

Historical Note.

1846.

farms, on which they possess large stocks of cattle and sheep. These parties would also be entitled to be confirmed in the quiet enjoyment of their land; but if the situation of the farms should be of public and political importance, and it should be desired by the Government of the United States, the whole property might be transferred to them at a fair valuation.

"I think that these proposals for an adjustment of the whole question at issue would be honourable and advantageous to both parties. It can scarcely be expected that either of them should now acquiesce in conditions less favourable than had been previously offered; and it may reasonably be presumed that each will at the present moment be prepared to make larger concessions than heretofore for the sake of peace. By this settlement, in addition to the terms proposed to us by Mr. Gallatin in 1826, we should obtain the harbours necessary for our commerce, as well as an increased security for our settlers and their possessions; and in lieu of the detached district, with its single harbour, offered by the British Plenipotentiaries on that occasion, the United States would acquire the whole coast with its various harbours, and all the territory north of the Columbia, as far as the 49th degree of latitude.

"I am not disposed to weigh very minutely the precise amount of compensation or equivalent which may be received by either party in the course of this negotiation, but am content to leave such estimate to be made by a reference to higher considerations than the mere balance of territorial loss or gain. We have sought peace in the spirit of peace, and we have acted in the persuasion that it would be cheaply purchased by both countries at the expense of any sacrifice which should not tarnish the honour or affect the essential interests of either.

"I have now, therefore, only to instruct you to inform the American Secretary of State that you have been authorized and are prepared to conclude a Convention, without delay, founded on the conditions set forth in this despatch.

"I am, &c.
(Signed) "ABERDEEN."

On the same day the following despatch was also addressed to Mr. Pakenham by Lord Aberdeen, inclosing the draft or project of the Treaty:—

(No. 19.)

"Sir,

"May 18, 1846.

"With reference to my despatch No. 18 of this date, I transmit to you herewith the draft or project of a Treaty, such, at least in its essential parts, as Her Majesty's Government are prepared to conclude with the United States for the final settlement of the Oregon question.

"That project may be understood to embody all the conditions which are considered by us as indispensable. The wording of the Articles may be altered as may be deemed expedient, but their substance must be preserved, nor can any essential departure from that substance be admitted on the part of Great Britain.

"The preamble may be considered as open to any alteration which may be proposed, and which you may think expedient. In the project which I have sent you the definition of the territory adopted in the Convention of 1827 has been adhered to. That definition appears to be the most suitable and open to the least objection.

"If the United States' Government should agree to our terms, such or nearly such as they are now proposed, you will do well to hasten as much as possible the conclusion of the Treaty, since the present constitution of the Senate appears to offer a greater chance of acquiescence of that important body in those conditions than might be presented at any future period.

"If, on the other hand, the President should decline to accept those terms, and should make any counter-proposition essentially at variance with their substance, you will express regret that you possess no power to admit any such modification, and, without absolutely rejecting whatever proposal may be submitted on the part of the United States, you will refer the whole matter to your Government.

"I am, &c.
(Signed) "ABERDEEN."

The draft or project was, as regards the description of the boundary now in question, identical with the Treaty as ultimately ratified.

On the same day, also, Mr. MacLane, who had before this time succeeded Mr. Everett as the United States' Minister at London, addressed a letter to Mr. Buchanan as follows:—

"Sir,

"London, May 18, 1846.

"I received, late in the day, on the 15th instant (Friday), your despatch No. 27, dated the 28th of April, 1846, transmitting a notice for the abrogation of the Convention of the 6th of August, 1827, between the United States and Great Britain, in accordance with the terms prescribed in the IInd Article, instructing me to deliver the notice to her Britannic Majesty in person, or to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, as will be most agreeable to Her Majesty's wishes, and at the same time leaving the mode of the delivery of the notice entirely at my own discretion.

"I will of course execute your instructions at the earliest practicable moment. As, however, I could only ascertain Her Majesty's wishes, which I am directed to consult, through the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, sufficient time has not yet been afforded for that purpose; and, in the midst of the preparation of my despatches for the steamer of to-morrow, and of my engagements at the Foreign Office connected with one of the topics of this letter, it has not been in my power to give to a subject of so much importance that deliberation which I am sensible a proper exercise of the discretion confided to me requires. To-morrow, however, I propose to seek an interview with Lord Aberdeen for the purpose, and without loss of time finally to execute your instructions in the mode that may be deemed most effectual. I may add, that although it is altogether probable that the presentation of the notice to Her Majesty in person will not be admissible, and that where a Treaty may be annulled