

SAN JUAN AND SECESSION

de Haro separated Vancouver's island from the continent, and was the line Mr. McLane had assented to, etc. The commissioners had reported to their respective governments as far as they had gone, leaving their superiors to resolve the boundary problem.

Another matter (when General Harney visited the Sound, in 1859), worthy of our serious consideration was the unfortunate state of feeling existing throughout the quasi United States. We were no longer united. The "irrepressible conflict" had arrayed the North against the South, and bitter strife in congress induced several states to prepare for a violent separation. We were, at this time, in a much more perilous condition than we were in President Polk's term, when about to fight England for 54 degrees 40 minutes, and Mexico for Texas. Now, the South, with Texas, was about ready to fight the North, if not allowed to secede, and a war with England, then, would, without doubt, have greatly helped to secure their independence. General Harney's conduct is inexplicable, unless it was "a design and an object with it, the Southern secession from the beginning." The history of Washington territory confutes the assumptions of the general against Governor Douglass and the Hudson Bay company. The evidence, although not connected with the boundary question, is, I think, pertinent to a more thorough understanding of our relations with our neighbors across the line, who stand accused by the general, because it will throw side lights on their actions, which are always more reliable than mere accusations.

It is a part of our history that Governor Stevens, of Washington territory, and General Joel Palmer, of Oregon, were appointed commissioners to negotiate with Indians for lands appropriated to white settlements by acts of congress. These commissioners inaugurated a grand council, at which the Yakima Indians (fourteen tribes), the Nez Perce and the confederate band located on or near the Walla Walla (three tribes), all lying on the east side of the Cascade mountains, in Oregon and Washington, were to meet them at their council ground on the Walla Walla river. This assembly made it possible for Kamiaken, a very intelligent chief of the Yakima Indians, to combine all who were unwilling to part with the homes of their forefathers into a secret association, pledged to exterminate the hated white settlers. The persistent efforts of the commissioners were gaining chief by chief, with the possibility that the unwilling Indians would lose their homes. In this extremity it was proposed to massacre the commissioners and small guard of soldiers, but Kamiaken advised the disaffected chiefs to sign the treaty—the whites had not conformed to their treaty promises to the Indians on the Willamette; it was only to gain time—and it would be a great advantage, while the whites considered the Indians friendly, to have time to procure powder and lead, and, when winter set in, the Columbia would be frozen over and steamers tied up; at the same time the snow on the Cascade mountains would make the crossing impracticable; then, at a signal, their warriors would fall, simultaneously, upon the unsuspecting whites, which could not fail to destroy them, having no escape, and no assistance could reach them in time.

It was my fortune to sound the tocsin of war, before the winter set in, and suddenly Oregon and Washington found a bloody war on their hands. The local Indians on Puget Sound, instigated by the Yakima-Klickitats, made a raid on the unprotected settlers, massacring the pioneers, their wives and children, and setting fire to their dwelling places.

Although Governor Stevens had applied, early in his administration, to the