

bites of a cherry? If we hold the harbours, what is the good of the remainder of the territory to you?" and on this showing they got that too. Two years afterwards, in 1848, by the conquest of California, they became possessed of the finest harbour on the whole Pacific coast, the bay of San Francisco. Little wonder at the alacrity with which the American Senate ratified the Treaty of 1846, standing at that moment face to face with the Mexican war, though England scorned to make use of her "opportunity." And justly may it be added, in the words of the *Quarterly Review*: "Never was the cause of a nation so strong as ours in this dispute; never, owing to unscrupulous assertions on one side, and to the courteous desire to waive irritating arguments on the other, was the case of a nation less decidedly put forth."

Such was the chief purport of the next Treaty—that of 1846, or the Oregon Treaty. The line 49 degrees, which by the Ashburton Treaty had been left indefinitely in the Rocky Mountains, was extended from the Rocky Mountains to the middle of the channel of the Gulf of Georgia, and, dividing that channel and the Straits of Fuca, to the Pacific Ocean. The American Government, with rare magnanimity, waived their claim to the extension of the line, 49 degrees, across Vancouver Island, gave up graciously the Southern Cape, and allowed Great Britain to remain in undisturbed possession of the whole of *her own* dependency. In after discussions, the American Commissioner, Campbell, a man of shrewd wit and sharp practice, dwelt loftily and long on the disinterestedness of America in this matter of "swapping armour,"—the gold of Glaucus against the brass of Diomed,—and about 270,750 square miles of the El Dorado of the Northern Pacific was compensated for—by a touch of Vancouver cement, laid on with a *camel* hair paint brush.

This Treaty of 1846, or the Oregon Treaty, has been also called the "Boundary Treaty," and has assumed, under that name, a significance and a portent not contemplated by its projectors. It gave rise to the St. Juan question, now so inauspiciously closed. This question never should have been a question at all. The British right under the Treaty to one-half of the channel between the continent and Vancouver Island was unquestionable, and, in this view,

the Island of St. Juan was indisputably hers. How came it, then, that a question of right was allowed to take the shape of a question of compromise?

This controversy has become history, and it behoves Canadians to mark, learn, and digest it. There can be no doubt that, from the first, the British authorities insisted, perversely, that the Rosario Channel was the right channel of the Treaty. The Americans retaliated, and, with equal pertinacity, insisted on the Haro Channel. Both sides were imperfectly informed, and each took its information from interested parties. It became manifest from the first, also, that it was in the interest of the Americans to ignore the real meaning of the Treaty, and to encourage the delusion of the British, and they succeeded, by the play of their opponents, not only in making their game, but in winning it.

Both parties, at remote distances, no doubt had recourse to the best source of information within reach. The British Government turned naturally to the Hudson Bay Company. We find the name of Sir John Pelly, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, prominent in the early stages of these transactions. The Company had been the first explorers; they were the first occupants of the country; they knew all that was then known about it. In their intercourse with Vancouver Island from the mouth of the Fraser River they had always navigated the Rosario Channel; they knew that it was the best, and they brought themselves to believe that it was the right channel; and this belief was strengthened by the knowledge that its maintenance would secure to them, under their lease from the Crown, the 400 square miles of island, islet, rock, and water, which makes up the Georgian Archipelago. They counselled as they believed, judging with the judgment of shrewd and intelligent traders; but the questions evoked by the Treaty of 1846 demanded the foresight and forethought of statesmen.

Viscount Milton has produced a book, printed in 1869, entitled "A History of the St. Juan Water Boundary Question, as affecting the Division of Territory between Great Britain and the United States," interesting in details, and valuable as presenting, in a compendious form, a large amount of official information which, even with his opportunities, was obtained with difficulty.