are interrupted in at least a hundred places, by falls and rapids, along which the trader has to carry his merchandise on his back, and over a hundred and thirty carrying places from twenty or thirty yards in extent to thirteen miles, where both canoe and cargo have to be conveyed by the same means.

These are some of the obstructions which the Northwest Company encounter: yet their exports from Quebec are valued at more than a million of dollars annually, without reference to those brought to the United States, and shipped from New York and Philadelphia direct to China, rather than incur the cost and delay in procuring them a passage to London and thence to India, in the ships of the East India Company. Indeed, it appears that many of the goods of that company destined for this trade, particularly on the coast of the Pacific, are shipped to Boston, and immediately reshipped in American vessels, for the benefit of drawback. These vessels are sometimes employed to make a voyage for them from the mouth of Columbia to Canton. To illustrate more fully the increasing value of this trade, it is only necessary to observe, that from Quebec, in 1803, there were exported the skins of 650,729 quadrupeds, 93,778 of which were the beaver. Since that time they have extended their trade beyond the Rocky Mountains, and have, as has already been observed, established themselves at the mouth of the Columbia. The amount of their export from that port cannot be ascertained, but it is thought to be of great value. The Hudson's Bay Company is believed to be considerable, from a state of former depression, is fast becoming the rival of the other, but for several years past have withdrawn their traders from the west side of the Rocky Mountains; they have fewer difficulties to overcome in arriving at the highest point of navigation than the Northwest Company. Their route is through the Hudson's Bay, the Nelson River, to Lake Winnepeg; thence, by passing other lakes, they ascend the Red River to their

establishment, which is within ninety miles of the Missouri River, at a point called the Mandan Villages. This river takes its rise in the Rocky Mountains, in about the forty third degree of latitude, and observes a course north and north east towards Hudson's Bay, until it arrives at the Mandan Villages, a distance of nearly twelve hundred miles, when it turns short to the south, without any apparent cause, and joins the Mississippi; the water running to the Hudson's Bay at that point, approaching within one mile, and no hill or high ground to separate them, of any magnitude. Yet, notwithstanding the many advantages which the Hudson's Bay Company possessed over the Northwest Company, the Earl Selkirk, the patron of the former, and a man of uncommon enterprise, was exceedingly desirous to obtain the privilege of supplying his establishments upon the Red River, by ascending the <sup>Mississippi</sup> ~~River~~ to the St. Peters; thence to its source in Stone Lake; then, by a short portage, through open woods and a level country, to his stations; or, taking the route by the Missouri to the Mandan Villages, thence by a portage of ninety miles, to his place of destination. The exports of this company, for a short time past, have been very little less than those of the Northwest Company.

The Committee, from carefully examining all the facts connected with the subject referred to them, are well persuaded that the situation of the United States is such as to enable it to possess all the benefits derived from this trade, which, in the hands of others, amounts to millions; many of whose trading establishments east of the Rocky Mountains are within the acknowledged limits of this Republic, as fixed by the Convention of London of the 20th of

October 1818; and it is believed, that no power, with the exception of Spain, has any just claim to the territory west of them, or on the Pacific. The dependence for subsistence of many of those establishments, is upon the buffalo beef hunted by the Assiniboin Indians, who inhabit the country between the river of that name and the Missouri; their hunting ground is far within our boundary. To succeed in procuring to the people of the United States all the ~~wealth~~ flowing from this source, it is only necessary to occupy with a small trading guard the most northeastern point upon the Missouri River and confine the foreigners to their own territory; at the same time occupying, with a similar guard, the mouth of Columbia. The great profit derived from this trade by the Canadian companies, when we know the distance and obstructions in their rivers, and in the various streams they ascend in carrying it on, the advance of price consequent upon it becomes rather a matter of amazement than otherwise, and inclines us to examine our own rivers with a view to the same object. Instead, however, of those formidable obstructions, we find a smooth <sup>and</sup> deep river, running through a boundless extent of the most fertile soil on this continent, containing within its limits all those valuable furs which have greatly enriched others; a certain, safe, and easy navigation, with a portage of only 200 miles uniting it with another river, equally smooth, deep, and certain, running to the great western ocean. Thus are those two great oceans separated by a single portage of 200 miles ! The practicability of a speedy, safe, and easy communication with the Pacific, is no longer a matter of doubt or conjecture: from information not to be doubted, the

Rocky Mountains at this time, in several places, are so smooth and open, that the labor of ten men for twenty days would enable a wagon with its usual freight to pass with great facility from the navigable water of the Missouri to that of the Columbia; the actual distance from river to river several hundred miles from their source, that is, from the great falls of Missouri to the fork of Clark's River, is one hundred and forty nine miles; the distance, therefore, of two hundred miles is to good navigation on the Columbia, which is the only river of any magnitude upon that whole coast, north of the Colorado of California, though there are several good harbors, secure and safe for vessels of any size.

The region of country from the ocean to the head of tide-water, which is about two hundred miles, is heavily timbered with a great variety of wood well calculated for ship building, and every species of cabinet or carpenter's work; though there is a heavily timbered country thence for two hundred miles further, yet it is of a lesser growth, and quality not so durable; at that point commences the plain country when the soil becomes more thin, and almost without wood, until it arrives at the table lands below the mountain. Though the soil of this region is not so good as in any other part of this great valley, yet it produces grass of the finest quality, and is emphatically called the region favorable to the production of the horse; this noble animal, so far surpassing all others in usefulness, courage, and swiftness, is here produced in greater perfection than ever in Andulasia or Virginia. But,

independent of all the wealth which may be derived from the fur trade of that river and the Missouri, the security, too, which the peace of this country would find in the influence which the American traders would obtain over the natives, is the increasing commerce in the western ocean. There is no employment so well calculated to make good seamen as the whale fisheries, which are known to be more profitable on this coast than any other; at the same time, the oil is far preferable to that taken on any other coast, being clear and transparent as rock water. While so many of our citizens are industriously engaged in the various branches of trade in those seas, more valuable to this country, it is believed, than any other: while all nations who have claims upon that coast, and some who have known, are anxious to occupy some position upon it, even at a vast expense, to enable them to participate in its benefits, we have neglected to extend to it any portion of our care, though it appears, from the best information, that there is at this time eight millions of property owned by citizens of this Republic in the Pacific Ocean.

Russia, whose dominions on the Asiatic coast occupy nearly the same position upon that side which ours <sup>do</sup> on this, has long been well informed of the great and increasing value of that commerce; and while she has been nowhere visible, not even to the powers of Europe, only as she has of late taken part in a few memorable enterprises, she has been felt everywhere. No labor, care, or expense is avoided to make tributary the four quarters of the globe; forts, magazines, towns, cities, and trade, seem to arise on the coast as if by magic; with an army of a million of men,

She sits not only in proud security as it regards Europe and menaces the Turk, the Persian, the Japanese, and Chinese, but even the King of Spain's dominions in North America are equally easy of access, and equally exposed to her fearful weight of power. Her watchfulness is ever in advance in discerning the most practicable avenues to profitable commerce. In the midst of all her busy arrangements she has not neglected the opportunity of possessing herself of two important stations on the American shore of the Pacific- one at a place called New Archangel, in about fifty nine degrees of north latitude, the other at Bodiga Bay, in latitude thirty eight degrees, thirty four minutes, At the former of these military positions for the protection of her commerce, it is presumed, she has incurred much expense and built a fort of great strength, situated upon one of the best harbors on the coast, standing upon a point of land projecting into the little bay, giving something of the appearance of a conical island in the center of it; this fort is well supplied at all times with provisions and military stores, mounting one hundred and twenty cannon, carrying balls from eighteen to twenty four pounds weight. That at Bodiga is well constructed and supplied with cannon, and has a good harbor; at this point they have ammunition and merchandise in abundance, and find the Indian trade at this post as well as New Archangel very considerable; besides the fine condition of this fort and its defenses, they have many field pieces, some of brass, of the finest construction, in good order and well mounted.

All these supplies have been conveyed to those places through immense oceans, round Cape Horn, which would have appalled any but Russian policy and persiverance.

The light articles destined for this trade are transported from St. Petersburg in sledges, which will perform in three months that which would require two summers of water conveyance to effect; their communications are open to Kamschatka, to Ft. St. Peter and St. Paul, by Okhotsk, in the Pacific, where they have the finest harbor in the world; the distance is estimated at ten thousand miles. The nation which can encounter such journeys as these often through seas of ice, and storms of snow so terrible as to obscure an object beyond the distance of a few paces, to prosecute any branch of commerce, must be well and fully informed of its value. That the objects she has in view may not, by any event, be taken from her grasp, after encountering such vast difficulties, she has found it expedient to occupy one of the Sandwich Islands, which not only enables her effectually to maintain her positions, but to command the whole northern part of the Pacific Ocean. These islands, lying just within the tropics, in the direct course from the lower coast of North America to Canton, are well supplied not only with all the fruits of that climate, but with every vegetable and animal known in this country.

It is worth y of remark, that among other advantages which the Russian position on the opposite coast possesses, is, that a voyage from Kamschatka to Japan can be made in an open boat, as it is a continuous chain of islands from the Okhatsk Sea until it arrives at its place of destination.

Your committee are well persuaded that, by a little care and small expense, the citizens of this Republic might reap all the benefits of this trade, not only profitable now, but from every view of the subject there is a strong probability that it will increase for many years.

Were an establishment made at the mouth of Columbia, which should be allowed to take with them their women and children, there can be no doubt of success, as so many years' experience of the English fur companies have amply shown this mode has the most powerful effect in separating the minds of the men from pursuits which often in frontier countries lead to strife, as it gives them a local interest and feeling, and makes them even more vigilant and prudent in the discharge of all their duties. It is believed that population could be easily acquired from China, by which the arts of peace would at once acquire strength and influence, and make visible to the aborigines the manner in which their wants could be supplied. The coast of the Pacific is, in its climate, more mild than any other part of the continent in the same parallel, and many vegetables on that shore grow in great abundance in the native forests, which are likewise natives of China.

It is known that when the Spanish Government, in 1789, sent their ships of war up the coast to capture the British vessels which were intruding, they found seventy Chinese, whom the English had procured to immigrate, that they might be employed in the mechanic arts; and, though the people of that country evince no disposition to immigrate to the territory of adjoining princes, it is believed that they would willingly, nay, gladly, embrace the opportunity of a home in America, where they have no prejudices, no fears, no

restraint in opinion, labor, or religion.

The committee cannot doubt that an establishment made on the Pacific would essentially benefit the natives, whilst it would give this country the advantage of all its own treasures, which otherwise might be lost forever, or rather never enjoyed; and, from all that can be ascertained relative to its present and increasing value of more profit to this country than the mines of Potosi.

From the best information which can be had, it appears that the Indian trade on the Missouri, below the Mandan Villages, is worth about \$120,000, and that on the Mississippi is valued at \$250,000, making the sum of \$370,000 annually. They have reflected upon this trade, and that prosecuted by the whalers on that coast, and are irresistably drawn to the conclusion that they are the most valuable to this nation, and demand its care and attention in a high degree. This trade, unlike any other, originates its own capital, and may fairly be said to bring into the United States \$370,000 every year, where not one dollar previously existed, and adds that much to the wealth of the community as decidly as though it had been fished from the bottom of the rivers in gold and silver, as it is in the market of China, or any other market, capable of purchasing as much; and if, with that amount in furs, a vessel should sail from the mouth of the Columbia to Canton, which is a voyage of from fifty to seventy days, she would return with that in exchange which would sell for perhaps double that amount, thereby contributing to the comfort, enjoyment, and accomdation of the community, \$740,000, which is the result not of a profitable voyage but a creative trade. It is believed that a shipment of tobacco, flower, or cotton, bears no comparison, in point of profit, with this, as