

WHAT NEXT?

By MAHLON HARVEY

AN impression has gone abroad regarding a possible claim by the United States of territorial rights in North-eastern Canada. From what source this claim originates is hard to define, but it is clearly an aftermath of the Alaskan boundary question. While the general public are but little informed of our rights in Ungava, Franklin, and the far northern islands, our claim is none the less secure. Possession counts nine points of the law. Close examination of the Alaskan award will reveal a decision upon that same legal precedent. British magnanimity looked kindly upon thirty-five years' usurped possession and forbade deprivation thereof. Canada's claim to her eastern territory is much older and far more stable than that of the Alaskan shore.

Occasionally we hear of some foreign power seizing some little island in the far Pacific for a coaling depot. It was common enough in the days of privateer navigation for some enterprising mariner to raise his country's flag over some terra incognita. International complications were then concerned with larger issues, and coaling stations less required. Geographical precedence received, therefore, more consideration, and an island or two, if outside of Europe, was of no consequence. Yet, in spite of the zeal of the explorer, one or more unknown lands remain. One of these—whether land or sea, we know not—the North Pole, occupies the intermittent attentions of various adventurous mariners. Which nation will first attain the Pole? Pray Heaven it be not the Yankees! These latter have sent representatives from time to time. It is from these visits to the north that the American claim would be largely based. Explorations have undoubtedly been made, but they confer no priority of claim to territory, even in the extreme

north. Great Britain had been there before them. Moreover, should American fishermen and whalers have plied their business in Hudson Bay itself, the act gave them no claim to aught save the doubtful honor of affrontery and wholesale poaching.

The general supposition concerning the extreme north-eastern lands of the Dominion is that they are of no particular consequence. The same was thought of the Alaskan shores by Great Britain some years ago. These northern districts, the home of the Hudson Bay trapper and Esquimaux, have a distinct value that will be greatly augmented in the near future. This was vaguely recognized as a matter of priority when Charles II., in 1664, gave letters patent to the Honorable Hudson Bay Company, granting to their use all lands and waters to the north and west of New France. Those were not the days when Englishmen talked of "Our Lady of the Snows," when they were willing even to navigate the Arctic Circle to gain a little trade or, better still, a few furs to keep themselves warm. The value of this land was still further emphasized when, by the treaty of Utrecht, 1713, the same rights were confirmed, with the additional cession of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. It was still further confirmed, as well as the priority of claim to the new territories, when in 1735 an expedition from Bristol sailed up the Hudson Straits on their way to find a north-west passage. But for a mistake of direction this might have been found, for, discounting all misadventure, they might have reached Behring Straits and the far Pacific in due course. Instead, however, they sailed southward over Hudson Bay, and found eventually the Company's trading posts on the western shore. Subsequent events have had little or no bearing upon the title of this territory.