

certain, demonstrable, and unquestionable advantage and protection to our commerce as would be conferred by the establishment of the proposed line of communication. It would keep the owner and his vessel, in whatever European or Asiatic port the latter might be, separated by less than a single week. It would enable communications, whether of accident, of market, or of destination, to be made and answered without injurious detention or delay. It would reduce the rates of insurance and the prices of freights. It would place the fishing fleets of Gloucester and Cape Cod, upon the coasts of Nova Scotia, in communication with the owners at home by a railway transit that might be performed in less than a day.

There is another point of view from which this work presents a truly national character; it is as a means and implement of national defense. Traversing a territory so near the coast, yet not upon it, to the very frontier of the Republic, and connected, as it will be, in its branches and interconnections, with every other railroad in the country, it will be of greater service and importance in this respect, than any mere works of protection and fortification that can be erected by the outlay of many millions. On this point I do not speak unadvisedly, or without book. I quote from an admirable letter of Lieutenant Maury, United States Navy, addressed to the Portland committee, July 24, 1850. Having remarked that—

"It [this railway] will connect with railroads from Montreal, Quebec, and Boston; and in view of the consequence which these lines will give it, you eloquently describe it a 'grand trunk line of railway from the State of Maine to the lower British Provinces.' It is only one of the topmost branches; the main trunk extends from the West to the East, from the North to the South, and has its tap-root planted in the heart of the Mississippi valley.

"There is already in contemplation, in process of construction or actually completed, a grand trunk line of railroads all the way from Portland, in Maine, to Memphis, in Tennessee, and other points on the Mississippi river. To complete such a trunk you cannot go amiss for friends and advocates, for its branches are everywhere. Whether you go among the mountains of New England, or the lakes of Canada—in the plains of the South, or the forests of the West—wherever you sound the ear whistle for this line of road, you will see the friends of the measure, like Rhoderick Dhu's men, starting up from every bush and bank, in ready response to the call.

"At the speed of Collins's steamers—and we do not mean to rest satisfied with that—the passage across the Atlantic can be performed, when the line of your trunk road is pushed over into Nova Scotia, in a week.

"The advantages of a road which is to shorten one third of the sailing distance between London and New York, Boston and Paris, are too many and too obvious, and too great for enumeration or description. They strike every one."

He proceeds to say—and to this portion of his letter I desire to call particular attention:

"There is, however, one point of view which I wish you would take of this railroad; for it is from that point that I wish to present some of its merits to public favor.

"You know that the system of fortifications formerly adopted for the defense of the coast, as expensive and as necessary as it was, has been rendered almost unnecessary by the system of railroads that has been introduced by the private enterprise and energy of public-spirited individuals like yourselves. We have seen the General Government expending millions of dollars for the erection of a single fortification, and which, when completed, was of no earthly value in times of peace to the citizens or occupations of the country. There it stood—a mere pile of brick and mortar—drawing heavily upon the public Treasury for repairs every year, and dragging out a burdensome existence in peace, that perchance it might be useful in war.

"Now, with the power which this railroad would give you to draw an army, if need be, from the great valley of the West, and in two days march it all the way by steam from

Memphis, on the Mississippi, to the frontiers of Maine, or even into foreign territory—with such a power, what do the people of Maine want with any forts and castles, except such as may be necessary to protect her seaport towns from the great guns of big ships?

"You know, too,—for you have only to visit the navy-yard in your State to see evidence of the fact,—that the plan was to collect in our navy-yard, and at great expense, large quantities of ship timber, and store it away for the emergencies of war. The emergencies never came, the timber rotted, and the money was lost.

"Now, in time of war, almost any timber that stands in the forests is good enough to build men-of-war. Even if built of green timber they would probably last through the war, when the vast majority of them, of whatever kind of timber they might be built, would be of no thrifter use at any rate. Therefore, with railroads, what do we want of any more stores of ship timber for any such purposes? As for the Navy, railroads have converted almost every forest, 'from Maine to Georgia,' into a timber shed for it.

"Seeing, therefore, the important part which railroads are performing, and will perform in the system of national defenses—seeing that one of the principal objects which moved our fathers to form this Union, was 'the better to provide for the common defense;' and seeing that the public lands are a common fund which is being squandered, I am of opinion that a more righteous, wise, and beneficent dispensation could not be made of portions of these lands than to apply them to aid in the construction of railroads, and other works which provide so effectually as railroads do, for the common defense."

Not only will this road (in connection with the Atlantic ferry) be convenient for the traveler, enabling him to make the passage to Europe by the shortest and quickest sea route, and over a portion of this continent as yet but little known, but of a most interesting character; through the heart of Ireland—a land whose history and misfortunes, whose vicissitudes and sorrows, have interested us all—and by that grandest achievement of modern art and skill, the Tubular bridge,—not only will it afford direct advantage and protection to the trade and commerce of the country; speed the transmission of intelligence by mail and telegraph, and provide for the national defense; but it will tend indirectly, though materially, to enlarge the trade, and increase the wealth and population of every portion of the country. And here I am happy to be able to read the opinions of the Hon. Robert J. Walker, contained in a letter to John A. Poor, Esq., dated August 9, 1850:

"It was not in my power to comply with the request made by the committee in your name, to attend and address the Convention held at Portland on the 31st ult., with a view to the continuation of the great Eastern railway from your city to some point in Nova Scotia, nearest to Great Britain and Ireland. This would, indeed, be a work of vast importance, not only to your own State and city, to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, but to the whole American Union, and to all the continents of the Old World. It is hoped that, with the improvements now being made in steamers, it might bring some good harbor in Ireland within five days of our American shores. It would greatly enlarge international commerce, and become a new bond to preserve the peace of the world. It would increase our exports to the British provinces and to Europe, with a corresponding augmentation of imports and revenue. It would bring Europe so near to America, that it would greatly facilitate the export and diffusion abroad of our Republican principles, without any diminution or deterioration of the supply laid for domestic consumption."

"I cannot doubt but that the present enlightened Ministry of Great Britain—the great advocates of a liberal commercial policy—will aid this noble enterprise; that our Government will extend to it all proper facilities by mail arrangements and otherwise; and that the rest will be accomplished by the well-known energy of New England, aided by the co-operation of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

"From the increased speed, it seems to me that the mail and passengers, between both countries, must be generally carried by this route; as also light articles of value."