

HALIFAX RAILWAY, AND PUBLIC WORKS IN CANADA. 21

BRITISH
NORTH AMERICA.

be opposite another. For the second 100 miles it will leave these concessions and farms a little on one side, but still within reach. A more favourable disposition of a population (comprised of small farmers) for contributing to the way traffic of a railroad could scarcely have been devised.

In the country lying between the Restigouche River and Halifax, the inhabitants who will be near to the railroad will amount to about 100,000; making the population, either upon or near to the line, including the two termini, 250,000 persons. But if the total population be taken within the area, which will be benefited by and become contributors to the line, then it may be estimated at not less than 400,000 souls.

In a report of the directors, made upon the New York and Erie railroad in 1843, when the question of proceeding with that line was under consideration, one of the data upon which its future receipts was calculated was derived from population and relative distance. And using the data obtained from the working of one portion which had been completed and was in operation, it was calculated that 531,000 persons on a line of 425 miles in length, would return in net earnings to the railway 1,343,500 dollars, or $2\frac{1}{2}$ dollars nearly per head, equivalent to 10s. sterling. As the railroad is not yet completed, the true result cannot yet be seen.

The net earnings of the railroads in Massachusetts for the year 1847 were 2,290,000 dollars. The population of that State, over whose area railways are everywhere extended, and the whole of which may therefore be considered as tributary to them, being at the time about 800,000. This gives $2\frac{3}{4}$ dollars per head, equivalent to 11s., or the same result nearly.

Applying the same ratio (of 10s. per head) to the 400,000 inhabitants who are within the area and likely to become tributaries to the Quebec and Halifax railway, it would give 200,000l. as its probable revenue.

The great staple of trade of New Brunswick is its timber. For this all-absorbing pursuit the inhabitants neglect agriculture, and instead of raising their own supplies, they import provisions in large quantities from Canada and the United States. In the year 1846, New Brunswick paid to the latter for provisions alone 216,000l. sterling, whilst, in return, the United States only took from them 11,000l. in coals and fish.

Of Nova Scotia the great staples are timber and the products of the fisheries. The inhabitants import provisions also largely.

Canada is an exporting country, and capable of supplying the demands of both.

In the winter of 1847-8 the price of flour at Halifax and St. John was at 40s. the barrel, and it was being imported from the chief ports in the United States, even from as far as New Orleans in the Gulf of Mexico. At the same time, at Quebec the price of flour was only 25s. per barrel. A very great difference, which, had the railroad been in existence, would not have occurred.

Another great source of revenue likely to be developed by the railway is that of coals, to be derived from the Great Cumberland Field.

Quebec and the upper country would no doubt take large quantities for their own consumption. Halifax the same for itself, and also for exportation to the United States.

Considerable returns would arise from the fisheries and from the products of the forest lying contiguous to the line, which would find their way by it to the shipping ports.

The country through which the road will pass possesses, therefore, in itself, elements which, when fully developed, cannot fail to realize large receipts.

But there are, exclusive of these, other and highly important sources for productive revenue.

Halifax may be considered to be the nearest great seaport to Europe.

Passengers travelling between England and the Canadas would adopt this railway as the shortest and best line which they could take. Emigrants would do the same.

The mails, troops, munitions of war, commissariat supplies, and all public stores would naturally pass by it, as the safest, speediest, and cheapest means of conveyance.

If a straight line be drawn from Cape Clear, in Ireland, to New York, it will cut through or pass close to Halifax.

The latter is therefore on the direct route; and as the sea voyage across the Atlantic to New York may be shortened by three days nearly, in steamers, it is not improbable that on that account, when the branch railroad to St. John is completed, and other lines to connect on with those in the United States, the whole or the greatest portion of the passenger traffic between the Old and New World would pass through Halifax, and over a great section of the proposed railroad.

But the great object for the railway to attain, and which, if it should be able to accomplish, its capability to pay the interest of the capital expended would be undoubted, is to supersede the long and dangerous passage to Quebec by the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

To make two voyages in a season vessels are obliged to leave England earlier, and encounter the dangers of the ice in the Gulf, much sooner than it is safe or prudent for them to do.

The loss of life and property which has occurred from this cause, and returning late in the autumn, has been enormous. It cannot be ascertained, but probably it would have more than paid for the railway.

An opinion may, however, be formed of it from the rates of insurance, which in the spring and autumn are as high as 10 per cent. A much higher rate than to any other part of the world.

The navigation of the St. Lawrence is closed for about six months of every year. During the whole of this period all the produce of the country is locked up, and necessarily lies unproductive on the hands of the holders.