

about one-tenth of a square mile. It had up to that period been regarded as too insignificant for ownership by any Power. This little islet is known as Necker Island. It is situated four hundred miles westward from Honolulu, and was not then included in the Hawaiian group. Other islands had been claimed by Hawaii as appanages, but Necker Island was not included. Indeed, until the following year, when it was visited by Hawaiians for the first time and taken possession of by the Hawaiian Government, it was entirely open to the British Government to take possession of it.

Every inquiry, at Honolulu, during the Minister's visit in 1893, having satisfied him and the resident British Commissioner that Necker Island was unclaimed by Hawaii, or by any Power, a memorandum was sent to the British Government pointing out its singularly commanding geographical position for telegraphic purposes, and as possibly it was of vital importance to secure it as a landing-station for the Pacific cable, it was strongly recommended that it be immediately taken possession of in the name of Her Majesty.

The circumstances respecting the availability of Necker Island were, without loss of time, made known by the Minister of Trade and Commerce to the Governments of Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland. Each of these Governments was convinced of its great utility, and in October, 1893, sent instructions to its respective High Commissioner or Agent-General in London to urge upon the Home Government the advisability of immediate action being taken in securing possession of this unclaimed islet for the purpose of making it a landing-station for the Pacific cable. The Australian Governments, as well as the Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce, having read the despatches above mentioned, recently transmitted by the Colonial Office, were impressed with the alleged impracticability of the Fanning Island route, and looked upon the possession of Necker Island as vital. It was accordingly arranged that I should proceed from Australia to London, with the special object of leaving nothing undone to secure its possession.

I reached London before January, 1894. It could not be learned that any steps had been taken toward the acquisition of the island. Application was made to the Colonial Secretary for an interview on the subject. After some delay a day was named—the 12th January. The Agents-General for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and New Zealand, with the High Commissioner and other gentlemen representing Canada, were present, as authorised by the respective Governments. Each one present supported the representations that no time should be lost in securing the Islet of Necker as a British possession. A memorandum, which had been drawn up by me, fully describing the facts respecting it, was read to the Colonial Secretary and left in his hands. A copy of the memorandum follows:—

*Note in reference to Necker Island and the Vital Importance of securing this Island as a Mid-Pacific Telegraph-station.*

1. The question of a Pacific cable to connect the sister colonies of Australasia with Canada has long been before the public. It received special attention at the Colonial Conference of 1887. In the despatch of the late Mr. Stanhope, 26th November, 1886, summoning the Conference, the Colonial Minister dwelt on postal and telegraph inter-communication as essential to the consolidation of the Empire. He referred to it as "a great question," and reproduced the words in the Queen's speech at the prorogation of Parliament, expressing the conviction of Her Majesty "that there is on all sides a growing desire to draw closer in every practicable way the bonds which unite the various portions of the Empire."

2. The proceedings of the Conference show that great prominence was given to the question by the Chairman in his opening address and by delegates in discussions, and that at the close of the Conference a resolution was unanimously passed declaring that "the connection of Canada with Australia by direct submarine telegraph across the Pacific is a project of high importance to the Empire."

3. Since the Colonial Conference many efforts have been made to induce the Home Government to take some step which would practically advance the Pacific cable. Recently it has been felt in Canada and Australia that the time has arrived when the telegraphic connection should be formed. The Postal and Telegraph Conference of the Australian Colonies met in March last, and passed a resolution to that effect.

4. The Governments of Queensland and New South Wales, impatient of delay and wearied waiting for assistance from the Home Government, accepted the offer of a French company to lay a cable to New Caledonia, which its projectors intended should form the first link of eight hundred miles in a cable across the Pacific to the coast of North America.

5. The Canadian Government, in September last, sent the Hon. Mackenzie Bowell, Minister of Trade and Commerce, as a delegate to Australia for the purpose of exchanging views upon matters of trade and telegraph connection between the colonies and the Dominion. The undersigned accompanied Mr. Bowell, and, after carefully considering all the facts and circumstances, prepared a memorandum, dated 11th October [No. 1, Appendix G., F.-2, 1894], which Mr. Bowell brought to the notice of the several Governments for their information and consideration.

6. The Governor-General of Canada forwarded, on the 9th January, 1893, an approved minute of Privy Council, submitting to the Home Government correspondence advocating the appointment of a special Commission to inquire into the most feasible means of completing the telegraph system of the Empire. The Colonial Secretary (Lord Ripon) in his reply of the 22nd March, stated, among other things, that Her Majesty's Government "take a great interest in this matter, and would welcome any proposal which would afford a practical solution of a question which is of considerable importance to the Empire from a strategical point of view."

7. It is respectfully submitted that the memorandum of the 11th October submitted by Mr. Bowell to the Australian Governments formulates a solution of the question as it now stands. This solution was favourably received in all the colonies, and commented on in the Press as a clear and practical exposition of a scheme for establishing an essentially British cable across the Pacific.

8. The Governments of Queensland and New South Wales, although parties to the laying of the New Caledonia cable by a French company [see Nos. 38 *et seq.* F.-5, 1893], have signified their preference for a British cable, and are prepared to join hands with the Dominion and their sister colonies in establishing a telegraph to Canada independent of foreign connections.

9. One of the first essentials to the establishment of a British trans-Pacific telegraph is the possession, at suitable intervals, of mid-ocean stations. In the South Pacific, Great Britain has taken possession of a sufficient number of islands for mid-stations, but in the North Pacific there are singularly few islands available.

10. The Hawaiian group of islands are the nearest to Canada, and until recently it was believed that on one of them a landing-place could be secured on neutral soil. These islands are not, however, within British influence, and their political future is a matter of doubt and uncertainty.

11. Outside the Hawaiian group, the nearest and only islands in any way suitable for the purpose of a mid-ocean station are Necker and Fanning Islands. The former occupies a position eight hundred miles nearer Vancouver than the latter. Fanning Island is, however, the only one of the two which up to the present date has been formally made a British possession.

12. In a communication from the Postmaster-General to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated the 5th July last year, it is stated that the Engineer-in-Chief of the Post Office Department takes an unfavourable view