

Historical Note.
1846.

proposed in favour of the occupants of land between the Columbia and the forty-ninth parallel would be asserted to. I may repeat my conviction, founded upon all the discussions in which I have been engaged here, that in making partition of the Oregon Territory, the protection of those interests which have grown up during the joint occupation is regarded as an indispensable obligation on the score of honour, and as impossible to be neglected. I am quite sure that it was at one time in contemplation to insist upon the free navigation of the Columbia River for British subjects and British commerce generally, and that it has been ultimately confined to the Hudson's Bay Company, after great resistance, and, in the end, most reluctantly. Being so confined, however, it would be only reasonable to limit the enjoyment of the right to a period beyond which the company might have no great object to use the river for the purposes of their trade. But the interests of the British subjects who have settled upon, and are occupying lands north of the forty-ninth, are considered as permanent, and entitled, when passing under a new jurisdiction, to have their possession secured. This, at least, is the view taken of the subject by this Government, and not at all likely, in my opinion, to be changed.

"I may add, too, that I have not the least reason to suppose it would be possible to obtain the extension of the 49th parallel to the sea, so as to give the southern cape of Vancouver's Island to the United States.

"It may not be amiss, before leaving this subject, to call your attention to the position of the present Ministry. The success of their measures respecting the proposed commercial relaxations is quite certain; and the Corn Bill, having now finally passed the House of Commons, may be expected, at no remote day, to pass the Lords by a majority no less decisive. From that time, however, the tie which has hitherto kept the Whig party in support of Sir Robert Peel will be dissolved; and the determination of the Protectionist party, who suppose themselves to have been betrayed, to drive him from office, has lost none of its vigour or power. Indeed, it is confidently reported, in quarters entitled to great respect, that they have even offered to the leader of the Whig party to select his own time, and that, when he is ready, they will be no less prepared to force Ministers to resign.

"I have reason to know that, at present, Ministers themselves believe a change to be inevitable, and are considering only the mode and the time in which it will be most likely to happen. It will not be long, after the success of the measures for the repeal of the Corn Laws, before opportunities enough for the accomplishment of the object will occur. The Factory Bill, regulating the hours of labour, will afford one, and most probably that on which the change will take place. With a knowledge that the change, sooner or later, must be unavoidable, and that the offer has been made to the probable head of a new Ministry to select his own time, may it not be expected that, instead of waiting quietly to allow the Whig leader to select the time of coming in, the present Premier will rather select his own time and mode of going out, and, with his usual sagacity, so regulate his retirement as to leave as few obstacles as possible to his restoration to power? In that case it is not very unlikely he would prefer going out upon the Factory Bill, before taking ground upon more important measures; and, if so, it will not surprise me to witness the coming in of a new Ministry by the end of June, or earlier. With a knowledge of the proposition now to be made, I am not prepared to say that one more objectionable might have been apprehended from a Whig Ministry; unless, indeed, the present Government may be supposed to be prepared to accept qualifications, when proposed by the President, which it was unwilling at first to offer. Upon that supposition, it might be desirable that the modifications should be offered before the coming in of a new Minister, who, finding only the acts of his predecessor, without a knowledge of his intentions, might not be so ready to take the responsibility of assenting to a change.

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"I have, &c.
(Signed) "LOUIS MACLANE."

The following was Mr. Pakenham's report after receiving Lord Aberdeen's despatches of 18th May:—

(No. 68.)

"My Lord,

"Washington, June 7, 1846.

"Her Majesty's Government will necessarily be anxious to hear as soon as possible the result of my first communications with the United States' Government, in pursuance with your Lordship's instructions of the 18th of May, on the subject of Oregon.

† The last three paragraphs of this letter are omitted here. They have no relation to the question before the Arbitrator, and they have not (as far as Her Majesty's Government know) been published by the United States' Government.