

has said in effect* of the Great North West, that to within the last few years,

Courteous as were the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, not one of them could be found who would not deprecate the idea of "opening the country for settlement." They could not foresee that a favourable bargain for the Company would be made in reference to their lands, and they only looked upon an immigrant invasion as the expulsion of the fur-bearing animals which alone afforded a good trade.

Had they been able to prophesy they would have welcomed the tide of the white races whose advent would enhance a thousand-fold the value of the as yet useless grass ocean around them. But the Hudson's Bay Company's people had had enough trouble in years long past with their competitors, and, having procured a monopoly, they did not desire neighbours. So it was said that grain would not grow; that even roots were difficult to raise. Who know if the virgin soil was worth the plough? Such was the language industriously employed. But Lord Selkirk had persuaded some of the Highlanders who at the beginning of the century thronged so eagerly to the emigrant vessels to sail into Hudson's Bay and to ascend the Nelson River and to settle to the south of Lake Winnipog, where they formed a most flourishing colony. Then, again, the Americans higher up the Red River had found the valley most fertile, with a soil marvellously black and rich, and it became evident that vast wheat-fields had been hidden away in that dim green north land.

To-day all this is changed. The great Prairie of the North-Western States of America has become a vast farm, and in Canada the province of Manitoba, and the whole country beyond to British Columbia, has been opened up by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the pioneer city of Winnipeg is now reached in Pullman cars in fewer hours than it occupied weeks in 1870 for Colonel (now Lord) Wolseley's Red River Expedition to march along the same route to Fort Garry.

The fertile territory may be taken to extend over an area of at least 270,000 square miles, and of this great domain the Canadian Government have appointed one twentieth of each township to the Hudson's Bay Company in satisfaction of their monopoly.

The Hudson's Bay Company has thus an aggregate quantity of about eight million acres, which is spread over the whole area, and has a direct and substantial interest in its rapid development by the construction of railways for its colonization and settlement.

There remains another great Corporation, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Their line crosses the fertile territory from East to West, a length of 900 miles, at an average distance of seventy miles from the southern frontier, and has attached to it a strip of land twenty-four miles wide on each side called "the railway belt," with an area of 32,000,000 acres. If this land were but half under cultivation the traffic would require the service of a greater number of trains per day than the existing single line could accommodate, and would be a very severe strain upon a double one.

Such is the prairie character of the country, the extraordinary rapidity with which the land is taken up and can be developed,

* *Good Words*, February 1886.