

and explorations of the ground to ascertain whether or not all parts of this railway would be equally productive. It passed this resolution as it conceived it to be a work of political necessity, and if it was a work of political necessity it had to be built, cost what it might. When, a few years later, upon the accession of British Columbia to the confederation, the government of the day pledged themselves, and wisely pledged themselves, in favour of the building of a highway across the Rocky mountains, in order to bind the new province by the Pacific to the rest of the Dominion, they did it although they supposed that all sections of the country would not be equally productive, but they did it in the faith that the weaker sections would be carried by the stronger sections. If our conception of this railway is the correct and true one, as we contend it is, that it is a work of a national character, then, it follows that this railway has to be built from ocean to ocean to connect the tidal waters of the Atlantic with the tidal waters of the Pacific though we know in advance, though we are sure that all sections of it will not be equal in fertility, in resources and in productiveness. In that consideration alone there would have been cause sufficient for us to go on with this work without any previous explorations, but I have to say this more that we have a wealth of information on this subject. We have more information upon this scheme than ever was possessed by former governments when they decided upon the Intercolonial Railway or the Canadian Pacific Railway. I do not expect even the most fastidious of our critics will ask us that we should have had an exploration across the prairies. They are satisfied that we have enough information now to deal with this question so far as the prairies are concerned. But, I shall be asked: What about the Rocky mountains? My answer in regard to the Rocky mountains is that we have mountains of information. We have mountains of books, pamphlets and reports—books, pamphlets and reports from traders, from explorers, from engineers. From the early days, when the French settled upon the shores of the St. Lawrence, the constant aim of those hardy pioneers was to reach that western sea now familiar to us, at that time unknown, and which inspired the awe of everything unknown. Samuel de Champlain devoted years to the task in the hope of finding a passage to the sea. Robert Cavalier de La Salle lost his life in the attempt. Another man, LaVerendrye, took an overland journey to reach it by exploring the prairies, and his two sons, on the 1st January, 1743, were the first Europeans to cast eyes upon the Rocky mountains. LaVerendrye himself lost his life like Robert Cavalier de La Salle in the attempt to get to the Pacific ocean. After the country had passed under the sovereignty of the British Crown the task was resumed by Scotch

traders established in Montreal, and in 1793, Alexander Mackenzie was the first white man to reach the Pacific ocean across the mountains by the overland journey. Many private individuals subsequently attempted and performed the same feat. The last of them was Captain Butler, of the British army, who in the winter of 1872 crossed the continent from Fort à-la-Corne at the forks of the Saskatchewan by way of the Peace river to the Pacific ocean.

In that year, 1872, the Canadian government undertook a systematic and scientific exploration of the whole northern region from Lake Abitibi westward to the Pacific ocean. From the year 1872 to the year 1880 no less than twenty-eight expeditions were organized to visit, explore, and report upon that country. Their reports are all available to us now and during that time the sum of no less than \$5,000,000 was expended for that purpose. Now, one district was specially examined at that time and that was the northern section of the Rock mountains. Several passes, *aye*, all the passes north of the Kicking Horse Pass were examined and especially the Pine River Pass and the Peace River Pass. Mr. Marcus Smith, Mr. Cambie, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Horetzky and several other, all engineers of eminence, crossed and recrossed that territory and became as familiar with it as they were with the streets of Ottawa. Any one who to-day would care to look into the reports now accumulated in the archives of the Railway Department will know that country just as he may know his own home. These explorations show conclusively that the best of all these passes may be found either in the Pine River Pass or in the Peace River Pass. It is not only a fact that there is a very successful way of crossing the Rocky mountains either by the Pine river or by the Peace river, but on both these rivers are to be found lands as fertile as the lands of the Red river or the Saskatchewan.

It is of some interest to follow the area of wheat produced on this continent from the early days of the 19th century. Wheat-growing first began on the shores of the St. Lawrence; from the shores of the St. Lawrence it passed to the Genesee Valley in the state of New York; from the Genesee Valley it passed to the Ohio river; from the Ohio river to Illinois; from Illinois to Minnesota; from Minnesota to Dakota and from Dakota to Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, where it now is. The wheat area is fast advancing towards the Saskatchewan river and in a few years it will pass over to the Peace river and to the Pine river valleys. And when the Red river and the Saskatchewan river territory have been exhausted for wheat production and have been given to mixed farming, then the Peace river and the Pine river territory will become the wheat producing centre of the world. Instead of giving my own opinion

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