

Treaties Affecting the North Pacific Coast

THE principal treaties and conventions affecting the North Pacific Ocean and its coast line and the adjoining territory are largely devoted to delimiting land and water boundaries. They were necessitated by the conflicting claims to early discovery and occupation set up by the various nations. In some instances rights of a more spiritual nature were asserted. By the Bull of Pope Alexander VI, promulgated in 1493, the whole undiscovered world was evenly divided between Spain and Portugal. The dividing line ran from the North to the South Pole, through a point one hundred leagues West of the Azores.

To understand the treaties which composed the various differences, it is necessary to be familiar with the conflicting claims themselves, and this entails careful enquiry into all the particulars of discovery and occupation within a certain period. It may be, as asserted in the annals of the Chinese Empire, based on the report of Hwei-Shin in 499 A.D., that Chinese Buddhist priests discovered Western America in the fifth century, but interesting as this topic might prove to be, it need not be inquired into when we are examining claims to ownership based on discovery followed by effective occupation.

The earliest discoveries on both the Pacific and Atlantic seaboard are to some extent shrouded in mystery. "The true sources of history," says Prof. Wrong, "lie somewhere in the wonderland of myth and tradition. Canadian history seems to have its proper beginning in that vague atmosphere, colored with adventure and romance, which surrounds the westward voyages of the Northmen." Is it true that when Harold Harfager in the ninth century undertook to feudalize Norway the Vikings fled to the Faroes and Iceland, and that finally about 986 A.D. Eric the Red established a great colony in Greenland? Is it true that Beorn was