

A PLEA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN CANADA.*

By J. B. Tyrrell, Mining Engineer.

Northern Canada as here referred to is doubtless fairly well understood by all as defining that portion of Canada which lies north of the more thickly settled parts of the Province of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, and which forms a great land mass stretching for 85 degrees of longitude across the centre of the North Temperate Zone in the Western Hemisphere. It is a country so vast that even those of us who have made a special study of it know little about it except its immensity, and its vastness so completely overshadows all its other attributes in the mind of the traveller that he has great difficulty in descending to thoughts of the common details of existence such as surround us in our daily life under ordinary conditions of civilization.

You have all heard the saying many times of late that last century was marked by the great progress of the United States but that the progress and opening up of Canada will be the distinguishing feature of this century.

On the 1st of January, 1901, the first day of this century, in the city of Dawson, during the almost sunless days of a very cold winter spent within four degrees of the arctic circle, and surrounded by that advanced guard of adventurous miners thrown out into one of the coldest and least accessible parts of our northern country, I published a letter in the Dawson "Daily News" in which that idea of faith in the coming progress and development of Canada was enunciated. Whether it had been stated before or not I do not know but the idea had impressed itself upon me that the conquest of our own north country had begun in earnest.

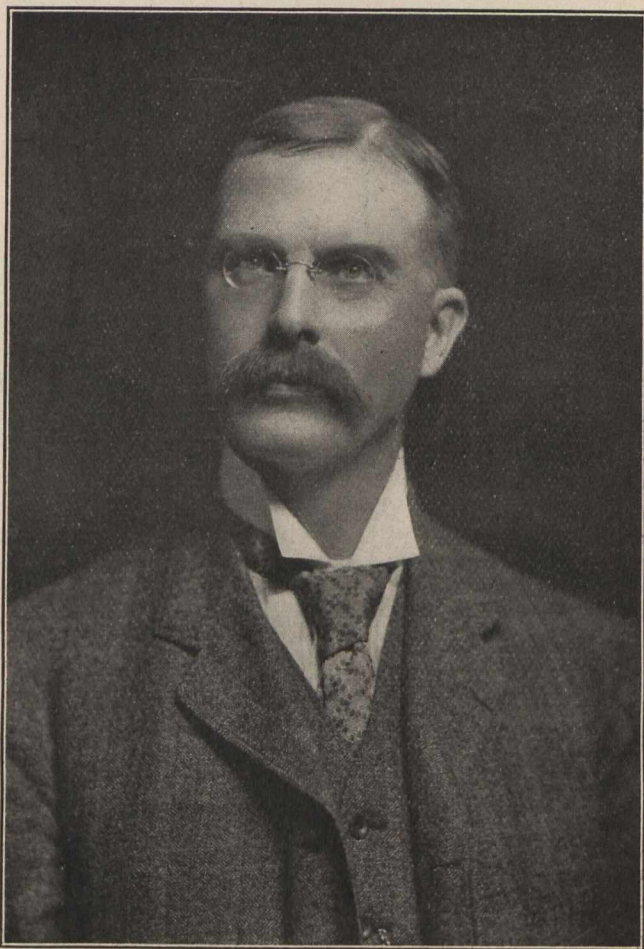
Dawson was but an outpost from which civilization would radiate into the surrounding wilderness, and it was but one of many centres which would soon be established by the enterprise of our people. The greatest extent of virgin territory in the world lies in Canada, and before the close of this century we will have learned how to make use of the vast store of natural resources of even the most inhospitable parts of the country.

Let us for a moment consider the value of the products of the whole of Canada at the present time. It is not my intention to weary you with figures and statistics, any of you can look these up in the Census Reports for yourselves, but a few figures may be instructive. The total value of the natural products of Canada in 1901 was in round figures \$519,000,000. Of this sum the agricultural and farm products were valued at \$393,000,000; the forest products came next with a value of \$51,000,000, while the mineral products were worth \$48,000,000. Five years before that date, namely, in 1896, the minerals produced had only a value of \$20,000,000; while five years later, in 1906, they had reached the large total of \$80,000,000. Thus farming is as yet by far our most important industry; but mining has assumed a place second to it, and is increasing in value rapidly every year.

Now with regard to Northern Canada, very little is known, but at the same time most of us claim a fairly accurate knowledge of the industries of the Province of Ontario. This province is considered one of the most fertile parts of the North American continent. It is true that the parts of Ontario immediately around you are fertile and well cultivated, but the cultivated lands comprise only about one-seventh part of the whole Province, and form a fringe along its southern side. The remaining six-sevenths of its area which lies further north is as yet almost undeveloped and hardly comes into your thoughts when you are considering the Province as a whole.

New or Northern Ontario is as yet practically an unbroken and untilled wilderness, except that it has to a considerable extent been stripped of the richest portion of its natural crop, namely, of its forests of white pine. These

pine forests, the natural growth of the unbroken soil, yielded many large fortunes to those who had the good judgment to secure them. Fortunes will still be made from the products of the forest; but in our northern country the forest growth is very slow, so that when the land is found capable of being used for other purposes, the forest must needs give way. For instance, we now know that in Northern Ontario, near the Height of Land between the watersheds of the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay, there is an area of 25,000 square miles of rich clay land which is eminently suited to the growth of all the more hardy serials. Judging from the similarity of the vegetation on this forest area in Northern Ontario to the vegetation in the wooded regions of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, where the best wheat in the world is grown, I am confidently of the opinion that this great clay belt of the north with its 16,000,000 acres of rich land will, when cleared



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and drained, be the wheat growing region of Eastern America. The statement may seem hardly credible, that there is within this Province within a day's journey of us land now lying waste which is capable of producing 150,000,000 bushels of hard wheat every year, but such seems to me to be the case.

On the same day on which this paper was read, Professor R. F. Stupart, Director of the Meteorological Service of Canada, delivered an address before the Canadian Club in Ottawa, in which he is reported to have stated that "From the height of land to James Bay there was nothing in the climatic conditions, at any rate, to prevent the whole great district from being a good agricultural country right up to the shores of James Bay."

I might speak at considerable length of the vast areas of fertile land as yet uncultivated which lie between the eastern border of this Province and the Pacific Ocean, the largest areas of rich unbroken agricultural land in the world. But you have heard of that western country very often of late, and

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