

of the laying of a cable from Vancouver to Fanning Island, owing to the distance. Such a length of cable has never yet been laid; and, in his opinion, "it may well be doubted . . . whether, with existing appliances, the Vancouver-Fanning section could be either laid or maintained." If this opinion has weight, it adds enormously to the importance of Necker Island, to which the same objection does not apply.

13. In crossing the Pacific in September last, the undersigned made careful inquiry regarding Necker Island. It is a small, rocky, treeless spot in the middle of the ocean, less than three-quarters of a mile long and 1,000 ft. broad, with an extreme elevation of 280 ft. Further particulars are given in a memorandum, dated Honolulu, 23rd September, in the possession of the Government. Necker Island is perfectly valueless for any ordinary purpose; its geographical position only gives it importance as a desirable point for landing a submarine cable between Canada and Australia.

14. Inquiries at Honolulu farther elicited the information that Necker Island is unoccupied, and unclaimed by any maritime power; that the late King, with the ambitious view of forming an oceanic empire, issued some years back a Proclamation claiming as appanages of the Hawaiian Kingdom all the islands of the Pacific. This proclamation has, however, never been recognised by other nations, and France, Germany and Great Britain have since it was issued taken possession of such of the Pacific islands as they each deemed expedient. It was further learned at Honolulu that Necker Island is entirely beyond the legitimate sphere of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and that the claim set up by the late King is considered untenable.

15. Everything goes to show that the establishment of a telegraph across the Pacific cannot much longer be postponed. The mere fact that two of the colonies grasped at the prospect of being telegraphically connected with North America, even by a foreign company, gives some indication of the demand for a Pacific cable in Australia. A sufficient proof of its necessity is furnished in the stranding of one of the first steamers on the Canada-Australia line, and the long suspense in learning the cause of the disaster, with the accompanying anxiety as to the fate of passengers and crew. The strongest possible feeling exists in Canada and Australia that the Pacific cable should be in every respect British, and the memorandum submitted by Mr. Bowell to the Australian Governments clearly points out that the colonies and Canada can establish a British cable without drawing on the Imperial Exchequer. It is necessary, however, to have mid-ocean stations at suitable points; and the one point on the whole route not taken possession of in the name of Her Majesty is Necker Island. The possession of Necker Island is indispensable, if the views of the highest electrical authority in the service of the Imperial Government are well founded. While the undersigned is unable to indorse the views of this authority, he is bound to respect the source from which they come; and obviously great importance is attached to them by the Home Government, as they were forwarded for the information of the colonies by the Colonial Minister in September last. If the opinions of this Imperial officer be sound, there can be but one conclusion, and that is: no British cable can be laid across the Pacific without the possession of Necker Island, and the colonies and Canada may be driven to the alternative of landing the telegraph on foreign soil (as in the case of the New Caledonian cable), thus abandoning the strategical advantages of a trans-Pacific telegraph essentially British, and the assurance it would give of strengthening Britannic unity in the outer Empire. Necker Island can only be secured by the action of the Home authorities, and the way to its possession is as simple and as clear as in the case of other islands in the Pacific on which the British flag has been raised within the past few years.

The undersigned renews the recommendation strongly expressed in the memorandum forwarded from Honolulu by the Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce and by the resident British Minister on the 23rd of September last [not printed: but see Appendix G., F.—2, 1894; F.—5, F.—5A, and F.—5B, 1894].

London, 12th January, 1894.

SANDFORD FLEMING.

The Colonial Secretary (the Marquis of Ripon) expressed the deep interest he felt in the matter. He assured those present that he would immediately confer with the Foreign Minister, and impress upon him the urgent necessity of prompt action.

Month after month passed, during which the Imperial authorities were frequently reminded of the vital importance of securing the island for a mid-Pacific telegraph-station. At last it became known in Honolulu, toward the end of May, that Necker Island possessed a certain value for trans-Pacific cable purposes, and the Hawaiian Government immediately despatched an expedition to take possession of it. A landing was effected on 27th May, 1894, and the Hawaiian flag raised. Until that date there is no record of any person whatever having landed on the treeless and inhospitable rock in the middle of the ocean.

The loss of Necker Island as a possible mid-ocean stepping-stone for a telegraph between Canada and Australia was felt by some persons, and doubtless hoped by the Eastern Extension Company, to mark the demise of the project of a Pacific cable. Efforts were, however, immediately made by the Canadian Government—(1) to obtain a suitable island from the Hawaiian Republic, (2) to ascertain if it would be practicable to lay and work a cable to the least distant British island from Canada (Fanning Island). The first effort proved unsuccessful; the second, however, established that it was still practicable to connect Canada and Australasia telegraphically, but at an increased cost.

The tenders received by the Government of Canada, in 1894, for establishing a cable, including its maintenance for three years, showed that a cable by Necker Island would cost £1,068,000, a cable by Fanning Island would cost £1,517,000, the difference being £449,000 in favour of the Necker Island route. Owing to the increased cost of copper and guttapercha, it will now probably cost 10 to 12 per cent. more than in 1894 to manufacture cables. As a consequence, the Pacific cable (by Fanning Island) will require fully £500,000 more capital to establish than if Necker Island had been placed under the British flag.

Obviously it has not been the fault of Canada or the Australasian Colonies that Necker Island is not a British possession. Had the earnest entreaties been regarded it could easily have been secured by the Home Government in 1893 or in the early part of 1894. The Home authorities, however, adopted a different policy, and, in consequence, it will cost half a million pounds additional capital to lay the cable. Moreover, when laid, owing to an increased length of 800 miles given to the longest section, the commercial value of the whole line will be considerably lessened.

The Eastern Extension Company's desire being to frustrate the laying of the Pacific cable, naturally welcome delay, and do everything in their power to prevent steps being taken to further the project. That the wishes of the company have to a remarkable extent been gratified cannot be denied, for there has been great and seemingly needless delay from year to year.

As an outcome of the Ottawa Colonial Conference of 1894 it was proposed to have a Commission appointed for the purpose of inquiring into all matters relating to the project, and to report on the best means of carrying it out. After much correspondence the proposal was assented to by all the Governments concerned, and their representatives assembled in committee in London in June, 1896. They completed their labours by the end of that year, and on the 5th January, 1897,