

compete either with the navigation of the St. Lawrence, or with shorter railroads terminating in the Bay of Fundy, for heavy freight. There is not the less doubt, however, that the way freight which it will command as a line of distribution will, in conjunction with other sources of revenue, be highly remunerative.

BRITISH
NORTH AMERICA.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. WILKINSON.

December 28, 1848.

It may be proper to refer more particularly to the grounds of objection to a military line of railway, immediately along any considerable part of the coast of the Gulf and River St. Lawrence.

It is to be borne in mind that not only France, but the United States, have important rights in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, materially involving their respective plans of maritime advancement, and which continually occupy their jealous attention.

By a succession of treaties, since that of Utrecht, the French have a right to fish not only on the coasts of Newfoundland, but also in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, within three leagues of all the coasts belonging to Great Britain, as well as within 15 leagues of the Atlantic coasts of Cape Breton and Nova Scotia. The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, overlooking the main entrance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, are ceded in full right to France, the unimportant right of fortifying excepted. These islands are held and governed as exclusively French.

It is evident that this cession was made on the part of Great Britain, and received on the part of France, with a mutually deep consciousness that it would always involve considerations of danger to the peace of both countries.

The foregoing and other rights were confirmed to France by the treaty of Paris in 1814.

Neither the past history of the fisheries on these coasts, nor the growing anxiety of late years, manifested both by France and the United States, on the subject of relative maritime progress, seem to afford that sure confidence of a permanently good understanding, which would warrant an entire indifference to any contingencies which might hereafter arise to affect the security of a line of military communication immediately along the coast under notice.

The author of "The Past and Future of the British Navy" does indeed ascribe the chief prospective danger to the sleepless jealousy of France alone, regarding it as the cherished ambition of that nation to strike a sudden and decisive blow at our commercial supremacy. The blow might possibly, however, lose nothing in either suddenness or decision in being dealt by a combined, rather than by a single arm.

It is further to be borne in mind that, besides a resident maritime population, acknowledging the jurisdiction of France alone, and the intimate knowledge of extensive portions of these coasts, maintained by the annual visits of many thousands of the fishermen of that country, counted upon at all times as an available maritime force; the British coast, the proposed site of the railway, is also lined with a population of French origin, retaining the language, habits, and predilections of their race, and remaining under the guidance of a foreign priesthood.

If, therefore, the central line of railway, the line equally remote both from the inland and the maritime frontier, must necessarily pass through vacant country, the consideration may not be altogether without value that the blank may be filled up with exclusively British attachments and preferences, habits and institutions.

But these remarks are made, much less under any serious anticipations of the eventual importance of avoiding, very widely, either the inland frontier on the one hand, or the sea coast on the other, than under a sense of the high importance of constructing a trunk line of railway which shall, as much as possible, bind together both colonial and national interests; and by its intrinsic adaptation to the purpose, independently of any adventitious aid from Government, preclude, for all time, a reasonable motive for the project of a competing line.

The results of railway experience generally, and the opinions of distinguished engineers, both in Europe and America, appear now very decidedly to recommend the system of central trunk lines with branches to remote points, rather than independent lines of communication between the latter.

There are portions of the Report under consideration, relative to the use of wood in the construction of railways, which do not clearly harmonize. The 14 bridges in 20 miles, up the rocky chasm of the Metapedia, of the aggregate length of nearly 6000 feet, and another bridge of 2000 feet, necessary to cross the Miramichi, are represented as not formidable at all, because wood may be used for their construction; and that bridges in the United States, "on the best lines," are built of this material. But immediately further on the liberal use of wood is disparaged as the "cheap method of making railways;" and a quotation from a report relative to the Syracuse and Utica Railroad is given to show "some of the consequences arising from a cheap railway." But the statement quoted seems less to disparage than commend the advantages of a wooden structure, at least in the first instance. The first cost, including equipment, was 3600*l.* per mile. For this small outlay, the advantages of a railway are obtained for eight years. After this a more perfectly re-constructed line will enhance the whole cost to only 5960*l.* per mile. Report, p. 14. Report, pp. 16, 18.

A perishable, as well as a durable, material may be badly employed.

A locomotive may drop through a trestle-bridge or may run off an embankment without either wood or stone being really responsible for the disaster.

Ever since Lord Stanley was pleased, immediately after the great fire in Quebec, to communicate, for the information and benefit of the North American colonies, the results of several experiments, under the auspices of Government, made with wood rendered incombustible, and,