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PRESENT CONDITION OF THE SURVEY OF THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

BY JAMES DOUGLAS, JR.

THE railroad is in our new world fulfilling a new function; for, from the north of North America to the south of South America, railroad companies are now the most active explorers of their unknown recesses. Heretofore, in the old world, these highways have been run only where a dense population needed their facilities for transport; on our side the Atlantic, on the contrary, either in connecting far distant centres of settlement, or in giving access to fertile districts—as yet unpopulated—the railway track is being laid through regions which would otherwise, for long or forever, have remained a solitude! Surveying parties are now looking for an easier route across the Chilian Andes than those by which the cattle dealers from the Pampas drive their flocks to the Pacific; and further north, from one side the Cordilleras, access is being sought by railway engineers to the rich table-lands of Bolivia; while, on the other side, every defile of the Peruvian Andes is being surveyed for one or other of the roads by which the Republic is endeavouring to throw open to the world its vast interior, teeming with Nature's richest products, but which are, to all intents and purposes, quite inaccessible. In North America we are expecting our first exact information as to the physical configuration of that most southerly zone of the United States bordering on the Mexican frontier, from the engineers of the South Pacific; to the same Pacific Railroad the geographer owes his present intimate acquaintance with the Rocky Mountains, along the 41st parallel; and the northern section of the United States west of the Dakota, is undergoing the same thorough examination by the engineers of the North Pacific. But this useful office of the railway is now being performed by the engineering staff of our Pacific Railroad, for not only are they penetrating and describing parts of the Dominion concerning which we certainly would never otherwise have known much, but they are compelled, owing to their utter ignorance, especially of the British Columbian District, to extend their explorations over an area greater by far than the engineers of any other railroad in the world have ever had to do, in selecting the best road to reach their goal.

In locating a railroad, a mere general idea of the country through which it is to pass is not enough, as thousands of dollars may be saved in constructing, and thousands more in the diminished cost of running, by avoiding a very insignificant ravine or ridge, so low that we would lay out an ordinary road over it without looking for another course. The engineer requires to possess that intimate knowledge of the minutiae of a country such as most men have not acquired of even their own immediate neighbourhood. In the late Franco-Prussian war, as well as in that between the North and South, there were many incidents which proved how vague people's acquaintance generally is with

Canadian Pacific Railway. Report of Progress of the Exploration and Surveys up to January, 1874. By Sandford Fleming, Engineer-in-Chief. Ottawa, 1874.

Canada on the Pacific, by Charles Horetzky. Montreal, 1874.

The Wild North Land, by Captain W. F. Butler. Montreal, 1874.

Geological Surveys, Report of Progress for 1871-72. Montreal, 1872.

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