

THE NORTHWESTERN BOUNDARY.

The western boundary of the Northwest Territory was the Mississippi river. Afterwards, when the trans-Mississippi country, westward to the Missouri and the White Earth, was added to Michigan Territory and retained by Wisconsin Territory, it was understood that it was merely for purposes of temporary government. Wisconsin never laid claim to any of this tract, but did insist on having as its western limit the Mississippi river to its source, and thence north to the international boundary, as prescribed by the ordinance of 1787. Had the territorial legislators of 1844 had the faintest idea that Wisconsin was to be still further reduced by taking from it the tract of country between the St. Croix and the upper Mississippi, and attaching the same to a new "sovereignty," then unborn, there is no doubt that their famous address to congress would have not merely breathed threats, but have been a notice of nullification itself.

It was not until 1846 that the northwestern boundary question arose. On the 14th of January that year, Morgan L. Martin, Wisconsin's delegate in congress, introduced in the house a bill to enable his constituents to form a constitution and a state government. This bill claimed the "ancient boundaries." May 11, Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois reported, as chairman of the committee on territories, an amendatory bill which cut the proposed new state down to its present boundaries, the clause relating to the northwest limit being: "Through the center of Lake Superior to the mouth of the St. Louis river; thence up the main channel of the said river to the first rapids in the same, above the Indian village according to Nicollet's map;¹ thence due south to the main branch of the river St. Croix; thence down the main channel of said river to the Mississippi; thence," etc.

Later, Mr. Martin secured the adoption of this important proviso in the substitute bill: "*Provided*, That the conven-

¹ For the map of and elaborate historical and scientific report on the upper Mississippi basin, made by Jean N. Nicollet, see *Senate Docs.*, No. 237, 26th Cong., 2nd sess.