

OVERLAND ROUTE THROUGH BRITISH NORTH AMERICA;

OR,

THE SHORTEST AND SPEEDIEST ROAD TO THE EAST.

"Once lost, never regained."

SUCH is the motto with which I head these pages, because it embodies a great truth, and an ominous one, as regards the subject about to be discussed, namely, "The Shortest and Speediest Road to the East." The unprepared reader may feel surprised, but if he take the trouble to go through these pages, he will soon admit the correctness of its application. The truth is, that England is, commercially speaking, on the brink of a precipice without being aware of it. Wrapped up in her own prosperity, she is apparently ignorant that a trans-continental railroad is rapidly progressing through the United States, for the professed purpose of transferring the trade of the Old to the New World, and that ere long it will be completed. Or, if not entirely unaware of the fact, the few persons who have turned their attention to it are either heedless as to its general importance, or else foolishly incredulous, and therefore indifferent as to the results. And yet England has in her hands the means of rivalling that high road, as we shall presently show, by one still more direct through British North America, and of thus averting the impending danger. But this is not generally known; or rather (as is almost always the case when a subject that is not over favourably looked upon, has been but imperfectly studied, and that from a distant point of view), those who are more or less aware of it are only acquainted with the objections that have been made to its practicability. And these have been so often repeated, that they are almost taken for truth. In the meanwhile the Americans are actively advancing towards the attainment of their object, and if England neglects this opportunity, she will awake, when too late to recover them, to regret the loss of her trade with the East and her commercial supremacy.

But before proceeding further, it may be well to give a short description of the way in which this great American enterprise, the most magnificent perhaps of modern times, is progressing, so that the reader may better realize the extent and imminence of the danger with which we are threatened.