

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 cannot reasonably be questioned. Neither is there anything necessarily unfriendly in the act itself; but, as both parties would thus be replaced in their former position, each retaining all its claims and asserting all its rights, which each would freely exercise, it is obvious that, in proportion as the country became settled, local differences would arise which must speedily lead to the most serious consequences.

"In this state of affairs it is matter of some anxiety and doubt what step, with a view to an amicable settlement of the question, may be most consistent with the dignity and the interests of Great Britain. After all the efforts we have made, and the course we have pursued, we might perhaps most naturally pause, and leave to the United States the office of renewing a negotiation which had been interrupted under such circumstances. But Her Majesty's Government would feel themselves to be criminal if they permitted considerations of diplomatic punctilio or etiquette to prevent them from making every proper exertion to avert the danger of calamities which they are unwilling to contemplate, but the magnitude of which scarcely admits of exaggeration.

"I think that an opportunity has now arisen when we may reasonably lay aside those formal considerations by which, under ordinary circumstances, we might have been precluded from making any fresh overture or demonstration on this subject.

"In complying with the recommendation of the President to terminate the Convention under which the Oregon Territory is at present occupied, the Legislature of the United States have accompanied their decision by resolutions of a pacific and conciliatory character; and have clearly signified to the Executive Government their desire that this step should not lead to the rupture of amicable negotiations for the settlement of the question. I can scarcely doubt that the Government of the United States will be duly influenced by the desire thus unequivocally expressed by Congress; and it is in this hope and belief that I now proceed to instruct you to make another, and, I trust, final proposition to the American Secretary of State, for the solution of these long-existing difficulties.

"I avail myself of this opportunity the more readily, because, although Her Majesty's Government have strongly pressed a reference of the whole subject to arbitration, they are by no means sensible to the inconvenience attending such a mode of proceeding, and would willingly avoid it if possible. Nothing, indeed, but the apprehension that an amicable settlement by means of direct negotiation was entirely hopeless, would have led them so decidedly to adopt this course; and they are still of opinion that, with such a prospect of failure before them, it would be their duty to adhere as earnestly as ever to this recommendation. Nor can they believe that any Christian Government could ultimately persevere in rejecting a proposal of this nature, whatever might be their objections to its adoption, and in the face of the civilized world deliberately recur to the dreadful alternative of war.

"The boundary having been fixed by the Convention of 1818, between the possessions of Great Britain and the United States, and the line of demarcation having been carried along the 49th parallel of latitude for a distance of 800 or 1,000 miles through an unfrequented and unknown country, from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, it appeared to the Government of the United States that it was a natural and reasonable suggestion that this line should be continued along the same parallel for about half that distance, and through a country as little known or frequented, from the Rocky Mountains to the sea. And, indeed, with reference to such a country, the extension of any line of boundary already fixed might equally have been suggested, whether it had been carried along the 49th or any other parallel of latitude.

"On the other hand, however, it may justly be observed that any division of territory in which both parties possess equal rights ought to proceed on a principle of mutual convenience, rather than on the adherence to an imaginary geographical line; and in this respect it must be confessed that the boundary thus proposed would be manifestly defective. It would exclude us from every commodious and accessible harbour on the coast; it would deprive us of our long-established means of water-communication with the interior for the prosecution of our trade; and it would interfere with the possessions of British colonists resident in a district in which it is believed that scarcely an American citizen, as a settler, has ever set his foot.

Historical Note.

1846.