

Historical Note.

1846.

navigating the Columbia River, which, by the second Article of the Convention, is secured to the Hudson's Bay Company and to British subjects trading with the same, was understood by the Senate to be limited to the duration of the licence under which the Company now carry on their operations in the country west of the Rocky Mountains; to which observation you very properly replied that the Article proposed by Her Majesty's Government spoke for itself.

"Nothing in fact can well be clearer than the language of that Article. In drawing it up I had not the smallest intention of restricting the British right to navigate the Columbia in the manner supposed, nor can I comprehend how such a supposition could have been entertained by the Senate, for I have reason to know that Mr. MacLane fully and faithfully reported to his Government all that passed between himself and me respecting the navigation of the Columbia. In every conversation that we held on the subject of the proposed Treaty, I not only declared to Mr. MacLane that we must insist on the permanent right being secured to us to navigate the Columbia, but I even shewed him the project of the Treaty, and, on his expressing an apprehension that the provision contained in the second Article would not be accepted unless the right of navigation were limited to a term of years, I positively declined to accede to this suggestion.

"I think it right to state these facts, in order to obviate any misapprehension which might possibly hereafter be raised on the construction of the second Article of the Oregon Treaty.

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

"P.S. July 1.—Since writing this despatch, I have held a conversation with Mr. MacLane, in which he has freely and fully confirmed all that I have stated above with reference to his own understanding of the intent of the second Article of the Oregon Treaty.

(Signed) "A."

Two subsequent despatches of Mr. Pakenham to Viscount Palmerston (who had succeeded Lord Aberdeen as Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) are as follows:—

(No. 100.)

"My Lord,

"Washington, July 29, 1846.

"Owing to one of those irregularities which are not unfrequently witnessed in this country, the President's Message to the Senate, submitting, for the advice and opinion of that body, the proposition lately made by Her Majesty's Government for the settlement of the Oregon question, and various other papers connected with that transaction, have found their way into the public papers, notwithstanding that the injunction of secrecy has not yet been removed.

"Amongst other papers thus published, a collection of which I have the honour to inclose,* will be found a despatch from Mr. MacLane to his Government, reporting what had passed between the Earl of Aberdeen and himself with relation to the proposition which Lord Aberdeen was about to make to this Government, for the partition of the Oregon Territory.

"It would appear from this despatch that Mr. MacLane had no expectation that the terms proposed by Her Majesty's Government would be accepted here; that he discouraged any such expectation on the part of Her Majesty's Government, considering as 'erroneous' an impression, which he found had been produced in England, 'that the Senate would accept the proposition now offered, at least without any material modification, and that the President would not take the responsibility of rejecting it without consulting the Senate;' and, finally, that he gave it as his opinion to the American Government that the offer then made was not submitted as an 'ultimatum,' nor intended as such; in short, that some modification of its terms would, without much difficulty, be acceded to by England.

"It is most providential, my Lord, that Mr. MacLane's suggestions did not succeed either in England in deterring Lord Aberdeen from making his offer, according to his original intention, or here, in inducing the American Government to stand out for some modification of that offer when it was made; for, in either case, all would have been spoiled.

"The President's Message, transmitting the proposition of Her Majesty's Government for the consideration of the Senate is very guarded,—upon the whole, rather deprecating than encouraging the acceptance of the offer; but in this course the President ran no risk and incurred no responsibility whatever, for every one in Washington, at all acquainted with the disposition of the Senate, knew that such a proposition would be accepted by that body, by a large majority.

"I have, &c.
(Signed) "R. PAKENHAM."

(No. 106.)

"My Lord,

"Washington, August 13, 1846.

"The injunction of secrecy having been removed by a Resolution of the Senate, I have the honour herewith to transmit three numbers of the 'Union' official newspaper, containing, in an authentic form ('Union' of 7th August), the papers relative to the conclusion of the Oregon negotiation which I had the honour to transmit in an unauthorized form with my despatch No. 100, and also ('Unions' of 8th and 10th August) two Messages from the President to the Senate, the first communicating for approval the Treaty signed here on the 15th of June, the second communicating documents not before communicated to the Senate relative to the Oregon Territory in answer to a Resolution of the Senate of the 17th June last.

"Amongst the papers thus made public, the one which I should most particularly recommend to your Lordship's attention, is a despatch from Mr. Buchanan to Mr. MacLane dated the 12th of July, 1845

* There was inclosed in the despatch a copy of the Baltimore Sun newspaper of 23rd July, 1846.