

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

The Appalachian Barrier in Canadian History Presidential Address

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Volume 18, Number 1, 1939

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300183ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/300183ar>

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Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (print)

1712-9095 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Trotter, R. G. (1939). The Appalachian Barrier in Canadian History: Presidential Address. *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada*, 18(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300183ar>

THE APPALACHIAN BARRIER IN CANADIAN HISTORY

Presidential Address Delivered by REGINALD G. TROTTER

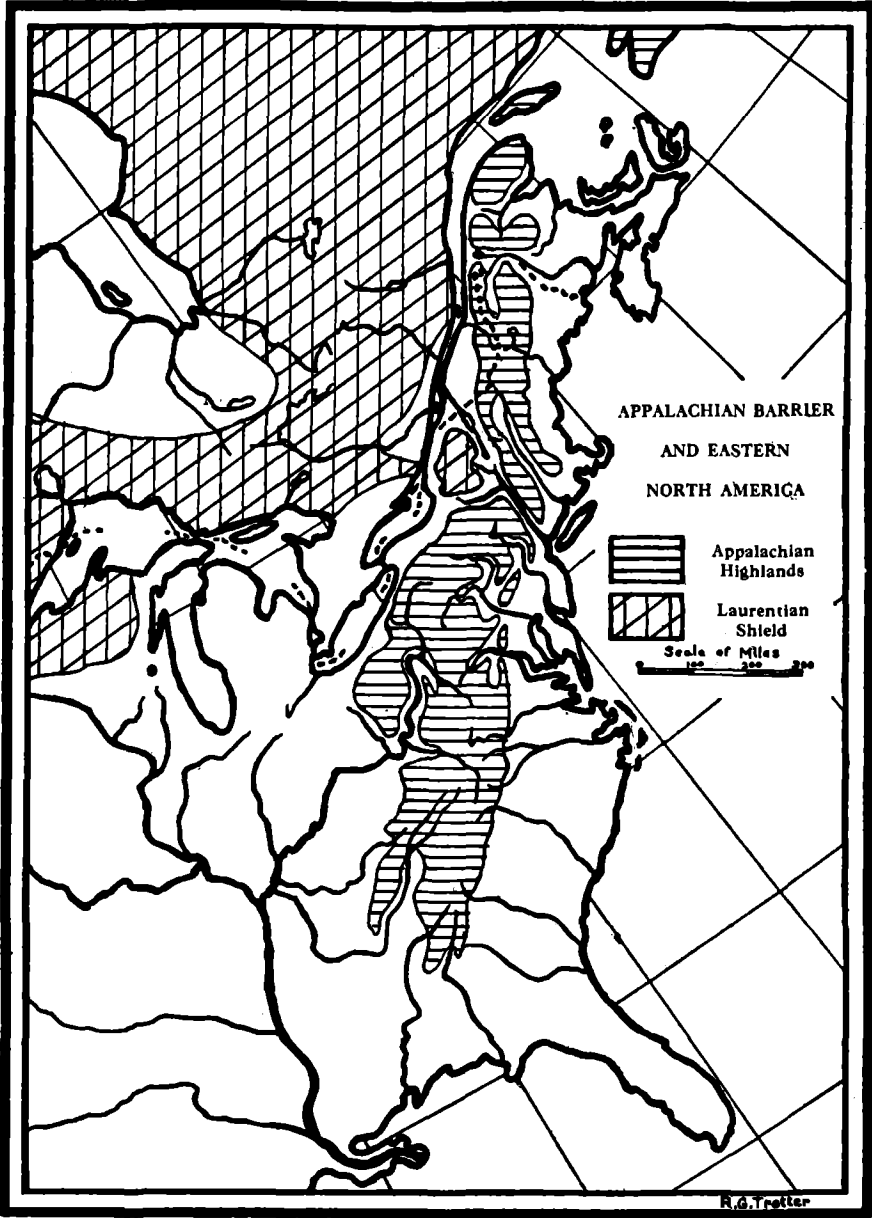
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I invite your attention this evening to a problem in historical geography. I am not proposing, however, to indulge in a philosophical discussion of the doctrines of geographic determinism. The fact is that I cannot profess that creed, for I suspect that men have been more than the mere victims of their physical environment. In the process of adapting themselves to its pressures and exploiting its resources, they have been also increasingly its masters. They have made it serve purposes and they have subordinated it to ideals with roots deep-bedded in tradition and in historic institutions. But when this has been said, it remains profitable for the student of human society to trace the relations between its growth and those factors of environment which have gone to shape its destiny. History is in vital ways the story both of man's struggle with nature and his partnership with nature. Physical features may place difficulties in the way of certain developments and at the same time in other respects may stimulate those same developments.

North American history has to do very largely with the migration of European peoples and institutions into the North American environment and the subsequent interplay of the two. The peoples of Canada and the United States and their ways of life are essentially European, but they show some characteristics that are caused by peculiarities of the environment on this continent. Certain traditions and outlooks common to both nations have contributed in both to the shaping of political institutions that are democratic and federal in form and to many other similarities that are obvious. Yet a fact of no less interest to the student of history is that there are two nations rather than one. Their separation, and the differences between them, can no more be dismissed as accidental than their similarities. I propose to explore with you tonight one corner of the very large and interesting question as to how there came into being a Canada that is so like and yet so distinct from the United States.

Three extensive natural features have become famous in North American history as barriers which man, as the hero of the historical drama, has had to overcome. These are the Appalachian highlands in the east, the Laurentian Shield in the north, and the Cordilleran mountain system in the west. Early historians rather oversimplified the dramatic roles of these sections. Barriers they assuredly were and are, but they have been a good deal more than mere obstacles to the mastery of the land and to the use of its resources.

The western ranges are the loftiest and most rugged, extending unbroken from Alaska and the Yukon to the far south-west. In the United States they occupy, with their intervening arid uplands, more than a fourth of the area of the country. In Canada they form a narrower belt, but fertile valleys and coastal lowlands are there much more restricted than in the states of the Pacific slope. To the young Dominion of Canada this barrier presented a problem that was more critical than that with which the far west confronted the more populous and powerful United States. Despite the



inhospitableness of most of the Cordilleran region to continuous settlement, its resources in both countries have richly rewarded development, while railways and recently the aeroplane have reduced what was once a formidable obstacle to intercourse between the populations lying to the east and west. Yet because of that great barrier, the communities on the west coast are still the most isolated and most precariously established sections of our North American civilization, and for that very reason the most in need of close association with larger communities possessing ampler resources and situated more securely.

The Laurentian Shield, occupying the great northern area fringed by the St. Lawrence and Mackenzie River basins, undoubtedly has been an obstacle to Canadian unity by thrusting between east and west so wide a region inhospitable to dense or continuous settlement and with a rugged terrain of rock and swamp and broken water-courses so inconvenient and expensive for railway and road transport. We have, however, been learning recently to see it more fundamentally as a unifying factor. It was so at first by virtue of its fur resources and the system of primitive east-west water transport that was adapted to the conditions of its southern fringe; and later its resources of forest and mine became increasingly factors in national wealth. The Shield, indeed, has become of late the field of the speculator's dreams as well as a favourite national theme-song of Canadian economists and historians. It is now deemed accountable for much that is distinctive in Canadian problems and achievements, from a goodly share of our railway debt, to our continental banking system and to the art of the School of Seven. Both as liability and as asset it is almost one hundred per cent Canadian, for it crosses the international border at only two places. There, however, it provides the Americans with the resorts of the Thousand Islands and the Adirondacks and the rich copper and iron deposits south and west of Lake Superior.

Much more might be said about the Cordilleran barrier and the Laurentian Shield, but I content myself with thus briefly recognizing their importance in the continental picture, before passing on to consider the third of the regions mentioned a few minutes ago, the Appalachian barrier. The theme of this paper is "The Appalachian barrier in Canadian history."

Among historians of the United States it has long been a truism that the Appalachian barrier has profoundly affected the history of that country. Hardly less momentous has been its influence on the destiny of Canada, and this despite the fact that the larger part of the barrier lies within the United States. At least one American writer has described it as terminating in the Green Mountains of Vermont. But it does not end there. On the northern coast of the Gaspé Peninsula where the highway runs cramped between the tides of the St. Lawrence and precipitous heights, today's motorist suddenly faces a sign that reads "Appalachian Mountains." The sign is justly placed. The rugged Notre Dame Mountains of the Quebec-Maine border and the Gaspé belong to the Appalachian system of highlands that stretches south-westward from the Gulf of St. Lawrence more than fifteen hundred miles to northern Alabama, within two hundred and fifty miles of the Gulf of Mexico. To the north-east it emerges in Anticosti and Newfoundland, but there is no need to bring these into the present picture. The Adirondacks, on the contrary, although geologically they are an extension of the Laurentian Shield, are so situated as to make it convenient for

the purposes of this discussion to treat them as part of the same barrier as the Appalachians proper.

The fifteen hundred mile stretch of broken upland of which I speak deserves well to be called a barrier, because of its breadth, in some parts more than three hundred miles, and the character of its topography, which is various in detail but everywhere presents a formidable obstacle in the way of ready access from coast to interior, everywhere, that is, except at about the middle of the barrier, where the level trench of the Hudson River Valley penetrates it northwards from New York to divide at Albany into two gateways past the Adirondacks, one to the valley of the St. Lawrence by way of Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River, the other to the basin of the Great Lakes by the Mohawk cut. No other passes through the barrier are comparable with this. The headwaters of the rivers of Pennsylvania and Virginia interlace with tributaries of the Ohio, but the barrier in those latitudes is at its widest. From seaboard New England and the Maritime Provinces, such few natural ways as are afforded by river trails and portage routes cross the most rugged and least hospitable part of the whole barrier and have not been readily amenable to improvement for convenient use, although the best of them, that following the St. John and Madawaska Rivers and the Temiscouata portage, attained importance early. In the more southerly mountains of the Appalachian upland even the hill tops often have good soil, and in due time they offered hospitality to considerable settlement, but the more broken mountains and uplands that separate the St. Lawrence River from the seaboard of New Brunswick and Maine were so denuded of their soils by glaciation that in this section are still to be found the most thinly populated regions of the whole barrier.

The relation of the barrier to the Atlantic coast is important. They are roughly parallel, but in the north the coastal lowlands are narrowest, in New England and New Brunswick hardly more than fifty to seventy-five miles at best, and much broken by the irregularities of a glaciated surface. Nova Scotia has a still more broken topography. The extremities of the barrier are in marked contrast. At the south a wide belt of lowlands extends from the Atlantic around to the basin of the Mississippi. In the north the barrier presents its most forbidding aspect where it thrusts abruptly into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Here there is no easy natural way around it by land, and the salt-water route is useless nearly half the year, for the north coast of Gaspé is above the 49th parallel besides lying in the path of winds blowing over the Labrador Peninsula.

As significant as the northern latitude of the St. Lawrence River's mouth is the fact that most of the basin of that river and the Great Lakes lies well to the south. Indeed the general trend of the river and the two lower lakes, roughly a straight line a thousand miles long, is almost parallel to the general trend of the Atlantic coast from Chignecto to Chesapeake Bay, and at no point, at least this side of Cleveland, more than three hundred miles by the shortest line from Atlantic tide-water. The general direction, too, is neither north and south nor east and west, but inland waterway and sea-coast alike extend from south-west to north-east, pointing by the great circle route directly at the British Isles. On a globe either side of the parallelogram looks as directly approachable from Europe as the other. Bordering its north-west side, between Quebec and Windsor, lies the most populous and highly developed area in Canada. The history of

this region and its present relations with the outside world and with Maritime Canada have been largely determined by its position with reference to the Appalachian barrier, which crowds it on the south-east and separates it from the Atlantic seaboard except where gateways through the barrier and railways and roads across it offer alternatives to the natural highway of the St. Lawrence Valley.

Much of the history of Canadian-American relations, much indeed of Canadian history, is the story of the changing pattern of migration and settlement and methods of transport as these have been shaped by, and have shaped, the means of getting across the barrier. This does not mean that Canadian history can be interpreted satisfactorily simply by applying to it the version of the westward movement which has been worked out by historians of the United States. That version stresses the fact that the Appalachian uplands presented such obstacles to penetration that settlement during the colonial period was perforce held to the coastal region. Instead of scattering thinly into the interior, the inhabitants of the English colonies spent a century and a half occupying more densely the Atlantic seaboard. By the middle of the eighteenth century, they thus had been able to develop a group of populous communities with the variegated economy and mature institutions of a settled society. The strength of the position that was thus consolidated was a vital factor in the British victory over the French in America in the seventeen fifties and again in the defeat of Britain by the colonies, though with French aid, in the Revolution twenty years later. By this time the Americans—already they were called that—were able to swarm over the barrier into the great central basin of the continent that now lay open to them, to press across it on a broad front, and finally to leap the western mountains to the Pacific slope. Canada's story was influenced by that American westward movement, indeed certain chapters of Canadian history form part of it, notably the early settlement of Upper Canada and later some of the peopling of the western prairies, but no more in this matter than in any other can Canadian history be understood if it is thought of as a series of foot-notes and appendices to the history of the United States.

The early settlement of Canada was strikingly different from that of the Atlantic seaboard. It is not merely that the barrier, and the Iroquois, kept early settlers in the English seaboard colonies from access to Canada as it kept them from the Ohio country. Canadian history did not have to wait for its beginning till they could push through; the settlement of Canada began behind the barrier. There was early French settlement also on the seaboard, in Acadia, but the main enterprise of the French was from the first carried on behind the barrier, and well behind it. Remember that the Appalachian Mountains and the Laurentian Shield crowd close to the shores of the long St. Lawrence estuary and that the early colony was therefore virtually confined to the river from Quebec to Montreal. In many essentials early French Canada, like Quebec today, was really not a maritime but an inland community. Its river outlet to the sea was long and in winter closed. The same barrier that held the English to the seaboard kept the French behind it. The Champlain-Hudson gap would have offered them a less desirable outlet than the St. Lawrence, except in winter, even if the Iroquois had not barred its use and the Hudson had not been in the hands of Dutch and, later, English rivals. The French coastal settlements in Acadia were

of little importance except in relation to Canada's problem of winter communications with ice-free Atlantic ports and Acadia's strategic position in relation to the fisheries and control of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Acadian settlements were never a serious threat to the more populous and more prosperous New England till after Louisbourg was built and then only in respect of strategy. More will have to be said of Acadia later in this discussion. The point here is that its importance in French hopes of empire was subordinate to that of Canada and derived mainly from the fact that Canada's position behind the barrier gave Acadia most of its value in French eyes.

Not only the location of the French settlement on the St. Lawrence, but its character as well, was determined largely by geography and available resources. Even in the middle stretch of the river, between Quebec and Montreal, the very heart of New France, the available area was cramped between the Appalachian barrier and the Laurentians. Soil, forests, difficulties of transport back from the river, all restricted agricultural activity. For a time there was thought of stimulating it by finding an export market through a triangular trade with the West Indies of the sort that early proved so easy and profitable for New England and the middle colonies. But the short season of navigation in the St. Lawrence combined with distance and with seasonal conditions of navigation in the Caribbean made such dreams impracticable. Acadia was better situated for that sort of trade but had neither the resources nor the men to compete with the better placed New England colonies.

Fur built New France. It was available in abundance and could stand the inconveniences and high costs of export around the barrier. Fur, indeed, it was that lured French settlement inland even as far as Quebec. Once established there and soon at Three Rivers and at Montreal, the fur traders could make tributary to them the great fur-bearing areas of the interior. Iroquois, jealous for the inland trade, and the white man's goods that it could bring, might destroy the rival Indian middlemen who served the French, but the latter proved able to press along the water routes past the Iroquois and tap directly the sources of fur in the heart of the continent. It was this far enterprise to the interior, from which the Atlantic seaboard settlements were barred by the Appalachians, that gave to New France its peculiar character and significance in the history of North America.

It is important to bear in mind that the main direction of French activity was not so much westward as south-westward. It is true that difficulties of navigating the Great Lakes, combined with the opposition of the Iroquois by Lake Ontario, led the French traders to prefer the Ottawa River and the comparatively sheltered route north of Manitoulin Island, but thence they turned southward through the Straits of Mackinac to Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Roberval's pilot had reported the southward trend of the St. Lawrence as offering possibilities of linking up with the lands by the Gulf of Mexico. By the end of the seventeenth century, French enterprise had made the connection and was staking out an empire stretching between the two great gulfs whose river systems give access to the heart of the continent. By that time, too, the French had begun to shorten their lines. In 1701, the very year after Iberville founded New Orleans, Cadillac established Detroit, almost midway between the mouths of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi. In the next half-century the

French drew in their lines still shorter. The Iroquois were now no longer the menace that they once had been, but the English settlers were threatening the passes in the barrier. The French worked strenuously to make good their claim to the basin of the Ohio; they planted new fortified posts along the western fringe of the Appalachian uplands, trying hard to close the gaps. Only the mountains now separated their wilderness enterprise and the English settlements. Fort Duquesne, the present Pittsburgh, built where the Allegheny and the Monongahela unite to form the Ohio, was as near to tide water on the Potomac as Montreal to Portland, nearer than Rivière du Loup on the lower St. Lawrence to the Bay of Fundy.

Few and scattered posts had been sufficient as focal points for the organization of the fur economy of the interior and for the preservation of satisfactory political relations with the far-flung tribes whom that trade served and on whom it depended. More and stronger posts were needed to hold the inland empire now that the English were threatening it through the eastern passes. But it was too late. Wide as France's empire in North America might be, its base on the St. Lawrence was too slight, and that base was too much cut off from the sea. For the same barrier that had done so much to promote consolidated settlement in the English seaboard colonies had prevented the French from establishing correspondingly substantial settlements as bases for their interior empire. The settlements on the St. Lawrence and at the mouth of the Mississippi were too undeveloped and too far apart to afford adequate support to the scattered posts that dotted the interior, in the face of the English challenge for mastery.

When the final struggle came, the French had to hold not only their colonial settlements but also their scattered wilderness posts upon which depended the consolidation of their position behind the barrier. Unless they could keep the territories immediately behind the middle of the barrier and maintain their connections between Quebec and New Orleans, they had little or no chance of retaining any of the far interior upon which the economic survival of New France was conditioned. By that time the English colonies were ready to push through in force. Moreover, they had already pressed north-eastward into Nova Scotia, where they could effectively threaten French communications with Canada overland. English sea power, too, had now consolidated its position in Newfoundland and at Halifax. With the conquest of Louisbourg the way up the St. Lawrence to Quebec lay open. In the same year the capture of Fort Duquesne and still more the destruction of Fort Frontenac shattered the western lines and destroyed French prestige with the western Indian tribes. Attack could now be made in force through the barrier and from the sea. The French at Quebec found their position untenable. The St. Lawrence River colony was helpless economically and strategically when cut off both from the Old World and from the traffic of the continental interior. Wolfe and Montcalm played out on the Heights of Abraham the dramatic climax of an issue that was already virtually settled.

The conquest was accomplished by isolating the Canadian colony. Yet paradoxically the conquest saved it from a fate of isolation which would have left it a mere back-alley in North American life. The conquest brought to the St. Lawrence a renewed opportunity of profitable links with the interior, not merely the interior north of the Great Lakes but, what was at that time vastly more important, the interior that stretched south-west-

ward just behind the Appalachians, the very interior that French policy had tried so hard to hold for Canada against the advance of the English from the coast. As a matter of fact, British power on the St. Lawrence was the heir of French power there in respect to the rivalry of the St. Lawrence with the English colonial seaboard for trade and control in the trans-Appalachian country. And because imperial authority rather than colonial communities at the seaboard dominated the Mohawk Valley and relations with the Six Nations Indians, the only geographically easy route by which the seaboard might gain competitive access could more easily be blocked. British imperial policy proceeded to give again to the St. Lawrence a favoured position in the trade of the interior behind the barrier. The British Proclamation of October, 1763, following close on the peace settlement, barred the authorities of the old colonies from control beyond the mountains and their people from free trade and settlement there. It was hoped to maintain unified control of trade, and a single policy in those Indian relations upon which it so largely depended, both of which would be impossible if the old colonies were allowed the free hand that they claimed. British possession of Quebec, affording as it did an established back-door route into the trans-Appalachian country, was to give thus an opportunity to perpetuate a trans-montane régime competitive with that which the old colonies were ambitious to establish and consolidate. Thus, it was hoped, could the imperial position in North America be improved. But the policy proved to be an imperial boomerang. While it justified itself on grounds of immediate military and commercial advantage, it did much to alienate the English colonies. Except New England they cherished ambitions for westward expansion. Eager for free western trade and a boom in western lands and settlement, they saw in the policy an attack on their vital interests.

If the conquest of Canada had been followed by its absorption into the life of the old colonies, the whole situation might have been very different. The assimilation of Quebec in its institutions and policy to the general pattern of those older colonies, even the absorption of the French by large English-speaking immigration from them, seemed, indeed, to be envisaged in that same Proclamation of 1763, inconsistent though such assimilation might be with the western policy embodied in the same document. Nova Scotia was in process of being assimilated. Why not Canada? Representative and other institutions were foreshadowed with the intention of attracting immigration from the older colonies in numbers large enough to change the complexion of the province. But there did not occur the mass migration of agricultural settlers into the old French community along the St. Lawrence which might largely have unified its life with that of the English colonies. The few hundred traders and merchants who did come had little effect on the life of the province and their interest in western trade soon accentuated the competition between Quebec and the English seaboard. Their influence was not unifying but divisive.

The Quebec Act, eleven years after the Proclamation of 1763, was an admission that a policy of assimilation by immigration had been premature, while by its extension of the boundaries of the province to the Ohio River it confirmed the policy of controlling the western country and its trade from the province on the St. Lawrence. In other words it was still hoped, on the very eve of the American Revolution, that the trans-barrier country, at

least as far south as the Ohio, might be held tributary to the St. Lawrence community. The Quebec Act, however, instead of furthering this hope, in fact added to the already increasing American pressure against the natural barrier a bitter resentment at this new legal barrier to western expansion of the old colonies.

Imperial policy concerning the western country thus hastened the Revolution. Before the war was over the Americans were well on the way to possessing by actual occupation a good deal of the basin of the Ohio River. They succeeded in holding the Mohawk Valley and adjacent regions, forcing the loyalists among the inhabitants to move to Canada as civilian refugees or as recruits in the King's forces, in which latter capacity numbers of them revisited the frontiers of American settlement in what was, in effect, a guerilla warfare for control in the West. As for Quebec itself, ensconced in its inland valley, distance and difficulty of access overland prevented the Americans establishing a hold on the province which otherwise they might have obtained despite British sea power. On the other hand, the British hope was disappointed of using Canada as a base for major operations against the revolting colonies. Isolated behind the mountains, its communications with the sea subject to rigorous seasonal limitations, and its own resources limited, it afforded too poor a base for successful operations even by way of Lake Champlain on a more extensive scale than raiding expeditions. Thus the barrier again helped to determine the destinies of the continent.

At the close of the war the British held the St. Lawrence and the lakes, but were not in a position to insist upon a boundary further to the south than that which was agreed upon, from the forty-fifth parallel south-westward and then north-westward along the waterway. The location of that line reflects the drawn issue between the seaboard with its Hudson gateway through the barrier and Quebec with its entrance around it by way of the St. Lawrence. Yet the seaboard community, pressing up the Hudson, had now gained some advantage. Strict geography would have placed the portions of New York and Vermont lying north and north-west of the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains north rather than south of the international boundary. Running where it does, the boundary severs them artificially from neighbouring regions across the border and from their natural metropolis at Montreal. But in the historical process the French had passed this region by, partly because of the Iroquois, and perhaps even more because the routes to the interior down the inside of the Appalachian barrier led around it. Settlement from the south had found portions of it accessible following the conquest and already was pushing into it before the boundary was drawn.

On the other hand, despite the boundary laid down in the Peace of 1783, Montreal merchants and imperial authority were still ambitious to hold the trade of the hinterland south-west of the lakes. This ambition persisted even after the surrender of the posts across the line under the terms of Jay's Treaty. The Canadian fur trade was forced to turn to the country north-west of the lakes and the War of 1812 confirmed the boundary. In any event the cross-border fur trade would have been doomed by the advance of American settlement. It remained to be seen if the St. Lawrence route could capture predominance in the trade of the new states, particularly their export of grain. The competitive pull of the

more developed economy of the Eastern States, however, proved now sufficient to cope with the handicaps imposed upon them by the barrier. The usefulness of the Mohawk-Hudson route was so greatly improved by digging the Erie Canal in the 1820's as to ensure American victory in that chapter of Canadian-American competition. The Canadian answer, the Welland Canal and the St. Lawrence Canals, failed to make the region south-west of the lakes tributary to the St. Lawrence. Even if the British preference which favoured the St. Lawrence route had not gone by the board with Britain's adoption of free trade on the eve of the completion of the canals, it is doubtful if that important section of what has recently been aptly called "the empire of the St. Lawrence" could have been recaptured.

The coming of railways in the fifties did not at first seem to strengthen but rather to weaken the relative position of what was left of "the empire of the St. Lawrence." They greatly enlarged transportation facilities, not only by the naturally easy routes, but through the opportunity they gave of artificially multiplying outlets from interior to coast, outlets usable winter as well as summer for heavy hauls. The Grand Trunk Railway found its way out to an open winter port directly across the barrier from Montreal to Portland. Useful, however, as this proved to be for Canada's own traffic, that was its main value. Montreal's importance had still to depend primarily upon trade and transportation north of the international boundary. The bid for through railway traffic from beyond the Detroit River failed to draw through Montreal more than a fraction of the traffic from the American Middle West. American railways vanquished the Appalachians and ensured victory for the Atlantic states in their effort to attract the traffic of that region. Was the St. Lawrence community, its early hinterland so largely lost, doomed to become itself merely a minor or marginal part of the empire of the seaboard United States? To some observers it seemed not impossible that the conquest of the barrier through improved outlets by water and rail directly across it to American coast ports might hold that very destiny for Canada. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 was a product of diverse forces and implied many things, but among its implications was certainly such a possibility.

Nevertheless the international boundary had not lost its reality. There were historical forces, which owed much for their shaping in earlier days to the presence of the barrier, and which strongly supplemented the still effective if somewhat diminished influence of geographical factors, to preserve the separation to which the international boundary gave legal expression. For even though the hinterland south-west of the lakes had been lost economically as well as politically, the Canadas themselves had been held together and at the same time been kept politically separate from the United States. Upper Canada had lain directly in the path of the American westward movement and in many aspects of its life was the product of that onward sweep of population from the American East. But the peculiar nature of the first and most significant wave of entering Americans, the loyalist migration from the frontiers of New York and Pennsylvania, bitterly anti-American in political feeling, and consciously dependent upon British aid for their independent survival, did much to perpetuate the international boundary. Though settling within the borders of the old province of Quebec, these American immigrants had little direct effect on the French

Canadians because they settled so far apart from them, further in the interior. Their coming, however, hastened the granting of representative institutions, a reversing of the policy embodied in the Quebec Act seventeen years earlier. It also brought the political separation of Upper from Lower Canada, but political sentiment and economic interest alike tied the newcomers, in company with their French-Canadian neighbours down the river, to the British connection. Whatever their mutual jealousies, the two Canadas had a common interest in their competition with the Atlantic seaboard states.

The very remoteness of the inland province from centres of American life facilitated Britain's preservation of her guardianship through the perilous crisis of the War of 1812 and in the face of later threats. It was the St. Lawrence that made possible the system of defensive communications with the interior into which went so much British money. It was through the St. Lawrence that British immigration came to complete the occupation of Upper Canada and in part to neutralize "post-loyalist" influences of American tendency. And thus, though the population of Upper Canada lived in a comparatively narrow strip along the international section of the great waterway, its political independence and in a large measure its economic independence from the power to the south had been preserved.

As for Lower Canada, its international boundary still partly coincided with the natural barrier, in that region where it is more of a barrier to intercourse and continuous settlement than anywhere else. The short stretch of border along the forty-fifth parallel ran through territory which was settled late, and then the American communities which furnished many of the settlers and with which the life of that border region was closely articulated were in regions themselves off the main path of American westward progress. Travel and trade from Lower Canada followed the Lake Champlain gap to a considerable extent, but the effects of this intercourse, as well as of the newer settlements near the border, were negligible upon the character of the province. In essentials the life of French Canada was still almost as isolated from that of the seaboard to the south-east as in early days. In fact, it was not long after the middle of the century before the old stock was pushing into the border region and demonstrating that any Americanizing encroachments there, in the long view, were only temporary.

Unlike as the two sections of Canada were in many respects, they had much in common. The Appalachian barrier, which had helped to determine the growth of a separate people along the lower St. Lawrence, had also delayed the westward movement from the English seaboard till the circumstances under which Upper Canada was formed provided a basis in sentiment as well as in economic interest for unity with the older French community down the river. Consequently, even the development of convenient railway outlets to American ports across the barrier did not produce in Canada any wide complacency at the idea of surrendering either economic or political independence to the United States. The two Canadian communities, each eager to guard its distinctive traditions, were no less eager to promote their common aims by preserving a joint identity which would enable them to build together an expanding community and life of their own. But if they were to be limited to their own resources for such growth, they could no more hope to succeed than could Quebec

in the days of the old régime. Having lost hope of recovering an economic hinterland south-west of the waterway, they found that they must turn to developing a hinterland of their own north of the international boundary. Perhaps in the development of the northern portion of the continent there was still a vital and profitable role that could be played. Within the province the Laurentian Shield, which confined Canadian settlement to so narrow a belt along the international border, was already yielding timber, but its resources did not seem to offer a broad enough base for permanent independence. In former days the "Nor'Westers" of Montreal had built an inland fur trade north of the border that reached across the continent, but the merger with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 had diverted its traffic from the St. Lawrence to Hudson Bay. The North-West had thus ceased to be a Canadian hinterland. But now fur was doomed as the principal staple of the North-West. Before long railways would make the distant prairies available for extensive settlement and profitable agriculture. With the best lands of old Canada occupied, and with American settlement and American railways pushing perilously close to the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, Canadian eyes turned again north-westward. Annexation of the West and the extension of Canadian railways and settlement thither might provide a hinterland such as had always been a necessity of Canada's independence from its American neighbours.

No less needed was a secure outlet to the open sea independent of frozen ports and of alien restrictions and prohibitions that American policy might impose in competitive or, so it seemed in those days, in aggressive mood. The same barrier that had done so much to produce a distinctive society and economy on the St. Lawrence made it necessary, as in the past, that the seasonal St. Lawrence route be supplemented by an overland route to the open sea that could be used, at least in emergency, the year round. The coming of railways gave added point to the problem, by opening the possibility of heavy traffic by such a route in competition with American railways. A railway to serve this purpose could be secured only by co-operation with the Maritime Provinces. The essential problem, however, was much older than railways, and to see it in perspective it is necessary to turn back briefly to earlier times.

Acadia had always been important to the power holding Canada, for emergency communications as well as in relation to control of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Its value in relation to Canada was, indeed, greater than its importance for New England, despite the fact that it was more accessible from the New England coast than from the St. Lawrence. It might be New England's outpost but it was Canada's outlet. New England was actively interested in its conquest, partly as a field for economic expansion but also to weaken the French in Canada whose possession of Acadia had strengthened their position and facilitated their border attacks on New England. Once secured as a British possession, it was too remote to become an integral portion of New England, and its resources, though less extensive than New England's, were so similar that after it had been consolidated against French recovery it was bound to become more competitive with New England than complementary to the latter's interests. In the American Revolution British sea power made possible its retention, and thereafter its competitiveness with New England was accentuated as it developed under the stimulus of imperial bounty and protection.

Between the fall of Quebec and the Revolution, Nova Scotia had been of less importance to Great Britain and to Canada because both had enjoyed the full use of the Hudson-Champlain route as well as the St. Lawrence. In the Revolution, however, Canada assumed special significance as a British base against the rebels in the seaboard colonies and Nova Scotia again became of vital strategic value. On the conclusion of peace, Nova Scotia remained a principal base of British sea power in the western Atlantic and its importance for Canada was enhanced also, as in French days, because it afforded essential means of winter communication. Appreciation of Canada's need of the overland route was increased by its use in the War of 1812 when regiments marched over it on snowshoes to augment the defence forces on the inland borders of Canada. The Legislature of New Brunswick in 1814 drew attention to the military importance of this St. John Valley route in forceful fashion. Measures for improvement of the route were thereafter periodically advocated, notably by the military commission of 1825 and by Sir James Kempt a few years later. Rude posthouses were not difficult to build, but the maintenance of the hilly thirty-seven mile portage from Lake Temiscouata to the St. Lawrence required constant care. So barren was the soil and so bleak the country along the portage that the military veterans placed there to keep the way open had to rely largely on government rations for subsistence. The route was difficult even for the couriers who traversed it with mails, though troops made their way over it again at the time of the Canadian rebellions. Arduous as this route was by Temiscouata and the Madawaska to the St. John Valley, the only conceivable alternative further east was across the base of the Gaspé Peninsula by the Matapedia River to the head of Bay Chaleur. This was so difficult and undeveloped that early settlers at Gaspé going overland to Quebec preferred the hard journey up the Restigouche and across to the St. John. It was possible to reach the St. Lawrence overland from the St. Francis, a tributary of the St. John west of the Madawaska, but in fact the Madawaska-Temiscouata route had held precedence since French days and its possession was looked upon as essential to the maintenance of communications to the ports of the Bay of Fundy.

In the famous dispute over the Maine boundary, the vital imperial and Canadian interest at stake was the possession of this route. New Brunswick settlers would have liked to secure the agricultural lands of the Aroostook and the additional timber of the upper tributaries of the St. John, but the necessity for winter communications was the vital point. This more than anything else determined the insistent British claim for the famous line westward from Mars Hill. It was an artful but to most present-day historians an unconvincing interpretation (some would say adaptation) of the terms of the Treaty of 1783 to suit the necessities of the case. Admittedly that treaty was drawn loosely and in ignorance of the detailed geography of the region; such a literal application of its terms as the American claim demanded, would unfortunately allot to the United States a salient containing the critical line of communications, and would also mean a boundary overlooking the St. Lawrence for many miles from the height of land. Britain would have had reason to be well satisfied with the line proposed in 1831 by the King of the Netherlands which the American Senate rejected, for it would have saved the route through the barrier. Eleven years later, however, the Ashburton-Webster settlement

secured a more favourable compromise. In its essentials it may indeed be described as a victory for the imperial interest which served at the same time the necessity of all the provinces. As in the former award the boundary followed the St. John River past the mouth of the Madawaska to the St. Francis, up which it turned. But south-westward from the St. Francis River the former award had accepted the American claim for a line topping the heights within a few miles of the St. Lawrence, and actually overlooking that river. The new treaty line lay well down the south-eastern slope of the mountains, cutting across the north-western tributaries of the upper St. John west of the St. Francis.

It is true that the coveted lands of the Aroostook Valley were not secured, nor much valuable timber in north-eastern Maine, but in estimating the significance of the area reputed as "lost" by the settlement, the area between the line claimed and the line established, it is pertinent to notice that that section of the Appalachian barrier did not afford any usable short cut from the St. Lawrence to New Brunswick. The north-west half of it is still almost unpopulated. Even yet, motor maps show no roads east and west across that section of Maine. If the motorist does not follow a Canadian route by Temiscouata or closer to the border by the St. Francis, he must dip to the south beyond the line of the extremist British claim. It is worthy of note, too, that the Canadian Pacific Railway, running almost due east from Montreal to the New Brunswick border, lies well south of the line of the British claim. Its present route is so much more direct and easy than any across the disputed area as to suggest that it would have been preferred even if the British claim had been realized. As for the railway projected in the 1830's between St. Andrews and Quebec, which had to be abandoned because it was to cross the disputed territory, it is extremely doubtful whether in any case it would have been sound policy to attempt to follow so direct a route as its promoters contemplated. I would suggest, then, that in attempting to view dispassionately that very controversial chapter in Canadian history, the story of the Maine boundary, it is highly advisable to keep in mind the character of the mountain barrier that was involved.

The conviction that the Temiscouata route was indispensable for the defence of Canada was vindicated during the American Civil War, when the contingent of twelve thousand troops that was hurried across the Atlantic after the *Trent* Affair would mostly have been held in the Maritimes for months, useless for the defence of the Canadian border, had it not been possible to send troops during the winter over that road, which by then had been made usable for sleighs. In so far as Britain's concrete demonstration of her intention to defend the Canadian border at that time served its purpose in preventing war with the United States, the policy that had secured that route through the barrier was more than justified. Although an alternative road was being opened by way of the Matapedia across the base of the Gaspé Peninsula, it lay through far more country that was only sparsely settled and would have been much more difficult for such use. Its only advantage was its remoteness from the American border. This advantage did lead to its being selected shortly afterwards as the route for the Intercolonial Railway.

A railway connecting the Grand Trunk with the Maritimes had long been talked about, but the difficult character of the barrier country that lay

between them was a very great obstacle in the way. Construction costs would be high, and after it was built much of the country it would pass through could provide little local traffic. But the necessity for its construction, at whatever cost, was made obvious by the Civil War in the United States, which did so much to bring into plain view the inherent potentialities of Canadian-American, as well as Anglo-American, relations and the conditions that those relations involved for Canada. It now became clear that the Intercolonial Railway was needed on grounds of economic as well as military strategy. Canada already had its direct rail outlet to Portland and normally would continue to make much use of outlets across the United States, but American threats to remove the bonding privilege enjoyed by Canadian traffic to and from Atlantic ports demonstrated the precariousness of attempting to build an independent Canadian economy without a railway to winter ports that would not be subject to the caprices of United States policy. The impending abrogation of reciprocity also stimulated a desire to promote trade among the provinces, which it was felt would require for its adequate growth the building of direct rail connections.

The task required public support. Arrangements among the separate provincial Governments and with the imperial Government were proving very difficult to make. Like the question of the North-West this problem was really national in scope. Both problems required the erection of a national state. Both helped to bring Confederation. It is further significant that because the rugged character and the far northward thrust of the barrier between the St. Lawrence and the Maritimes made necessary a railway that could hardly be expected to pay its way by the traffic it would carry, the Dominion had to begin its life with a national railway policy that recognized railways as an indispensable means for building the nation, a means which must be provided, if need be, at national expense. It is appropriate to recall that the building of the Intercolonial was vindicated on military grounds during the earlier years of the Great War, and to remember that so far as ordinary traffic is concerned the mere possession of an all-Canadian railway to winter ports has ensured continued use of United States railroads as well, and under favourable conditions.

I have been speaking from the point of view of Central Canada and the problem of building a nation by linking it with a continental hinterland and with an adequate all-year-round outlet to the Atlantic. What of the Maritime Provinces and their own interest in relation to this whole situation? These provinces well deserve their appellation maritime. Even more than in the case of New England the barrier had hemmed them in against the sea, cutting them off from the distant interior. Their settlement was mostly confined to narrow coastal lowlands and a few river valleys. Agriculture was of minor importance compared with fisheries, timber, and shipping, supplemented, particularly in wartime, by exploiting their favourable position in relation to naval maintenance and operations, both by privateering and by supplying the Royal Navy. Their importance to British sea power had stimulated not only economic growth but the rapid development of a cosmopolitan culture, particularly in Halifax. The operation of their extensive mercantile shipping brought their people into close touch with a wider world, British, West Indian, American, in fact cosmopolitan. By the 1860's Nova Scotia was enjoying a brief period of

something very near to a national life and consciousness of its own. Under such circumstances it was natural that a good many people there should look with some suspicion at proposals for a continental tie-up with Canada. Would there be adequate compensation for the lessening of independence that would be involved? The attraction of Canadian markets as a possible substitute for American reciprocity, and the desire for greater unity for defence, doubtless had some favourable effect. It was argued, moreover, that railway connections would lead much of the traffic of the continent to Maritime Province ports, thus shortening the ocean voyage and augmenting the seagoing interests of the whole region. The Intercolonial Railway was for them an indispensable condition. Imperial policy also played its significant part. From a variety of motives and with somewhat mixed feelings they entered Confederation.

Was Confederation a mistake for the Maritimes? Certainly their prosperity declined relatively in the following decades, when wood and sail gave way on the seas to steel and steam, when the consequent speeding up of ocean transport and the continuing high costs of long rail hauls nullified the hoped-for advantage from their eastern position on the front porch of the continent, and when many phases of economic life became concentrated in metropolitan centres outside their borders. I do not propose here to weigh the relative importance of factors such as these, but it does appear that the Appalachian barrier has a bearing upon the question as to whether the problems that must in any case have confronted the Maritimes could have been met by them more successfully if they had stayed out of the Dominion of Canada. What were the alternatives to Confederation? Going their own way as separate provinces or as a single colony they would have found themselves isolated from the continental hinterland upon which they would have become increasingly dependent with the decline of their position in oceanic trade. Canadian external traffic would without doubt have moved much more than it has done directly across the Appalachian barrier to the more favourably situated ports of the United States. Canada would have had little inducement to tap the public Treasury in order to provide railway facilities to Maritime Province ports on an uneconomic basis. Or consider the alternative of becoming an eastern outpost of the United States. Within the American orbit the Maritime region would have found itself even more marginal than eastern New England has become in the American system. The United States has no need for the winter ports of the Maritimes. The economy of the Maritimes, moreover, is competitive with that of New England; and it is not difficult to imagine which would have had the worse of it if they had been drawn into the same national orbit. In fact, within the American system the bargaining position of the Maritimes would have been negligible. On the other hand, the Dominion of Canada could not be formed without them. The very barrier that made them remote made them necessary. Only by their integral co-operation could its obstacles be surmounted and a nation be called into being that should possess a geographical basis for enduring independence. When these things are considered, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Maritimes, in view of their natural position and the character of their resources, were exceedingly fortunate that geography also made them necessary to a more populous and a wealthier community, since by association with it in a common national state they could secure, not it is true

all the compensations that they might like, but nevertheless some advantages that they could get in no other way. History since Confederation seems to indicate that the Maritimes have not been unaware of the advantages of the bargaining position that they thus possess.

The imperial Government gave its backing to Confederation once the project was launched, and it speeded the new Dominion's expansion from sea to sea. It did so essentially because, after having spent millions on British North American defence, it came to realize at the time of the American Civil War that the establishment of such a union had become indispensable to Canada's survival and national growth. In political union the sections of British North America might form an interdependent society with sound basis for national life in its possession of wide natural resources and adequate outlets to the sea free from alien control or interference.

The existence of formidable natural barriers between the several sections of Canada has meant and must continue to mean difficulties to be overcome in the creation and in the preservation of the necessary minimum of national unity. But in the case of at least one of these barriers, the Appalachian system, with which we have been specially concerned tonight, it is evident that its existence has also had much to do through long years with calling into being in the northern half of this continent a separate Canada and stimulating its growth into the Canada of today, stretching from ocean to ocean. Canada's natural barriers have each in its own way stimulated the development of a national economy and a national political system by which each section in union with the others might secure a larger share in a national life than would be open to any of them under any other auspices. Canadians who share a hope, as most Canadians seem to do, that Canada will endure and that Canadian unity will grow, may deplore any obstacle that perpetuates division. They will do well to recognize also that a geographical barrier separating sections may nevertheless in some ways unite them. Moreover, by requiring combined effort to surmount it, a barrier may contribute to deeper appreciation of the importance for each section of the common interests of all, to a wider recognition of the continued necessity of shouldering national burdens nationally, and by no means least to the enlargement of a common loyalty. Canadian loyalties to national ideals and institutions are finding nation-wide expression in these present weeks of the royal visit. Such loyalties do not have their basis only in political tradition. They are shaped by a history which has been founded in a very real sense on the solid rock of this continent's basic structure.