

WHAT SEEMS TO US TO BE THE ISSUE AS TO THE
CANADIAN NORTH.

From the most ancient times it has been the belief of Southern people that lands to the north were inhospitable, difficult to cultivate, or wholly worthless. The climate was supposed to render permanently wretched those who dwelt in these unfavored countries. At one time this wretchedness due to climate was supposed to extend in Europe as far south as the Alps. There are many still who maintain that the tropical climates are the only pleasant ones, but it has at least been established that populous and prosperous communities can be maintained much farther north than the Alps, as for instance, London, New York, Moscow and Winnipeg. But although the "frozen desert of the Far North" has been getting gradually smaller, it still embraces in the public mind territories of a total area equal to that of all of North America north of Mexico. Roughly this means two hundred to three hundred thousand square miles in Alaska, one and a half million to two million square miles in Canada (including the islands to the North of Canada) and two or four million square miles in northern Europe and northern Asia.

It is of manifest importance for the world in general, and of particular importance to Alaska, Canada, and Siberia to determine as soon as possible what part of our belief about these frontiers is in the nature of inherited prejudice and what part is really justified by the conditions as they exist. The second problem is to consider how to deal with these inhospitable conditions that do exist. This second problem is in the nature of that which many nations are facing with regard to deserts - admitting that there are deserts, we have set ourselves to studying how they may be subjugated. Similarly admitting that part of the cold and other inhospitable qualities of the North are something beyond imagination, we consider if we can directly or indirectly circumvent these hostile forces.

In general there are with regard to the North two views, the traditional one held by most scholars and supported by nearly all written authority, and the new view. That nearly all written authority is on one side need not discourage those who hold the other view, for written authority has always been against every new view. It is essentially absurd to try to judge any new thesis on the basis of recorded opinion. Five hundred years ago practically every one was against the view that the earth was round, and still the roundness view was in its nature bound eventually to prevail. Fifty or seventy-five years ago nearly all opinion was against the glacial theory, and still the glacial theory has made its way. The same may be said of organic evolution, and germ theory of disease, and in general of nearly all the advances in knowledge of recent times.