

REPORTS, TREATIES, &c.

REPORT ON THE LOCATION OF THE BRITISH-ALASKAN BOUNDARY UNDER THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION OF 1825.

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No. 1.

The following remarks on the location of the British Alaskan boundary, in respect of their order, follow the sequence indicated in the Convention by which the boundary is defined; and in respect of their matter, are suggested by interpretations of the terms of the treaty opposed to the intention of its framers.

The order adopted, following the northerly course of the line, is:—

The water boundary:

- 1st, from the southernmost point of Prince of Wales Island to Portland Channel.
- 2nd, the course of the line through Portland Channel.

The land boundary:

- 1st, from Portland Channel to the parallel of 56° North latitude.
- 2nd, from 56° North latitude to contact with the meridian of 141° West longitude.
- 3rd, from contact with the meridian of 141° West longitude to the Arctic Ocean.

The matter aims at a demonstration of the intentions of the framers of the Convention, founded upon records of the negotiations, maps, charts, and the wording of the treaty itself; and brings into contrast with the conclusions thus arrived at, views inconsistent with them, and based, it is believed, on imperfect information.

The interpretation of the Convention, supported by the arguments now submitted, will be found to be an unstrained and natural version of the terms of the treaty, consistent in every respect with the inferences to be drawn from the records of the negotiations and not inconsistent in any single point with the geographical features referred to.

On the other hand, it is shown that the alternative interpretations abound with untenable assumptions, improbabilities, inconsistencies and contradictions. These support the view that the treaty description of the boundary—in every detail except as regards the meridian line to the Arctic,—is inaccurate, incomplete, or impracticable.

The interpretation maintained in this report to be that intended by Russia and Great Britain, is precise and definite; and, consistently with the attitude of the contracting parties at the date of their Convention, indicates a line easier to be recognized and marked than any other which could, even now, be described in words.

The British Alaskan boundary is defined by the Convention of 28-16 February, 1825, between Great Britain and Russia.

A general sketch of the origin, and of the course of the negotiations which terminated in the Convention, is contained in a Confidential Memorandum drawn up for the use of the Foreign Office in 1835, and reprinted in 1868.

The Right Hon. Mr. George Canning was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs during the negotiations. His Excellency Sir Charles Bagot was the British Plenipotentiary who commenced the negotiations at St. Petersburg. They were concluded by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Stratford Canning. Count de Nesselrode, Imperial Secretary of State, and Monsieur de Poletica, Imperial Councillor of State, were the Russian Plenipotentiaries, and Count de Lieven was the Russian Ambassador throughout.

Of the Articles of the Convention, Nos. 3 to 6, inclusive, alone relate to the subject of this report.

Sir Stratford Canning—who, as British Plenipotentiary, concluded the Convention—wrote of the terms in which the agreement was expressed as follows:—"The Articles of the Convention depend for their force entirely on the general acceptance of the terms in which they are expressed."