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ON THE NATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF A RAILROAD FROM HALIFAX TO QUEBEC, AND THE NECESSITY OF COUNTERACTING THE POLICY NOW ADOPTED BY THE UNITED STATES.

(BY A COLONIST.)

The railway system has assuredly been a gigantic and wonderful, if not miraculous, creation of wealth. It will require the expenditure of one hundred and fifty millions before the lines now in progress are completed. Upwards of one hundred millions have been already expended. Before this outlay will give back a net return of five per cent., twelve millions annually must be paid by the British people for the transit of goods, and the bare expense of travelling. One single line yields now a revenue of a million sterling. These are mighty schemes and magnificent results; they seem visionary rather than real; but it is said that what has yet been done are "but the shadows of coming events." They are yet expected to be extended into a thousand new directions, and to be made far more productive and profitable. Cheap travelling, like moderate taxes or the penny postage rate—small profits from vast numbers—is the sound policy to be applied to them. Much less costly materials for rails; steam less extravagant & ornamental; cheap and more effective agents for the production of locomotive power, are in contemplation, and likely to be introduced; and improvement to be pushed so far, that the railway, it is predicted, will entirely supersede both canals and turnpike roads, and lines in connexion with the great trunk will run into every village, into the private estate of every landholder, if not into the yard of every leading hotel. They are destined, in fact, to be the most safe, extensive, and profitable investment for the surplus capital of the country ever yet discovered by human ingenuity and skill.

These prospects are more like the brilliant and shadowy dreams of an Eastern fabulist, than the sober and actual results of life; and yet they are not without foundation. But if such be the effect they are likely to produce on the employment and development of capital, their social results are not less mighty and important. They have nearly eradicated all our former notions of relative distance. Cities are no longer congregated and centralised into a narrow and exclusive circle; they extend their suburbs to a range which twenty years ago could not have been entered. London merchants have their houses and families at Brighton, and find it not too heavy a tax, either on their time or means, to come to their offices and return daily. A distance of five miles is carried into the very bosom of the city; local prejudices are retreating before new influences, and a new order of things—the bonds of kindly brotherhood and of social connexion, are knitting the nation into the world more closely and sympathetically, though this has been accomplished by change is only at the dawn of that brighter day which waits the zenith of the future. It is admitted that there has been, and will be, a large increase of industry, wealth, and intellectual power; but the final issues are too deep and remote for human foresight, and are bound up in the bosom of that sacred and mysterious volume which time only can unfold.

The active and vigorous spirit of speculation which the system has inspired, not content with the field of the United Kingdom, broad and extensive as it is, has sought a new and wider sphere by the introduction of railways into several of our own colonies. In the long array of colonies filled with these new projects, in addition to the lines projected, on the continent of Europe, to France, Vienna, and Italy—there will be found prospectuses for railways in Jamaica, Demerara, Dominica, Trinidad, the Mauritius, and Central India; three lines in Canada, and a great inter-colonial line to connect Halifax with Quebec. The latter is designed so as to complete, at a subsequent period, the long chain of communication from the Atlantic, on the north-western side of the continent of British North America, circulating the lakes of Canada, and piercing the far west, till it reaches the Oregon territory on the shores of the Pacific.

It is the grand project of a great age. Add to it the electric telegraph, and the transmission of thought, from one ocean to the other, will be more like an act of the Deity than of man.

Of the value and importance of the colonies of British North America to the Parent State too high an estimate can scarcely be found. The area more extensive than that of the United Kingdom. In climate, soil, and resources they are equal, some may say superior; but they are equal in high rank. Their united population is now estimated at between one and a half and two millions.

Since this was in type, it has been stated that an engine capable of drawing a train of 800 tons weight is nearly completed and fit for use.

but, at the past rate of increase, it is expected that in 1860 their population will not be less than four millions. The timber trade of the Rivers St. Lawrence, St. John's, and Miramichi give employment to a large proportion of our British labour. It will not be long before the agricultural resources of Canada will yield a surplus sufficiently ample to supply the deficiency required to meet the consumption of the United Kingdom.

Nova Scotia has boundless wealth in coal, iron, and other minerals; the coal and the iron are there interstratified, as in the mineral districts in England. There is no limit to the productiveness of the fisheries of that province, and of Newfoundland. Great Britain has the power of fostering in this portion of her colonial territory millions of customers whose means and capacity of consumption will be fully equal, if not superior, to the same number of her own population. British North America has high destinies marked out for the future. She has the area, extent, resources, the virtues and energies in her Anglo-Saxon population, to make a great country;—to be, in fact, a second Britain in a new field. The Cabinet may keep and favour Canada as our own, and cherish these noble colonies as a field for domestic trade, as a source of independent supply, as a home for our surplus population, as the nucleus of maritime strength, as the certain instrument of national ascendancy and of glory;—or the alternative may happen, and they may be lost!

But in this new feature of their progress, in the extension to them of the taste for railway speculation—in this recent search of theirs for a new, and speedier route to the Atlantic—it is not only wise, but incumbent to inquire what influence they are likely to exercise, not on the development of their wealth alone, but on political and social feeling. And we frankly confess, it is for the latter purpose only that these few paragraphs have been written. Deeply sensible of the value of the colonial system to Great Britain, we feel sensitive on any question likely to affect either its strength or integrity; and not indisposed to sound the alarm if danger is to be apprehended. We see it now, and not very far off, hence we bestir ourselves, and exhort.

The three projects for laying lines of railway in Canada now before the British public are:—

First—The St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, with a capital of half a million, 12,000 shares in all, and 2,000 of these subscribed in the colony. An Act of incorporation has been obtained from the Legislature of Canada, and a survey of the line and estimate of the cost have been made. This line runs from Montreal to Portland; the whole distance being 240 miles, 120 of which lie within the boundaries of Canada and the rest of the route through the territories of the three States of New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts. The Legislatures of these three States have also granted acts of incorporation, and a large part of the capital required to complete the American portion of the line has been subscribed for in the United States. The following is taken from the prospectus of the company:—

"This company is established under an Act of the Parliament of Canada, 8 Vic. c. 25—royal assent 17th of March, 1845—for the purpose of forming a railroad from the city of Montreal, through the most populous and fertile part of Canada East, via Sherbrooke, in connexion with a railroad to be constructed to the Atlantic Ocean at the city of Portland, whence a railroad now exists to Boston."

"The proprietors have the certainty that, in a country whose resources are daily becoming so enlarged and developed, this railroad, forming the principal highway to the extensive and fertile regions bordering on the great lakes, comprehending Western Canada, the States of New York, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and being the trunk to which local branches will from time to time become united, must steadily and greatly increase in productiveness."

The second in importance is the Great Western Railway, being a line running from Hamilton, on Lake Ontario, to Windsor, on Lake St. Clair, and exactly opposite to the American town of Detroit, in the State of Michigan. An Act of incorporation has been granted by the Canadian Legislature. The distance of the line is 245 miles; the cost is 1,750,000 Halifax currency; or, in round numbers, equal to 1,350,000 sterling. Of this sum one-tenth has been retained for Canada. By the recent mission of Sir Allan McNab and Mr. Ewart, from Canada; the residue of the stock has been guaranteed by a responsible body on the London Stock Exchange. To show the design and prospects of this company, the following paragraphs are drawn from the advertisement which has appeared in the London Times:—

"Two principal features of the undertaking, however, as a commercial enterprise, consist in its uniting the character of a Tammany artery for the local and provincial purposes of Upper Canada with that of a connecting link in the great system of thorough communication between the north western States of America and the upper valley of the Mississippi on the one hand, and the cities of New York and Boston, and the seaboard of the Atlantic, on the other."

A reference to the map will show that the town of Buffalo, which is the eastern terminus of the Great Western Railway of Canada, is the focus of the various communications by which the traffic of the interior may be mentioned the Erie Canal; the New York and Erie Railroad, 460 miles in length from New York to Buffalo; the Boston and Buffalo Railroad, 560 miles in length, and various other lines of railroad which radiate from Buffalo in different directions through the States of New England and New York.

The western terminus, Detroit, is, in like manner, the focus of the extensive railway and canal communications of the north-western States, including Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and the upper part of Ohio, of which a large portion are already completed and in successful operation."

There can be no reasonable doubt, therefore, that the railway will at once absorb the greater portion of the traffic, and will become in connexion with the systems of railway communication at either extremity, the high road for the traffic of the western States with the Atlantic.

No competing line can be made to divert this traffic, as the Great Western Railway of Canada affords the most direct route between Buffalo and Detroit; and any other line to connect these points, would have to wind round the south shore of Lake Erie, increasing the distance by at least 125 miles."

The third is "The City of Toronto and Lake Huron Railway," for the purpose of completing a line from the city of Toronto to Goderich. This association has the patronage of the Canada Land Company (An act of the Provincial Parliament has also been obtained for the line. The capital is half a million—the length of railway 120 miles. The following extract is taken from the prospectus of the company, which has been printed and circulated in London:—

"This railway will form the cheapest, most direct, and expeditious communication between the States bordering on the Atlantic and the territories intersected by the two great ship canals lately constructed in Wisconsin and Illinois, to connect Lake Michigan with the Mississippi, and by avoiding the circuitous and, at some period of the year, dangerous navigation of Lake Erie, will shorten the distance to Chicago, on Lake Michigan, the great entrepôt of the western trade, by upwards of 300 miles, and will, therefore, attract the chief part of the carrying trade to and from the west, at present passing through Lake Erie."

This trade is sufficient to support, at the port of Buffalo alone, 60 steam vessels of the largest class, and 300 sailing vessels. The passengers by this route fluctuate from 5,000 to 7,000 weekly, for about five months of the year. The proposed line, by connecting Lakes Ontario and Huron, the navigation of which is open for six weeks longer in the year than Lake Erie, will add this period to the season of communication. It will also shorten the direct route to New Orleans, and thereby secure the transit of a very numerous class of passengers, who, in the summer months, travel from the southern and central to the north-eastern States of America and to Canada."

The facility of communication which the proposed line will open with the above States, to which the great tide of western emigration is directed, together with the command of the entire traffic of that rich portion of Canada lying between Lakes Ontario and Huron, cannot fail to ensure to the stockholders in this undertaking an ample and immediate return upon their capital, and there is every reason to anticipate a considerable addition from the increased facility of communication with the Atlantic, which the completion of the railroad from Montreal to Portland will afford."

These extracts are given that there may be no misrepresentation, and no misapprehension, as to the calculations of the projectors of these three schemes. It is clear that the effect of them will be to make that Canadian peninsula which lies between the head of the Ontario and the waters of Lake St. Clair a central ground for the transit of those vast products yielded by the fertile regions of the west; that the western planters are to find in this way an easier route, both for themselves and their trade; and that, in seeking an outlet to this ocean, they are to pass over parts of the British territory and sea, in place of following the present channels, which belong exclusively to themselves. No scheme could be more judicious or commendable than this, if it were free of all corresponding disadvantages; but the misfortune is, that for this transitory benefit—the barren right of carriage—the Atlantic trade of Canada is to be transferred to the Americans; for after goods are deposited at Hamilton or Toronto, they are then to be conveyed—the

lines of railway are to be made complete—to New York, Boston, and Portland. The exports of the west and of Canada are to be combined in their progress seaward; but ultimately they are to pass into the charge of American merchants, and to seek their market in the world under the flag of the American Eagle. It is in vain to blink this question—we ought to meet it boldly; the effect of these railroads, in short, is to transfer a large portion of the trade of Canada to the Atlantic ports of the United States.

To what consequences are these schemes likely to lead? They are important, startling, pregnant with disasters. They may add to the wealth of Canada, but certainly not to the power of the parent state.

Far be it from our purpose to impute any design on the part of the projectors to effect the strength of the relations, or to touch the integrity of the empire. The schemes are supported here by men of all parties—by those far above, and therefore undegging of suspicion.

From Canada, again, they have come guaranteed by the highest and grandest names;—by men who have endured every peril and made every sacrifice to guard the honour of the Crown and to protect the British allegiance; and who, we believe, would be ready again, as they have been in the past, to fling their swords and beat their ploughshares into the weapons in war, if the connexion were in danger. But put the question to reason the matter with, any of those from the opposite side of the Atlantic or with those who can take a local, colonial, and comprehensive view of the results of these speculations, and they will candidly admit that they look to them with fear and trembling, and that they would be glad if the causes for this fear were less potential.

For what are these consequences? Many:—loss of trade, the change of employment from British to American shipping; an increase of American influence; a diminution of British influence. It is too palpable that, if the import and export trade of Canada are to be centralised in the Atlantic cities of the United States, a far closer bond of union and dependence must grow up than exists now. From such an intercourse there will issue monetary relations, partnerships in trade, and social connexions;—they will be taken and given in marriage;—and as the United States is the greater power,—as she has the superiority in wealth, as the terminus and door to the sea are on her soil, and under her control;—as it is a rule in politics, as in physics, that the greater ever attracts the less,—it is obvious that her influence will be in the ascendant, while that of Britain must be on the decline.

But let not our statesmen be deceived. America, with that quick and sagacious foresight with which she ever peers into the future, contemplates the effect of these changes, and has already adopted the policy fitted to hasten them on. The late agreement made with the Post-Office authorities to sanction the transit of the British mails from Britain to Canada through American routes; the law recently passed in Congress to permit the imports to Canada to pass free through the United States under bond; the promptitude with which American capitalists have responded to these Canadian projects,—nay, the absolute rivalry now in active operation between the three cities of New York, Boston, and Portland to counteract each other, and to secure, each exclusively to itself, the anticipated profits of this new trade,—are indications too palpable to be mistaken, of what America hopes for;—pecuniary results in the meantime, and commercial and political advantages hereof,—the British steamers, direct from Liverpool to Boston; the transit of British produce under bond in American bottoms to British ports;—(for this, it will yet be argued, would be only favouring reciprocity to their generosity, in permitting British goods to pass free over their railroads)—the commerce of Canada made dependent on them—national affections yielding to national interests—the loyalty of Canada, mayhap made spurious, if not sapped,—and, in the event of a collision, with no stout hearts to oppose, and no stern militia to retard their march—the flag of the Republic waving proudly over the heights of Montreal, Toronto, and the impregnable city of Quebec.

It is not a little singular that, while they are pursuing this policy on the land, they are seeking also to invade our rights on the sea. Not three months ago the American Minister pressed Lord Aberdeen to acquiesce in the construction of 1815, which gave them entire rights of fishing on the coast of British North America, so as to give them the right to enter our bays. This year, they have gained a point, by being permitted—to enter for the first time after a century's usage of 27 years—to fish in the Bay of Fundy. They are debarr'd from fishing within three miles of the coast. They wish to break this barrier down—to fish on the same terms as the relations—to wedge us out of Canada—to fence us in on the sea. This attempt to gain concession has been foiled, for the colonies act with vigour. New Brunswick and Nova

Scotia had agents before Lord Stanley; the colonies sent earnest representations; and the Minister has put the veto against further negotiation; but we refer to it here as another fresh instance of what America is about. Her leading men never slack in the pursuit of advantage. It is our duty to watch with equal—nay, with exhausted—diligence.

We have stated above the expectations of America. God forbid, we say, such a catastrophe; and yet it may come to pass. Patriotism is a feeling, if not a principle, which prompts and inspires expansive, generous, and ardent minds; but it is the lesson of experience that the mass—the strength of a nation—are governed by grosser motives, and that no tie binds them like that of interest. The age of chivalry—the time for clanship—the blind enthusiastic feeling of loyalty:—these "loving kings they know not why"—have now departed, and for ever! This is a harder and more calculating age. The love of gold daily grows stronger. Make it the interest of Canada to join the Republic, and where is the spot sufficiently tenuous and firm to uphold the British standard? There is no gulf so ruthless and desolating as the gulf of disaffection, as popular dissatisfaction, founded on the belief that a change will bring comfort—a heavier load and more productive employment to the poor; and wealth, more costly garments, luxurious wines, and the ornaments of art, to the better orders. Never was the wretched class so formidable or reckless—never had Governments such powerful inducements to govern wisely and well.

Evil will befall the hour if Canada be lost. Canning once proudly and emphatically said, he would "call on a new world in the west to balance the old." It was a saying no less true, than it was brilliant. But this dependence of the old world on the new has become, since that time, far more close and sympathetic. It has been justly said that the march of empire is westward; and that as kingdoms grow up here to their prime,—to their maturity and grandeur;—and then, according to the universal law, we had also, said the eternal law of change, begin to fall into decay,—the progressive progress, the increased energies, and the accumulated knowledge of man is to start fresh on the great field of the new world, and create a round him a scene of civilisation indicative of higher intelligence, of more refined art, and of a more expanded and riper glory. If such contemplations be sound, it cannot be the duty nor the policy of Great Britain—the greatest nation in the paternity of that mighty future—to suffer her influence to be affected and curtailed in that field where millions of her subjects and their descendants are yet to find a home; and where her free institutions, and her arts and greatness, are to be reproduced and cultivated till they reach a far higher and nobler perfection than

But, to show the importance of our present inquiry, we do not need to deal in these revelations of the future; the past affords a lesson sufficiently instructive and significant. The possession of British North America is indispensable to the safety and protection of our islands in the Archipelago of the West,—necessary for their supply and trade, and for the retirement of our troops and navy. If the footing of Great Britain were lost in Canada, our settlements in Hudson's Bay and in the Oregon territory would soon follow. Unless the broad continent in the rear were our own it would be impossible to preserve the fine harbours and the inexhaustible fishing grounds of Nova Scotia and the other lower colonies. Give to America the sweep of Canada, the ports and mines of Nova Scotia, the fisheries of the Bay of Chaleur and of Newfoundland, the superior timber of our northern forests—all elements of national wealth, now wanting,—her sway from the Atlantic to the Pacific would be irresistible as boundless. Mexico and Texas would be at her mercy—the trade and manufactures of the old world would be subject to her selfish and grasping policy,—for she could reject or receive them on her own terms; and, enjoying those rich and unpossessed resources, now held by this country in these wide possessions, her industry would be extended to new branches, and inspired with new vigour, her prosperity be fed from original and fertile sources, and her independence built on a basis far more broad in itself and threatening to other powers.

If the old world is not to be surrendered to the new—if Great Britain desires to retain her, or, any, influence in the West—Canada must be preserved, be the cost what it may. The lower provinces hang upon her; their fate is intertwined with that of their sister State; and, waited, they are the political and British interests and power. England, said Sir Robert Peel, equipped her Colonies, would be reduced to a third-rate power; those in British North America, by overhauling and keeping in check her great and most dangerous rival, are the most important of them all.

(Continued in our next.)