

settled, and that it will be done without the Federal treasury being greatly affected. We have, therefore, the means left of helping other railways. We have, thanks to the good administration of our friends on the Treasury benches, money enough to satisfy the aspirations of the people of different parts of the country. The northern part of the Province of Quebec has never received anything. It is its turn now. That part of the country should have the preference. The Quebec and Lake St. John Railway offers itself as the most important scheme, and as the one that will produce the best results. Let us put faith and efforts in that direction. But there is a great political reason. I say that this Quebec and Lake St. John Railway is a natural enterprise. It is of the most urgent necessity that we should develop colonization in the great fertile valley of Lake St. John, and utilize its resources. We must, as soon as possible, pour in a large population there. And why? Because, in a few years, the North-West will contain a large population. In twenty-five years hence there will, perhaps, be three or four Provinces in the North-West. They will have a good many representatives in this House. And what will be the result? Why political influence will be going westward. The interests of a great part of the Province of Ontario will be identical with those of the North-West Provinces. The Province of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces will not offer, perhaps, a sufficient counterpoise to this influence coming from the North-West. And the Western Provinces will trouble themselves very little about the Province of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces; and, provided their own interests are protected, they will in no wise hesitate to send their products to New York or Portland, rather than to Quebec or Halifax. Confederation would then be threatened with dismemberment. We must consequently foresee such a result and provide the remedy beforehand, by increasing the resources and the population of the eastern Provinces. Now, there remains but little colonization to be done in the Maritime Provinces. It is only in the Province of Quebec where there remain vast regions to be opened to colonization, and the finest and most extensive of these regions is, without question, the Saguenay and Lake St. John district. There is no doubt but that if the Government were to build a railway to Lake St. John before long we would be able to form there a separate Province, as populous, as rich and as flourishing as any of the North-West Provinces. That would be one more Province in the east; and if we are to remain united as a Confederation, we require this Province to counterbalance the influence of the North-West. There is something more. Many complaints are made that Canadians in the Province of Quebec are leaving every year in great numbers for the United States. In opening, by means of a railway, this great region of the Saguenay to colonization, would we not be drawing all the Canadians in that direction? Would we not be turning their attention away from the United States? Would we not be performing a great act of patriotism? The Federal policy should not only tend towards bringing immigrants into the country; the Federal Government should also adopt the means of keeping the Canadians within Canadian territory. Since it is stated that it is the French-Canadians who are flocking in the greatest numbers to the United States, then we could not choose a place where they would like to go better than to the Saguenay and to Lake St. John, provided we give them easy means of communication with Quebec. But what is this great region of the Saguenay and Lake St. John? In 1832, as Mr. Bouchette tells us in his topographical dictionary, there were in this vast territory, besides the Indians, only ten families, employed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the fur trade. As late as 1842 this country was in the wildest possible condition. The Hudson's Bay Company had held this territory under a lease for many years. It was the finest hunting

Mr. CIMON.

ground they had, and naturally enough they wanted to keep it. For that reason they endeavored to keep its resources hidden. They prevented, by all possible means, colonization from penetrating there. It was only in 1842 that the last lease expired. Until then, says the Minister of Crown Lands of that day, in his report of 1845, the Government had not ventured to have surveys made for colonization purposes, being under the impression that they had not the right to do so. It is not, therefore, astonishing, if during a long time there existed prejudices against the climate and soil of the Saguenay and Lake St. John. The Hudson's Bay Company, by spreading these prejudices, were following the line of conduct long pursued with regard to the North-West. Until the time when the Canadian Government acquired the North-West, this territory had a still worse reputation than the Saguenay. It was only looked upon as an ice-bound region, inhospitable and unfit for settlement. These prejudices have disappeared. Those against the Saguenay have likewise disappeared. The territory of the Saguenay and of Lake St. John, comprising all the territory between Quebec and Lake St. John, through which the road is to pass, the occupied and surveyed lands as well as those not surveyed, according to the data of the Quebec Crown Lands Department, embrace an extent of land fit for cultivation of about 3,500,000 acres. This figure is of some importance, as it will be seen, especially when we consider that the Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, with a population of 670,000 souls, only have 2,800,000 acres under cultivation. But what is the climate and what is the quality of the soil of this immense territory? I will give this honorable House an idea of it. I shall cite an impartial opinion, that of Mr. Bouchette, who explored Lake St. John in 1828. In his topographical dictionary he says:

"The climate of Lake St. John is as mild or milder than that of Montreal."

In 1828, when all this territory was covered with forests and in a wild state, an experiment was made to test the quality of the soil and the climate, and Mr. Bouchette relates what follows:—

"On or before the 1st of May, ten gallons of peas have been sown which produced more than ten bushels, although from the wetness of the season about one-third of the crop was lost. On the 7th of May half a pint of wheat was sown, and when harvested on the 8th of September, produced full half of a Winchester bushel; two of the ears, without selection, were examined and found to contain, one 41, the other 46 grains of corn. On the 4th May, half a bushel of barley was sown and produced, 5th August, from five to six bushels. Not quite eight bushels of potatoes, produced 3.0 bushels."

During the Session of 1877, in order to make known to the hon. members of this House the nature of the Saguenay and Lake St. John district, the Committee on Immigration, at my request, summoned as a witness on this subject Mr. Siméon Lesage, Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture at Quebec. His Lordship the Bishop of Chicoutimi, also at my request, had the kindness to address to the Chairman of the Committee a letter upon the subject. This evidence and this letter are printed, and are annexed to the report of the Committee for that year. Well, here is what His Lordship the Bishop of Chicoutimi wrote:

"I cannot give a better idea of the fertility of the soil of the Saguenay than by citing the appreciation that an eminent man in the agricultural line, and quite disinterested, lately made. After having visited the whole of the Saguenay he said: I have nowhere else seen richer or more fertile lands than those of the Saguenay and Lac St. Jean."

"This judgment corroborates exactly that already rendered by the land surveyors, Hamel, Bouchette, Ballantyne, and others who had occasion to go through the great territory."

Mr. Siméon Lesage, in his evidence, said:

"Since 1867, when I was appointed Assistant Commissioner in the Public Works Department, I have had charge of the Colonization Department, and I have found, after visiting the Saguenay and several other parts of the Province, that upon the whole the Saguenay district is the best settling district that we have by far. There are some inconveniences, but I believe that before long the Saguenay district will prove to be the best part of the Province of Quebec, if not of the Dominion of Canada."