

1888
FEARED COMPLICATIONS 387 CANADA.
By Commercial Cable to the Herald.

WASHINGTON, May 22.—Instructions to the United States vessels cruising in Behring Sea require positively the capture or dismantling of all vessel, American or foreign, caught sealing in any part of Behring Sea. In 1888 the same instructions were given, but the Government then added secret instructions to the commanders of ships in Behring Sea to make no seizures, but to board and warn sealing vessels that their business was unlawful. No such secret countermand of open instructions has been issued so far. The British Minister proposed a *modus vivendi* pending the negotiations by which a close season would be established, and the British cruisers would join the American in preventing sealing during the close season. This offer has been rejected by Secretary Blaine.

It is understood the British Minister is making urgent representations that the seizure of British sealers in open Behring Sea must make grave trouble.

OTTAWA, May 22.—Regret is expressed by officials here that the *modus vivendi* tendered the Government of the United States several weeks ago has not met with formal acceptance. That proposal was believed to cover every reasonable wish and interest of the American Government in respect of a temporary provisional regulation of the seal fishery. It embraced not only a close season during the inward and outward movement of seals, but an effective isolation of the islands containing rookeries during the breeding season, whereby the slaughter of breeding seals in the waters adjacent to the islands might be prevented. It contained also, as I am informed, provisions for co-operative action by the Governments of the United States and Canada for an efficient enforcement of a *modus vivendi*. Serious trouble is likely to arise. The sealing fleet have gone to Behring Sea, upon the understanding that the United States have no jurisdiction in those waters beyond the conventional marine league from the shore, and upon the further understanding that no arrangements have been concluded for restraining sealing operations beyond the conventional limit. Any dismantling of British vessels outside the three-mile limit, or the seizure of their log book or bills of lading of seal skins will be regarded by the Canadian authorities and people as a virtual act of war against a friendly Power, and will, I am assured, change the whole character of the situation, which, up to the last day or two, was considered to wear an encouraging and promising aspect.

The Imperial Government has been kept fully advised of the position and prospect of affairs, and no doubt is entertained here of its purpose to perform its full duty in the protection and vindication of the rights of Canadian subjects. Still, the Canadian authorities profess confidence that the Government of the United States will do all that circumstances require, and that no unjustifiable molestation of vessels will occur.

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