

WHEN MINNESOTA WAS A PAWN OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS¹

Were I asked what region of the world's surface was best prepared by nature for human habitation, I should pass over such densely populated areas as Egypt, the Rhine Valley, and other places made famous by centuries of history and claim this honor for a region that has been occupied by white men only a few generations. Undoubtedly your self-complacency has already suggested to you my answer, at least in part. Yes, your city of Duluth is at one end of the region, but, if the whole extent of the territory I have in mind was favored by Minnesota's cold winters, I fear I should hesitate about selecting it. In my humble opinion, however, the valley of the St. Lawrence River and of the Great Lakes by climate, by fertility of soil, by mineral wealth, and by facility of transportation is the most blessed region on the earth's surface. How quickly man has realized its wealth is proved by the string of great cities which have sprung up over night like those large puff-balls that are found in our woods. The list of them is a proof of my contention: Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, Rochester, Buffalo, Toledo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Duluth, not to mention many other beautiful and wealthy cities which are disappointed by the official figures of the census report.

Today the value of every acre of this region is easily recognized, and I can imagine the howl of protest should it be proposed to give a few square miles on the American side to the Dominion of Canada for the purpose of rectifying the bound-

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ary. If the present British prime minister should have the hardihood to suggest such a measure, it would be well for him to make preparations for war, for nothing short of blood could wash out such an insult.

This evening we are to consider a period in the history of this region when its value as a place of human habitation was not yet recognized and the alienation of thousands of square miles could be proposed to American officials by British ministers without giving great offense and even with some assurance of consideration. Yes, even men of high position in the American government were willing to second such proposals. What were a few thousand square miles of wilderness between friends? In order to understand this attitude we must eliminate from our minds all that knowledge which has become a part of our consciousness during the last hundred years or more and try to look at international problems touching the western part of America with that same ignorance of coming events as blinded the men of the generation which watched the eighteenth century pass over into the nineteenth.

If you want a plumb line to fathom the typical mind of the eighteenth century, you can find none better than in the sayings and writings of the great Dr. Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer, whose daily opinion has been preserved for us by the greatest of all biographers, James Boswell. At one time, just before the outbreak of the American Revolution, the inimitable Samuel wrote a pamphlet about Canada and the West, which had been won for the British Empire by the French and Indian War. He wrote that "large tracts of America were added by the last war to the British dominions," but that they were at best "only the barren parts of the continent, the refuse of the earlier adventurers, which the French, who came last, had taken only as better than nothing."²

² *Works*, 5: 414 (London, 1825).

Here is another statement. This was written in 1789 by William Knox, who had lived many years in America and probably knew North America as well as any contemporary Englishman. He prophesied that the Americans could not settle the western territory for ages and that for this reason it must be given up to barbarism like the plains of Asia and the population would be as unsettled as the Scythians and the Tartars.³ Do you men and women of Minnesota recognize yourselves in the Scythians and the Tartars? I have no doubt some of our friends from Massachusetts and New York would find the simile very just when they think of our Nonpartisan League, our Farm Bloc, and our insistence on a deep waterway from Duluth for ocean-going vessels.

Few Americans had a clearer conception of the future of the West than did Benjamin Franklin. He had studied its every feature in his desire to participate in its colonization; he was a partner in three colonial schemes; he had studied the growth of population most carefully and had a vision of our future greatness. Even Franklin, for all his study and wisdom, thought it would be "some centuries" before the population would number a hundred million.⁴

You perceive then that our present-day appreciation of the value of the Great Lakes region and the Mississippi Valley cannot be read back into the eighteenth century, for if it is, we shall become hopelessly confused. We shall become angry at the British for making what appears to our present-day understanding preposterous demands, and we shall wrongfully condemn American officials who were ready to make concessions in the interests of peace. As I have already said we must force our view of the West into conformity with that of an eighteenth-century man, who might well have declared: "What are a few thousand miles of wilderness between

³ William Knox, *Extra Official State Papers*, 2: 49 (London, 1789).

⁴ *Writings*, 4: 55 (Smyth edition, New York and London, 1905-07).

friends?" He could not look into the future and behold in a gazing crystal the beautiful cities located throughout the West; the crystal did not reveal a wealthy metropolis spreading itself over the muddy banks of the Chicago River; nor did it show to him the sturdy form of Henry Ford and his city of "flivvers." These things have come into being, but our forefathers could not imagine them.

In the game of diplomatic poker in which these golden acres of the Great Lakes region and the upper valley of the Mississippi were the chips, the Americans opened the first jack pot. The player for our side was Benjamin Franklin and all he held was a pair of jacks and a monumental bluff. It was in the year 1782 when the war in America was languishing. Lord North had been replaced by an ardent friend of humanity and a sincere admirer of Franklin, Lord Shelburne. Like Franklin, Shelburne dreamed of universal peace and the millenium brought about by the preponderance of business men in world politics. The preponderance of financial interests has come, but we are seemingly far from the dream of these eighteenth-century philosophers.

When Shelburne sent his friend Richard Oswald to Paris to discuss the terms of peace with Franklin, the two soon agreed that the basis of peace should be safety from future conflicts and disputes. At this point Franklin opened the famous jack pot. He pointed out that in a new country like America danger of disagreement would always come from the back countries, where dwelt lawless pioneers, whose disputes would be a constant source of international bickerings. His proposal was, therefore, that England give up to the United States not only all the West but also all Canada and thus do away once for all with dangerous boundary disputes. The audacity of the proposal can be appreciated when you realize that at the time British troops occupied forts on the lakes from Niagara to Mackinac and that their Indian and white partisans roamed at will as far south as the Ohio River. The Ameri-

cans occupied Pittsburgh and had settlements in Kentucky as far west as Louisville, but on the north side of the Ohio there were no American troops, although there were a few spies at Kaskaskia and Vincennes. Nor had the colonists ever exercised dominion over this vast region except for the small territory in the Illinois country south of the Illinois River, which was occupied by George Rogers Clark's troops during the years 1778 to 1780. Strangely enough, there seems to be evidence that Lord Shelburne considered this proposal of Franklin's, although it never again came to diplomatic discussion. Its influence may have remained, however, as an active force in the British minister's mind, if we may judge from the outcome. It soon became evident that there were influences at work in Spain and France, also parties to the peace negotiations, which might throw all the territory bounded by the Ohio and the Mississippi into the lap of the British Empire. There is no doubt that the British negotiators could have easily drawn the boundary line at the Ohio, had they so wished. Here then were the two extremes: America to have all British Canada and the West, on the one hand; Great Britain to retain all Canada and the region that we call the Old Northwest, on the other hand. Neither American nor British negotiators expected one or the other. A compromise line was in the minds of both.

The first line proposed by the American commissioners and accepted tentatively by the British ministry had an historical basis which I have no time to discuss. It followed approximately the present line in the East to where the forty-fifth parallel touches the St. Lawrence River, then it ran northwest to Lake Nipissing, and thence westward to the Mississippi. This would have placed most of Ontario in the United States, but would have thrown into Canada all the territory north of approximately the southern bank of Lake Superior. The people of northern Minnesota just missed being born "Canucks."

The record is not sufficiently clear to show the forces which led to the reopening of the question about the line. There have been several suggested interpretations, but I am not going to enter into the intricacies of a dispute that has an interest only to the academic mind. But it is time to turn our attention from the exchange of gentlemanly notes by diplomats and investigate a certain Ethiopian gentleman who was mixed up in some way with the supply of fuel. His outcries disturbed undoubtedly the peace negotiations. His name was Business, spelled with a big *B*, and he was to be a disturbing force in all the relations of the British Empire and the United States for a couple of generations, in fact until the boundary line was run way across the continent to the Pacific.

I have said that no one could foresee the immediate value of these northwestern acres for settlement. They were wilderness and that ended it. There were, however, some men who were directly interested financially in the wilderness and wanted it to remain in its primitive condition in perpetuity. These were the fur-traders. They knew that settlement and fur-trading were incompatible. But we are particularly interested in their business, because in their eyes the basin of the Great Lakes was extremely valuable. Here was the home of the fur trade with western centers at Detroit and Mackinac, whence fleets of canoes and Mackinac boats went south, west, and north, many canoes finding their way into the most distant Canadian Northwest by means of the Grand Portage. To these men the location of the boundary line was a weighty consideration. A few thousands of square miles of land might mean nothing, but when the area consisted of valuable fur-raising territory, that was a different matter.

At the time of which we are speaking the most frequented fur land lay around the southern lakes, whence came fifty per cent of American furs. A large band of Canadian traders was accustomed to leave Mackinac in the fall for the Chicago

River portage and buy furs from the Potawatomi, Fox, and Sauk Indians in the region north of the Illinois River. The land lying between Lake Erie and Lake Michigan was still an important hunting ground. A few years later these more southern haunts were esteemed less valuable as the regions both to the north and on the upper Missouri became more widely known. But you must remember that the territory around the southern lakes was in 1782 still held in very high esteem for the fur trade or you will misunderstand the negotiations for peace and later events.

The fur-traders were not without political influence. Many important merchants of London, Bristol, and the Scottish ports were directly interested financially in these far western speculations. They were the suppliers of the Canadian merchants who in turn outfitted the fur-traders. There was thus a close bond uniting the man trading among the Minnesota lakes and the British firms. And needless to say these British firms had personal relations with members of Parliament.

There was in this case a more powerful and politically more direct line of influence than the foregoing implies. The Canadian fur trade was in the hands of Scotchmen. If you are to understand the intricacies of international relations between Great Britain and the United States between 1782 and 1818, you must have a realization of Scotch political influence. When England and Scotland were united politically in 1707, there were assigned to the northern country forty-five members of the House of Commons. Not a large number, but we have experienced in our politics the influence wielded by a small bloc, and forty-five votes if united form a power in any legislative body. The Scotch forty-five furnish one of the most illuminating examples in history of the power of such a bloc. For over a hundred years these forty-five members voted as a unit with every administration. So consistent was the voting that one facetious member of this

Scottish cohort said — this occurred late in the eighteenth century — that the king should always choose as the Scottish leader, that is as lord advocate, a tall man, so that Scottish members could see, when there was a division, how they were expected to vote. In the eighteenth century members of Parliament did not generally give their vote except for an equivalent. Of course, we have become more moral. The Scotch asked and received their pay. Scotchmen entered into office all over the empire. A very large percentage of British officials in the American colonies were from the land of heather. The East India Company was amenable to political influence and the government of Great Britain's far eastern dependency has practically been molded by Scotchmen. Lord Shelburne's ministry in 1782 could not have lasted a day without those forty-five Scotch votes. Do you catch a distinct view of that "nigger in the woodpile" of whom I spoke? The fur-trading fraternity of Scotland exercised its influence, and, although the British ministry had already agreed on one line, the question had to be reopened.

The next information we have is that the American commissioners were obliged to propose two lines, one of which was to be selected by the British ministry as the final boundary. One of these is the present boundary through the middle of the lakes. The alternative proposed was the forty-fifth parallel of latitude from the Connecticut River westward to the Mississippi. Had this latter been selected the southern half of Ontario would have fallen to the United States, but Canada would have been given the upper parts of Michigan, of Wisconsin, and of Minnesota east of the Mississippi River, namely, the great ore-bearing territory. To be more specific, the campus of the University of Minnesota would have lain south of the proposed line, but all north of it would have been in the territory of our neighbor. The importance of the final choice of the British ministry may be understood in the light of later events. More than the iron mines were at

stake. The delimitation of the territory west of the Mississippi River was to become a vital issue during the first half of the nineteenth century. Had our northern boundary east of that river been the forty-fifth parallel the British would have had a strong argument for the continuance of it farther west. The home of the Nonpartisan League might have been Canadian; but before the drawing of the Trans-Mississippi boundary became an issue the forty-ninth parallel had secured force by the weight of tradition, and both countries acted on the assumption, without much investigation, that it was the historical boundary.

The arguments that led to the selection by the British of the middle of the lakes line is apparent. The fur-traders wished to retain their rights and property on Lakes Ontario and Erie and that desire was the paramount influence in the period under discussion. Thus the present boundary was selected. The British permitted contemporary interests to outweigh future considerations.

After the preliminaries were signed — November, 1782 — and the knowledge of the boundary agreed upon became more generally extended among the fur-trading gentry, there was a very loud uproar. Niagara gone, Detroit gone, Mackinac and Green Bay gone, the Grand Portage gone. Nothing seemed left. This indignation was stronger because it was known that with the help of Spain and the silence of France a much more favorable boundary could have been secured. Lord Shelburne was now out of office; his work in the interest of future peace was done; and his former opponents were obliged to complete the treaty and to defend it against criticism. During the course of the defense there was developed by means of political propaganda the belief that on account of the stubbornness of the American commissioners the settled boundary was forced upon the British ministry. Such was the defense that was made in Parliament and it was generally accepted by the public. This purely political explanation will

not satisfy the demands for truth made by the critical historian, however. There were, of course, many forces at work during the treaty negotiations; but in the final determination of the boundary line we must give the greatest credit to those two lovers of humanity, Lord Shelburne and Benjamin Franklin.

Shelburne in 1797, after the British finally evacuated the lake ports, explained his attitude at the time of the treaty negotiations to a friend in Philadelphia in the following words: "I must express to you the satisfaction I have felt in seeing the forts given up. I may tell you in confidence what may astonish you, as it did me, that up to the very last debate in the House of Lords, the Ministry did not appear to comprehend the policy upon which the boundary line was drawn, and persist in still considering it as a measure of necessity not of choice. However it is indifferent who understands it. The deed is done; and a strong foundation laid for eternal amity between England and America." ⁵

So many were the influences brought to bear upon the ministry of Lord North and Fox, which succeeded that of Lord Shelburne, that negotiations were started for a commercial treaty by which some of the loss sustained in the treaty of peace might be repaired. These failed, and it was decided to postpone the negotiations to a later day. The delay was to last eleven years. Meanwhile the British ministry attempted to save the fur-traders from losses by not fulfilling the agreement to withdraw British troops from the lake forts at Niagara, Detroit, and Mackinac. In fact orders to that purpose were sent to Canada at the time the definitive treaty with the United States was signed. Excuses for this evasion of the stipulation of the treaty were easy to find in the failure of the United States to secure for British merchants the payment of past debts and in the mistreatment of the loyalists.

⁵ Edmond Fitzmaurice, *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne . . . With Extracts from his Papers and Correspondence*, 2:202 n. (London 1912).

These were mere excuses. The retention of the posts on the lakes was prolonged in accordance with the wishes of the fur-traders, who insisted on the need of time to wind up their business in the West. But instead of curtailing their enterprises the Canadian merchants extended them during the next few years, while British ministers consistently refused to take up the question of the postponed commercial treaty or to consider the withdrawal of the troops from the territory of the United States.

Thus endeth the first lesson. I have dwelt somewhat at length over this first episode in the history of the northwest boundary because it was necessary to explain the various forces that affected the situation. It will be possible to pass in review the later developments more speedily.

A new force arose immediately after the treaty was made and was to increase in importance as the years passed by. The influx of American settlers into the Ohio Valley threatened the life of the fur trade, but their settlements offered another advantage to British merchants and manufacturers. New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans were competing for the profits to be made by supplying these settlements of the new West with merchandise. In many ways Canadians had an advantage. British goods were cheaper and better, and the water communication via the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes was excellent. By 1783 Canadian merchants were trading with Kentucky; and this new business increased with surprising rapidity, so that it had become a factor of importance in the minds of more than one British minister. It was bound in time to become the controlling force in the policy toward Canada and the West. It, therefore, behooved British politicians to find some pretext for permanently holding Niagara, Detroit, and the other lake posts, or so to change the northern boundary as to give Canada direct communication with the Mississippi Valley. Recognizing the necessity of conforming to the stipulations

of the treaty concerning the lakes, the policy of the British from about the year 1792 till after the treaty of Ghent, which closed the War of 1812, was directed to changing the northern boundary in order to secure for Canada the desired connection with the growing population within the Mississippi Valley.

The British and American commissioners who negotiated the treaty of Paris in 1783 did not carry with them a boatload of experts, mostly professors, to furnish them with the necessary information concerning the countries involved. Had they done so, possibly one egregious blunder might have been avoided. In the second article of the treaty is contained the delimitation of the boundary. It ran from Grand Portage through Rainy Lake to the northwestern corner of the Lake of the Woods and thence westward to the Mississippi. Of course, the line from the Lake of the Woods was impossible, as the source of the Mississippi lay well to the south. There was thus left a gap of approximately 175 miles in the boundary. The mistake was due to a fault in the map which was used.

The necessity of correcting this error was utilized by the British as an excuse for reopening the question of the boundary. George Hammond, the British minister to Philadelphia, learned of this error at the time that the Americans were beseeching for a commercial treaty and for the withdrawal of British troops from American posts on the lakes. Hammond immediately saw the value of this opening and talked the matter over with his friend, Alexander Hamilton, the secretary of the treasury. The relations of the United States with European countries were at the moment complicated by the French Revolution, and these international affairs intensified party enmity in the states. Thomas Jefferson, the secretary of state, favored France, whereas Hamilton believed that the young country's best interests would be served by

drawing close to England in the war which threatened. He was therefore ready to listen favorably to Hammond's argument.

This was as follows: The eighth article of the treaty of peace guaranteed England's right to the navigation of the Mississippi River. The clause was inserted in the treaty when there was some chance that England would retain possession of East and West Florida and would therefore be interested in the navigation of the river at its mouth. This reservation had no connection with the boundary article, which was number 2. Hammond proposed that the northern boundary be so modified that British subjects could reach the navigable waters of the Mississippi, or in other words that the boundary line be run southward to below the Falls of St. Anthony.

Alexander Hamilton believed that there was brewing a war with Spain and that it would be advisable for the United States to purchase England as an ally by a concession of these four thousand square miles. On October 31, 1792, in a cabinet meeting he advocated just such a measure. He proposed giving to England the territory desired, and he was aided and abetted by his faithful and not too intelligent follower, Henry Knox, the secretary of war. The opposition to this proposal was led by the secretary of state. Jefferson knew the West and had an abiding faith in its rapid development, and certainly no American statesman has done so much to promote the interest of this region as has he. He was not unprepared to meet Hamilton's arguments, for he had previously talked this subject over with the British minister and had pointed out that the error in the boundary could be and should be rectified without a large territorial cession by the United States. He gave no weight to the argument that the right of Great Britain to navigate the Mississippi necessitated the alienation of United States territory that British subjects

might enjoy accessibility to navigable waters. President Washington closed the discussion by the remark that the "remedy was worse than the disease."

This effort by Hammond was only a preparatory game of bluff. The real contest was to come two years later. Great Britain was now at war with the French revolutionists and was more amenable to reason as it was expounded by the United States. For the expounding Washington selected John Jay, who was instructed to negotiate the commercial treaty, so long delayed, to secure the vacating of the lake posts, and to close up such other open sores as affected the relations between the two countries.

Lord Grenville, who conducted the negotiations for England, brought forward the question of the rectification of the boundary as one of the objects most pressing. He had before him a memorial concerning the West in which the writer laid great stress on securing access to the population of the Mississippi Valley in order that British merchants might enjoy the profits of the growing trade. The choice of two lines was the option offered Jay by the British minister. One extended from the present site of the city of Duluth westward to the Red Lake River, which was supposed to be a branch of the Mississippi. The line was impossible because the river chosen is a branch of the Red River of the North and so a gap in the boundary would still have been left. Nevertheless, if this line had been accepted, that greatly desired Grand Portage would have belonged to the British Empire. The other line proposed was to run from the junction of the St. Croix with the Mississippi northward to the already established boundary. This would have given Canada an entering wedge of land extending to below the site of St. Paul. In the treaty of 1794 John Jay managed to yield almost everything demanded by Great Britain and it seems almost incomprehensible that he should have hesitated about giving up

such a bauble as thirty or thirty-five thousand square miles of territory containing the future sites of Duluth, St. Paul, and the campus of the University of Minnesota. Fortunately the real fame of Minnesota was not endangered in this negotiation; the site of "Gopher Prairie" was not in dispute. Jay did not yield in this instance. He hummed and he hawed, he looked at the map and then at Lord Grenville and finally said that the map seemed uncertain about the course of the river involved and he thought it would be well to appoint a joint commission to investigate. The British were, therefore, obliged to be satisfied with the postponement of any decision.

Grenville did in Article 3 of the treaty secure one right demanded by the fur-traders. This granted freedom to each country to use the portage waters, and it prohibited the laying of duty by either country on peltries or on goods and effects of the Indians who might pass the boundary. By this clause the fur trade of the Old Northwest was legally secured to the British even though they were forced to give up the lake posts, which they did in 1796.

The next movement to settle the boundary came from the United States. In the fall of 1802 the negotiations were opened with the object of securing the consent of the British to the most direct and just means of correcting the error, namely, by running a line from the headwaters of the Mississippi to the Lake of the Woods. This time the negotiations were successful and on May 12, 1803, the most direct line between the two points was agreed upon.

At the same time, however, there had culminated in Paris certain negotiations which ended rather unexpectedly in the purchase of Louisiana, thus giving the United States the territory west of the proposed line, or possibly so, for the northern limits of Louisiana were unknown. The Senate of the United States, not wishing to impair in any way the rights

that had been acquired to the region west of the Mississippi, struck out the clause of the agreement with Great Britain establishing the boundary line. At the same time Secretary of State Madison laid claim to the forty-ninth parallel as the boundary of Louisiana. Thus the error of 1783 was united with a greater issue — the boundary of the territory stretching to the Rocky Mountains, a subject into which I have no time to enter this evening. Enough for us to know that the convention of 1803 was not ratified, nor did an attempt in 1807 to settle the issue end in a definite agreement. From the negotiations, however, it was evident that British ministers seemed ready to accept the forty-ninth parallel as marking the boundary of Louisiana, although that line from ignorance was based on a purely fortuitous circumstance.

The story of the closing of the boundary line of 1783 might very well end at this point, for the next attempt on the part of the British to rectify the international boundary is not connected so definitely with the previous negotiations; but since that attempt aimed at the alteration of the whole boundary of the Great Lakes region, it is one of the most interesting of the series of events we are considering. The War of 1812 is generally depicted as a war waged to protect our rights on the sea, which the British were continuously disregarding. They overhauled our vessels and impressed our seamen into their service. There can be no doubt that the popular slogan that aroused the people to a war pitch was connected with the wrongs suffered by our sailors on the ocean. But the men who forced our country into the war were Westerners and their irritation at the British arose out of western conditions; they resented the continued exploitation of the fur trade by Canadians within the boundaries of the United States and the influence exercised by them over the American Indians, who were bound by economic interests to the men of the northern dominion. This condition lies at the basis of the Western-

ers' hostility to Great Britain, and it was this western hostility which Henry Clay and the new men in Congress voiced. The stalwart and rather blunt provincialism of the West brought on the war, which these Westerners thought would be quickly ended by their prowess. Clay was only voicing the opinion of his neighbors when he boasted that the militia of Kentucky alone could conquer Canada.

We didn't conquer Canada, in fact we were beaten back. Our ships were driven from the sea, our troops did not win one considerable victory, except the battle of New Orleans, which was fought after the treaty of peace was signed. We did suffer the humiliation of invasion, and the public buildings at Washington were burned. From a military and naval point of view we were beaten. Moreover the British had had some very irritating experiences. There had been rather decisive, although small, American victories on the lakes and on the ocean. These called for retribution, and the editors of British newspapers were loud in their demands for punishment. The negotiations for peace occurred just at the moment of England's greatest exhaltation in Europe. Napoleon had been overthrown. England was everywhere regarded as a savior of civilization, and her people were willing to accept the glory which had come to them.

They had made peace in Europe, but in one insignificant part of the world they had failed to convince the people of the power of the British Empire. The newspapers made of the American situation their main news items and the subject of editorial comment. "The London Times, the Morning Post, the Sun, the Courier, were incessant in their demands, and beyond all others abusive in their language. James Madison, according to these journals, was a despot in disguise, a liar, an impostor, and the most abject of the many abject tools of Napoleon. The Government of the United States was, in the opinions of their editors, the most unprincipled . . . on

the face of the earth — a Government not only insensible to shame, but destitute of that brutish quality of being beaten into a sense of its worthlessness and incapacity." They didn't know when they were whipped.⁶

These newspaper editors demanded a dictated peace and wished the war to be continued until such a result was secured. Their demands may be enumerated somewhat as follows: "No Yankee must ever again be allowed to catch a fish or dry it on the coasts of Nova Scotia, or Labrador, or the Magdalen Islands, or of Newfoundland. Louisiana must be given up. A large piece of Maine must be ceded. Control of the St. Lawrence river must be secured to Canada by surrendering a strip of New York north of a line drawn from Plattsburgh to Sackett's Harbor. Troops must be withdrawn from the posts in the Northwest, and the safety of Canada yet further secured by the acquisition of the eastern banks of the Niagara river and the formation of an Indian territory reaching from Sandusky to the Kaskaskia."⁷

Such was the state of public opinion in England when the instructions to the peace commissioners to Ghent were drawn up by the British ministry. Naturally the thought uppermost in their minds was to make the peace prove to the Americans the success of the empire, which the imperial troops apparently had failed to do. Fortunately for America there were chosen as British peace commissioners men of mediocre intelligence and of no political weight. They were met by the ablest men in America. Three of the five American commissioners were Albert Gallatin, John Quincy Adams, and Henry Clay. There was lack of harmony among them but no lack of intelligence, and they saved for America what was so nearly lost by our army.

⁶ John B. McMaster, *History of the People of the United States*, 4: 260 (New York, 1896).

⁷ McMaster, *United States*, 4: 261.

The American commissioners had come prepared to discuss the questions involved in the rights of neutral ships and in the impressment of American seamen, but they found much to their surprise that the British commissioners were not intending to discuss these issues so paramount in American eyes. Nor were they discussed nor did they enter into the final treaty. The British commissioners found in their instructions three paramount issues, and they were told that the British demands concerning these must be accepted or there would be no treaty. These issues were the limiting of the fishing rights of Americans on the Canadian coast, the rectifying of the Northwest boundary, and the creation of a neutral Indian state. The first of these need not detain us, although its acrimonious discussion created dissensions between Adams and Clay. The last two issues are of importance to us.

The British fur-traders still had their eyes on the Grand Portage, and their influence was sufficient to make one of the proposed conditions of peace the alteration of the boundary by removing its starting point on Lake Superior from the Pigeon River to the St. Louis. Duluth was again in jeopardy. The third *sine qua non* of the British commissioners reminds us of that nery bluff of Benjamin Franklin, when he suggested in 1782 that the British Empire throw in Canada for good measure. The British now demanded the erection of a neutral Indian state between Canada and the United States. Its southern boundary was to follow the line of the Indian treaty of 1795 at Greenville, made by Anthony Wayne. This would have thrown into this buffer state northwestern Ohio, most of Indiana, all Illinois, and the states to the north of them. The true Anglo-Saxon, wherever he dwells, is able to clothe his diplomatic demands in the language of philanthropy. The British argued that their allies, the Indians of the Northwest, had been badly treated by the American settlers. They were constantly being driven

from their hunting grounds and obliged to abandon the graves of their ancestors. Furthermore, in their present state the Indian tribes were a source of international irritation. Canada also had its Indian problem, and it was proposed to throw the Canadian West into this new Indian state, all to be under the kindly and fatherly care of the British Empire. The American commissioners were assured that these conditions were the *sine qua non* of peace. Of course, such terms could not be considered, and Albert Gallatin and his companions began to pack their trunks. They lingered over the process, however, long enough for their opponents to receive further instructions.

The British ministry was far more interested in the European situation as it was unfolding itself at Vienna. Canada and the interests of Canada were, after all, very remote. The valley of the Great Lakes apparently touched British interests very slightly, in spite of the noisy editorials in the newspapers. The ministers took thought before allowing the negotiations to be broken off. They finally asked the opinion of the most popular man in England, the Duke of Wellington. Two questions they asked of him, first, his opinion about going himself to America and leading the British arms to victory; second, what he thought of making an issue over a cession of territory. The Duke of Wellington was a man of good common sense, not given to chasing will-of-the-wisps. He replied that he would go to America, if ordered; but he didn't regard it as worth while. And as to the demand for territory he felt certain that the success of the British arms had not been sufficient to warrant the making an issue of it. The advice seemed wise, and the British peace commissioners were instructed to withdraw their *sine qua non*. Since the American commissioners had already given up hope of securing any guarantee of American rights on the high seas, there was nothing to be done but to declare a peace and a return to conditions as they were before the war. This was done.

Thus ended the game of international poker in which part of the future state of Minnesota was one of the chips. It had gone on intermittently for thirty-two years, from 1782 to 1814, but no change had been effected since the time when the preliminaries of peace were signed in 1782. By the convention of 1818 this particular phase of the boundary question was closed forever by delimiting the two countries west of the Mississippi by the forty-ninth parallel as far as the Rocky Mountains. The fate of Minnesota was finally determined. It was to be built by the labor of American men and women; its industries were to be developed under the laws and administration of the great republic of the south.

During the War of 1812 both the British Empire and the United States had built many armed vessels on the Great Lakes. After the cessation of hostilities the issue immediately arose whether the two countries would enter into competition in building fleets for the protection of their boundary. The issue was even more comprehensive, for it would mean were this competition entered upon, the erection of large forts along the boundary line. The jingoes of both countries demanded just such a warlike competition. The honor of country, they argued, demanded such a preparation for war. The issue really wavered in the balance. Fortunately, better counsels prevailed and there took place in 1817 that now famous exchange of diplomatic notes by which each country limited its armed vessels to what was needed for police duty. Thus without formal treaty there has existed for over a hundred years the most important boundary agreement in the history of the world; it creates a boundary unprotected by vessels bristling with guns and without thick steel fortresses capable of withstanding the attack of armies. It is a boundary of peace, offering to a war-sick world an object lesson and a hope.

Such it should be, for the boundary line was conceived in the love of humanity, and Canadians and Americans by their

respect for the rights of others have raised a great monument to the two men who loved mankind and longed for universal peace, the two men who originally drew this boundary and who knew that they had laid as one of them wrote "a strong foundation for eternal amity between England and America." So long as this line remains as a boundary of peace between two nations of friends, so long will it endure as a glorious monument to Benjamin Franklin and Lord Shelburne.

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