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THE TRUE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

THE shortening of the route to the Indies by a western passage is a design which has long occupied the attention of maritime nations, and within the last few years various circumstances have combined to deepen the interest of the British public in the subject. The discovery of gold in British Columbia has already attracted thither thousands of adventurers, who are building up a colony that is destined to form the western terminus of a belt of British settlements gradually extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The precious metal has also been found of late, in very remunerative quantities, north of the United States' boundary, on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, and the testimony of hundreds of Canadians who have travelled across the Hudson's Bay Company's territory to the mines of the Far West has completely silenced doubts formerly expressed respecting the practicability of railway communication from ocean to ocean. It is not long since Major Smith and Mr. Wilson, in pamphlets which they published, urged the importance to national interests of this scheme of overland transit. The blue books containing particulars of Government explorations conducted by Captain Palliser and Dr. Hector in 1858-59, furnish evidence to the same effect. Last year Colonel Syngé, R.E., whose mind has been engaged upon the details of the enterprise for twenty years, read a masterly paper before the British North American Association on the subject. The narrative of a journey by Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle from Canada to British Columbia, and a work published by me on the resources and prospects of the latter colony this year, have, I hope, also contributed to stimulate statesmen and capitalists to a deeper consideration of the proposed undertaking.

In Canada, too, great exertions have been made to advance this object. In 1851 application was made to the Colonial Legislature for the incorporation of a company to construct a railway from Lake Superior through British territory to the Pacific. The Bill was read a second time, but afterwards thrown out, solely in consequence of barriers opposed to the action of the railway company by the monopolising claims of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1853 and 1855 application to the Legislature was renewed, but on each successive occasion was rejected on the same ground. Now, however, a more auspicious future seems to be dawning for the promoters of this stupendous work. Repeated attempts have been made by the Canadian Parliament to prove the invalidity of the Company's charter, on the plea that when the territory was conveyed to them by Charles II., it really belonged to France. But the law advisers of the Crown