

which were suggested in reports from his subordinate officer, the Commandant of Guiana. These reports were characterised by the Spanish Ministers as insufficient and unsatisfactory, as "professing to show the Province of Guiana under too favourable a light," and finally by the Council of State as appearing from other information to be "very improbable." They form, however, with a map which accompanied them, the evidence on which the Venezuelan Government appear most to rely, though it may be observed that among other documents which have from time to time been produced or referred to by them in the course of the discussions is a Bull of Pope Alexander VI, in 1493, which, if it is to be considered as having any present validity, would take from the Government of the United States all title to jurisdiction on the Continent of North America. The fundamental principle underlying the Venezuelan argument is, in fact, that, inasmuch as Spain was originally entitled of right to the whole of the American Continent, any territory on that Continent which she cannot be shown to have acknowledged in positive and specific terms to have passed to another Power can only have been acquired by wrongful usurpation, and if situated to the north of the Amazon and west of the Atlantic must necessarily belong to Venezuela, as her self-constituted inheritor in those regions. It may reasonably be asked whether Mr. Olney would consent to refer to the arbitration of another Power pretensions raised by the Government of Mexico on such a foundation to large tracts of territory which had long been comprised in the Federation.

The circumstances connected with the marking of what is called the "Schomburgk" line are as follows:—

In 1835 a grant was made by the British Government for the exploration of the interior of the British Colony, and Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Schomburgk, who was employed on this service, on his return to the capital of the Colony in July, 1839, called the attention of the Government to the necessity for an early demarcation of its boundaries. He was in consequence appointed in November, 1840, Special Commissioner for provisionally surveying and delimiting the boundaries of British Guiana, and notice of the appointment was given to the Governments concerned, including that of Venezuela.

The intention of Her Majesty's Government at that time was, when the work of the Commissioner had been completed, to communicate to the other Governments their views as to the true boundary of the British Colony, and then to settle any details to which those Governments might take objection.

It is important to notice that Sir R. Schomburgk did not discover or invent any new boundaries. He took particular care to fortify himself with the history of the case. He had, further, from actual exploration and information obtained from the Indians, and from the evidence of local remains, as at Barima, and local traditions, as on the Cuyuni, fixed the limits of the Dutch possessions, and the zone from which all trace of Spanish influence was absent. On such data he based his reports.

At the very outset of his mission he surveyed Point Barima, where the remains of a Dutch fort still existed, and placed there and at the mouth of the Amacura two boundary posts. At the urgent entreaty of the Venezuelan Government these two posts were after-

wards removed, as stated by Mr. Olney, but this concession was made on the distinct understanding that Great Britain did not thereby in any way abandon her claim to that position.

In submitting the maps of his survey, on which he indicated the line which he would propose to Her Majesty's Government for adoption, Sir R. Schomburgk called attention to the fact that Her Majesty's Government might justly claim the whole basin of the Cuyuni and Yuruari on the ground that the natural boundary of the Colony included any territory through which flow rivers which fall into the Essequibo. "Upon this principle," he wrote, "the boundary-line would run from the sources of the Carumani towards the sources of the Cuyuni proper, and from thence towards its far more northern tributaries, the Rivers Iruary (Yuruari) and Iruang (Yuruan) and thus approach the very heart of Venezuelan Guiana." But, on grounds of complaisance towards Venezuela, he proposed that Great Britain should consent to surrender her claim to a more extended frontier inland in return for the formal recognition of her right to Point Barima. It was on this principle that he drew the boundary-line which has since been called by his name.

Undoubtedly, therefore, Mr. Olney is right when he states that "it seems impossible to treat the Schomburgk line as being the boundary claimed by Great Britain as matter of right, or as anything but a line originating in considerations of convenience and expediency." The Schomburgk line was in fact a great reduction of the boundary claimed by Great Britain as matter of right, and its proposal originated in a desire to come to a speedy and friendly arrangement with a weaker Power with whom Great Britain was at the time, and desired to remain, in cordial relations.

The following are the main facts of the discussions that ensued with the Venezuelan Government:—

While Mr. Schomburgk was engaged on his survey the Venezuelan Minister in London had urged Her Majesty's Government to enter into a Treaty of Limits, but received the answer that, if it should be necessary to enter into such a Treaty, a survey was, at any rate, the necessary preliminary, and that this was proceeding.

As soon as Her Majesty's Government were in possession of Mr. Schomburgk's reports, the Venezuelan Minister was informed that they were in a position to commence negotiations, and in January, 1844, M. Fortique commenced by stating the claim of his Government.

This claim, starting from such obsolete grounds as the original discovery by Spain of the American Continent, and mainly supported by quotations of a more or less vague character from the writings of travellers and geographers, but adducing no substantial evidence of actual conquest or occupation of the territory claimed, demanded the Essequibo itself as the boundary of Venezuela.

A reply was returned by Lord Aberdeen, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, pointing out that it would be impossible to arrive at any agreement if both sides brought forward pretensions of so extreme a character, but stating that the British Government would not imitate M. Fortique in putting forward a claim which it could not be intended seriously to maintain. Lord Aberdeen then proceeded to announce the concessions which, "out of friendly regard to Venezuela," Her Majesty's Government were prepared to make, and proposed a