

Historical Note.
1846.

"If, therefore, the 49th parallel of latitude be adopted as the basis of an agreement, it will be incumbent upon us to obviate these objections, which, I trust in great measure, may be successfully accomplished.

"You will accordingly propose to the American Secretary of State that the line of demarcation should be continued along the 49th parallel from the Rocky Mountains to the sea coast; and from thence in a southerly direction through the centre of King George's Sound and the Straits of Juan de Fuca, to the Pacific Ocean, leaving the whole of Vancouver's Island, with its ports and harbours, in the possession of Great Britain.

"You will also stipulate that from the point at which the 49th parallel of latitude shall intersect the principal northern branch of the Columbia River, called Macgillivray's River in the maps, the navigation shall be free and open to the Hudson's Bay Company, and to the subjects of Great Britain trading with the said Company, until its junction with the Columbia, and from thence to the mouth of the river, with free access into and through the same; British subjects, with their goods, merchandize, and produce, to be dealt with as citizens of the United States; it being always understood, however, that nothing shall interfere to prevent the American Government from making any regulations respecting the navigation of the river, not inconsistent with the terms of the proposed Convention.

"In the future appropriation of land, the possessory rights of all British settlers will of course be respected. The Hudson's Bay Company should be confirmed in the occupation of Fort Vancouver, and the adjacent lands of which the Company have been in possession for many years. They would also retain such other stations as were necessary for the convenient transit of their commerce along the line of the Columbia; but all other stations, or trading posts, connected with their present exclusive rights of hunting and of traffic with the natives, within the territory south of the 49th degree of latitude, would in all probability forthwith be abandoned.

"The Puget Sound Agricultural Company have expended large sums of money in the cultivation and improvement of land on the north of the Columbia River. They occupy two extensive farms, on which they possess large stocks of cattle and sheep. These parties would also be entitled to be confirmed in the quiet enjoyment of their land; but if the situation of the farms should be of public and political importance, and it should be desired by the Government of the United States, the whole property might be transferred to them at a fair valuation.

"I think that these proposals for an adjustment of the whole question at issue would be honourable and advantageous to both parties. It can scarcely be expected that either of them should now acquiesce in conditions less favourable than had been previously offered; and it may reasonably be presumed that each will at the present moment be prepared to make larger concessions than heretofore for the sake of peace. By this settlement, in addition to the terms proposed to us by Mr. Gallatin in 1826, we should obtain the harbours necessary for our commerce, as well as an increased security for our settlers and their possessions; and in lieu of the detached district, with its single harbour, offered by the British Plenipotentiaries on that occasion, the United States would acquire the whole coast with its various harbours, and all the territory north of the Columbia, as far as the 49th degree of latitude.

"I am not disposed to weigh very minutely the precise amount of compensation or equivalent which may be received by either party in the course of this negotiation, but am content to leave such estimate to be made by a reference to higher considerations than the mere balance of commercial loss or gain. We have sought peace in the spirit of peace, and we have acted in the persuasion that it would be cheaply purchased by both countries at the expense of any sacrifice which should not tarnish the honour or affect the essential interests of either.

"I have now, therefore, only to instruct you to inform the American Secretary of State that you have been authorized and are prepared to conclude a Convention, without delay, founded on the conditions set forth in this despatch.

"I am, &c.

(Signed) "ABERDEEN."

On the same day the following despatch was also addressed to Mr. Pakenham by Lord Aberdeen, inclosing the draft or project of the Treaty:—

(No. 19.)

"Sir,

May 18, 1846.

"With reference to my despatch No. 18 of this date, I transmit to you herewith the draft or project of a Treaty, such, at least in its essential parts, as Her Majesty's Government are prepared to conclude with the United States for the final settlement of the Oregon question.

"That project may be understood to embody all the conditions which are considered by us as