

REPORT

RELATIVE TO THE

ALASKAN BOUNDARY QUESTION,

SUBMITTED BY

ALEXANDER BEGG, C. C.

VICTORIA, B. C., 15th August, 1896.

To the Hon. J. H. Turner,
Minister of Finance, &c., &c.

SIR,—In compliance with your letter of the 1st instant, I have the honour to submit the following report relative to my investigations and researches in connection with the Alaskan boundary question.

Attached to the report are several "annexures" in the form of an Appendix, in which will be found many references, statements, arguments and explanations bearing on the subject, giving the views expressed by those who favour the claims of the United States *via* Portland Canal, &c., as well as the views and conclusions of those who adhere to the language of the Treaty *via* Clarence Strait (called Portland Channel in the Treaty of 1825).

As far as the boundary line along the coast of the continent north of latitude 56° is concerned I have only referred to it incidentally, as the surveying parties belonging to the Boundary Commission representing the United States and Great Britain have been engaged in ascertaining where the correct boundary line in that region should be placed.

For the better understanding of why the Treaty of 1825 was framed between Great Britain and Russia I have supplied annexure No. 28. (See the Appendix). It will throw much light on affairs as they then existed on the north-west coast of America. From that document will be learned the extravagant claims of Russia and the urgent necessity for Great Britain to take steps to protect their maritime right.

It is not necessary here to refer particularly to the transfer of Russian America to the United States in 1867, however it may be well to mention the course pursued by Secretary Seward on obtaining possession of the Territory of Alaska. The Russian flag having been lowered at Sitka and the United States "Stars and Stripes" hoisted instead, in token of possession, Mr. Seward at once proceeded to develop his plans. Doubtless he was anxious to annex to the United States that important tract of country, with its islands, lying between Portland Canal and Clarence Strait, and contiguous to the south-eastern portion of Prince of Wales Island. He expected, owing to the similarity of the name Portland Canal to that of Portland Channel mentioned in the Treaty, and under cover of the confusion and mystification which he hoped to produce thereby, to accomplish his purpose.

British Columbia at that time had not quite recovered from the gold mining excitement which began in 1858 and continued well down in the 60s, the attention of her public men