

and west of Lake Superior. To the rear, however, of the rocky region it is alleged the land is tolerably level, and free from serious obstructions to the progress of the railroad.

Having thus, in very general terms, described the character of the country to be traversed, we may forecast, so far as the materials to hand will allow, the probable route of the Canadian Pacific. That Vancouver Island must ultimately have its railroad terminating at the magnificent Harbour of Esquimalt is tolerably certain. The distance to Esquimalt from Seymour Narrows, where the main line, if its terminus were located in Vancouver Island, might be expected to cross, is about 160 miles, and, except for some 25 miles, a route might be found admitting of the tolerably easy construction of the railroad through a country partly agricultural and rich in coal beds and other mineral deposits. On the other hand, the task of connecting Vancouver with the mainland would be very costly, and require engineering works of great magnitude. A steam ferry might supply for a time the connecting link. A railroad crossing the strait would involve the construction of several bridges, with a clear span varying from 100 to 150 feet each, and the intervening islands would impose a heavy amount of rock excavation and tunnelling on the constructors. These circumstances will have to be regarded in considering the propriety of immediate operations in the island itself. Public policy might demand that they should be grappled with, but the legal obligations of the country towards British Columbia do not actually compel the Dominion to enter upon this undertaking. The Pacific coast can be reached in the terms of the contract with British Columbia by fixing the terminus on the mainland; and without in the least, therefore, proposing to discourage the idea that Vancouver Island is to enjoy the full benefit of this great national enterprise, it may be well, in tracing prospectively the route of the main road, to eliminate the Vancouver Island branch or continuation from our calculations.

Starting eastward from Waddington Harbour, on Bute Inlet, the first 44 miles will present, perhaps, the most repellant features of the undertaking, although the gravest difficulties of this section are to be met with in a distance of some 15 miles. It is probable that the Cascades will be crossed by the great canon of the Homathco River at an altitude of 2,285 feet above the sea level, the ascent being abrupt, and severely taxing the skill of the engineers to reduce the gradients to working proportions that will be equal to the duty of surmounting them. A glance at the map will indicate as the probable route of the railway, after leaving the canon, a line running by way of Lake Latla across the Chilicotin Plains to the Fraser, near Soda Creek; thence by Lac de la Hache to the valley of the Thompson, near Clearwater, and then following the course of the Fraser to Yellow-head Pass, which is crossed at an altitude of 3,760 feet. Descending the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains the road would, probably by way of the Caledonian and Jasper valleys, finally strike the plains of the north arm of the Saskatchewan. Those who are most familiar with the route between the head of the Homathco canon and Fort Edmonton, on the eastern side of the mountains, speak of it as presenting no very extraordinary difficulties. The distance is 162 miles, and the greatest depression of the ground is said to be 800 feet below the head of the canon, and Yellow-head Pass only 1,500 feet above it. But it must be remembered that the authorities on these points are mostly engineers or surveyors, or persons who speak and write under inspiration, and it is the natural tendency of men who are daily engaged in the task of overcoming obstacles to make light of them. Captain Butler and others have made the public familiar with the more northerly pass, by which the Peace River flows, and either this or Smoky River Pass would probably be as eligible in many respects as Yellow-head Pass as a means of crossing the Rocky Mountains. We assume, however, that the route selected will be the one by which the Cascades can be surmounted most easily. As was lately announced, explorations are going forward, as to the merits of a route through British Columbia in the direction of the River Skeena. Enough has been said to show that the whole of this grand section is sufficiently beset with obstacles and difficulties to make the most exhaustive inquiry necessary before any one route is finally determined upon.

The prairie section of the route is one that recent travel and explorations have very generally familiarized us with. It will probably present the fewest obstacles to the construction of the road; but the first report issued of the progress of the surveys, if we are not mistaken, led to the conclusion that heavy bridging and some other works of considerable magnitude would have to be undertaken in this region. Meantime the announcements of the Premier indicate that by the utilization of the water communications the building of the railway west of Fort Garry and east of the Rocky Mountains may be for the moment deferred.