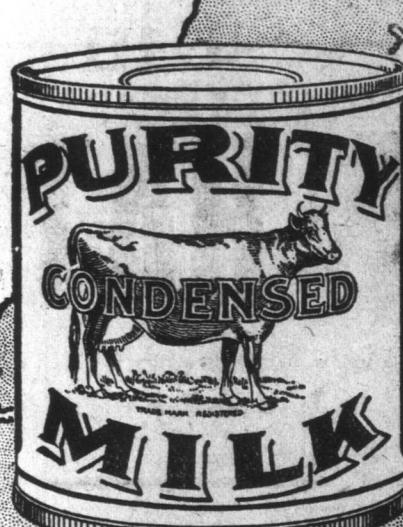


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An Ancient Problem

STORY OF NEWFOUNDLAND'S CLAIM ON THE MAINLAND OF LABRADOR.

(By W. L. EDMONDS).

The dispute between Canada and Newfoundland regarding the demarcation of the Quebec-Labrador boundary which is shortly to be submitted to the Privy Council for settlement among the oldest of the Dominion's international problems, its origin being traced to the terms and conditions under which New France was ceded to Great Britain over one hundred and sixty years ago.

Until the conquest of the whole of the disputed territory was under the authority of the French regime, and was retained under the jurisdiction of Canada after the troops of France had withdrawn in 1760. When, however, New France was formally conceded to Great Britain in 1763 the British Government not only linked up Labrador as far west as the St. John River with Newfoundland, but threw in the island of Anticosti as well. This

meant the detaching from the Canadian mainland of a block of territory exceeding in area that possessed by Germany prior to the Great War. Naturally, when in later years petitioning the British Government for the restoration of certain privileges, the French-Canadians did not fail to plead for the return of Labrador. With this request, under the terms of the Quebec Act of 1774, the British Government complied. And once again Canadian territory extended eastward along the whole of the north shore of the St. Lawrence to the Atlantic seaboard. Thirty-five years later, how-

ever, Labrador was again made a part of Newfoundland, the conceding proclamation once more placing Canada's eastern boundary line at the St. John River, which enters the St. Lawrence just opposite the western end of Anticosti.

In 1825 the territory was subjected to still another division, this time to the advantage of Canada, the proclamation authorizing it declaring that "so much of said coast (Labrador, as lies east of a line to be drawn due north and south from the harbor or Bay of Anse Sablon, inclusive, as far as the fifty-second degree of north latitude, with the island of Anticosti and all other islands adjacent to such part as last aforesaid of the coast Labrador, shall be, and the same are hereby, reannexed to and made a part of the said Province of Lower Canada."

There is no doubt as to the point at which this boundary line either begins or ends. Sablon Bay, its southern terminus, lies at the western end of the Strait of Belle Isle, Cape Chidley, its extremity in the north, guards the entrance to Hudson Strait. Between these two points is a distance of approximately six hundred miles. But although a century has elapsed since the intervening boundary line was defined on paper, its geographical course has never been authoritatively determined.

That the definition of the boundary line should have been so long left definitely undefined is not surprising when the general opinion obtaining in regard to Labrador is taken into consideration. Some conception of the value of its coastal fisheries was obtained when Cabot visited its shores, over four and a quarter centuries ago, but until of recent years the country itself was to the world in general a sort of "no man's land" not worth anyone's serious consideration. Corte-Real, the Portuguese adventurer who visited Labrador three years after Cabot had discovered it, evidently thought the few natives it possessed about its only tangible value, he having kidnapped sixty of them to serve as slaves in his home land. Cartier was certainly not enamored with Labrador when he visited it in 1534, as is evident from his declaration that "it might, as well as not, be taken from the country assigned by God to Cain." The Hudson's Bay Company did some exploration of the interior in 1840, but, according to its general practice, kept "under its hat" information it had gathered regarding the country's resources.

To this day, in spite of the centuries which have elapsed since its discovery, Labrador is a country without a town, and while several thousand Newfoundlanders annually cross the Strait of Belle Isle to fish in its waters the permanent population is under four thousand.

Naturally, with the ways and means that these modern days have made available for securing information, the interior of Labrador is not the unknown land it was a generation ago. And while much has yet to be ascertained, the knowledge that has so far been acquired has enhanced in more respects than one the country's potential value. Whether Labrador has any future in respect to mineral production has yet to be determined. But that it is rich in forest resources there can be no doubt. This has been demonstrated by surveys made by aeroplanes, while the magnificent scenic effects of its bays and fjords has led tourists to see.

to its being termed the "Norway of America"—hence a land for summer The present undertaking of the Canadian and Newfoundland governments to have the boundary line marking the limitation of the territories of Quebec and Labrador finally determined had its origin in an enterprise to develop the forest resources of the disputed territory. Newfoundland, who has exercised jurisdiction along the Labrador Coast for three centuries, in 1903 issued a license for one Dickie to erect and operate a lumber mill at the mouth of Hamilton Inlet. This particular point being held by the Canadian Government to be within the confines of the Dominion, the Federal Department of Customs undertook to collect duties on the supplies Dickie had brought in. As a direct result of the dispute that his claim created, steps were concurrently taken by the Canadian and Newfoundland Governments to have the boundary line authoritatively defined. Since then much research work has been done by the governments interested and attempts have been made to settle the matter by arbitration, but this method, because of the great divergence in the claims of the respective countries, has been finally abandoned and an appeal is being made to the Privy Council for adjudication.

How divergent the claims of the respective litigants are may be gathered from the fact that while Newfoundland holds that the boundary line between Blanc Sablon and Cape Chidley should be bent so far to the west as to give it 130,000 square miles of Labrador territory—about half the area of British Columbia—Canada, on the other hand, asserts that the coast is really all her sister Dominion has a right to possess.

In the meantime, pending the settlement of the question at issue, capitalists who are considering the establishment of lumber, pulp and paper mills in the disputed territory are lying on their oars.

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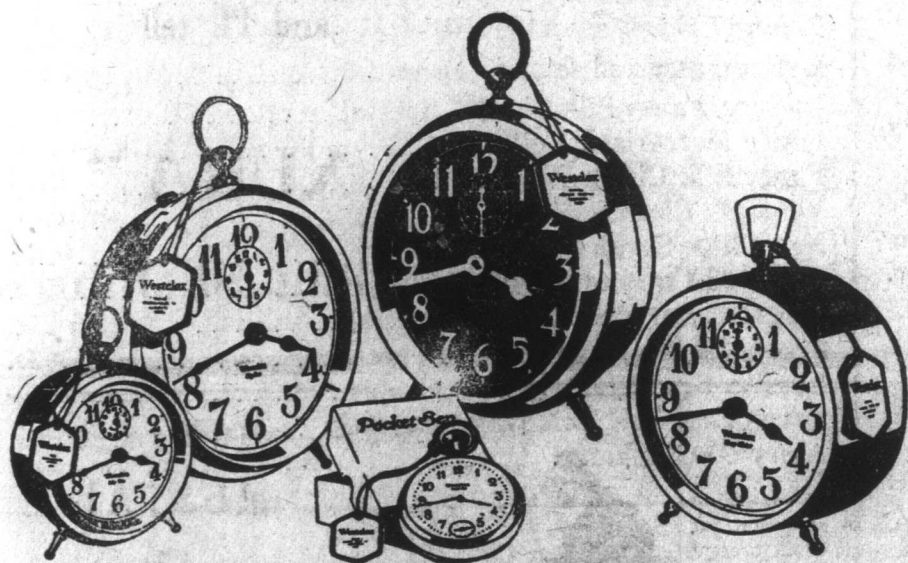
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