

Historical Note.

1844.

more circumscribed than their claims clearly entitle them to. It proposes to limit their northern boundary by a line drawn from the Rocky Mountains along the 49th parallel of latitude to the north-easternmost branch of the Columbia River, and thence down the middle of that river to the sea, giving to Great Britain all the country north, and to the United States all south, of that line, except a detached territory extending on the Pacific and the Straits of Fuca, from Bullfinch's Harbour to Hood's Canal. To which it is proposed in addition to make free to the United States any port which the United States' Government might desire, either on the mainland or on Vancouver's Island south of latitude 49°.

"By turning to the map hereto annexed, and on which the proposed boundary is marked in pencil, it will be seen that it assigns to Great Britain almost the entire region on its north side drained by the Columbia River, and lying on its northern bank. It is not deemed necessary to state at large the claims of the United States to this territory, and the grounds on which they rest, in order to make good the assertion that it restricts the possessions of the United States within narrower bounds than they are clearly entitled to. It will be sufficient for this purpose to show that they are fairly entitled to the entire region drained by the river; and to the establishment of this point, the Undersigned proposes accordingly to limit his remarks at present."

The paper proceeded with arguments, and ended thus:—

"Such are our claims to that portion of the territory, and the grounds on which they rest. The Undersigned believes them to be well founded, and trusts that the British Plenipotentiary will see in them sufficient reasons why he should decline his proposal.

"The Undersigned Plenipotentiary abstains, for the present, from presenting the claims which the United States may have to other portions of the territory.

"The Undersigned, &c."

In answer to this statement Mr. Pakenham delivered a paper (marked D, and dated September 12) of which it is sufficient for the present purpose to state the concluding passages:—

"In fine, the present state of the question between the two Governments appears to be this:—Great Britain possesses and exercises, in common with the United States, a right of joint occupancy in the Oregon Territory, of which right she can be divested, with respect to any part of that territory, only by an equitable partition of the whole between the two Powers.

"It is, for obvious reasons, desirable that such a partition should take place as soon as possible, and the difficulty appears to be in devising a line of demarcation which shall leave to each party that precise portion of the territory best suited to its interest and convenience.

"The British Government entertained the hope that by the proposal lately submitted for the consideration of the American Government, that object would have been accomplished. According to the arrangements therein contemplated, the Northern Boundary of the United States west of the Rocky Mountains would, for a considerable distance, be carried along the same parallel of latitude which forms their Northern boundary on the eastern side of those mountains, thus uniting the present Eastern Boundary of the Oregon Territory with the Western Boundary of the United States, from the 49th parallel downwards. From the point where the 49° of latitude intersects the north-eastern branch of the Columbia River, called in that part of its course McGillivray's River, the proposed line of boundary would be along the middle of that river till it joins the Columbia, then along the middle of the Columbia to the ocean, the navigation of the river remaining perpetually free to both parties.

"In addition Great Britain offers a separate territory on the Pacific, possessing an excellent harbour, with a further understanding that any port or ports, whether on Vancouver's Island or on the Continent, south of the 49th parallel, to which the United States might desire to have access, shall be made free ports.

"It is believed that by this arrangement, ample justice would be done to the claims of the United States, on whatever ground advanced, with relation to the Oregon Territory. As regards extent of territory they would obtain, acre for acre, nearly half of the entire territory to be divided. As relates to the navigation of the principal river, they would enjoy a perfect equality of right with Great Britain; and, with respect to harbours, it will be seen that Great Britain shows every disposition to consult their convenience in that particular.

"On the other hand, were Great Britain to abandon the line of the Columbia as a frontier, and to surrender her right to the navigation of that river, the prejudice occasioned to her by such an arrangement would, beyond all proportion, exceed the advantage accruing to the United States from the possession of a few more square miles of territory. It must be obvious to every impartial investigator of the subject that, in adhering to the line of the Columbia, Great Britain is not influenced by motives of ambition with reference to extent of territory, but by considerations of utility, not to say necessity, which cannot be lost sight of, and for which allowance ought to be made in an arrangement professing to be based on considerations of mutual convenience and advantage.

"The Undersigned believes that he has now noticed all the arguments advanced by the American Plenipotentiary in order to show that the United States are fairly entitled to the entire region drained by the Columbia River. He sincerely regrets that their views on this subject should differ in so many essential respects.

"It remains for him to request that, as the American Plenipotentiary declines the proposal offered on the part of Great Britain, he will have the goodness to state what arrangement he is on the part of the United States prepared to propose for an equitable adjustment of the question; and more especially, that he will have the goodness to define the nature and extent of the claims which the United States may have to other portions of the territory, to which allusion is made in the concluding part of his statement, as it is obvious that no arrangement can be made with respect to part of the territory in dispute, while a claim is reserved to any portion of the remainder.

"The Undersigned, &c."