

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMERCIAL ACCESS TO HUDSON BAY, FROM ONTARIO.

III.

The facilities of the surface road would, according to opinions of eminent engineers, save more than its cost in reducing the expense of the permanent railway surveys and construction. By making the surface road suitable for the use of automobiles and placing fast steamers on the Albany River the transit time to the sea from the C.P.R. can be reduced to forty-eight hours. When the railway is made ready the time can be reduced to twenty-four hours.

Such results would be epochs in the commercial history of Ontario, and of incalculable effect in giving impetus to its future development, rendering its advent as the leading maritime Province in the Dominion a possibility.

That the business interests of Ontario should take advantage of this new avenue to latent wealth and provide ample means for its accomplishment is a self-evident proposition. That the Provincial Government will aid this enterprise as a colonization road-builder in opening access to a large section of good agricultural land, according to the reports of the corps of explorers sent by it into New Ontario to examine that region, need not be doubted.

Transportation Problem Considered.

With the information furnished by the Government officials before quoted approximate estimates can be made that there are 1,000 miles of both shores of Hudson Straits prolific in yield of salmon and trout, 800 miles of west shore of Hudson Bay abundant in yield of salmon and trout, 1,000 miles of both sides of Hudson Bay largely yielding whitefish, 600 miles of James' Bay coast, receiving the outflow of 5,000 miles of rivers and lakes stocked with sturgeon, without including 1,000 miles of coast line in Fox Channel and other estuaries in which salmon exist in vast numbers as reported by whaling ship captains occasionally visiting the same. The coast lines of Hudson and James' Bay, including Fox Channel and other estuaries with those of the larger islands, exceed 6,000 miles. No other inland sea on the globe presents such inexhaustible fishery resources as yet practically unutilized.

The following extracts are taken from a report made by an engineer after a personal reconnaissance of parts of the central and western routes herein referred to.

These can be included in three divisions, all leading from the Great Lakes to James Bay.

1. The Eastern: from Lake Ontario with terminal presumably at Toronto.
2. The Central: from Georgian Bay and St. Mary's River with terminal presumably at Sault Ste. Marie.
3. The Western: from Lake Superior with terminal presumably at or near Jackfish Bay.

For the southern ends of all these routes, a score of good terminal points could be selected, but on the northern ends the same difficulties confront them all. There is no natural harbor worthy of the name along the Ontario sea coast.

In the vicinity of the mouth of the Moose River, the waters of the Bay are so shallow that some 12 miles beyond the river mouth there is only about 5 feet of water at low tide, and numerous shoals render the entrance of even small vessels difficult and dangerous. Inside the river the spring freshets cause the water to overflow the banks and islands and render vessel anchorage so unsafe that the Hudson Bay Company's vessels are hauled out on land to preserve them from the river ice "floes" which are very destructive when rushing seaward in the swift currents at that time. The river is wide and shallow—less than two feet deep in summer months—and with numerous rapids along its northern section, ending in a fall of nearly five feet where the current meets tide water.

Connection with Steamers.

These and other causes have led the Hudson Bay Company to transfer their "Post" from there to Charlton Island, some 75 miles northward in the Bay.

Assuming that no railway should be projected to reach those shores at a point where connection with sea-going steamers could not be made at a reasonable cost, it is use-

less to consider any route as feasible that does not extend as far north as the Albany River.

There 25 feet of water is shown on charts to come within about 3 miles of the mouth, and that there is about 5 feet of water on the bar at low tide, and over 10 feet at high tide, which with a fairly straight channel will enable ordinary sea-going fishing vessels, such as are now engaged in cod fishing on the Newfoundland banks to rendezvous there for delivery of cargoes, etc.

Whether the entrance can be made readily available for sea-going steamers, and where railway docks for their accommodation should be located can only be determined by extensive and accurate surveys requiring ample time and large expense. But an equally serious difficulty is presented by the character of the region adjoining the Salt Sea on the south, which for a zone averaging about 100 miles wide is mainly a moss-covered "muskeg," or morass reported by the Provincial Explorers in 1901, to vary from a few inches to 10 feet or more deep.

The Provincial Northern Ontario Railway extending from the North Bay to proposed point on intersection with the Grand Trunk Pacific Transcontinental line south of Lake Abitibi is evidently the one most likely to extend to the sea coast, but when the fact appears that the only possibly suitable terminal for it to reach is at the Albany River entrance about 300 miles north on an air line, or probably nearly 400 miles when actually built of which more than 200 miles will be over a "muskeg" waste, it can be safely assumed that the conditions are practically prohibitive, and such extension of that, or of any Eastern route, need not be anticipated.

Saving of Five Years and Five Millions.

The only Central Division route projected, is that known as the Algoma Central and Hudson Bay Railway Company line which was commenced in 1900, and now has about 70 miles of main line from Sault Ste. Marie north in operation. The same northern terminal difficulties confront it as on the Eastern route just mentioned, and as it has between 400 and 500 miles of unoccupied route with a similar proportion of "muskeg" thereon, it need not be considered a factor in the case.

The Western Division has had several Provincial chartered routes upon which no work has been done. But one Dominion charter is there in force, being that of the Manitoba and Keewatin Railway Company, which provides for a route from Winnipeg to the mouth of the Albany River, or any point on the coast northward within certain limits, also with power to build a branch line southward to the Canadian Pacific Railway and Lake Superior at or near Jackfish Bay, a distance of about 250 miles, with power to utilize the Albany River to the sea about 200 miles eastward, reported by Professor Bell as affording unobstructed navigation for steamers, thus making the total distance from the Great Lakes water-way to the sea about 450 miles, or nearly 50 per cent. less than by the Eastern routes, and over 25 per cent. less than on the Central Division, and avoiding muskeg areas altogether.

Not only does the Western Division combined rail and water route avoid the "muskeg" difficulty, but it also opens commercial access to the sea in advance of locating a railway terminal. It is safe to estimate that it will save over five years in time and more than five millions of cash capital in effecting that result by any other Ontario railway line if extended to the coast.

Albany is Navigable.

The navigability of the Albany River is shown in the following extracts from report of 1871, by Robert Bell, C.E., F.G.S., of the Geological Survey of Canada:—

Below Martin's Falls the river changes its character entirely, becoming more uniform in breadth, depth and velocity of current. In the 120 miles which we surveyed to "The Forks," or junction of the Kenogami River, the width is from twenty to thirty chains, the depth in the middle from five to twenty feet (averaging about eleven), and the mean velocity about three miles per hour. Below the Forks, the river is described as maintaining similar character all the way to the sea. A rapid occurs near the mouth, but this is said to be easily passed by boats going both up and down. Except in very low water, the river would appear to be navigable by powerful steamers, with shallow draft of water, all the way from its mouth to Martin's Falls, a distance of about 250 miles. As showing its freedom from obstructions, I may mention that the Hudson Bay Company's boats, in descending, are allowed to drift all night with the stream, in any part of this distance, the submerged top of a fir tree being sufficient to keep them in channel.

Macleod, Alta., is having a real estate boom. Many lots have been sold at advanced prices and at considerable distance from the business centre. A quarter section a mile east of the town was sold for a large sum and the purchasers are having it surveyed into lots for residential purposes, which will be placed on the market at \$200 for half an acre