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The Northumberland Tunnel.

How The Big Question in the Little Province.

IN the great game of land-grab which the provinces of Canada are now playing with such proficiency, one at least of the component parts of the Confederation, is not in the least concerned. We allude to the little province of Prince Edward Island. Just at present there is nothing in sight to excite hercupidity in the way of territorial expansion but this by no means predicates a state of perfect quiescence, on her part. Indeed, the opposite is the fact. Never in her history, not even in the stirring colonial days, when she settled, with wonderful wisdom the vital questions with which great nations have struggled for ages—the Land Question, the School Question, the Currency Question, etc., not even in the agitation for and against Confederation—has the country been stirred more thoroughly than it is at this moment over the all important matter of Communication with the Continent.

Prince Edward Island entered the Canadian Confederation in 1873. She was ardently wooed by Macdonald, Cartier, Galt, Tupper, and McGee, in 1864, but, whilst all the arrangements for the celebrated Quebec Conference, which resulted in the union of the four great provinces of British North America,—Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick,—were made within her borders; and, therefore, is she rightly called the "Cradle of Confederation," she did not enter the Federation herself until the date above given. This slowness to cast in her lot with the other provinces had its origin in various causes not the least of which was the Communication Problem. Naturally, the question foremost on the lips of Islanders was, "What have we to gain by Confederation?" An Island, small in area, entirely occupied with agriculture and the fisheries of the coast, what benefit was to accrue to her from a common union with the rest of British America? What advantages were likely to come her way by the enactment of a common fiscal policy? Should she help build up Continental trade and commerce; contribute to the construction of railways and canals and the other organized systems of Canada without a special assurance that in their beneficent results she would be able to fully participate. A line of railway she had built from end to end of the province for herself, but even if it were net-worked with railway lines, the expenditure would be as nothing construction is so easy and cheap, compared to the amounts she would have to contribute to