

Australia excepted, no country can furnish such singular instances of the rise in the value of surveyed lands as the last five years have witnessed in Canada. The development of the railway system throughout the Province has been the principal agency by which this has been effected. When we recollect that 1852 saw Canada without a single railway, and that 1857 saw her with 1,500 miles completed, and 500 miles more in process of construction, the rise in the value of land is readily understood. The lines of railway must be looked upon as a series of accessible markets for the country they serve. The natural consequence is, that every product of the farm has acquired a certain money value, although before this new access to market it may have been absolutely valueless. The immense remuneration thus obtained for the same outlay of labour has greatly enhanced the value of capital. Land in old settlements, remote from lake ports, has doubled itself in value in five years; while wild lands in new settlements, near to which a railway passes, have trebled their value within a shorter period. These all-powerful means of communication have opened up the country, made available a vast amount of inert wealth, stimulated industry, and effected a complete revolution in farming economy within a range of twenty miles on either side of the course they take.

In all countries similar results have followed the introduction of railways, but in Canada, where lakes having formed the chief means of intercommunication, which were closed to all traffic during the winter months, the results are naturally more felt and more strongly marked. If we turn to the map we see the numerous lines already intersecting the centres of industry and population, while the Great Western Railway, running from Niagara to Detroit River—some 230 miles—and the Grand Trunk line stretching from Lake Huron in the west, down to Trois Pistoles on the east, connect all these lines with each other, and also with the seaports both of St. Lawrence and the open Atlantic. This gigantic undertaking, rivalling in its magnificence the great river system of North America, already has 849 miles in traffic operation. Its length, when complete, will be 1,112, and it will stand first among the railways of the world, not only on account of its exceeding length, but more especially for that triumph of engineering skill, which will carry the line of rails across the broad and rapid St. Lawrence, by a tubular bridge, of stupendous proportions, and nearly two miles in length. This (which is to be called the Victoria Bridge) will be complete and open for traffic in 1860; fourteen piers out of the twenty-four are finished, and it is expected that eight or nine of the tubes will be in their places by the end of the current year. The expenditure, so far, has amounted to £712,192, out of £1,250,000, the contract price.

Whatever may be the results of these railways as mere objects of investment, whether at first they are remunerative or not, this much is beyond question, that the extent and nature of the benefits they confer on the districts which they serve cannot be too highly estimated. The Railway policy of Canada has been successful, from its boldness and completeness—it has had all the advantages of home experience and home capital; home interests are largely mixed up with its success—and one of the best ways to ensure that, is to make known, far and wide, the advantages it offers to those who are about to seek a new home in the fertile lands of the Western world. I regret that my time will not allow me to give you any details of the admirable arrangements by which the traveller or the emigrant is conveyed for *one payment* from the principal ports of this country, or, indeed, of Europe, to the confines of Canada, and farther still, the extreme boundaries of the United States—Kansas, Nebraska, or Texas; neither can I do more than give a very slight sketch of the great water highway, along which a vessel, sailing from Lake Michigan, finds its way to the broad Atlantic, and, in due time, hands over to the merchant at Liverpool the goods that were shipped at Milwaukee or Chicago. The natural difficulties of the great water roads of the country have submitted to the skill of man, and the canals, both proper and subsidiary, justly rank among the most successful evidences of Canadian enterprise.

The greatly increasing land traffic developed by the railways is urging forward a demand for increased facilities by water, to supplement either their area of service or their carrying powers. Already we find (by last half-yearly Report of the Grand Trunk Railway) a line of screw steamers of large tonnage preparing to run from the Michigan ports to Collingwood—the Northern Railway terminus, on Lake Huron—while at South Quebec, the principal terminus of the Grand Trunk Railway, a very important undertaking, of considerable magnitude, is already in active progress, under the title of the “St. Lawrence Dock and Wharfage Company,” which will go far towards making Quebec the Liverpool of the North American continent. To this point of the river the