

VII.—*The North-American Boundary from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains.* By CAPTAIN S. ANDERSON, R.E., Chief Astronomer, North-American Boundary Commission.

[Read, March 27th, 1876.]

THE international boundary-line between the British possessions in North America and the United States, in the central part of the Continent from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, was established by treaty in 1818; but more than half a century elapsed before the necessity arose for surveying and marking the boundary-line on the ground. The Red River Valley was long ago known to be partly in British and partly in United States territory; but in the early stages of the history of the Red River Colony, all its settlers had come from the British side, and no international question arose. The French fur-traders penetrating from Lake Superior to the westward, across a most difficult country of lakes, and swamps, and rocky ridges, had come upon the Red River Valley early in the eighteenth century, and must have realised its great capabilities for settlement. The Hudson's Bay Company, advancing southwards from their headquarters at York Factory on Hudson's Bay, by an equally difficult route, had in the early part of this century also reached the prairie-lands of Red River. The sole object of these rival Companies was the fur-trade, and they had no interest or desire to open up the country for agricultural settlement, or to press for a settlement of the question as to the precise position of the boundary-line. Lord Selkirk, a prominent partner of the Hudson's Bay Company, on his own account, made a treaty with the Indians, purchased some of their land, and in 1812 established on it a colony of Sutherland Highlanders, whom he imported by way of Hudson's Bay, and he left them on the banks of the Red River to endure great hardships, which were aggravated by the constant hostilities of the rival Fur Companies, who, after carrying on a war of extermination with each other for some years, eventually made peace in 1821, and joined in partnership. This union caused the canoe-route to Lake Superior practically to be abandoned for trade in favour of the more northerly route direct to the seaboard. The latter route was available during the months of June and July only, and the ship that annually came from England with supplies took away the furs. The Red River colonists were, therefore, almost cut off from communication with the outside world; while it was impossible for new settlers to come into the country unless they were imported by the Hudson's Bay Company.