

freight cheaply is concerned—from Selkirk to Lake Superior, are not considered of equal consequence farther west. I need hardly say that it is of great consequence to the dweller in the prairie, no matter how remote from Lake Superior, who expects that his grain will reach the sea-board *via* the line from Selkirk to Thunder Bay, that that line should be capable of carrying freight as low as possible; always provided that security shall be given that the amount charged for transportation shall bear some proportion to the cost of transportation. But, although this is important to all the dwellers on the prairie, in Manitoba, as well as farther west, it is of the last consequence to the dweller more remote, disadvantaged as he is by his being farther west, to have a line with good grades and curves, and capable of transporting produce cheaply to Selkirk. Such a line, it is obvious, you will measurably have under any circumstances, because the character of the country is most favorable for the construction of a good railway. Very nearly one-third of the 1,500 miles from Lake Superior westward is reported as absolutely level, and a great portion of the rest is reported as being approximately level. But it is equally obvious, as appears from the general tenor of these reports, that there are, as is natural in such a stretch of country, great gullies, enormous water courses, and mountainous regions, in which the question of grade becomes a serious one, and in which a heavy expense will be necessary to bring the grade down to the proper point. These heavy grades must involve a heavy charge for transportation, to which the letter of the Minister of the 15th April, with reference to the location and character of the railway west of Selkirk, alludes, as follows:—

“With regard to the location and character of the railway, I am aware that your own preference has been for a line with light, easy gradients. The Government recognizes the advantage of this feature between Lake Superior and Manitoba, but west of Red River we attach less importance to it than the rapid settlement of the country and the immediate accommodation of settlers.

“The policy of the Government is to construct a cheap railway, following, if rather, in advance of settlement, with any workable gradients that can be had, incurring no expenditure beyond that absolutely necessary to effect the rapid colonization of the country.

“In accordance with this policy, Mr. Marcus Smith has found a line on the second hundred-mile section where, two years ago, he reported it impracticable under the old system of gradients, and he has stated to me that there will be no heavier hundred-mile section than this one between Manitoba and the Rocky Mountains. I am, therefore, perfectly justified in calling upon you to take the accepted tender for the second hundred miles section as the basis for estimating cost up to the mountains.”

I pause to remark that this avowed policy of the Minister does in plain terms alter the whole character of the railway in grades, and I presume also in alignment and curvature. The policy was, instead of getting a line of the character agreed upon as proper, to get, —I suppose only temporarily, —as cheap a line as possible, to largely increase the grades, though with that to accept a location which had been found absolutely impracticable under the old system of gradients, but which, with superior grades, was reported by Mr. Marcus Smith to be practicable. The engineer, answering the Minister's letter, says:

“I understand the policy of the Government, with respect to the railway, to be . . . the roadway and works to be of the character defined by the 46th contract of the tenders for the 66th contract;”

And he describes what has been done in these words:

“West of Red River, 100 miles have been placed under contract, and tenders have been received for a second hundred-mile section. These two sections are designed to be constructed and equipped in the most economical manner, dispensing with all outlay except that necessary to render the railway immediately useful in the settlement of the country. It is intended that the line be partly ballasted, to render it available for colonization purposes, full ballasting being deferred until the traffic demands high speed.”

We are here met with this embarrassment, that as far as I know, there was no very close calculation before the calculation made by the Chief Engineer in April, 1880, as to the

cost of the prairie section; that, in making an estimate of the cost of that section, one was obliged to rely upon the description that the engineers gave of the character of the works required in different sections, as they described them. You find that they described the work as “heavy,” “moderately heavy,” “light, etc.”; and the nearest one could come to a true estimate was—always assuming, of course, that the standard, the curvature, the gradients, the alignment were to remain as before—that works described as heavy or light in one section would cost about the same in the prairie section. Of course, such estimates would be open to the same reduction which the British Columbia estimates were open to, on the two grounds—first, that the more accurate location of the line showed that it was possible to diminish the cost, and also, and I venture to say chiefly, that the change in the character of the line also diminished very largely the cost. I think it important that we should know, in full detail, what were the particulars of the modification in design which enabled the estimate, so obviously and very much reduced, of April, 1880, to be made. We have not an estimate of December, 1880, as to this portion of the line, because the Government does not propose to construct it. It is left for the Syndicate to construct, and the hon. Minister does not seem to have thought it necessary to obtain a further estimate of what its cost is likely to be. I am not now discussing the question of policy. I am merely pointing out that the changes made are important and serious, and one wants to know what were the grades and the character of the alignment which it was proposed to have in April, 1880, west of Selkirk and to the Rocky Mountains. Then, I turn to the section north of Lake Superior, which remains, so far as information is concerned, in the least satisfactory position of any section of the line, because, as I said on a former occasion, it was not regarded as of present consequence for any Government to push on the location survey of that section, as it was generally understood that its construction was to be postponed for a considerable time. Now, all that you can find, so far as I can judge from the facts before us, is the pretence that the works would be very heavy for a good line of the same character as the Canadian Pacific Railroad was intended to be—alignments, grades, and curvature of the character I already described, giving us excellent grades for the traffic east-bound, and fair, good grades for the west-bound traffic, the standard of the works, equipment, and so forth, equivalent to that of the Inter-colonial. The estimates made upon that basis, of course, wholly differ from any estimates which are to be made upon the basis of the policy of April, 1880. The engineer does not in the general report, so far as I remember, deal with that particular branch, but it is dealt with in the letters. The second letter would appear to have been written to the engineer, and is replied to by him, on the 16th April, and in that letter he shows the new basis of calculation:

“Sir,—In compliance with your directions, I have the honor to consider the cost of the eastern section of the Pacific Railway extending from Thunder Bay, Lake Superior, to the eastern terminus, Lake Nipissing. In my report recently laid before Parliament, I have referred to the projected line between South-East Bay, Lake Nipissing, and Sault Ste. Marie. The explorations of this district have established that a location can be had north of Lake Nipissing, which would be common for 60 or 70 miles to the St. Mary's branch, and the main trunk line to the North-West. As the St. Mary's branch will, in all probability, be constructed before the through line is undertaken, the length of the latter will be reduced by the length of the location, common to the two lines. The eastern terminus will consequently be advanced some 60 or 70 miles to the west, beyond the theoretical starting-point at Lake Nipissing. The length of the eastern section, therefore, may be assumed not to exceed 600 miles.”

That is the first element in this calculation. He assumes that the Sault Ste Marie Branch will be built before we commence the construction of the eastern link; that 60 or 70 miles of the eastern link, by which the construction is brought to the Sault Ste. Marie line must be built, and that he may take as a starting point sixty or seventy miles to the west of Nipissing. Assuming that he takes the length of