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THE BOUNDARY QUESTION.

We have now before us the text of the report of the Judicial Committee on the boundary question. It may have the advantage of setting at rest a troublesome dispute, but there its merit ends. Both in matter and in form it is disappointing. It would have been satisfactory, for those who have taken an interest in the question, to know the grounds of the decision, and the respect and confidence with which their Lordships' opinion would have been received by the public generally, would not have been diminished had they condescended to explain what part of the voluminous evidence had led them to the extraordinary conclusion at which they have arrived. Their lordships must be dwelling in the murkiest mists of officialdom if they fancy that, in this skeptical age, an unreasoning opinion will be received as gospel, even in a colony. It is not safe to presume too far on the assumption of colonial dullness, and our bump of veneration is not so developed as to induce us to accept, with implicit faith, the edicts of oracular wisdom.

The judicial committee has made answer, such as it is, to the three questions put. First, they hold that the award was not binding. As an abstract proposition there was really no doubt on this point. It will, however, be remembered that Mr. Mowat thought it of so much importance that in the Lieutenant-Governor's speech, it was specially alluded to as a triumph of the Attorney General's diplomacy, that the validity of the award was to be treated as a preliminary question. The learned gentleman has lost the saddle but not the horse, for their Lordships hurry on to say that, nevertheless, the boundary lines laid down by the award, so far as they relate to the territory in dispute between Ontario and Manitoba, are "substantially correct."

Perhaps it may be a subject of regret, that the judicial committee, being of the opinion that the award was "substantially correct"

so far, did not confine themselves to confirming what they could not amend. The terms of the award are, at all events, coherent, those of the judicial opinion are not.

It is not the object of this paper to discuss the verbal inaccuracies of their Lordships' composition. We need not stop to enquire how the true boundary between the *Western* part of the Province of Ontario, and the *South-Eastern* part of the Province of Manitoba can ever be described, nor is it necessary to take up the point raised so effectually by Mr. W. Mc. D. Dawson. As plain as words can put it, the report says, after describing another line as the "true boundary," that a line drawn due north from the confluence of the rivers Mississippi and Ohio "forms the boundary eastward of the Province of Manitoba." What is amusing in the matter is that this palpable blunder of redaction makes the judicial committee say precisely what the act of 1774 enacted in terms too clear for equivocation. But the Act of 1774 dealt with what was then British territory, whereas their Lordships have coolly annexed a part of the United States.

The object of this paper is to point out the strength of the old argument, now that we have a proposition, defined in a manner, to combat. We shall, therefore, presume that their Lordships intended to answer the question secondly submitted to them, that is what was, on the evidence, the true boundary between the Provinces; that is, that they did not intend to go further than to describe, as the dividing line, any line that had not Ontario on one side and Manitoba on the other, and that the allusion to the international line and to the due north line was only incidental, or to exclude the presumption that Manitoba extended to the south of Ontario, or that Ontario extended north of the Albany River. This will reduce the report to that part of the line beginning at the Lake of the Woods, and going "to the most north-western point of that lake as runs northward," &c., to where it strikes the due north line from the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

In this way we shall cut off the somewhat alarming *tracé* their Lordships have indulged in of the international boundary between