

Historical Note,
1845.

Before this despatch reached Mr. Pakenham, Mr. Buchanan had been appointed Mr. Calhoun's successor in the office of Secretary of State. Mr. Pakenham informed Mr. Buchanan of the instructions which he had received, again to press on the Government of the United States the expediency of arbitration. But Mr. Buchanan said on one occasion that he did not despair of effecting a settlement by negotiation, by adopting (to use his own words) the principle of giving and taking; and on another occasion that settlement by arbitration did not meet with the concurrence of the President and his Cabinet, that they all entertained objections to that course of proceeding, and that they preferred negotiation, hoping, as they did hope, that by negotiation a satisfactory result would at last be attained.

On 16th July, Mr. Buchanan delivered to Mr. Pakenham a paper (marked J. B.) containing his proposal for settlement. It began thus:—

"The Undersigned, &c., now proceeds to resume the negotiation on the Oregon question at the point where it was left by his predecessor.

"The British Plenipotentiary, in his note to Mr. Calhoun of the 12th September last, requests that as the American Plenipotentiary declines the proposal offered on the part of Great Britain, he will have the goodness to state what arrangement he is, on the part of the United States, prepared to propose for an equitable adjustment of the question, and more especially, that he will have the goodness to define the nature and extent of the claims which the United States may have to other portions of the territory to which allusion is made in the concluding part of his statement, as it is obvious that no arrangement can be made with respect to a part of the territory in dispute, while a claim is reserved to any portion of the remainder."

"The Secretary of State will now proceed (reversing the order in which these requests have been made), in the first place, to present the title of the United States to the territory north of the valley of the Columbia; and will then propose on the part of the President the terms upon which, in his opinion, this long-pending controversy may be justly and equitably terminated between the parties."

The paper (after a lengthened argument) ended thus:—

"Such being the opinion of the President in regard to the title of the United States, he would not have consented to yield any portion of the Oregon Territory, had he not found himself embarrassed, if not committed, by the acts of his predecessors. They had uniformly proceeded upon the principle of compromise in all their negotiations. Indeed, the first question presented to him, after entering upon the duties of his office was, whether he should abruptly terminate the negotiation which had been commenced and conducted between Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Pakenham on the principle avowed in the first Protocol, not of contending for the whole territory in dispute, but of treating of the respective claims of the Parties, with the view to establish a permanent boundary between the two countries westward of the Rocky Mountains."

"In view of these facts, the President has determined to pursue the present negotiation to its conclusion, upon the principle of compromise in which it commenced, and to make one more effort to adjust this long-pending controversy. In this determination he trusts that the British Government will recognize his sincere and anxious desire to cultivate the most friendly relations between the two countries, and to manifest to the world that he is actuated by a spirit of moderation. He has, therefore, instructed the Undersigned again to propose to the Government of Great Britain that the Oregon Territory shall be divided between the two countries by the 49th parallel of north latitude from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean; offering, at the same time, to make free to Great Britain any port or ports on Vancouver's Island, south of this parallel, which the British Government may desire. He trusts that Great Britain may receive this proposition in the friendly spirit in which it was dictated, and that it may prove the stable foundation of lasting peace and harmony between the two countries. The line proposed will carry out the principle of continuity equally for both parties, by extending the limits both of ancient Louisiana and Canada to the Pacific, along the same parallel of latitude which divides them east of the Rocky Mountains, and it will secure to each a sufficient number of commodious harbours on the north-west coast of America.

"The Undersigned, &c."

Thereupon Mr. Pakenham presented a paper, dated 29th July, beginning thus:—

"Notwithstanding &c., feels obliged to place had the honour to receive United States, terminating Oregon question."

Mr. Pakenham

"After this exposure value and importance surprised to hear that the American Plenipotentiary

"This proposal, in Negotiation of 1826, and

"On that occasion parties. On this point reply. While with respect to the facts which led to the possession of the

"The Undersigned further proposal for the and with the reasonable D, which the Undersigned of the present negotiation

"The Undersigned

Mr. Pakenham Government. Mr. P. which, after further this paper were as follows

"Upon the whole, able to bestow upon the States, embracing the whole to this entire region, and

"Notwithstanding compromise and conceal obedience to his instructions the territory in dispute Britain may port or port might desire. The British Columbia River was no free ports on the south

"Such a proposition President, had this been

"Upon his accession the spirit and upon the demand the whole territory of the respective permanent boundary between

"Placed in this occasions, offered to display Pacific Ocean, he felt in opinion as once more to

"Not only respect peace and harmony but question presents the great and beneficial commerce