

we should be able, by crossing to the narrows of the lake, to obtain the shortest line to Winnipeg and its neighborhood.

Mr. DAWSON. They are there yet.

Mr. MACKENZIE. I am glad they have come back, but it is rather too late. Well, Sir, we had also in the meantime endeavored to keep up our search for another route if this should fail, and it became evident, in the first years' operations of Mr. Sandford Fleming on the track I have indicated, that the country between Sturgeon Falls and the Lake of the Woods was impracticable for the railway, and that the crossing of the lake imposed very serious difficulty. That was therefore given up, and the route which is now about completed between Selkirk, on the Red River, and Fort William, on Thunder Bay, was selected by us. So urgent were we in prosecuting this work, that we let a contract on the east end, forty-five and one-half miles long, very early in 1875, or the fall of 1874, I forget the precise moment, thinking we would be able to take the route to Shebandowan, which, in consequence of the explorations showing the impracticability of the country, we had to abandon. We were able, however, to take thirty-two and one-half miles to Sunshine Creek, and another contract to English River, a distance of 116 or 118 miles. We then let out a contract, No. 14, from Selkirk eastward to Cross Lake, in the meantime prosecuting the work under contracts Nos. 15, 41 and 42, altogether a distance of 200 miles, as rapidly as we fairly could, in order to obtain a route preferable to the one we had abandoned. The hon. gentleman opposite has an advantage in one respect in debate on this subject, over myself or any other person, that he has had three men to assist him, strong partizans of his own, to make out as strong a case as possible against his opponents, and avoid every possible reference to anything that might be discreditable or foolish on his own part; and one of the statements of these three men who were selected for a special purpose—and they have prosecuted their mission with very great zeal—one of these statements is that we made a mistake in locating the road to Selkirk, and that by taking it in the first place from Rat Portage, a common crossing, to Winnipeg, we had permanently lengthened the line by twenty miles. This was very extraordinary news to me, and how these gentlemen managed, even with all the strong partizan feeling manifested in their report, to reach that conclusion, is a perfect mystery. They have it on record in the published reports of the Engineer in Chief that to take the road from Winnipeg westward to the south of the lake towards the neighborhood of Fort Pelly would increase the distance by thirty miles. Mr. Marcus Smith, in his second survey, under the instruction of hon. gentlemen opposite, appears to have reduced that distance to about twenty miles. Now, in the first place, the hon. gentleman endeavored last night to evoke some sympathy for Winnipeg, because I had determined that the main line should not go to that point. In selecting the line of the Pacific Railway I was bound as a Minister, bound in every sense, not to look upon Winnipeg or any other place in the territories as a point to be reached unless it coincided entirely with the public interest. Winnipeg was not the objective point but the Pacific Ocean, and at the time we acceded to office the case appeared to have been settled; that after two years' explorations in the Rocky Mountains south of Yellow Head Pass, it was determined by the Chief Engineer that there was no practicable route through the Rocky Mountains south of that pass. We therefore determined to make all our lines subsidiary to the question of reaching Yellow Head Pass by the most direct route possible. I never lost sight of this fact, or those two facts, that the success of a great trans-continental railway depended upon two things, to get the shortest

Mr. MACKENZIE.

route and the best as to grades and curves. That those could be had at Yellow Head Pass was beyond a doubt, and therefore we had no difficulty in deciding at a comparatively early day, upon the adoption of the route laid down by Mr. Sandford Fleming to that point. It may be said that I am trying to place the responsibility upon Sandford Fleming as Chief Engineer. No doubt I do as far as the engineering goes, but in respect to the general policy of the Government I and my colleagues are responsible. I had this to say then, and I have it to say now, that I am not aware that at any time any serious difference of opinion arose between the Chief Engineer and myself or my colleagues. I am not aware that we ever entrusted the work of surveying to any new men after our accession to office. We found Mr. Sandford Fleming, as Chief Engineer, Mr. Marcus Smith as Chief Assistant, and Messrs. Cambie, McLennan and others able lieutenants of both. All those gentlemen were continued in the positions they held, and all their energies were devoted to the best interests of the great enterprise which for the time was committed to our care. That those interests were well cared for by them I have no doubt. That mistakes were made by them is beyond doubt, and that mistakes may have been made by ourselves is equally beyond doubt; but I am not able, at this present moment, to recall anything of importance whatever that I would not have done under similar circumstances in the working of the line. We had to consider the interests of the whole North-West Territory, and it seemed to us that the best mode of considering their interests was to have the road pass as nearly as possible through the centre of the fertile belt in such a direction as would make it comparatively easy to build lines to the north and to the south which would become tributary to the main line. There were two courses which we might have taken. One was the course which the Syndicate has taken. They have decided to build the line from Winnipeg nearly due west, and at present it seems to be decided both by the Government and the Syndicate that it shall reach Moose Jaw Creek, and from that point it shall take the direction which may be found necessary, either in the direction of the Kicking Horse or the Yellow Head Pass. That road traverses a country which is comparatively level. The country which we traversed with our line north of Lake Manitoba, or through the narrows of that lake, was also a level country. Indeed, it was pronounced by many hon. gentlemen opposite in their criticism to be far too level, too wet, but it could hardly be more wet than that described by the hon. gentleman opposite when he told us, as he did last night, that the track was laid for many miles upon the ice. I do not think any part from Selkirk westward to Fort Pelly, could have exceeded that for wetness, nor am I aware that it is more valuable for settlement than a very large portion of eastern Manitoba. The present hon. Minister of Railways himself decided, after more than a year's exploration, upon making a change, and instead of taking either the southern or the northern route I have indicated, he took a line between the two, and instead of following the country where the natural features were most favorable for railway construction, he appears to have chosen the roughest district that could be found, making his road over hill and valley between the two routes indicated, in such a direction, and through country as made it impossible to construct a first-class road, and we had the humiliating admission in this House that he had given up hopes of building a first-class road, and had determined to build one suited to colonization purposes, with very high grades and very sharp curves, which would have made heavy traffic impossible with profit for all years to come. The Chief Engineer recommended in his earlier reports that the Government should confine themselves to two grades east and west—that going westward being no more than forty feet to the mile, and that going