

glide to the south, compared with the tumultuous rush of those we see hurrying on to the north and west. And what use have we yet made of this great advantage of position? Little indeed as yet; but the beginning has been auspiciously entered on, and this advantage will suddenly and convulsively increase to results which at the first glance appear too astonishing and overwhelming for belief. To our east lies a vast consuming country, incapable of satiety; from its circumstances incapable of supplying its own wants; and from a spirit, nay, a necessity of accumulation, always seeking, and instantly absorbing whatever we have to offer. To our south and west, and north-west, lies an equally vast producing country, capable of indefinite extension; and from a spirit of restless activity, and an unquenchable thirst for gain, always producing and setting in motion the accumulations of its industry to supply the necessities of the east and receiving, as we do, in return, the varied results of mechanical skill. We lie between these extremes; the nearer they are brought to one another the greater gain to both, and the greater stimulant to both to pursue their incessant interchange of rude industry on the one hand and capital and skill on the other. We know how astonishingly the influence of rapid and uninterrupted communication between distant centres of industry is developing itself around us; to whatever country we look, examples without number start up before us in testimony of the life and vigour which is infused as soon as rapidly and perfect freedom of communication is established. Besides this great advantage of position, we have immediate and uncontrolled communication with the sea, the highway of nations. When the east or the west fails us, or are temporarily incapable of relieving us of surplus productions, we can always find ourselves in a better position than our western neighbour, because we are nearer to the markets abroad. And lastly, may we not look upon resources within ourselves? Have we not the power of increasing tenfold the products of our mines, our forests, and our farms.

The relation of our country to the North-Western and Western States of the Union is most remarkable; and in order to understand this important question in its wide extent, you must familiarize yourself with a few general truths which a little quiet reflection will render almost self-evident. What has led to the construction of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal. You will answer, the great mining region of Lake Superior—copper in inexhaustible abundance, and iron distributed in mountain masses, not only on the shores of that cold fresh-water sea, but profusely scattered throughout northern Michigan and Wisconsin! Think you that the vast demand for iron in the new North-western States will allow those rich mines of metal to remain idle. Will it be cheaper to bring the coal of Ohio and Illinois to Chicago, Milwaukee, Superior City, or take the ore to the Eastern States, smelt it, manufacture it, and then send it back again to the far west. No—the region of the great lakes will manufacture its own railroad iron as soon as speedy and cheap means of communication are opened out and maintained. From Chicago or Milwaukee to the mining region of Lake Superior, a railroad is now contemplated, and a few months on this continent will teach you that to “contemplate” in such matters signifies “to construct.” From Milwaukee to Copper-range is about 350 miles, part of the line runs through the richest iron region; and when all things are dependent upon iron, the south shore of Lake Superior must soon find that population and industry for which it is so remarkably adapted; and then follows the north, the great mineral region of Western Canada. But look beyond the lakes—see Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois, what are they to do with their surplus grain? It must all seek the lake ports. It must be stored where there is no prospect of growth and fermentation taking place. The damp and warm voyage over the heated waters of the Gulf stream is impracticable. The Mississippi and its affluent the Missouri, are useless in great part as avenues for the exportation of the wheat of the west. This has led to that wonderful star-work of railways which radiates from Chicago—for, as a general rule, all traffic follows the direction of a leading traffic. Extending into the rich prairies of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Wisconsin, not less than thirteen different railways radiate from Chicago, a city which has sprung up as it were in a night; in 1840 it had 4,479 inhabitants, it now embraces 55,000 souls, an increase absolutely without parallel on this continent, and yet a true reflection of the commerce, industry and activity of the west. In like proportion, railways from Milwaukee and from Green Bay ramify into the interior. The same argument applies to the lake ports of Huron, St. Clair, and Erie, resulting

in the general proposition, that the region of the Great Lake draws to itself a mighty traffic which naturally belongs to other water sheds. Once on the lakes whither do these accumulations tend? You will answer to the seaboard, for home consumption, or for exportation to Great Britain, Ireland, or the West India Islands. But in seeking the seaboard they have to find the easiest and speediest route in their descent to the sea level. In Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and northern parts of Lake Huron, every cargo of western produce is 500 feet above the sea. It must be let down step by step until it reaches this universal level. This may be effected by a short, safe and rapid step, nearly in a straight line, or it may be effected by a circuitous route, and by a long and often precarious descent. No one doubts that the more rapid and safe the communication between east and west, the more sudden and elastic will be the ebb and flow of that mighty commercial stream whose course, if wisely, though ever so gently directed in the first instance, will soon carry away every obstruction and impediment to its perfect freedom. Now look at Western Canada, and see the barrier which this wedge-shaped country introduces between the east and west; happily it is only a physical barrier; formerly it was also a political and commercial one. As a physical barrier what has high art and generous enterprise done to bring nearer to one another the fruitful west and the insatiable east. We have now in active operation the Great Western, (Lake Huron and Lake Ontario at Hamilton; and State of New York at Suspension Bridge, 220 miles), the Northern Railway (Lake Huron and Lake Ontario 90 miles), traversing the barrier; and the Welland Canal, (Lake Erie and Ontario), letting down the produce of the west to the level of Lake Ontario, without breaking bulk. Are these means of communication taxed to the full; the Welland Canal thronged to the utmost, answers for itself; the Great Western Railway for half its length as a mere preliminary step, has to be immediately doubled in capacity by means of a new branch from London to Saratoga, with double track from London to Hamilton; the Northern, which a year ago was thought to be a weak and exotic fledgling, has already taken wing with a power and vigour indicative of great inherent strength; the Lake Huron and Buffalo Railway, the Anglican name for the late Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich railway (Lake Erie to Lake Huron 160 miles, 82 now open,) will be finished in a twelve-month; the Grand Trunk which stretches its long length through the centre of the most fertile part of Western Canada, and thence onward to the sea, will soon unite the upper lakes with the Atlantic; and yet all these connecting links between the west and east will be insufficient to serve that vast commercial expansion which trends so rapidly upon, and fills to repletion the present artificial means of communication. There are additional stupendous works in “contemplation.” First, a ship canal connecting Georgian Bay, the northern part of Lake Huron, with Lake Ontario at Toronto. Second, a ship canal connecting the head of Lake Huron by the route of Lake Nipissing, with the Ottawa, and thence with the sea or Lake Ontario. Third, the Great Southern Railway, establishing a third line of communication between the head of Lake Erie and the Niagara River. You may well smile at the interpretation given to the word “contemplate” with us, yet think that all the railways just named were only “contemplated” some three or four years ago, and now they may be said to be constructed. So in five years to come you will find that vast change to have occurred in relation to these new projects, when the wonderful growth of the Great West is now forcing upon our attention. Whatever each succeeding year is doing for the Great West it is doing for Canada. It is not only increasing population by the influx of strangers, to a degree totally unparalleled, but opening out new fields of enterprise, and establishing new centres of industry, where five years before existed desolate and uninhabited wilds. Every mine opened on the south shore of Lake Superior, benefits us on account of our geographical position; and whatever may be said of the prospective wealth and importance of that extensive mineral region of our neighbour may be said with equal confidence of our own. So with respect to every additional acre cultivated in Iowa or Minnesota; it adds its mite to the traffic which is filling to excess every avenue of communication we have opened between the west and east; and our future difficulty will be to keep pace with the increase of those accumulations which will seek to be set in motion from the commercial centres of the north-western lakes. It will be well to examine in as brief a manner as possible, the present ascertained commerce of the lakes, in order to see if our ex-