

DOCUMENTS

The original of the following letter was recently secured by Thomas W. Prosch of Seattle. It has been published in part in L. G. Tyler's "Letters and Times of the Tylers," Volume II., pages 48-49. That work was issued in limited numbers and is not very accessible in the Pacific Northwest. The letter is printed here in full as the text of an interesting document that has found its way into one of the local collections and especially because it reflects some of the diplomatic interest that prevailed just before the Treaty of 1846 was completed:

Letter From John Tyler to His Son

Sherwood Forest, Dec. 23, 1845..

My Son:

Letty passed up the James on Saturday and I committed to her care for you a box containing a dozen bottles of 27 year old wine to be drunk on Mr. Cooper's visits to Bristol. Ask his kind remembrance of me whenever he takes a glass of it, and give him the assurance of my high respect and regard for him always. I had flattered myself that you would have received it in time for Christmas, but Letty so long delayed her return that all hope of it finally vanished. I fear that the ice will still further detain her, as it has been exceptionally cold for some days—so much so as to freeze the steamboat up at Richmond and thus I fear to deny me the happiness of seeing Mr. Waller and his family during the hollidays. They were to have reached us today.

You have now seen the whole of the diplomatic correspondence relative to Oregon, and can better appreciate the unguarded expressions in the message as to my offers of compromise. None was in fact ever made, yet when it was believed that the negotiations were to be conducted in London Mr. Everett was authorized to feel the pulses of the B. Ministry as to the 49 degree. I have no recollection of his having so far advanced with the negotiation as to have submitted formally any proposition—and yet the language of the message very clearly embraces me in its terms. Buchanan's last letter to Pakenham is more definite and precise. It is an able vindication of the American claim and leaves G. Britain without any strong pretense to title. He might have more strongly retorted the inconsistency of her claim under the Nootka Sound convention and McKenzies exploration of Fraysers River. The letter however is very able—and yet it is altogether too late to say that the question is not one of compromise. By the

very terms of the Treaty of Ghent by which Astoria was restored to us, it is made a subject of negotiation. I think it would be a high stroke of policy to interest G. B. in our negotiation with Mexico so as to lead her to concede California and thus to bring about a tripartite Treaty, acceding to G. B. the line she offers and our taking California G. B. to pay so much towards the purchase. It would require great skill to bring this about. I ask now no other basis for negotiation, with Mr. Polk holding the opinions he does, and I fear a war for the whole would lose us the whole. These are speculations for yourself but time will take care of itself as it always has done, and my trust is ever one in an overruling Providence.

I have heard nothing of or from John since he left me. My hope is that he intends to surprize me by obtaining his license. He requires nothing but doing his duty to insure success. Neither Julia or myself have of late been well. I suffer from catarrh, but am not confined to the house. My dependence is now on the plough, and there is wisdom in the old lines—"He who by the plough would thrive: Must either hold the reins or drive."

Give my love to Pris and Tish.

Yr. Father
J. TYLER.

How do you come on in your profession?

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