

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

LORD ASHBURTON AND MR. WEBSTER,

RESPECTING

BOUNDARIES.

No. 1.

Lord Ashburton to Mr. Webster.

Sir,

Washington, June 13, 1842.

ON considering the most effectual mode of proceeding to arrive at an amicable and satisfactory termination of the long-continued controversy respecting the North-Eastern Boundary, between the British Colony of New Brunswick and the State of Maine, I believe that I may confidently conclude from what passed in the preliminary conferences, which I have had the honour of holding with you, that we concur in the opinion that no advantage would be gained by reverting to the interminable discussion on the general grounds on which each party considers their claims respectively to rest. In the course of the many years that this discussion has lasted every argument on either side is apparently exhausted, and that without any approach to an agreement. The present attempt, therefore, of a settlement must rest for its success, not on the renewal of a controversy, but on proceeding on the presumption that all means of reciprocal conviction having failed, as also the experiment of calling in the aid of a friendly arbiter and umpire, there remains only the alternative of a compromise for the solution of this otherwise apparently insurmountable difficulty, unless, indeed, it were determined to try a second arbitration attended with its delay, trouble, and expense, in defiance of past experience as to the probability of any more satisfactory result.

It is, undoubtedly, true that should our present attempt unfortunately fail, there might remain no other alternative but a second reference, yet, when I consider all the difficulty and uncertainty attending it, I trust that all parties interested will come to the conclusion that the very intricate details connected with the case must be better known and judged by our two Governments than any diligence can make them to be by any third party, and that a sincere candid disposition to give reciprocally fair weight to the arguments on either side is likely to lead us to a more satisfactory settlement, than an engagement to abide by the uncertain award of a less competent tribunal. The very friendly and cordial reception given by you, Sir, as well as by all the authorities of your Government to the assurance that my mission here by my Sovereign has been determined by an unfeigned desire to settle this and all other questions of difference between us, on principles of conciliation and justice, forbid me to anticipate the possibility of the failure of our endeavours applied with sincerity to this purpose.

With this view of the case, therefore, although not unprepared to enter into the general argument, I abstain from so doing from the conviction that an amicable settlement of this vexed question, so generally desired, will be thereby best promoted. But, at the same time, some