

abundant, and in places of large size, is not of the most valuable kind. Nevertheless, the country is not so barren as not to repay tillage, should a local market be made by a population entering the region to pursue other branches of industry: and the day may come, and certainly will come speedily, unless effectual measures be taken to stop the destruction of North American forests, when worse timber than the spruce and red pine of the Upper Ottawa, the Moose, and the Albany, will be in demand. Such a prospect is a poor consolation to cheer one on in building a thousand miles of railroad, through a wilderness, and almost as scanty is the encouragement to be derived from the few indications of mineral wealth; but, while these would not be inducements to build the road, they afford us some reason to hope that the road when built, and if built for the purposes of through traffic, will serve a valuable local end.

In 1871 Mr. Alexander McKenzie made a flying expedition (by order of the Engineer-in-Chief) by canoe up the Ottawa, and across the portage to the head waters of the Abbitibi, which he descended to Moose Factory on James Bay, returning up the northern branch of the Moose river, and down the Michipicoten to Lake Superior. On the Moose river he found quartz in boulders in abundance, "containing apparent traces of gold, copper, etc., while galena," he says "is not to be found in its south branch." There are also, in his opinion, indications of petroleum on its western side, for about 130 miles southward from tide water, and the locality abounds with ferruginous and brackish springs. A better authority is Mr. Robert Bell, of the Geological Survey, who spent the summer of 1871, exploring the country N. E. of Lake Nipigon, and the head waters of the Albany. He reached the Albany from Lake Nipigon by the Ombabiki, and if his observation be correct, it sets at rest the vexed question of a lake with two outlets, for he describes his following the

Ombabiki against the current, from Lake Nipigon to its source in Shoal Lake, three and a half-miles long and one mile wide, lying at "a distance of twenty-five miles north-east of the mouth of the river. This lake lies due north and south, and discharges both ways; the stream flowing northward towards the Albany, called the Powétiik River, being nearly as large as the southern outlet." It is a pity Mr. Bell did not follow the Powétiik into one or other of the main unmistakable branches of the Albany, as until this is done a doubt may exist as to whether it is a confluent of the northern river system at all, and does not twist round and find its way into Lake Superior. Mr. Bell's description of the Ojoké is not what we would expect to be that of a river within a few miles of its source. He leaves the Ojoké to cross a narrow water-shed to another branch of the Albany, which he follows through alternating stretches of lakes and rapid rivers to Martin's Falls; and thence 120 miles further to the junction of the Kenogami. In his 522 miles of journeying, he speaks only once of seeing a vein of quartz carrying a little iron pyrites, and once of detecting specks of copper pyrites in some dioritic schist. "But in one place, just below the mouth of the Goose River, or three miles below the point where the river turns south-east, bright red marl occurs on the north bank, and on a small island a mile further down, some loose fragments of a bright bituminous coal were found. The Hudson Bay Company's officers informed me that coal had never been brought into the country; and considering that the conveyance of even light and valuable goods is so expensive in this region, this is only what might have been expected, so that I cannot suppose this coal to have been brought here by human agency." Should good coal in available quantities be found within 300 miles of the heart of Ontario, and less than 200 from Lake Superior, the Pacific Railroad will be the most fruitful work Canada has ever engaged in. But it