

CONFIDENTIAL.

Correspondence respecting the Boundary between the British Possessions in North America and the Territory of Alaska.

No 1.

*The Marquis of Salisbury to Sir L. West.*

(No. 8 A.)

Sir,

*Foreign Office, January 12, 1886.*

THE United States' Minister called on me to-day and stated that he wished to speak to me with respect to the boundary of the State of Alaska.

He read to me the Treaty between the United States and Russia of the 30th March, 1867, under which the boundary was established which was now the frontier-line between the possessions of Great Britain and of the United States. It started, he said, from the head of the Portland Channel, followed a certain range of mountains, which was indicated upon Vancouver's Map, up to a certain meridian of longitude, which it followed to the north to the Frozen Sea. But, unfortunately, Vancouver's Map was wrong, and there was no such range of mountains.

Another indication was given by the Treaty that the boundary was at all points to be 10 marine leagues from the coast, but the indentations of the coast were so numerous that such a boundary was impossible.

Mr. Phelps proceeded to inform me that the Government of the United States were anxious that now, while the Territory was still of little importance and the land of little value, the boundary should be more satisfactorily drawn, and they wished to know whether Her Majesty's Government would consent to the appointment of a Commission for that purpose.

I said it was a matter upon which the Government of Canada must obviously be consulted, but that the proposition seemed to me, at first sight, very reasonable.

Mr. Phelps pressed for an early reply, because, he said, an Appropriation Bill must pass through Congress before it separated, and also that the labours of the Commission must be undertaken in the early summer.

I assured him that Her Majesty's Government would use all the dispatch possible; but I should be glad, I said, if he would inform me what the latest day was upon which their answer could be received.

For convenience of reference, a copy of the Treaty above referred to is forwarded herewith, and in connection with this subject I have to call your attention to the correspondence which took place in 1878 between Great Britain and the United States respecting the boundary between Canada and Alaska, and was published in the State Papers, vol. lxix, pp. 589-599, and also to the correspondence between 1872 and 1877, concluding with Sir E. Thornton's despatch No. 388 of the 17th December, 1877, which will be found in the archives of Her Majesty's Legation at Washington.

I am, &c.

(Signed) SALISBURY.

No. 2.

*Sir P. Currie to Sir R. Herbert.*

(Confidential.)

Sir,

*Foreign Office, January 16, 1886.*

I AM directed by the Marquis of Salisbury to transmit to you a copy of a despatch which has been addressed to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington,\* recording the sub-

\* No. 1.