

"We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea."

In the continental United States and in the southern part of Canada we have just about run out of frontier, and thus it is that the Far North in Canada and Alaska is North America's last frontier. There is so much of it that it will be a very long time before we run out. Although much has been done to study its problems, an enormous amount remains still to be done.

It is not easy for the imagination to grasp the extent of the Canadian Arctic and Sub-Arctic. The land area of the North West Territories and the Yukon is about 1,460,000 square miles, very nearly equal to one half the area of the continental United States, and approximately two-fifths of the area of Canada. A good deal of this, of course, lies outside the Arctic proper, since the southern border of the North West Territories is the 60th parallel of latitude, some 400 miles to the south of the Arctic Circle. But the Arctic Circle is only a line on the map and not a boundary between different regions. The latitude at which a person passes from Sub-Arctic to Arctic conditions depends on the part of the world in which he is.

The great archipelago of the Arctic Islands includes Baffin Island which is larger than any state in the union except Texas, Victoria and Ellesmere Islands, each almost as large as Great Britain, and several others as big as the smaller countries of Europe. The coastline is immense. The shoreline of the Canadian mainland on the Arctic Ocean is nearly 6,000 miles long, and the shoreline of the Arctic islands is estimated at nearly 27,000 miles. These bald statistics indicate the huge extent of the task of science in applying throughout the Canadian Arctic modern methods of exploration and research.

A frequently noted paradox of our times is that too often it takes the impetus of a great war to start or to further developments which should be undertaken in the interests of peace and progress. In the northwest the war with Japan did more to open up the country, and to make easier the work of the scientists, than centuries of the fur trade and the search for precious metals. The construction of the air route to Alaska, followed by the building of the Alaska Highway and the establishment of a number of landing fields down the Mackenzie River, is serving to make accessible a huge area reaching well beyond the Arctic Circle. In the northeast the war with Germany similarly brought the construction of new air fields and aids to air navigation. Across the northern archipelago there have been dotted a number of weather stations which are adding greatly to our knowledge of those "masses of Arctic air moving south from Canada" which are often mentioned in the reports of the U.S. Weather Bureau at times when the temperature is unpleasantly frigid and our stocks of fuel oil are low. These wartime developments now have their peaceful uses. Their existence greatly facilitates the achievement of the programme of Arctic research prepared by the Arctic Institute.

Neither the Canadian Arctic nor its counterpart in the northern portion of Alaska is ever likely to have a large population. At present in the Canadian Northwest Territories there is probably on the average not much more than one person for every hundred square miles of territory, although the white population is said to have increased by 60% in a single recent year. The native population of Indians and Eskimos is little more than 10,000, nearly evenly divided between the two races. We know something, however, of the endowment in mineral resources of parts at least of the area - gold around Great Slave Lake and at other points, uranium at Great Bear Lake, oil at Norman Wells, copper in the region of the Coppermine River, and so on. Much has been discovered, enough to establish that a great deal more remains to be found.