

siderable deposits of gold or other minerals have been found therein. The extremely rugged formation of the country renders intercommunication difficult. Its rivers are navigable only by steamers of light draught, while the climate is such that neither cereals nor fruits can be successfully cultivated. Indeed, with the exception of a week or so in the months of May and September, the sun rarely pierces the mantle of fog and mist which envelopes this inhospitable coast.

This strip is deeply indented by inlets, one of which, called the Lynn Canal, forms the natural gateway to the newly discovered Canadian gold-fields of the Yukon. In this circumstance lies the immediate importance of the Alaska boundary controversy. Lynn Canal, or channel, penetrates the mountains bordering the western coast and runs eighty miles into the interior. At about sixty miles from the ocean it bifurcates, forming two inlets, the Chilkat and the Chilkoot, each receiving rivers at its head. The valleys of these rivers lead to the passes affording access to the British hinterland beyond. While the boundary line is contested at almost every point throughout its entire length, the interest of the question for the moment centres in the heads of the Lynn Canal.

The United States claim that the international boundary runs round the heads of all inlets, including the Lynn Canal, and that, consequently, the three ports of Dyea, Skagway, and Pyramid Harbour, at the mouth of the Taiya, Skagway, and Chilkat rivers respectively, are within American territory. The Canadians contend that the dividing line crosses the Lynn Canal within thirty miles from its mouth, leaving the whole upper part well within British jurisdiction. So long as the hinterland was believed to be valueless no one cared much how it was reached, but with the announcement of gold discoveries in the Klondike region the means of access thereto became at once an object of actual and pressing concern.

In the year 1867 the United States purchased Alaska from Russia for 1,440,000*l*. As manifestly Russia could only convey to the United States that of which she stood possessed at the date of sale, it becomes important to ascertain on what her title to Alaska was founded. This the treaty of cession itself discloses, for Article 1 declares that 'the eastern limit (of the territory of Alaska) is the 'line of demarcation between the Russian and the British 'possessions in North America as established by the convention between Russia and Great Britain of February 28,