

crease, or even maintain, those profits, I think would be a proposition that Parliament would not be likely to adopt. I have only to add that I will very carefully consider all that you have placed before me. I am disposed, so far as my personal opinion is concerned, entirely to admit that, at any rate with regard to India, there is a very considerable grievance in the cost of the telegraphic communication, and whether by a Royal Commission or by a Committee of the House of Commons, or whether it is possible, with the action of the departments principally concerned—the Post Office and the Indian Government—by some such process as Sir Edward Sassoon has suggested, of filling up gaps between the different systems, to do a good deal to improve the position in this matter, those are all points which I will bring to the attention of my colleagues.

THE ALASKAN BOUNDARY AND THE CANADIAN CONTENTIONS.

The claims of Canadian statesmen regarding Alaska are thus referred to in an article published in the "Commercial Bulletin" (New York), of Wednesday last:—

That portion of the Alaskan boundary which is now in dispute is thus defined in the treaty between this country and Russia, quoting from the Treaty of 1825 between Russia and Great Britain: "That whenever the summit of the mountains * * * shall prove to be at the distance of more than ten marine leagues from the ocean the limit between the British possessions and the line of coast which is to belong to Russia, as above mentioned (that is to say, the limit to the possessions ceded by this convention), shall be formed by a line parallel to the winding of the coast, and which shall never exceed the distance of ten marine leagues therefrom." The Canadians wish to measure the ten leagues from the sea end of the Lynn Canal; our contention is that the shores of the Lynn Canal are a part of the coast line, and therefore the head of the canal and the country for ten leagues back from it belong to us.

It is an elementary principle of international law that the jurisdiction of a nation extends a marine league beyond its shore, and in measuring this marine league the sinuosities of the shore are always measured, except of course in the case of small bays, where the line would be carried across the mouth and the league measured outward from that line. If in determining the extreme range of a nation's jurisdiction the league be measured from the actual water line, the presumption is that in measuring back into the country to determine a boundary that is to follow the coast the measuring should be from the actual water line. Occasionally a nation has attempted to extend its jurisdiction to sea by insisting on the right to measure its coast line from headland to headland, and then going three miles beyond such a line. The practical difficulty in the way of this is that every-

thing depends upon what headlands shall be selected. Unless the shore line be followed everything is at sea in a literal as well as a figurative sense. Canadians have claimed the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence under this headland theory.

The measurement from headlands is a comparatively new claim, and it has not been assented to. "This doctrine of headlands is new," says a British decision of 1853 cited in the Halifax award, "and has received a proper limit in the convention between France and Great Britain of the second of August, 1839, in which 'it is equally agreed that the distance of three miles fixed as the general limit for the exclusive right of fishery upon the coasts of the two countries shall, with respect to bays the mouths of which do not extend ten miles in width, be measured from a straight line drawn from headland to headland.' " It will be observed that where the league was not to be measured from the actual water line, but from an imaginary line connecting headlands, it was so specified in the agreement.

The successive claims put forward by Canada are not calculated to increase confidence in her good faith; they suggest that she is making vast claims simply to give her something that she can insist on arbitrating. In 1884 she claimed that the boundary ran along certain mountain summits, as it does along another part of the line, and this took in very little of what the United States claimed, has always claimed, and has administered. In 1887 the happy thought occurred to some Canadian statesmen of abandoning the mountain summits, as the language of the treaty requires, and of measuring ten leagues from the coast line of the western side of the islands that lie along the coast. This conceded nothing to the United States except the islands and fringe of shore. Last year, perhaps because the Canadian statesmen had discovered an island lying farther out at sea which they had overlooked in 1887, they deflected a part of this line still farther west, actually taking into the Dominion's claim the towns of Juneau and of Douglass City on Douglass Island. The Canadian policy seems to be to claim so much that, if the United States can be bullied into "splitting the difference," the Dominion will get all that it desires.

CURIOUS ELECTRICAL FIRES.—An unusual fire was caused by the focusing of the sun's rays by an electric light bulb, which set fire to a curtain in the window of a residence.

A falling tree was the indirect cause of two fires several miles away and the temporary suspension of traffic on an electric road. The tree, in falling, carried down some wires of a telegraph company, crossing them with the trolley wire. The heavy current from the latter followed the telegraph wire 20 miles, and set fire to two telegraph switchboards. In both cases the fires were quickly extinguished. Business on the electric railway was suspended an hour.—From "The National Board's Quarterly Report."