

itself without a single foreign immigrant having been drawn there, without a railway, without any great public works. Ah! if we had the railways of the Eastern Townships, or those that we have given to Manitoba, I answer for it, Mr. Speaker, that in twenty-five years hence, we would have in the great valley of Lake St. John a population of 250,000 souls. Yes, Sir, what we require is a railway, which starting from Quebec should be continued as soon as possible to the shores of Lake St. John. Once the road has reached the Lake, we will ask nothing more from the Government; private enterprise will find the means of building the branch lines to the north and to Chicoutimi. The Quebec Company have already begun to build the road. But their means are quite limited, and it is impossible for them, if the Federal Government do not come to their aid, to build the road through to the Lake with their own resources. The Government of Canada, I am sure, will secure the completion of a road so important for the whole Dominion. I come now, Sir, to the objections raised against the building of this road. Some one has said that there is no passage by the route chosen by the Quebec Company. Whoever said that was not serious. The idea of saying there is no passage when we are crossing the Rocky Mountains! In 1876, at the request of the Hon. David Price and myself, the Hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Province of Quebec, entrusted Mr. Sewell, and later, Mr. Dumais, surveyors, with making explorations in order to see whether there was a passage. These gentlemen did not discover any serious impediments. I am informed that the Company's engineer has found a very easy passage. This fact is set forth in Mr. Light's report, for a copy of which I am about to ask. It is again said: it is too far north. The other day, the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Anglin) said that it would be just as worth while to build a railway to the moon as to Lake St. John. I cannot certainly congratulate the hon. member on his knowledge of the country. The hon. member must have paid very little attention to what has been going on in the Province of Quebec within the last few years. Luckily, the hon. member for Gloucester belongs to the Liberal party, upon which the country relies but little. It is a prejudice to say that it is too far north. Within a few years clearings have been begun in the township of Albariel, the spot the furthest north where colonization has so far penetrated. Here is what Mr. Dumais, who surveyed the township, says of it:

"Since I set foot in Albariel I have been experiencing one surprise after another. There is nothing finer than the woods that shade the dells and the hillocks through a great part of this township. The soil is very rich, and very easy to clear; the wood is of very vigorous growth, which is easily explained when we study the nature of the soil. It is a garden, neither more nor less. I think that I can find over 300 lots of first-class land in this place; with 100 lots more in Normandin, and at least 100 more lots, quite as good, in the vacant space to the west of these two townships, we will have 50,000 acres of fertile land, or 1,000 lots of 50 acres each."

Then he adds:

"I hardly know what one feels at the sight of the immense plateau where Albariel and Normandin stretch out, and invite one to come and breathe the life-giving air 'neath their magnificent and shady forests."

It was not long since the great explorer, Mr. Olivier Lachance, was telling me that he had penetrated nearly as far as Lake Mistasni, that there he had found the very finest of lands and a climate as mild as that of Lake St. John. He told me that he had walked during eight days over fine level land, and through a magnificent forest of the finest hard wood trees of different kinds. Let it not be longer said that Lake St. John is too far north. Facts destroy this prejudice. It is said: What is the Saguenay fit for? Every year some calamity happens. One year it is frost or hail; another year an inundation; another, again, there is a fire. Well, frost and hail are experienced elsewhere. Has there not been frosts in Upper Canada and

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even in Manitoba; and no one thinks of depopulating those Provinces. But the unfrequent frosts at Lake St. John are easily explained. I will let Rev. Father Lacasse speak for me:

"But, you will ask, how do you explain the frosts that are a drawback to the settlement of St. Prime, it is said? The answer is easy; former frosts are explained by explaining the absence of frosts now. Here is the explanation: The ground is flat, and though the rivers have a good fall. When there is but little clearing done, the water remains in the forests, retaining the dampness, so that the places that cannot receive the warm air from the lake are sometimes exposed to frost. Now that the clearings at St. Prime are more extensive, the frosts are less frequent. There are good ditches, more open spaces, the warm currents can circulate freely, and an era of prosperity is beginning for these settlers."

As for the hail, is there a place in Canada that is not sometimes visited by this scourge. Hail only did damage once in the Saguenay district, and the same storm that brought us that hail likewise ravaged a part of the Eastern Townships, Beauce, and a part of the Maritime Provinces. Hail has often caused considerable damage in Ontario. And yet we have only had it once in the Saguenay district, and only over a very limited extent. Bouchette, in his topographical dictionary, at the words Lake St. John, tells us that in 1828 the rust had destroyed nearly all the crops in the district of Montreal and in Upper Canada, yet the wheat sown at Lake St. John had produced a crop of excellent quality. The district of Montreal and Upper Canada had therefore had their calamity, and yet no one thought of abandoning them. I state, therefore, that frosts and hail are less frequent in the Saguenay district than in any other part of Canada. As to inundations, there have been two or three along the shores of the lake. They were caused by the extraordinary sudden rise of the waters of the lake. As it was natural to suppose, the settlers cleared first along the borders of the lake, and they alone suffered by the inundation. The settlers living beyond the first range did not suffer by these inundations. Rev. Father Lacasse says on this subject:

"Before visiting Lake St. John, it is necessary that you should know what it was formerly. It was a lake twenty times greater than it is now, there is no doubt about it, science is there to prove it. A fissure opened and the lake emptied itself out through the Saguenay. Before the Saguenay, this unique wonder of its kind, was formed, the lake emptied either by the River Ste. Marguerite, a dried up Saguenay, or by the St. Maurice. Both of these suppositions are admissible. The chain of mountains that surround the lake is cut in the two above mentioned places. It would be difficult to make persons, going from Lake St. John to St. Maurice, believe that the latter did not formerly receive the waters of the primitive lake. The valleys, the lay of the mountain, shows it at every step. But let us leave the beautiful St. Maurice and come back to Lake St. Jean which, when we left it, was pouring out its waters all at once through the Saguenay. The lake has dwindled down to what you now see it; and one fine morning the sun, to his great surprise, shed its rays over more than a million acres of land for the first time in its existence. This land was warmed up, and now you see it covered with a vast forest. The greater part of the lake was of uniform depth, and that is why the land is as level as a map. Through this vast basin, the waters from the melting snow and the rain from heaven opened their way through to the lake. There are fine large rivers, streams in every direction, that facilitate the draining of the soil. Some of these rivers are even larger than the outlet. So that when the snow melts the waters of the lake rise and overflow, during several weeks, lands whose fertility could not be surpassed by those of the Netherlands."

"There is a very simple and very cheap means of preventing this inundation: widen the outlet that is narrowed down by two rocky points. A little powder would widen the outlet more than forty feet by a depth of twenty feet. The Government, you may be sure, will not be long without making this expenditure, or some private individual will undertake the work for a small portion of the land that is now under water long enough to prevent settlement."

By the way, I would state that I asked the hon. Minister of Public Works to be so kind as to put into the Estimates a sufficient sum to do the work mentioned by the Rev. Father Lacasse. I trust the hon. Minister will grant us this sum. As you see, there is nothing alarming about this inundation. It only affects the first range along the lake, and not everywhere, only along the upper part. Moreover, this inundation can be prevented, and it has only occurred two or three times. Very often there are disastrous inundations in France, Spain, Holland and else-