

The early settlement of the provinces was effected by means of the rivers, and bays, and lakes. There were no railways in those days: the hardy pioneers, axe in hand, landed on the forest-clad banks, and cut out homes for themselves and their children. In the four or five winter months they became completely isolated from the outer world, and from all but their nearest neighbours. In consequence the progress of settlement was but slow, and it was confined mainly to a narrow margin of land along the navigable water channels. It was not until railways were introduced that the progress of the provinces was so marked. These lines of communication, performing their functions independently of climate, connecting all parts of the old settlement, and penetrating wide tracts of land not previously accessible, have given Canada an enormous impulse, and established the conviction that the great interior to be prosperous, if colonised at all, must eventually be traversed not simply by one railway, but by many railways. The great water-ways will do their part during the open season in assisting to colonise the vast unoccupied regions that are fitted for the homes of men, but they alone would be utterly insufficient. If existing railways have proved so advantageous to sections of the country provided with navigable water channels, and at no great distance from the ocean, such as the settled portions of the province of Ontario, railways become indispensable to the western fertile regions not so favourably situated. In the great internal cultivable territory, therefore, it is clear that a system of railways must be considered necessary, in order to provide for its occupation by the many millions it is capable of supporting.

We have already had some experience of railways in Canada, as their construction has been progressing for the past twenty-five or thirty years, and we have found it important to regard with attention the principles which should govern their establishment in new districts. I shall not enter into mistakes which have undoubtedly been committed in the past, by which a great deal of money, public and private, has been sunk and wasted; but in the remarks which follow, it will be observed that due regard is had to the experience gained in these matters, and to the importance of avoiding such fatal mistakes as the building of lines which would injuriously compete with each other, or the sinking of money prematurely in the completion of any lines long before they are wanted.

In carrying railways through unsettled regions, we are called upon to solve a problem differing in essential circumstances from that which has to be considered in laying down lines in old districts already well populated. In the latter case the work is designed