

Historical Note.

1845, 1846.

"Placed in this position, and considering that Presidents Monroe and Adams had, on former occasions, offered to divide the territory in dispute by extending the 49th parallel of latitude to the Pacific Ocean, he felt it to be his duty not abruptly to arrest the negotiation, but so far to yield his own opinion as once more to make a similar offer.

"Not only respect for the conduct of his predecessors, but a sincere and anxious desire to promote peace and harmony between the two countries influenced him to pursue this course. The Oregon question presents the only cloud which intercepts the prospect of a long career of mutual friendship and beneficial commerce between the two nations, and this cloud he desired to remove.

"These are the reasons which actuated the President to offer a proposition so liberal to Great Britain.

"And how has the proposition been received by the British Plenipotentiary? It has been rejected without even a reference to his own Government. Nay, more, the British Plenipotentiary, to use his own language, 'trusts that the American Plenipotentiary will be prepared to offer some further proposal for the settlement of the Oregon question more consistent with fairness and equity, and with the reasonable expectations of the British Government.'

"Under such circumstances the Undersigned is instructed by the President to say, that he owes it to his own country, and a just appreciation of her title to the Oregon Territory, to withdraw this proposition to the British Government which had been made under his direction, and it is hereby accordingly withdrawn.

"In taking this necessary step, the President still cherishes the hope that this long-pending controversy may yet be finally adjusted in such a manner as not to disturb the peace or interrupt the harmony now so happily subsisting between the two countries.

"The Undersigned, &c."

1846.

On 9th February, 1846, the House of Representatives, and on 17th April, the Senate, of the United States passed a joint resolution, authorizing the President to give the requisite year's notice to put an end to the Convention of 1827. The notice was dated the 28th of April; it reached the United States' Minister at London on the 15th of May, and was by him sent to Lord Aberdeen on the 20th.

Meantime, on the 18th of May, Lord Aberdeen addressed the following instructions to Mr. Pakenham:—

(No. 18.)

"Sir,

"May 18, 1846.

"In the critical state of the negotiation for the settlement of the Oregon Boundary, it has become my duty carefully to review the whole course of our proceedings, and to consider what further steps in the present juncture it may be proper to take with the view of removing existing difficulties, and of promoting, if possible, an amicable termination of the question.

"I willingly abstain from renewing a discussion, the matter for which is already exhausted, and from repeating arguments with which you have long been familiar; but I think it is not too much to assert that, to any observer looking impartially at the different stages of this negotiation, it will appear that the conduct of Great Britain has throughout been moderate, conciliatory, and just. Can it truly be said that the Government of the United States have advanced to meet us in the path of mutual concession?

"The terms of settlement proposed by the British Plenipotentiaries to Mr. Gallatin in the year 1826 were much more advantageous to the United States than those which had been offered to Mr. Rush in the previous negotiation of 1824; and on your own departure from this country you were authorized still further to augment these advantageous conditions. The United States, on the other hand, have not only recently made, through Mr. Buchanan, a proposal less favourable to Great Britain than that formerly offered by Mr. Gallatin, but, when this was rejected by you, they withdrew it altogether.

"In truth, the pretensions of the United States have gradually increased during the progress of these negotiations. Acting in manifest violation of the spirit of the Conventions of 1818 and 1827, it is now formally and officially asserted that the right of the United States to the whole territory in dispute is 'clear and unquestionable.' The principle, however, of these Conventions plainly recognized the claims of both parties, as indeed was fully admitted by the American Plenipotentiary himself; and it was only on failure of the attempt to effect an equitable partition of the territory that the joint occupancy was established.

"Such pretensions, whatever may have been their effect in the United States, cannot in any manner invalidate or diminish our own just claims. With respect to these we have never varied. We have always maintained that we possess the right to establish ourselves in any part of the country not previously occupied; but we have fully acknowledged in the United States the existence of the same right; and we have also at all times been ready, by an equitable compromise and partition, to put an end to a species of occupation which is but too likely to lead to disputes and collision.

"Despairing of arriving at any agreement by means of direct negotiation, we have been urgent in pressing the reference of the whole matter to an arbitration. We have been willing to submit, either the abstract title of the two parties, or the equitable division of the territory, to the judgment of any Tribunal which could justly inspire confidence, and which might prove agreeable to the United States. All this, however, has been peremptorily refused; the progress of the negotiation has been entirely arrested, and, in fact, it now remains without any admitted or intelligible basis whatever.

"The United States have recently expressed their determination to put an end to the Convention which, for the last thirty years, has regulated the mode of occupation of Oregon by the subjects of both countries; but, as this power was reserved to each party by the terms of the Convention, the decision