

Here was the first official false step. This first startling impress on the sand became thenceforth hard and inefaceable as granite.

The discussion was thenceforth nursed assiduously, and kept warm carefully, up to the year 1856, when a joint Commission was appointed to settle the water boundary. The American Commissioner was Alexander Campbell; the British, Captain Prevost, R. N. The Commissioners met, reciprocated, and altercated. Prevost moored, fore and aft, in the Rosario Channel, prepared for action. Campbell was equal to any emergency in the Haro Channel. At this safe distance, they exchanged broadsides of minutes and memoranda. At length Prevost, weary of feints and dodges, broke ground, and put in a suggestion of compromise. He proposed the Douglas Channel, and advised his opponent to accept it at once, as he would never have another chance. Campbell answered that he did not want another chance, and would never accept it if he had.

Nothing of course remained to be done but to return home and report progress. Acting on the diplomatic maxim, *festina lente*, nothing more was done for three years, when Lord John Russell took the matter up, and in his memorable despatch of the 24th August, 1859, capped the climax by formally proposing the Douglas Channel as a *compromise*.

At this time the splendid surveys of the British Admiralty were so far advanced that all the great hydrographical facts must have been known in London. If not known, the despatch should have been delayed until they were. These facts, interpreted by the Treaty of 1846, would have justified his Lordship in brushing aside all previous misinterpretations and complications, in assuming new ground, and in demanding a centre line, or the Douglas Channel, as a *right*. Of course, the position then taken was conclusive. Nothing remained to be done but to arbitrate between the two channels, the Haro and the Rosario.

But while Lord John Russell was penning his despatch in Downing Street, a great deal more had been done, abruptly, among the distant isles of the Pacific, than the mind of diplomacy could conceive, or its temper stand. The people of Oregon Territory coveted the island of St. Juan, and General Harney, an officer of the United States

Army, on the most frivolous pretext, and without warning, invaded the island, drums beating, colours flying, with all the pomp and panoply of war. Harney was a kleptomaniac of the school of the first Napoleon. He occupied first and explained afterwards, and his explanation aggravated the outrage. This was in July, 1859. The British Admiral at Esquimalt Harbour, ten miles distant, sent over ships of war, seamen and marines. For a time, the aspect of affairs was threatening in the extreme; but the tact and judgment of the British Governor, Douglas, averted a collision. The intelligence of this hostile irruption reached New York on the 7th September, 1859. Lord Lyons was then our ambassador at Washington. His Lordship addressed, at once, to the American Cabinet, a note calm, grave, and resolute. The answer came promptly, and was enforced with energy. General Scott, commanding the American army—again the peacemaker of the time—was despatched at once to the Oregon Territory, to supersede, if he could not control, his fantastic subordinate. Harney was ordered to report himself at Washington, at a safe distance from the scene of his mischievous exploit. The Americans ought to have withdrawn from an illegal occupation with becoming acknowledgment, but they did not, for reasons best known to diplomacy. Scott and Douglas, discreet men both, arranged for the joint occupation of the island by British and American troops during the continued pendency of negotiations. On the 20th March, 1860, a detachment of British marines was landed on the island, and this joint occupation endured harmoniously, without let or hindrance, for a period of thirteen years.

This long delay was caused chiefly by the American civil war. While the contest raged, the British Ministry, with gentlemanly delicacy, refrained from embarrassing a Government already sore beset. This was acknowledged, with scrimp courtesy indeed, by Mr. Seward, in 1867, but the Hon. Reverdy Johnson was despatched to England with peaceful protestations and full powers.

During this long interval, the British Government had, no doubt, become slowly but widely awake to the important bearings of the questions at issue, and we now find a strong stand made for the re-opening and