

Marcus Smith, Mr. Cambie and other Engineers of the Survey. An ascent of the Frazer River, as far as Yale, and on to Boston Bar by land, has enabled me to form some idea of the difficulty of penetrating the cascade range of mountains with a line of railway. I have further inspected Burrard Inlet, Haro and Georgia Straits (as well as the inner channels emerging at Active Pass), Discovery Passage and some of the channels in the vicinity of Valdes Island, including Seymour Narrows. An examination has also been made by their Lordships' direction of the approaches to the Skeena River, the result of which has been reported in my letter No. 326 of the 9th instant.

3. The question of site of ocean terminus should, it appears to me, be determined by two main considerations (besides feasibility in an engineering point of view):—

1st. Its suitability for the interests and traffic of the populated parts of British Columbia, that Province having joined the Dominion upon the promise of a railway.

2nd. Its being situated at a convenient port for ocean steamers to take up, direct from wharf accommodation, the through traffic for Australia, China, Japan, and other places across the Pacific at all seasons of the year and in all weathers.

4. Bearing in mind these considerations, it appears desirable to reject all idea of a terminus on the coast between Vancouver and Queen Charlotte Islands. The navigation of that part of the coast, judging from the charts and from the reports of Admiral Richards and other naval officers, is decidedly unfavorable, and I should equally reject the vicinity of the River Skeena owing to the prevalence of fog, ice and other climatic causes incident to a high latitude, as well as to the difficulties of approach from sea.

5. If the above views are correct, the question of site for the terminus is narrowed to a choice between Burrard Inlet and a port in Vancouver's Island.

6. Burrard Inlet does not appear suitable for an ocean terminus on account of difficulties of navigation to seaward. The tortuous channel from Burrard Inlet to sea through Haro Strait will frequently be unsafe on account of the strength of the tide, great prevalence of fog and absence of anchoring depth. Burrard Inlet itself also, although possessing a safe port in Cole Harbour, and a good anchorage in English Bay, has these objections, viz.: that the narrow entrance to Cole Harbour through the First Narrows is hardly safe for large steamers in consequence of the rapidity of the tide; and that English Bay, although affording good anchorage, would not, in my opinion, be smooth enough during north-westerly gales for ships to lie at wharves, there being a drift of forty miles to the north-west.

7. Another grave objection to Burrard Inlet as the final terminus, is the possession of San Juan and Stuart Islands by a foreign power. These islands form the key of the navigation inside Vancouver Island. In case of war with the United States that power might readily stop our trade through Haro Strait. (San Juan was visited last month by General Sherman, I believe with a view to its fortification.)

8. Condemning Burrard Inlet for the above reasons, I conclude that the terminus should be in Vancouver Island, which may be reached in three ways:—

1st. By steam ferry carrying a train from Burrard Inlet to Nanaimo.

2nd. By bridging Seymour Narrows.

3rd. By steam ferry carrying a train from Estero Basin (Frederic Arm) to Otter Cove.

9. The train once landed on Vancouver Island, can, I understand, be carried without much difficulty either to Esquimalt or to Quatsino Sound, or perhaps to Barclay Sound, where Uchucklesit Harbour forms an admirable port.

10. The first method of crossing the trait, that of a steam ferry from Burrard Inlet to Nanaimo has three objections,—1st. The drawbacks above mentioned, to navigating the First Narrows and to going alongside a wharf in English Bay; 2nd. The difficulty and certain frequent detention in mid-channel owing to fog; 3rd. The heavy sea with north-westerly and south-easterly gales which would be at least inconvenient for the conveyance of a train across the Strait of Georgia. Another, and I think a cardinal objection, to the route by the course of the Fraser River and Bur-