

on this, it is perhaps better that I should give the language used by the explorers employed by the government of that day. But before I go into that, let me quote the language of Captain Butler who was the last of the individual explorers to whom I have alluded. In the appendix to his work 'The Wild North Land,' Captain Butler writes in the following pregnant language:

But should this Indian Pass at the head of the Pine river prove to be, on examination, unfit to carry a railroad across, I am still of opinion that in that case the Peace river affords a passage to the western ocean vastly superior to any of the known passes lying south of it. What are the advantages which I claim for it? They can be briefly stated.

It is level throughout its entire course; it has a wide, deep, and navigable river flowing through it; in its highest elevation in the main range of the Rocky Mountains is about 1,800 feet; the average depth of its winter fall of snow is about three feet; by the first week of May this year the snow, unusually deep during the winter, had entirely disappeared from the north shore of the river, and vegetation was already forward in the woods along the mountain base.

But though these are important advantages for this mountain pass, the most important of all remains to be stated. From the western end of the pass to the coast range of mountains, a distance of 300 miles across British Columbia, there does not exist one single formidable impediment to a railroad. By following the valley of the Parsnip river from 'the Forks' to Lake Macleod, the Ominica range is left to the north, and the rolling plateau land of Stuart's lake is reached without a single mountain intervening; from thence the valley of the Nacharcole can be attained, as we have seen in my story, without the slightest difficulty, and a line of country followed to within twenty miles of the ocean, at the head of Dean's Inlet.

I claim, moreover, for this route that it is shorter than any projected line at present under consideration; that it would develop a land as rich, if not richer, than any portion of the Saskatchewan territory; that it altogether avoids the tremendous mountain ranges of Southern British Columbia, and the great gorge of the Fraser river; and finally, that along the Nacharcole river there will be found a country admirably suited to settlement, and possessing prairie land of a kind nowhere else to be found in British Columbia.

That, Sir, is the opinion of a traveller of eminence, but let me give now the opinion of a professional engineer. Mr. Gordon, whose report is to be found in Mr. Fleming's report for 1880, says:

Were it necessary or expedient to find a course for the Pacific Railway, as far north as the Peace River Pass, a comparatively easy route is offered in this direction. Even at the wildest and most rugged parts of the pass, the mountains are almost invariably fringed by flats or by gentle slopes of varying width. One or two avalanche courses, a few ravines, and occasional projections of rock would form the chief difficulties, which are apparently much less serious than many obstacles that have been overcome on other Canadian railways. At its higher or western extremity the pass is not more than 1,650 feet above the sea level, and the current of the river, which is very equable, is

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not more than from four or five miles an hour, where it cuts through the mountain range. East of the pass, for fifty miles, till the canyon is reached, the engineering difficulties would probably be not much greater than those presented by an open prairie. But the chief difficulty on this route would be found at the canyon where the river sweeps round the base of a solitary massive hill, known as the Mountain of Rocks, or the Portage Mountains, just above the Hudson's Hope; yet even here, although the work would be heavy, the difficulties would be by no means insuperable.

Mr. Cambie, in the same report, says:

The Peace river, which is the lowest known pass through the Rocky Mountains, offers a wonderfully favourable line for a railway through that range, and for sixty miles east of its main summits.

Mr. Marcus Smith, in the same report for 1878-9, says:

This can undoubtedly become the great wheat-producing province of the Dominion. In aid of its development, it possesses a noble and navigable river, which runs through its centre, affording easy means of collecting its produce, and bringing it cheaply to some convenient point, where it could be received by the railway.

Mr. Marcus Smith, referring to the Pine River Pass route in another report, says:

There is further the important consideration that, in the place of a bleak sterile country the line by the Pine river route would traverse an area of remarkable fertility—the fertile belt, or wheat-producing country, extends nearly 300 miles further to the west, before the Rocky Mountains are reached, than by the route over the Yellowhead Pass; a corresponding reduction being made in the breadth of sterile country to be crossed in the Rocky Mountain district.

Now, Sir as to Port Simpson, which is to be the terminus of this railway, it is also important to know what is the opinion of the engineers who surveyed the country at the time of which I have spoken. Mr. Fleming, in his report for 1878-9, says:

Port Simpson is possibly the best harbour on the mainland. . . . of all the terminal points projecting on the mainland and on Vancouver Island, Port Simpson is most conveniently situated for Asiatic trade.

Mr. Marcus Smith, says:

There is really no harbour in the coast of the mainland of British Columbia, with the exception of Port Simpson, eligibly situated for purposes of foreign commerce. . . . It is easily approached from the ocean, and is the nearest to the coast of Asia of any harbour in British Columbia.

Again in another report written in 1878-9, Mr. Marcus Smith says:

Port Simpson may possibly be considered at present, too far north for the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but it is important that the fact should be borne in mind, that by virtue of low altitudes and consequent easy gradients, together with the moderate character of the works required to reach it, this terminal point offers advantages which would enable a Canadian line to defy competition for the trade with China and Japan.