

simply absurd, and the projectors as probably insane.\* Yet these expeditions were actually undertaken when the population of the whole of Canada was less than one-fifth part of the present population of Montreal, and, consequently, less than one half the population of Toronto.

That the early French colonists were pre-eminently distinguished by their desire for the extension of their territory, the following extracts from the Paris documents† will establish beyond doubt, and at the same time convey some idea of their activity and enterprise in the infancy of Canadian history, and also of the projects they formed, and the conceptions they entertained of the extent of the country they intended to colonize as new France, north of the great Lakes, two hundred years ago.

As early as 1616, we read that *Sieur Bourdon*, with three Frenchmen, was sent overland from Quebec, to take possession of Hudson's Bay for France. The French had already established a trade with the Indians of Hudson's Bay, and in a few years induced them to come to Quebec to barter their furs.

In 1661, the *Rev. Claude Dablon* set out overland for Hudson's Bay via the Saugenay, but he succeeded in reaching only the head waters of the *Nebouka*, 300 miles from Lake St. John.

\* Persons who pretended to be familiar with the difficulties of the overland route from Canada to British Columbia, were only too ready to predict the disastrous failure of the Canadian emigrant party of 1862 to reach British Columbia in one season, "supposing they escaped the Indians and starvation."

Probably there is no stretch of country in the world exceeding one thousand six hundred miles in continuous length, and wholly in a state of nature, which it would be possible for one hundred and fifty people, including a woman and three children, to traverse during a single season, overcoming such apparently formidable obstacles as the Rocky Mountains have been supposed to present. The simple fact that these emigrants were enabled to take a large number of oxen and horses through the mountains, by an undescribed Pass, supplies a most satisfactory answer to those who have uniformly represented the dangers and difficulties of a route across the continent within British Territory, as insuperable without extraordinary outlay. Here we have an instance of a large party of emigrants, nearly all unaccustomed to the work, effectually combating those difficulties, and proving that they were either grossly exaggerated or in a great part imaginary. Another important fact which this journey has developed, is the ease with which the Fraser river is capable of being navigated by canoes or rafts, as far down the stream as the forks of the *Quesnelle*, the point from which a road will most probably strike off in a nearly direct line to the Pacific, touching the ocean at one of those deep indentations which form so curious a feature of the British Columbian Coast. There can be no doubt that great privations were endured by many of the party, but at least until they reached the Fraser, there are, happily, no sad memorials left on the route they took, like those which distinguish every mile of the inhospitable desert which separates the valley of the Mississippi from the Pacific States and Territories of the United States.

† Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York.