

HALIFAX RAILWAY, AND PUBLIC WORKS IN CANADA. 29

BRITISH
NORTH AMERICA

prohibit the exports of provisions from their own harbours, the consequences would be serious to these two provinces. Canada could not then supply them.

In May, 1847, when the exploratory parties were being formed at Fredericton, and provisions were being forwarded to the woods for their use, there was a scarcity of flour at St. John. It was said that sufficient for only two or three days' consumption remained in that city. The prices rose considerably, and the scarcity was only averted by the arrival of some cargoes from the United States intended for Eastport.

The railway, had it been established, would have prevented such a state of things, and may save it for the future.

For the want of such a communication, Nova Scotia now finds it easier and more advantageous, notwithstanding a heavy duty of 20 per cent. against her, to export her great staple of fish to the States than to Canada; whereas, if the railway were made, it would pass on to the latter, where there would be an extensive market for it, and flour would be received in return.

Halifax would become the grand emporium of trade for the British provinces.

With the assistance of the electric telegraph, an order from Quebec could be received in a few minutes, and the articles wanted could be sent off by the next train.

As the vessels now arrive in fleets in the spring, and again in the autumn, it is a matter of forethought and consideration to the merchant of Canada to know what he shall provide himself with.

To the intending emigrant it will afford him the choice of any month in the year to set out for his new country, and if by means of friends previously settled, his place of abode has been chosen, he can time his arrival so as to have the shortest possible time to wait until his own crops are ready to supply him with food.

Arriving now, as thousands annually do, in the spring, when the seed time is at hand, and the land uncleared, they lose the valuable opportunity of that year's crop, and have to wait over, existing, perhaps, upon their little capital for nearly 18 months, until the succeeding harvest comes to them. To all such emigrants nearly a year may be saved.

Surprise has sometimes been expressed that out of so many who yearly land in the provinces so many pass on and become settlers in the States.

To the poor man his labour is his capital, and he must transfer himself to the place where employment is to be found.

The proposed railway would be such a work as would engage thousands in its immediate construction. While the stimulus and new spirit it would infuse into the whole community, now cribbed and confined as it were to their own locations, would give rise to branches and other works which would employ additional thousands.

It has been seen that the population of some of the Western States have doubled and even tripled themselves in the course of 10 years.

The population of New Brunswick is now only 208,000. Her revenue in 1847 was 106,000*l.* sterling, or 10*s.* per head.

There is no apparent reason why, if the same facilities of employment and land for settlement were afforded, that her progress should not be also very great.

Every emigrant, induced to settle and remain in the country, may be calculated as producing 10*s.* annual revenue to the province.

If the formation of the railway increased the population of New Brunswick by 40,000 persons only, then her proportion of the guaranteed interest would be covered from that cause alone.

The same might occur also to Nova Scotia and Lower Canada.

It may be asked what is to become of the labourers employed upon the railway during the winter. This is the season when lumbering or cutting of timber commences. They might engage in it also. But with the wages earned in the summer they should be incited to purchase small lots of ground of about 50 acres each.

The labours of the season over, or suspended upon the railway, they could most advantageously employ themselves in clearing, logging, and improving their own lots. This they could do to such an extent that in the spring the women and older children could burn the logs off and put in some sort of crops for food, such as potatoes, Indian corn, &c.

Mechanics might either do the same, if railway work could not be found for them, or find employment in the towns.

Another great effect of the railway would be to enhance almost immediately the value of all real and personal property. The effects produced by the Erie Canal in doubling and nearly tripling that of the City of New York has been stated.

Villages and towns would, no doubt, spring up in its course the same as on the canal. The railway would give them birth. Agriculture and external commerce would support and enrich them.

But if, by its means, the navigation of the Gulf of St. Lawrence is spared, what an amount of human suffering and loss of life will it not save.

The losses from shipwreck have been great, but not equal to that arising from protracted voyages and crowded emigrant ships.

In 1847, 89,738 persons emigrated to the British provinces, of whom 5293 persons perished at sea, and 10,000 are said to have died after their arrival.

This was a most unusual year, and it is to be hoped, by every friend of humanity, that anything like it will never occur again.

No human means could have saved all this loss of life, but there is, no doubt, a less protracted voyage, and a more favourable time than the spring of the year in the St. Lawrence would have prevented some of the fatal results.