

tained of all aid to the prosecution of the same work and of the same object in its practicable form by land; and this refusal, amounting almost to opposition, has extended from the days of McKenzie, the first great discoverer of both the northern and western coasts of the continent, and is not yet perfectly dispelled."¹

The principle known as "great circle sailing," by which distance is abridged in long voyages, may be advantageously followed in travelling westward across America. Communication with the East is made shorter and shorter the farther north its line of route is removed. The application of a string to the measurement of the distance between two places on a geographical globe will at once illustrate the system of sailing or travelling on "the spherical line of shortest distance." The greatest breadth of the Western Continent happening to lie in British North American territory, here (paradoxical though it may seem, but nevertheless in strict conformity with the principle just adverted to, which is universally acknowledged in practical navigation) we have the shortest possible route from England to the East. It is surely an interesting circumstance that where we desired the connection between Eastern Asia and Western Europe should be formed, through America, almost every possible facility for its formation is lavishly afforded. Our place of starting may be Europe, the west coast of Africa, the West Indies, or the eastern coast of the North American Continent; but if the East be our destination, our best route is unquestionably across the great Pacific Central British America. *There* is the point of junction where all the traffic of the continent, south, east, and north, most naturally unites, if its goal be yet further west, till the eastern antipodes be reached. To this position we are inevitably shut up. It is, in fact, determined for us by the spheroidal conformation of the earth, and the relative distances thereby created. The long continuation of rainless deserts and passless mountains in the territory of the great Republic renders Yankee competition with us, as to facilities of overland transit, hopeless. Can it be uneconomic, then, to open a country having this generality of access, and yet holding such a monopoly of advantage?

If the utmost abbreviation of distance be our object, and the far East the goal, by availing ourselves of the proper season we may shorten the distance from Europe 1,500 miles, by proceeding across Hudson's Bay. But from wherever we may come, we necessarily unite in the great stream of traffic that, bound for the East, in future years will meet on the plains of the Red River or the Saskatchewan. In this region, where the climate is the most healthful on the American continent, and where the flag of England still

(1) Paper read on "Central British North America," by Col. Synge, R.E., F.R.G.S., July, 1864, before the British North American Association.