

REPRINT DEPARTMENT

In this section of the magazine will be reproduced a few of the rarest out-of-print books bearing on the history of the Northwest. The one selected as the first to be reprinted here is "The History of Oregon, Geographical and Political," by George Wilkes, published by William H. Colyer, New York, 1845. It is one of the rarest and least known books of that period just before the treaty with Great Britain in 1846, during which many books and pamphlets were published. The book includes a proposition for a national railroad and a series of letters from an Oregon immigrant of 1843.

The value of the book we are here reproducing has been severely criticized by Professor Joseph Schafer of the University of Oregon. In a later issue his views will be given, but the editors believe that there is enough of value in the book to warrant its reproduction especially in view of the fact that it is exceedingly rare, and in view of the further fact that it is being quoted and criticised by different sides of the Whitman controversy.

THE HISTORY OF OREGON, GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL.

By George Wilkes.

[Continued from the last issue of the Washington Historical Quarterly.]

PART II.

Historical Account of the Discovery and Settlement of Oregon Territory, Comprising an Examination of the Old Spanish Claims, the British Pretensions, and a Deduction of the United States Title.

THE OLD SPANISH CLAIMS.*

In 1491, the western hemisphere slept unknown in the abyss. In 1492 Spain redeemed it to the world. Between 1512 and 1541, she settled Mexico, occupied Florida, traversed the whole north-

*Though it is hardly necessary to mention to the reader in this stage of our examination, that the United States purchased from Spain, in 1819, all the right devolving to her on the North West coast above 42 deg. north latitude by virtue of her discoveries and settlements, it will do no harm to direct him to bear in mind that in making out *her* title, we of consequence establish our own.

ern coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and explored the interior of the continent as far as the fortieth degree of north latitude. In 1543 she explored the coast under Cabrillo and Bartoleme Ferrelo, as high as the forty-fourth parallel, and from that year till 1580 we hear of no other adventure in a northern latitude. In the last mentioned year, however, Sir Francis Drake appeared in the North Pacific, and as the British government have seen fit to lay great stress upon his discoveries, it is necessary that we should give them particular attention.

Drake was one of the most distinguished of the buccaneers who cursed the face of the ocean during the latter part of the sixteenth century. He had heard of the enormous profits derived from the pillage of the South American Spanish settlements, and appealing to Queen Elizabeth (who secretly encouraged this system of warfare, in flagrant violation of the laws of humanity and of the rights of Spain to her Pacific discoveries), received her aid to his nefarious schemes. With, therefore, no object beyond piracy and plunder, he entered the Pacific in 1578, and during the course of that and the following year, ravaged every town of note on the coast of South America, committing the most barbarous outrages on their unoffending inhabitants. Being at last gorged with spoil and satiated with ravage, his next object was to secure a safe retreat; but fearing to take the risk of a return through the Straits of Magellan, lest the exasperated Spaniards should concentrate their forces there to cut him off, he resolved to return home by way of the Indies and the Cape of Good Hope. He accordingly ranged along the coast as high as the 42d or 43d degrees of north latitude, when, being pinched by the cold, he turned back and ran into the bay of San Francisco, in lat. 38. Here he stopped five weeks to refit, and for the purpose of awing the natives into submission, made a pompous display of colors and music, which he afterwards very modestly called taking possession for the British Crown. Though Drake knew from the accounts of the natives, and the articles of European manufacture he found among them, that the country had been discovered and visited long before, he could not overlook so favorable an opportunity of covering the dishonest nature of his enterprise; so he assumed the character of a discoverer, and performed the double service of saving both himself and his mis-

tress from impertinent inquiry by the evasion. He was rewarded on his return home for the murders he had committed and the plunder which he shared, by a baronetcy instead of a rope, and descended to posterity as **Sir Francis Drake**, the celebrated navigator, instead of Drake, the bold pirate. On this infamous basis do the British Government found their claims to Oregon, and it may be regarded as significant of the ramifications of the design. They insist that Drake explored the coast as high as 48° , and rely upon the statements of a work called the "World Encompassed," published by an unknown compiler, from "notes of the Rev. Francis Fletcher, Preacher in this (Drake's) employment." But as this journal was not made until **sixty-three** years after the voyage was made, and as its incongruous statements are directly contradicted by a work published immediately after the return of the expedition, when this Mr. Fletcher and all the parties were alive, and able to refute it, we are not bound to bestow a grave consideration on its statements. The following extract will serve to show the consistency and veracity of the Preacher's statement:

"On the 3d June (1580) we came in latitude 42° N., but in the night we found such an alteration of heat to extreme cold, as caused our men to grievously complain. The land bearing farther out in to the west than we had imagined, we were nearer on it than we were aware. The 5th of June we were forced by contrary winds to run in with the shore and cast an anchor in a bad bay, where we were not without some danger by the **extreme gusts and flaws** that beat upon us. In this place there was no abiding, on account of the extreme cold, **and the wind still directly bent upon us**, commanded us south whether we would or no. From the height of 48° , in which we now were, to 38° , we found the land low and reasonably plain, and in $38^{\circ} 20'$ fell in with a fit and convenient harbor, where we anchored. During all this time we were visited with like nipping colds, **neither was the air during the whole fourteen days so clear as to enable us to take the height of sun or star**. Though we searched the coast diligently, even unto the 48th degree, yet found we not the land to trend so much as one point in any place toward the east, but rather running in continually north-west, as if it were directly to meet with Asia."

Really, this preacher expects a great deal from our simplicity, for he coolly tells us that he accomplished a sailing distance of nearly, if not quite, **four hundred miles** under the most adverse circumstances, in **two days**. Moreover, we find upon an exam-

ination of the maps, that the coast between these latitudes, so far from running continually "north-west, as if it went directly to meet with Asia," does not in any part trend one point toward the west. By comparing the two accounts, we find that the first historian (Mr. Francis Pretty), whose relation being published immediately upon its conclusion, may be regarded as the official journal of the voyage, sets the latitude of 5th June at 43° , while the other, whose work was not ventured before all the actors had departed from the stage, marks it 48° . It may be that Fletcher's manuscript has its degrees of latitude indicated by figures, and that a peculiarity of formation has confounded 43 with 48; but if the inconsistency is not explained in this way, we must of necessity conclude that the preacher, whose hard task it was to make robbery and ravage square with the ordinances of religion, has been gradually brought to consider romance as his peculiar province, and to estimate a serviceable fiction over a commonplace fact. The character of this production of Mr. Fletcher's appears to have been pretty well understood by the historians of the last century, for while but three writers previous to 1750 (and those of but little reputation*) adopt his statements, they are rejected by the great mass of authorities, comprising Ogilby, in his *History of America*, De Laet, in his *History of the New World*, Heylin, in his *Cosmography*, Locke, in his *History of Navigation*, Dr. Samuel Johnson, in his biography of Drake, and Dr. Robertson, in his *Standard History of America*, none of them allowing Drake the credit of an advance above 43° , while the latter positively states that he turned back at the 42d parallel. When, in addition to the indisputable veracity of these writers, we take into consideration they are all, with one exception, Britons, who cannot be accused of an indifference to the glory of their country, we must reject the claim which is based upon the counter statement, as without foundation. Even admitting the latitude they ask, the very principles of international law they have advanced plunges them into an inextricable difficulty. By the rule which we have extracted from Vattel, a discovery, to confer a title, is clogged with a proviso in the concluding clause, that a real possession must follow soon after. Now we shall see in the progress of our inquiry, that **one hundred and ninety-**

*John Davis, Admiral Monson, and Captain Burney.

eight years elapsed before another English navigator entered the northern latitudes of the Northwest coast. As the most romantic imagination can hardly construe this into being **soon enough after**, we shall not hesitate to strike the pretensions, on the score of Drake, from off the record.

From the date of the expedition of Cabrillo and Ferrelo (1543), we hear of no further discovery to the north, except what is contained in the account of a voyage made by Francisco Gali, or Guelli, a merchantman, who in his course from China to Mexico is said to have reached the vicinity of the American continent, in $57\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, and to have sailed along in sight of its coast till he arrived at the bay of San Francisco, in latitude $37\frac{1}{2}$. But little reliance is to be placed upon this account, however, as by Guelli's own statement the land first seen by him "was very high and fair, and wholly without snow," which could not have been the case with the land in that latitude. It makes but little difference whether he is entitled to all he claimed or not, for subsequent discoveries cover all the ground which this could have occupied, if it were ever so substantial.

The next discovery by the Spaniards on the Northwest coast took place in 1592, by Jean de Fuca, a Greek pilot, who received the direction of a squadron fitted out by the Viceroy of Mexico for the discovery of a strait which was supposed to lead into the Atlantic ocean. Arriving between latitudes 48 and 49, he fell upon the great arm of the sea which separates "Quadra and Vancouver's Island" from the continent, and which now bears his name. This he thoroughly explored along its eastern course, and, having remained in it for twenty days, sailed again into the Pacific at its northern outlet in 51° , and then returned to Mexico. From the policy pursued by the Spanish Government of concealing everything that related to their American possessions, the existence of this strait was unknown to the rest of the world for a long time, and when its discoverer disclosed it to an English merchant some years afterward, it was derided as a fable.

In 1787 an Austrian vessel fell upon it and entered it to the distance of sixty miles, and as it corresponded in all its remarkable peculiarities with the one described by De Fuca nearly two hundred years before, justice was at once rendered to his memory by the bestowal on it of his name. From 1592 up to 1774,

the Spaniards occupied themselves principally in forming settlements upon the coast and in the interior of their northern possessions; but in the latter year another expedition was despatched under the charge of Juan Perez, which traversed the coast up to the 54th degree, down to forty minutes of which point the Russians had already extended their trading settlements. Proceeding south, Perez anchored in a spacious bay under 49° , which he named Port San Lorenzo, but which, on a subsequent visit by Captain Cook, received from that navigator its present name of Nootka Sound. After leaving Port San Lorenzo, Perez saw the Strait of Fuca in his southern course, but did not stop to examine it. In the following year another expedition, under Heceta, Bodega and Maurelle, examined the whole shore from 40° up to 58° , and the former, on his return voyage, while between 46° and 47° , noticed an opening in the land at $46^{\circ} 16'$, which appeared to be a harbor or the mouth of some river. He reported the fact, giving his opinion to that effect, and subsequent Spanish maps accordingly laid down a river there, which they called the San Roque.

We have now brought the Spanish discoveries down to 1775, to which time no other European nation had set foot upon the coasts between 38° and $54^{\circ} 40'$, neither had any ever reached a higher latitude than 43° .

In 1778, three years after this latter expedition, Captain Cook arrived in the North Pacific, and under $49\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ fell in with the port San Lorenzo of the Spaniards. This he named Nootka Sound, and ascribed the merit of its discovery to himself, in the face of numerous evidences that Europeans had been there before him, for he tells us in his own account that not only did the natives appear familiar with his ships, but he found among them articles of Spanish manufacture. Thus vanishes Cook from the shadowy list of English discoverers of the Coast of Oregon; for until the word discovery is born again and receives a new definition, it will hardly possess sufficient elasticity of application to stretch its qualities to two distinct visitations of the same spot, separated by a distance of three years; and unless its meaning is considerably enlarged, it will scarcely extend from the outside of an island twenty miles at sea to the body of the continent behind it.

Having disposed of the two main pillars of the English title,

we next come to the examination of the filling in, the flimsy material of which we shall find in keeping and correspondence with the unsubstantial quality of the first.

In doing this, we shall be obliged to extend the scope of our narrative somewhat, as well to correct certain gross misrepresentations which have been made to the injury of the Spanish title, as to afford a proper idea of the unworthy subterfuges which the desperate diplomacy of Britain has employed to effect the establishment of their own, in opposition to it. This course is necessary, moreover, to a correct understanding of the whole subject, as the circumstances to be related nearly kindled a general European war, and as they led to a treaty whose **claimed** concessions on the part of the English admits virtually the integrity of the title of Spain.

[Continued in next issue.]