

bay referred to in the former lake; yet it appears that the two commissioners could not agree upon the terminal point of the line.

"The matter, not being of immediate and pressing importance," Dr. Bigsby writes, "was suffered to remain in suspense. It was thought advisable by the British government, about 1841, that Dr. Tiarks should make a personal inspection of the Lake of the Woods, which he accordingly did."

So astronomer Tiarks decided the case against Rat Portage, and this is the peculiarly practical method he employed to come to his conclusion. If a line whose bearing is exactly N. E. and S. W. be passed westwardly over the surface of the lake, on paper, that point on the main shore which is last cut by it will be the most northwestern point required.

With all due respect to the learned astronomer who invented this plan, and to the eminent statesmen who accepted it—now probably all dead and gone—a common-sense man cannot well have much respect for it, unless it were understood to have been used by way of compromise, and for that occasion only, where a point had already been supposedly chosen by the method. Were the rule actually meant as one of general application it would be a strange piece of empiricism. Suppose, for example, that nature had made the bay at the southwest end of the lake in question to extend 29 more miles to the westward, and 3 more miles to the southward, than it does, and to terminate in a sharp point as at the bay that was chosen; then the N. E. and S. W. line would last leave the lake at the supposed point, as would also one bearing N. W. and S. E. It would result then, that at the place of the intersection of these two lines, on the water's edge, we would have both the most northwestern point of the lake and its most southwestern. And not only that, but would have found a *north-western* point that would be more *southern* than any other place on the lake shores!

But, turning away from all geometrical paradoxes, if an examination be made of the simple outline of the lake as drawn by Mr. Mitchell, it will be readily seen that a N. E. and S. W. line would cut its shore exactly at what appears to be the inlet, but really is the outlet, in other words, at Rat Portage.