

ALASKA BOUNDARY QUESTION.

There are two points submitted for consideration:—

1st—Whether it is desirable that steps should be taken to have the Boundary defined between Canada and the United States Possessions in Alaska.

2nd—A Requisition for Information in the possession of the Government of British Columbia on the subject, or that can be obtained.

As to the first—

For many reasons, apart from the national object of avoiding grounds of dispute between Canada and the United States, it is desirable, as affecting British Columbia particularly and the Dominion incidentally, that the boundary line referred to should be settled as soon as possible.

Alaska was purchased from Russia by the United States, on the 13th March, 1867, for \$7,200,000. At that time its present importance was not exactly understood or appreciated. Its lately discovered sources of wealth in the seal fur trade, deep sea and river fisheries, gold and other mining, and great extent of internal navigation by means of the large rivers Yucón and Porcupine, have added greatly to its importance, and are tending to increase, in a proportionate degree, the value and importance of the adjoining territory, belonging to British Columbia and the Dominion.

The Stikine River, running into British Columbia, communicating with Dease Lake and River, and ultimately with the Peace and Mackenzie Rivers and the surrounding North-West Territory, has its outlet in American Territory. The navigation of the Stikine, for purposes of commerce, was reserved to both countries by the Treaty of Washington, 1871.

In 1873, gold was discovered in the Cassiar District, about the upper waters of the Stikine, Dease Lake and River, and the other streams in that vicinity. In 1874, trade rapidly developed itself. A mining population flowed in and supplies of valuable goods and merchandise were required. In 1876, the volume of trade amounted to about \$350,000, and the duties paid to the Dominion Revenue, at Victoria and Glenora, on goods consumed in the Cassiar District, amounted to between \$35,000 and \$40,000.

Returns to 1880 show a somewhat fluctuating trade, as is common to all mining centres, but the average taken annually is still of considerable amount, namely, from 1877 to 1880, from \$290,000 to \$215,000, and from 1880 to 1884, diminishing on the Stikine, but so increasing along the coast as to keep the average at the same point.

Thus, apart from all considerations as to the future value of this northern portion of British Columbia, when the advancing progress of settlement from the eastern sections of the Dominion shall have reached it, we have at present an existing annual trade of upwards of \$300,000, yielding to the Dominion Revenue per annum \$35,000 or \$40,000.

This trade is seriously jeopardized by the unsettled nature of the question, that is the uncertainty of the boundary line—not that there is the slightest uncertainty where it is to be found, but that it has not been laid down territorially, and locally defined between the two countries.

As illustrating this danger, a short statement of facts will be useful:—

The entrance to the Stikine River is within American territory. The American Port of Entry at its mouth is Fort Wrangel. There all goods intended for the interior have to be transhipped or an American officer put on board the British vessel to see that they are not landed in the American territory *in transitu*. Every merchant knows that this adds to the expense and delay of transportation, which expense and delay would be entirely avoided if, within the British line, a Port of Entry was established, to which sea-going vessels from either British or foreign ports, with cargoes, could go direct, without breaking bulk, coming in no way within the purview of the coasting trade objections. Within what is here claimed as undoubted British territory, about 30 miles from the mouth of the river, facilities for establishing such a port exist.