

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GEN. HARNEY AND GOV. DOUGLAS.

GEN. HARNEY'S LETTER TO GOV. DOUGLAS.

HEAD-QUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF OREGON,
Fort Vancouver, W. T., Aug. 6th, 1859. }

His Excellency, JAMES DOUGLAS, C. B., Governor of Vancouver's Island, &c., and Vice Admiral of the same.

SIR: I have the honor to inform you of the receipt of an official copy of a protest made by you to the occupation of San Juan Island, in Puget Sound, by a company of United States troops under my command.

This aforesaid copy was furnished by Capt. Hornby, of Her Majesty's ship Tribune, to the United States officer in command at San Juan Island, Capt. George Pickett, of the 9th Infantry of the American army, together with a communication threatening a joint occupation of the San Juan Island, by the forces of Her Majesty's ships Tribune, Plumper, and Satellite, now in the harbor of that Island by your orders.

As the military commander of the department of Oregon, assigned to that command by the orders of the President of the United States, I have the honor to state for your information, that by such authority invested in me, I placed a military command upon the Island of San Juan to protect the American citizens residing on that island from the insults and indignities which the British authorities of Vancouver Island, and the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company have recently offered them, by sending a British ship of war from Vancouver Island, to convey the chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company to San Juan, for the purpose of seizing an American citizen and forcibly transporting him to Vancouver Island to be tried by British laws.

I have reported this attempted outrage to my government, and they will doubtless seek the proper redress from the British government. In the meantime, I have the honor to inform your Excellency, I shall not permit a repetition of the insult, and shall retain a command on San Juan Island to protect its citizens in the name of the United States, until I receive further orders from my government.

I have the honor to be very resp'y, your ob'dt serv't,
W. S. HARNEY,
Brig-Gen. U. S. Army, Commanding.

REPLY OF GOV. DOUGLAS TO GEN. HARNEY.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, VICTORIA, }
Vancouver's Island, 13th Aug. 1859. }

Brigadier-General Wm. S. HARNEY, Commanding the Troops in the Department of Oregon—

SIR: On the evening of the 10th inst., I had the honor of receiving your Dispatch dated Fort Vancouver, August 6th, 1859.

In reply thereto, I must thank you for the frank and straightforward manner in which you communicate to me your reasons for occupying the Island of San Juan in the Haro Archipelago with a portion of the military forces of the United States under your command.

I am glad to find that you have done so under your general instructions from the President of the United States as Military Commander of the Department of Oregon, and not by direct authority emanating from the Cabinet at Washington.

You state that the reasons which induced you to take that course are the "insults and indignities which the British authorities of Vancouver's Island, and the Establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company have recently offered to 'American citizens residing on the Island of San Juan,' by sending a British ship of war from Vancouver's Island to convey the Chief Factor of the Hudson's

Bay Company to San Juan, for the purpose of seizing an American citizen, and forcibly transporting him to Vancouver's Island to be tried by British Laws."

I will explain for your information that the Agents of the Hudson's Bay Co. hold no official position in Vancouver's Island, nor exercise any official power or authority, and are as entirely distinct from the officers of the Executive Government as are any of the other inhabitants of Vancouver's Island.

To the reported outrage on an American citizen, I beg to give the most unhesitating and unqualified denial. None of Her Majesty's ships have ever been sent to convey the Chief Factor or any officer of the Hudson's Bay Company to San Juan for the purpose of seizing an American citizen, nor has any attempt ever been made to seize any American citizen and to transport him forcibly to Vancouver's Island for trial as represented by you.

Up to a very recent period but one American citizen has been resident on San Juan. About the commencement of the present year a few American citizens began to "squat" upon the Island, and upon one occasion a complaint was made to me by a British subject of some wrong committed against his property by an American citizen, but no attention was paid to that complaint, out of consideration and respect to the friendly government to which the alleged offender belonged, and whose citizens, I think it cannot be denied, have always been treated with marked attention by all the British authorities in these parts. With reference to San Juan in particular, I have always acted with the utmost caution to prevent, so far as might lie in my power, any ill feelings arising from collisions between British subjects and American citizens, and have in that respect cordially endeavored to carry out the views of the United States Government as expressed in a dispatch from Mr. Marcy, dated 17th July, 1855, to Her Majesty's Minister at Washington, a copy of which I herewith enclose for your information, as I presume that the document cannot be in your possession.

Following the dignified policy recommended by that dispatch, I should in any well grounded case of complaint against an American citizen have referred the matter to the Federal authorities in Washington Territory, well assured that if wrong had been committed reparation would have followed.

I deeply regret that you did not communicate with me for information upon the subject of the alleged grievance, you would then have learned how unfounded was the complaint, and the grave action you have adopted might have been avoided. I also deeply regret that you did not mention the matter verbally to me when I had the pleasure of seeing you at Victoria last month, for a few words from me would, I am sure, have removed from your mind any erroneous impressions, and you would have ascertained personally, from me, the extent of my power with the officers of the United States Government in any measures which might be mutually beneficial to the citizens of the two countries.

Having given you a distinct and emphatic denial to the circumstances which you allege induced you to occupy the Island of San Juan with United States troops; having shown you that the reasons you assign do not exist, and having endeavored to assure you of my readiness on all occasions to act for the protection of American citizens, and for the promotion of their welfare, I must call upon you, sir, if not as a matter of right, at least as a matter of justice and of humanity, to withdraw the troops now quartered upon the Island of San Juan; for those troops are not required for the protection of American citizens against British authorities, and the continuance of these troops upon an Island, the sovereignty of which is in dispute, not only is a marked discourtesy to a friendly Government, but complicates to an undue degree the settlement in an amicable manner of the question of sovereignty, and is also calculated to provoke a collision between the military forces of two friendly Nations, in a distant part of the world.

I have the honor to be, sir, your Most Ob't Serv't,
JAMES DOUGLAS.