

runs south from the point where the 49th parallel really touches the gulf, it passes to the eastward of the islands, and near the American shore. This may appear a small matter, but when it is remembered that the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca will at no distant time be the Gibraltar of the Pacific, and that whoever holds the rock opposite Esquimalt harbour holds the key to the straits, and can dictate terms to all passers up the channel, it will easily be seen that it is almost impossible to over-estimate the importance of this apparently trifling difficulty.

The only possible object for which the Americans can wish to possess the island in question is for the purpose of erecting a fortification there, and overawing our trade. If the Commissioners, who are now on the spot and engaged in surveying the line, do not decide this point in our favour, we had better make a present of Vancouver's Island to the Americans, and ask them to give us what they please for British Columbia, which will be just nothing, for they can take it for nothing, or rather it will naturally fall into their hands, and it will be worth nothing to us.

But if Vancouver's Island goes, adieu to our trade supremacy, our easy access to China, India, Australia, our railroads connecting the Atlantic and Pacific, the gigantic future which otherwise awaits British North America. Suez will be lost some day. It is a broken reed to lean upon. And then, if the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca are ours, we shall substitute easily an invulnerable approach to the East for the one that has been lost. If that too has gone, we shall have nothing to do but to sit down and wait for Macaulay's New Zealander to come and look at our ruins, and meanwhile to curse the folly and incapacity of the treaty-maker.

About nine years ago the government of the island was handed over to the Hudson's Bay Company, on the condition that they should form a settlement there. It was, how-

ever, no part of the policy of the Company to form such a settlement as that contemplated by the charter. Indeed their acts have sufficiently shown that it was quite the reverse. They monopolized all the best land, and so far from inviting colonization, they religiously kept a secret which would have saved them all trouble of inviting emigrants, for the emigrants would come of themselves. They knew of the existence of gold for years, but they never alluded to its existence. Mr. Labouchere, in the most unaccountable manner, assisted to keep the secret. It appears by the Report of the Hudson's Bay Committee of last year, that Mr. James Cooper in his examination stated that gold had been discovered near Fort Colville.* The British public heard this intelligence for the first time, and we have endeavoured to describe the excitement which it has caused. But Mr. Labouchere was at that time in possession of a dispatch dated 16th April, 1856, and received 30th June, 1856, announcing the discovery of gold, which he did not submit to the Committee, although it had been a year in his possession. In January, 1857, he had received dispatches confirming the news from the same official. How, therefore, these two dispatches, which would have thrown so much light on a discovery deeply interesting to the public, and so rigidly concealed by the Hudson's Bay Company, escaped Mr. Labouchere's recollection, it is impossible to say. A still more startling announcement is, that the Hudson's Bay officials have known for 'several years' of the existence of gold over hundreds of miles of country. This announcement was made in the *Times* of August 27th, in the following words. The writer is the *Times* correspondent, and dates from San Francisco, July 15th:—

I may add that I have the distinct authority of Governor Douglas, and of one of the chief factors who has long resided in the interior, for stating publicly that for several years back they

* There are two Forts Colville; the old fort is within the American territories, but the new one, near which the gold was first found, is to the north of the line. It is not marked in most maps, but it is on the south shore of Flat Bow Lake.