

Canada and Hudson Bay

For a generation past the only Canadians who have known anything at first hand about Hudson Bay were civil servants—members of the staff of the Geological Survey. Now it has been “discovered” by the people at large. Incidentally it may be noted that one of the few persons that Earl Grey fell in with on his recent trip was Mr. J. M. Macoun of the Mines Department, and his party, at Fort Churchill. With the opening up of this vast area, new fields of duty for the government and the civil service will be discovered. It may interest the service, therefore, to read the following attempt on the part of Collier's Weekly to put “Hudson Bay in a nutshell” and to appreciate just what means this latest virtual extension of Canada's domain:

*“Status—*The latest award of the Hague Tribunal seems to leave no doubt that it is a closed sea and belongs wholly to Canada. Its history is British. The navigators who discovered and explored it from 1610 to 1660 were Englishmen. Charles II. deeded it in 1670 to Prince Rupert and the Hudson's Bay Company, his rake-off being ten per cent. of the profits. France had rival claims, but never took practical steps to confirm them. By the treaty of 1818 United States fishermen were given the same rights on the western Newfoundland seaboard and northwest indefinitely along the coast of Labrador, but ‘without prejudice to the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company.’ In 1903 the Canadian Government sent a cruiser there to assert our rights. Captain Bernier overhauled several American whalers and took toll. Possession is nine points of the law. Outside of American whalers, Captain Bernier's *Arctic*, and H.M.S. *Pelican*, about the only ships that ruffle these waters are the supply boats of the Hudson's Bay Company.

*“Fish Wealth—*In fifty voyages in eleven years, American whalers took out of Hudson Bay \$1,371,000, or \$27,500 a voyage. Last summer one whaling ship took out \$70,000. A single adult bowhead Greenland whale is worth \$20,000. The white whales are valuable for their hides and oil, also the porpoises, great schools of which churn these waters into foam. Walruses are numerous. A walrus hide is worth \$30, the ivory tusks \$20 more. The bay is the mating place of the fur seal—seal skins are getting scarcer and dearer. There are thirty species of edible fish, ranging from halibut, cod, and salmon down to perch, herring, and whiting.

*“Navigability—*Hudson Bay proper is clear of ice seven months in the year. It has few shoals. It is freer from fogs than the Strait of Belle Isle. With ice-breakers such as there are at Montreal and Port Arthur the harbors might be made accessible all the year round. Hudson Strait presents some difficulty. It has four months of clear navigation, but there is always a wide, safe channel, either on the north or the south shore, according to the prevailing winds and tides. With steel-work towers, beacon lights, fog-bells, and the wireless, it should be an easy matter to inform vessels in any weather where the open channel or the nearest, safest harbor is. The Hudson's Bay Company boats have been doing without any sort of help for two hundred and forty years.

*“Other Sources of Trade—*The surrounding country has timber and mineral wealth to support a population as large as Sweden and Finland. The trend of Canadian population is northward. When the grain area has spread west as far as it can, it will spread east toward Hudson Bay. There will be trade in coal from Nova Scotia and return trade from Hudson Bay in wood, pulp, reindeer carcasses, fowl, and fur. British tramp steamers could land enough merchandise at Churchill in four months to keep a Hudson Bay Railway busy for six months after. The return freight to Churchill would be grain for storage to next opening of navigation.

*“Distance Saved—*There are eight different charters for railways to Hudson Bay. One of them ought to go through. The West has set its heart on this ‘shortest way to Europe.’ Canada needs this back door for her grain and cattle. Among other things, it is cooler for the cattle. The haulage distance, saved between Edmonton and Liverpool will be 1,110 miles, between Prince Albert and Liverpool 1,241 miles.”