

The Hon. CHARLES SUMNER, United States Senator from Massachusetts, says in reference to this road:

"I cannot doubt that the material advantages, at least to the community, from such avenues of communication, will be in entire harmony with the greatness of the design. The producer, the manufacturer, and the consumer, will all be brought nearer together; intercourse of all kinds will be promoted; commerce will be quickened; markets will be opened; property, wherever touched by these lines, will be changed, as by a divining rod, into new values; and the great current of travel, like that stream in classic fable, or one of the rivers of California, will fill its channels with golden sands."

This enterprise, says the Hon. EDWARD EVERETT—

"Will be, when carried into effect, of very great utility to the American continent, and will afford the most important facilities to the commercial and social intercourse of the United States of America and Europe." * * *

"I have long looked forward to the commencement of this great enterprise, and I rejoice to see the movement making."

The President of the United States writes to the Portland Convention, as follows:

"Feeling, as I do, a deep interest in all subjects of internal improvement, which are calculated to develop the resources and advance the great interests of the country, I trust that your proposed convention may be productive of the most happy results, and that, through it, another link may be added to the chain which is binding more closely the great commercial interests of this country and Europe."

Mr. Chairman, this road will be a portion of the grand trunk railway that is to span the continent; it will be a link in the vast chain, of which the Missouri road may form a part, which is to be stretched from Halifax to San Francisco. This mighty work is fragmentary and incomplete, until the European and North American road is built. The convenience, the interest, the necessities of the country demand, and will compel its construction by the funds of the Government, if it cannot be built without. As well may you think of sending the mails from Washington to St. Louis by way of Boston, as believe that the country will be satisfied to send them to London by the present route, when they can be carried by another in two thirds of the time. In a case of the magnitude of this, the possible is the determining consideration. It is the peculiar strength of this plan that it cannot be partial in its benefits. Louisiana, Missouri, Georgia, and Illinois, with their vast products, will derive as much advantage from it as Maine. It will bring them nearer to the markets of the Old World.

For these reasons we ask, respectfully, but with confidence, for a grant of the lands of the United States, in which Maine has an interest in common with all the States, for the benefit of all. We ask it on national grounds. We may place our request on considerations which can apply to no other State, and be invoked in behalf of no other public work of the kind.

But, sir, there is another consideration which I desire to address to the House in behalf of this petition. It grows out of the relations of Maine to the General Government, in connection with the northeastern boundary question. The title of Maine to the territory she claimed was clear and unquestionable, and had so been regarded and pronounced by the General Government. Great Britain was extremely desirous of possessing that portion of our State lying north and east of the river St. John, and would probably never have consented to any arrangement which should not have embraced the cession of that territory to her;

regarding it, as she did, of great importance as affording a means of direct communication between her upper and lower Provinces. Well, sir, this Government was anxious to have the question settled. It will be remembered that the commercial and exporting sections of the country were exceedingly sensitive on the subject. In fact, Maine was pressed from all quarters to acquiesce in the terms that were proposed to her in 1842; she did acquiesce, and the treaty of Washington was concluded, and all the troublesome questions between these countries were put at rest. Rouse's Point was ceded to the United States, and other advantages secured. But Maine gave up between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 acres of her lands for the small sum of \$150,000—a territory worth, in the products of the forest alone, as experience has proved, much more than that amount. She felt at the time the inadequacy of the sum paid to her; but she was not unmindful of the importance of the treaty to the country, and fully appreciated the reasons of a national character which influenced the distinguished Secretary of State to desire to effect, if possible, an adjustment of the delicate and embarrassing questions which had so long threatened to disturb the peace of the country; and in a spirit of sacrifice and patriotic regard for the interests and wishes of the other States, which did her infinite honor, she yielded her consent to the dismemberment of her territory. And now that she asks of the General Government, in aid of a work within her limits, but of general convenience and importance, a grant of land less in quantity and value than she has ceded at the instance of the Government, and for the benefit of the country, she feels that her prayer will not be looked upon with less favor, to say the least, when presented in connection with the facts which I have stated.

But, Mr. Chairman, it would be unjust to the old States, not to urge this claim upon grounds common to them all. As it is quite probable that these lands are to be given, in greater or less quantities, to the States in which they lie, I have inquired for the reasons which should limit the grants to them alone. The deeds of cession from Virginia and other States, authorize no such distinction; and certainly it cannot be supposed to exist where the lands have been obtained by conquest or purchase from other Governments. I do not propose to argue here the general question of the distribution of the public lands among the States. It would be a work of supererogation, after all that has been said in Congress upon the subject, during the last twenty years. These discussions have shown, conclusively, that the lands are held in trust for the States. They were acquired by the blood and treasure of the old States, while yet many of those in which they lie were not even in the cradle of their existence. And are the States, by whose treasure and whose valor they were obtained, to be told now that they are none of theirs? Are they to be delayed and postponed in their petitions and requests for some share of them, till the new States shall become strong enough to stand up, and boldly avow their determination to be governed, in the disposition of them, by the "simple rule" of Rob Roy—

"——— the good old plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can?"