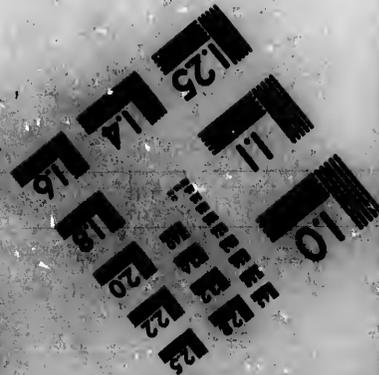
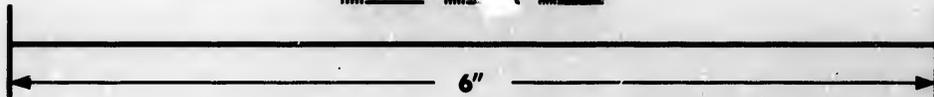


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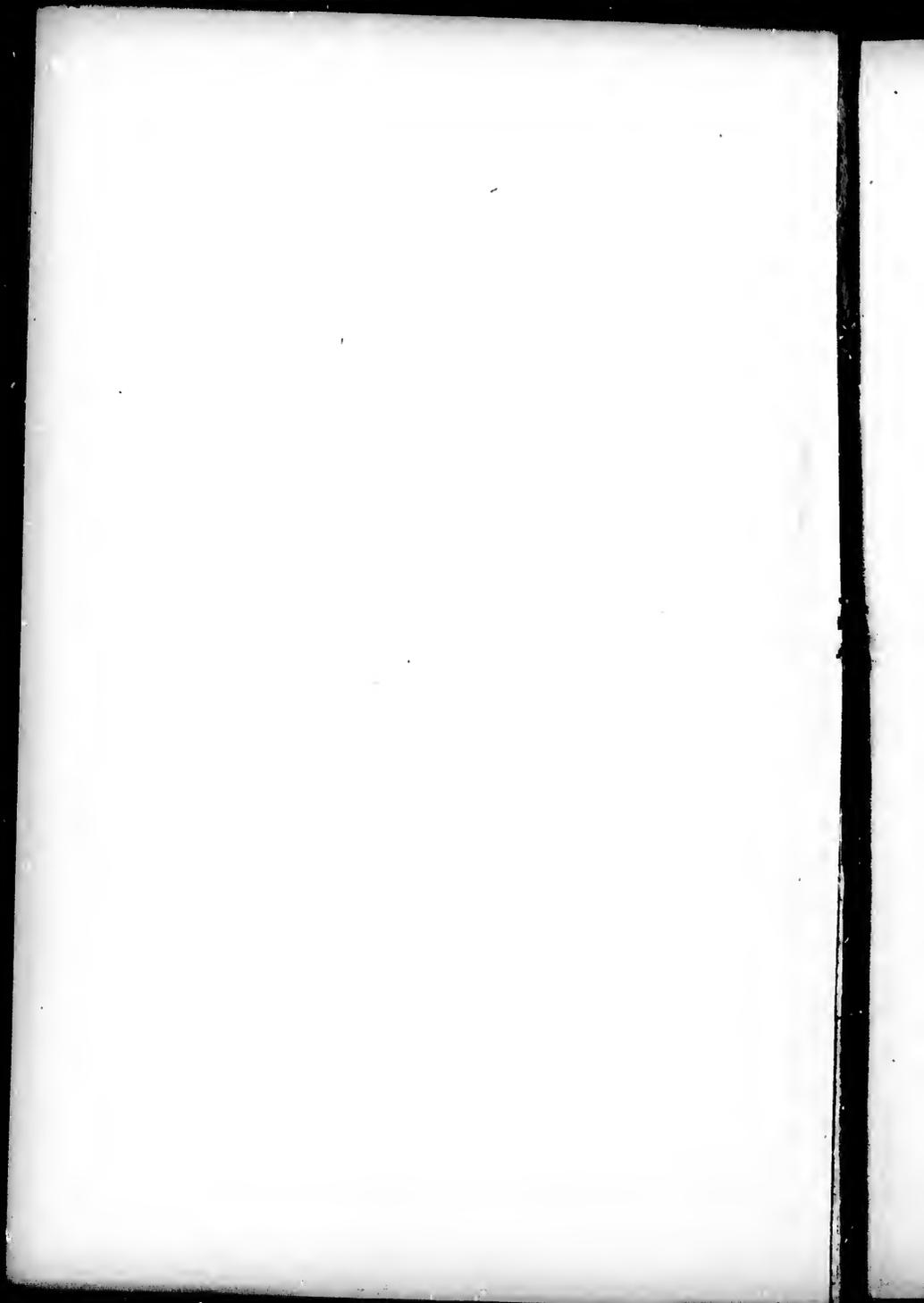
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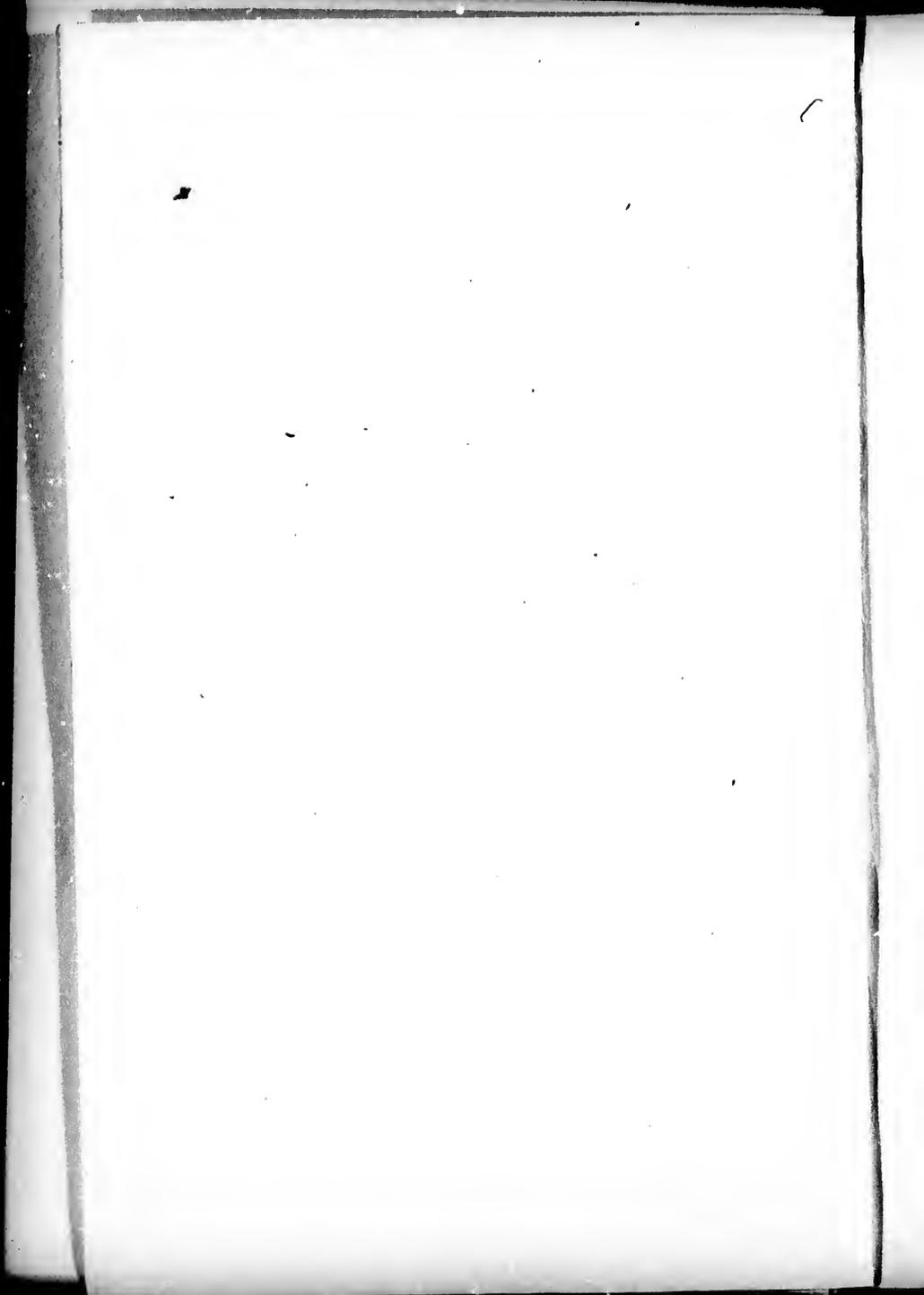


A PROPOSAL
FOR A
NEW PENAL SETTLEMENT,
IN CONNEXION WITH THE COLONIZATION
OF THE
UNINHABITED DISTRICTS
OF
BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

BY
ALEXANDER K. ISBISTER.

LONDON:
TRELAWNEY SAUNDERS, 6, CHARING CROSS.

1850.



TO

SAMUEL CHRISTY, Esq., M.P.

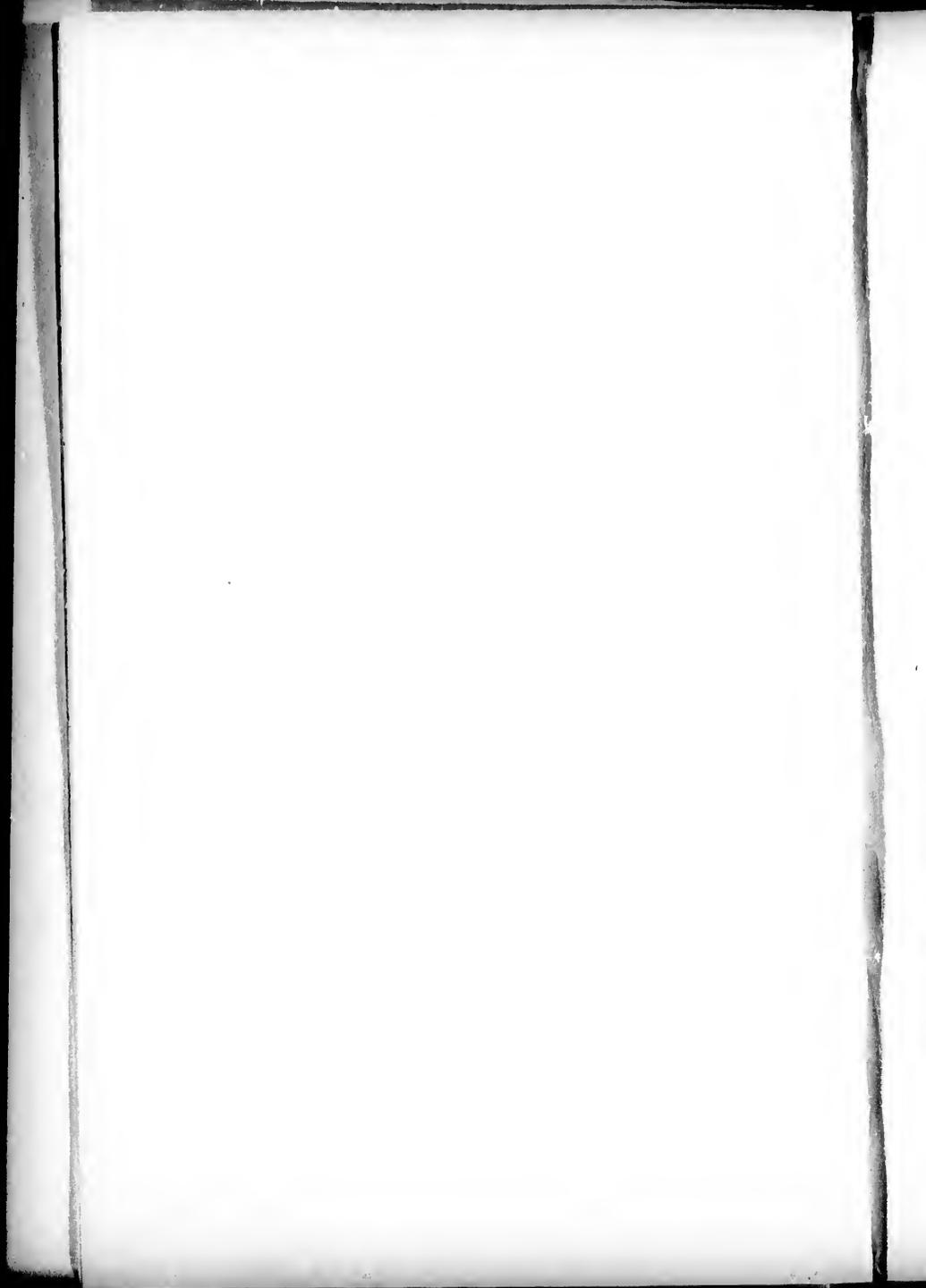
SIR,

THE interest you take in the condition and prospects of British North-Western America, will, I trust, plead my apology for submitting to your notice the suggestions contained in the following pages, which, while they aim at the furtherance of a measure of great national importance, have no less for their object the development of the resources of a territory, to the value of which you have taken so prominent a part in directing public attention. It is in the conviction that there is no one to whom they could be more fitly addressed, that these pages are, with the greatest respect, inscribed to you, by

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

A. K. ISBISTER.



NEW PENAL SETTLEMENT.

A YEAR has now nearly elapsed since Sir George Grey, in the course of a debate in the House of Commons on a motion introduced by Lord Mahon, took the opportunity in a speech, as remarkable for sound information as for its practical good sense, to explain at some length the plan adopted by the Government in reference to the important subject of Convict Discipline and Transportation. The main features of this plan, it will be remembered, were,—1st. Imprisonment on the separate system, in gaols adapted for the purpose in various parts of the United Kingdom, for periods of the nominal sentence of transportation, varying from 6 to 18 months. 2ndly. Forced labour upon public works in Portland Island, Bermuda, or Gibraltar, for the first half of the remaining term. And 3rdly. Deportation for the rest of the term to the Cape of Good Hope, New South Wales, or Van Diemen's Land, on tickets of leave.

The efficacy of Transportation as an ingredient of secondary punishment, has been universally admitted, and under our judicial system it has come to be regarded as an absolutely essential precedent of restoration to a forfeited position in society. Recent events, however, have rendered it equally undeniable that there exists, on the other hand, a very general disinclination to receive convicts even into our younger Colonies. In the instance of the Cape and Port Phillip, and it may be added, though in a minor degree, New South Wales, the manifestation

of this feeling has been accompanied by circumstances, which must already have entailed the necessity of a very considerable modification of the plan originally contemplated by the Government.

Under these circumstances (supposing the hostility of the Colonies to the measure to continue or to *increase*) it becomes a question of serious importance, how we are to dispose of the 6,000 criminals (in 1848 the actual number was 6,291) now annually convicted and sentenced to transportation; or, in other words,—what the question really comes to,—how the continuance of the present system of secondary punishments in this country is to be maintained?

Are we to keep our convicts at home?

Are we to thrust them on our recusant Colonies? or,

Are we to form new Penal Colonies?

The first of these alternatives opens up the prospect of the annual discharge of some of 6,000 *reclaimed* (?) criminals upon a population amongst whom their names are tainted, and whose social system they have outraged perhaps for a series of years. In the present temper of public feeling on such subjects in England, we need not stay to examine its obvious impracticability even on this ground alone—not to dwell on the extravagance of supposing that all or even a large proportion of the criminals would be reformed, under *any* practicable system of imprisonment in this country,—upon the enormous expense of constructing and superintending such establishments as would be necessary to carry out the attempt,—nor, finally, on the injury inflicted upon the already half-starved labourer, by the competition of a mass of prisoners in the gaols; the product of whose labour even now is inflicting serious injury upon him, by the necessary depreciation of price in the articles manufactured at Wakefield, Pentonville, and other prisons.

As regards the second expedient, it is sufficient to observe, "that although," as it is well remarked by a correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle*, "we could of course compel our smaller colonies to receive any number of criminals we chose to send them, yet no amount of force could compel them to employ the criminals so sent; and if we were to attempt to establish a Penal Settlement in such a colony by force, it would answer no good end, and would probably defeat its own object, and might even terminate in the abandonment of the colony by the free proprietors." We may, therefore, at once dismiss this second alternative as equally impracticable with the first; and with an earnest hope at the same time that the day may be far distant which shall see us reduced to the necessity of adopting either of them, by the failure of all other expedients.

The third proposition—the formation of new Penal Settlements, remains to be considered. Leaving for the present all discussion of the 'philosophy' of the measure in its relation to the subject of criminal legislation, whilst assuming it (as we believe it is) to be the only admitted practical remedy for the evil we are considering, we propose in the following pages to enquire into the qualifications and resources of a locality, perhaps more eligible than any other in our possession, where it can be carried into operation in a manner at once practicable and comprehensive.

The immense uninhabited country bordering on Hudson's Bay, and extending thence across the continent of North America, affords, notwithstanding its northern position, a sufficient extent of fertile soil, and numerous natural resources, to render it both attractive as a field for settlement, and capable of sustaining an increasing civilized population; and we hope to be able to shew, presents many advantages for carrying out within its ample limits a comprehensive scheme of Penal Colonization.

In enquiring into the adaption of this territory, for the purposes here contemplated, it is impossible not to be struck at the outset with the singularly close analogy it presents, in all important respects, to perhaps the most successful example of a Penal Colony in modern times—the Russian settlement of Siberia.

Nor is it easy to repress the conviction that under a different system as respects the development of its manifold natural advantages, this portion of the continent of North America might, from its geographical position and inherent resources, stand very much in the same relation to the Crown of England which its antitype in Northern Asia bears to the empire of Russia—which, exercising over it the effectual sway of an organized Government, profits in return by the vast resources which it develops.

“The system on which Siberia has been, and continues to be colonized,” says a recent English traveller in this region, “is admirable alike in theory and in practice. The perpetrators of heinous crimes are sent to the mines; those who have been banished for minor delinquencies are settled in villages or on farms; and political offenders, comprising soldiers, authors, and statesmen, are generally established by themselves in little knots, communicating to all around them a degree of refinement unknown in other half-civilized countries. In fact, for reforming the criminal, in addition to the punishment of the crime, Siberia undoubtedly is the best penitentiary in the world. When not bad enough for the mines, each exile is provided with a lot of ground, a house, a horse, two cows, and agricultural implements; and also for the first year with provisions. For three years he pays no taxes whatever, and for the next ten, only half the full amount. To bring fear as well as hope to operate in his favour, he clearly understands that his very first step will send him from his home and his family to toil as an outcast in the mines. * * *

“Through her system of deportation, Russia has thus been indebted to Siberia for the amelioration, both moral and political, of

her own condition. She has made good citizens of myriads who in other countries would have been indirectly condemned, on their first conviction, to a life of ignominy and shame; and thus has she virtually achieved the miracle of reconciling the safety of the innocent, not merely with the impunity, but even with the prosperity of the guilty."—*Overland Journey round the World, by Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories*, pp. 395, 442. London: Colburn, 1847.

Nor turning from its effects on Russia, to the direct benefits it has been the means of conferring on Siberia, are the results of this far-reaching and beneficent system of policy—anticipating rather than following, in all cases, the steps which have been taken to colonize the country—less worthy of notice.

Notwithstanding the great extent of this vast territory, the inhospitable character of the climate in which a large portion of it is situated, and the physical difficulties to be encountered in traversing it, there is perhaps no part of it which is not virtually, as well as nominally, under the power of the Russian Government. It is divided and subdivided, and placed under the administration of Governors, having a regular establishment of subordinate officers; and the constant communication of a regular post maintains an intercourse between St. Petersburg and every place intervening between it and the farthest fort of Kamtschatka. The influence of a controlling system is felt by the native tribes who subsist on the soil which their forefathers occupied before them; and who, though it cannot be said to what extent they have lost the nomadic character of their predecessors, are become a peaceable, and, more or less, agricultural people. The Government restrains and regulates an increasing emigrant population, of whom (although individual cases of hardship must doubtless occur) we are told that the general lot is happy and prosperous. At the same time the resources of the territory have been sedulously and effectually developed; added

to which, numerous important sources of a valuable foreign trade have been opened up. Of these it will be sufficient to mention as the most important branches,—the fur trade—the trade in ivory and leather—the international traffic with China ; and lastly, the far-famed mines and washeries, which, in any enumeration of the resources of Siberia, may perhaps be considered as throwing all other merely economical advantages into the shade, supplying, as they do, the chief source of the revenue of Russia, and the means at once of its national aggrandizement and political importance.

We have dwelt at some length on the example of Siberia, because it affords a practical illustration of the development and successful operation of the system we desire to see established in our unoccupied possessions in North America, and as such will probably outweigh with most minds any speculative reasoning in its favour. We shall have occasion to shew, in the progress of our observations, that while, as compared with the corresponding districts of Northern Asia under the dominion of Russia, these territories afford the advantage of a readier access—namely, by sea,—from the mother country, and an unrivalled system of inland water-communication (of which Siberia is altogether destitute); they possess, at the same time, intrinsic resources at least equal for the support and beneficial employment of a population, and the profitable investment of capital and labour. To these resources we shall now proceed to direct our attention.

The order we shall follow for this purpose will be,—to give, first, a general view of the country, and its system of inland water-communication ; and then proceed to describe more in detail, those parts of the territory which appear to be the most favourably situated, with respect to climate, soil, and readiness of access from this country, for the locations of the proposed Penal Settlements. These we may at once indicate as—

First. The valley of the Kaministiquia River, near the mining districts of Lake Superior, on the direct route between this lake and Lake Winipeg, and leading thence, by means of the Saskatchewan and Columbia Rivers, across the continent, to our possessions on the Pacific ; and

Second. The southern extremity of Hudson's Bay, usually known as James's Bay, readily accessible, as we shall afterwards shew, at once from this country, from Canada, and from the remotest parts of North-West America.

A survey of the unoccupied tracts of British North America would present for notice five great natural regions :—

1. The Western or Oregon Territory—a country of varied features, extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and bounded severally, on the north and south, by the possessions of Russia and the United States.

2. The Prairie Region—or valley of the Saskatchewan, extending from the Rocky Mountains eastward, to the chain of great Lakes which afford an uninterrupted communication from Canada to the Polar Sea, and northward from the international frontier, to Peace River and Lake Athabasca.

3. The Wooded Region—occupying the remaining section of country eastward, to the shores of Hudson's and James's Bays, having for its northern limit the highest feeders of the Churchill River, and continuous southward with the vast primeval forest so well known as the seat of the lumber trade of Canada.

4. The strip of sterile country, familiarly known as the "Barren Grounds," skirting the shores of the Polar Sea ; and

5. The valley of the Mackenzie, a well-wooded tract, situated north of the Prairie Region, and comprising the district between the Barren Grounds and the Russian settlements on the north-west coast.

The general character of the different districts will be sufficiently comprehended from this summary. Their united area cannot be correctly given: it certainly exceeds four millions of square miles; it is probably not much under five.

Numerous large rivers traverse this extensive country. Most of those which drain what we have termed the "Wooded Region," have their outlets in or near James's Bay. One of the most important of these, on account of its situation, is the Moose River, and its affluent the Appitibee. Both rise in lakes situated on the high ground between Canada and the Hudson's Bay territory, and being connected with the upper waters of the Michipicotton and Ottawa Rivers, (the former flowing into Lake Superior, and the latter into the St. Lawrence,) are accordingly used as the most convenient means of communication between both countries, and are the most frequented road from James's Bay to the great commercial town of Montreal. Another important stream is Albany River, which affords a communication between James's Bay and Lake Winipeg. The Rupert River, which has its outlet near that of the Moose River, and whose head waters are connected with those of the Sanguenay of Lower Canada, affords a similar communication, in the opposite direction, with the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Lake Winipeg is the centre of another remarkable river-system, whose numerous ramifications extend in every direction to the remotest parts of British North America. There is no strictly defined watershed between Lake Superior and Lake Winipeg, the remote feeders of both often receiving their supply from the same lake. From a few miles to the south of Lac la Pluie, however, the current sets steadily northward. This lake is connected with the Lake of the Woods by means of Rainy River, of which we have the following description in Sir George Simpson's "Overland Journey," vol. i., p. 46:—

“The river which empties Lac la Pluie into the Lake of the Woods, is in more than one respect decidedly the finest stream on the whole route. From Fort Frances (on Lac la Pluie) downward, a stretch of nearly 100 miles, it is not interrupted by a single impediment, while yet the current is not strong enough materially to retard an ascending traveller. Nor are the banks less favourable to agriculture than the waters themselves to navigation, resembling, in some measure, those of the Thames near Richmond. From the very brink of the river rises a gentle slope of green sward, crowned in many places with a plentiful growth of birch, poplar, beech, elm, and oak. Is it too much for the eye of philanthropy to discern through the vista of futurity this noble stream, connecting as it does the fertile shores of two spacious lakes, with crowded steamboats on its bosom, and populous towns on its borders?”

From the Lake of the Woods there are two practicable routes to Lake Winipeg. That usually followed by the employèes of the Hudson's Bay Company, is by the Winipeg River, on account of the trading posts situated on this stream, and from its affording, by means of one of its tributaries, (English River,) a ready access to Albany Factory, on James's Bay. The obstructions to its navigation are, however, so numerous and of so formidable a character, that it can never become the channel of any extensive traffic.

The second route, for the discovery of which we are indebted to Major Long, who was some years ago commissioned by the United States Government to survey this interesting portion of the country, is through the Reed Grass River, which connects the Lake of the Woods with the Red River. As the existence of this route is not generally known, we shall quote his account:—

“Reed Grass River has a two-fold connexion with other waters, serving as a channel of intercourse between the Red River and the source of the Mississippi, as also that of one of the tributaries of the Rainy River (described in the previous extract). Rat River also

affords a communication between Red River and the Lake of the Woods.

“Red River itself is navigable for canoes, and even perogues of two tons burthen, from its mouth to its source; as also the source of several of its tributaries when swollen by freshets. On such occasions canoes have been known to pass from Lake Travers, its source, into the St. Peter, (a tributary of the Mississippi,) and back again without inconvenience. The voyage down the river is now seldom performed, owing to the limited nature of the trade in this direction.”—*Keating's Narrative of Major Long's Exploring Expedition to the Red River*, vol. ii., p. 223.

The valley of the Winipeg, with its romantic but sterile scenery, offers a striking contrast to that of the Red River, where, according to the Bishop of Montreal, “the open level country extends in one direction all the way to St. Peter's, on the Missouri, and you may drive a waggon without impediment for hundreds of miles till you reach that place, where you fall at once into a line of American steamers, and have every facility of travelling onwards to any part of the United States, or to Canada.”—*Journal*, p. 78.

With a superiority so marked as respects both the navigation and the character of the surrounding country, it must be a subject of surprise that the advantages of this route, as a means of communication with Canada, have not earlier attracted the attention they deserve. But we are dealing with a territory in which anomalies, civil and political,—of commerce and of government,—are rather the rule than the exception. The falls and portages of the Winipeg River have been probably felt to be the most effectual safeguards to the mystery and romance of the territories they protect.

Lake Winipeg receives at its northern extremity its largest tributary, the Saskatchewan, the importance of which, in any consideration of the resources of the Hudson's Bay territories, will justify a more detailed description. All the waters which

descend from the eastern declivity of the Rocky Mountains between 47° and 53° North latitude, unite in two large rivers, the northern and southern branch of the Saskatchewan. Both branches form a junction about 420 miles from their source, and the united river, after a course of about 300 miles more, falls into Lake Winipeg; from which, again issuing under the name of Nelson River, and expanding several times in its course into lakes, it finally empties itself into Hudsons' Bay, near York Factory. "It is navigable" according to Sir George Simpson, "for boats from Rocky Mountain House, in longitude 115° West, to Lake Winipeg, in longitude 98°—upwards of 700 miles in a direct line; but by the actual course of the stream nearly double that distance." The north branch, whose sources are separated only by "a short portage" from those of Mackenzie and Frazer's Rivers, (flowing respectively into the Northern and Pacific Oceans,) "is descended from Fort Edmonton downward, without a single portage alike for boats and canoes."—*Journey*, p. 86.

On this branch there is an abundant supply of coal, which may be observed cropping out "in a seam of about 10 feet thick for a very considerable distance along both sides of the river."—*Journey*, p. 102.

The country watered by the Saskatchewan is an unbroken plain, evidently a continuation of the magnificent prairies of the Missouri. In regard to the fertility of the soil, and its adaptation to the purposes of agriculture, we have the following valuable testimony of Sir John Franklin:—

"The land is fertile, and produces, with little trouble, ample returns of wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes. The ground is prepared for the reception of these vegetables about the middle of April; and when Dr. Richardson visited this place on the 10th May, the blade of wheat looked strong and healthy. There were only five acres in cultivation at the period of my visit. The prospect from

the fort must be pretty in summer, owing to the luxuriant verdure of this fertile soil; but in the uniform and cheerless garb of winter, it has little to gratify the eye. Beyond the steep bank, behind Carlton House, commences the vast plain, whose boundaries are but imperfectly known; it extends along the south branch of the Saskatchewan, and towards the sources of the Missouri and Assiniboine River, being scarcely interrupted through the whole of this great space, by hills, or even rising grounds. The excellent pasturage furnishes food in abundance to a variety of grazing animals."—*Franklin's Narrative*, vol. i., p. 227, small edition.

The value of this fine country as a field for settlement, appears early to have attracted the attention of the French, while they continued in possession of Canada. It is an interesting fact, that long before the cession of that province to England, French settlers had penetrated to this stream, and formed several establishments on its banks, the remains of which are still traceable.

"At these distant establishments," says Mr. Alexander Simpson, "we have evidence that considerable improvements were effected; that agriculture was carried on, and even wheel-carriages used; in fact, that they then possessed fully as many of the attendants of civilization as the Hudson's Bay Company do now, after the lapse of a century."—*Life and Travels of Thomas Simpson*, p. 112.

The south branch of the Saskatchewan is in every respect a finer stream than the northern. It rises in the Rocky Mountains, near the international frontier, and completes up to its junction with the north branch, a course of upwards of 500 miles, "without any physical impediment of any moment." On arriving at its source, in one of his annual tours of inspection, Sir George Simpson, who had thus far traced a continuous communication by water from the Atlantic, found it separated from the origin of the Columbia by a distance of not more than fourteen paces. An incident so interesting is worthy of being recorded in his own language.

"About seven hours of hard work brought us to the height of land, the hinge as it were between the eastern and western waters. We breakfasted on the level isthmus, which did not exceed fourteen paces in width, filling our kettles for this our lonely meal at once from the crystal sources of the Columbia and the Saskatchewan; while these two feeders of two opposite oceans, murmuring over their bed of mossy stones, as if to bid each other a long farewell, could hardly fail to attune our minds to the sublimity of the scene."—*Journey*, vol. i., p. 119.

The Columbia, which supplies the remaining link in the route to the Pacific, has a course of about 1,000 miles, including all its windings; and although it cannot, in length, in volume, or in facilities of navigation, compete with the great rivers flowing into the Atlantic, it is still a noble stream, having a breadth of two miles at fifty miles from its mouth.

"Its navigation," says Mr. Alexander Simpson, who descended nearly its whole course, "has acquired a bad character, in consequence of there being a difficult and dangerous bar at its mouth; on which several wrecks—the last, of an American vessel of war—have taken place. Vessels of large draught of water have certainly much difficulty in entering, and still greater in getting out to sea, for the passage is intricate and tortuous; but the landmarks of the embouchure are bold and easily recognized, and a steam-tug would obviate all risk and difficulty. The bar once passed, there is good navigation for vessels of 400 tons up to Fort Vancouver. Above this the navigation becomes broken by descents of the river over ledges of rocks; but these are not frequent; and although dangerous to a frail boat, the only craft now used, they would but little impede a steamer of good power and light draught of water, such as surmount the rapids of the St. Lawrence. With such, I have no hesitation in saying that at certain seasons the Columbia might be navigated from the ocean to the spurs of the Rocky Mountains."—*The Oregon Territory*, p. 49. London: Bentley, 1840.

Before leaving the subject of geography, let us briefly glance at the results of the survey we have just presented. We have

been considering a system of inland navigation, **overspreading**, like a vast network, the whole of the continent of North America; and in its extent, completeness, and practicability, perhaps without a parallel in the world. We have shewn that, first by the St. Lawrence, and again by the Nelson to Lake Winipeg, and thence by the Saskatchewan and the Columbia to the Pacific, we have a direct medium of inter-communication between our widely-scattered possessions in America, and a great highway of civilization and commercial intercourse from ocean to ocean. Who shall say that there is not for these countries a great future in store, which, while towns and settlements are springing up along its borders, shall see steamers ploughing the waters of the Saskatchewan, loading their coals from its banks, and bearing the produce of its rich prairies to the markets of the east? If ever the time shall arrive in the history of mankind, when these magnificent plains shall become the home of a hardy, enterprising, and persevering race of men—if ever the oriental trade of India and China shall find its way, as some day it infallibly will do, across the American continent,—then, it is no extravagant speculation to affirm, will the waters of the Columbia, the Saskatchewan, and the St. Lawrence, become the high road through which its benefits will be diffused throughout the British possessions in America.

It is such considerations as these, shewing that this country has the reasonable prospect of a great future, that give its value to the selection of the valley of the Kaministiquia—the eastern terminus of this great high road—as the site of our first proposed settlement.

Among the means which Providence would appear to have employed for the diffusion of the human race over the unoccupied tracts of the globe, is the position of mines of the useful and precious metals, to attract a population through the means of one of the strongest passions of our nature—the love

of gain. The Kaministiquoia, as already stated, is in the immediate vicinity, apparently, of one of the most fertile mineral tracts in North America, as will appear from the following extract from Sir George Simpson's interesting work :—

“ Before bidding good bye to Lake Superior, let me add that since the date of my visit, the barren rocks which we passed have become an object of intense interest, promising to rival in point of mineral wealth the Altai Chain, and the Uralian Mountains. Iron had long been known to abound on the northern shore, two mines having been at one time worked, and abandoned chiefly on account of temporary obstacles which the general advance of agriculture and civilization was sure to remove; and more recently, the southern shore, though of a much less favourable character in this respect, was found to possess rich veins of copper and silver.* Under these circumstances, various enterprising inhabitants of Canada have prosecuted investigations which appear to have satisfactorily proved that, in addition to their iron, the forbidding wastes of the northern shores contain inexhaustible treasures both of the precious and the useful metals, of gold and silver, of copper and tin; and already have associations been formed to reap the teeming harvest.”—*Journey*, vol. i., p. 34.

To the same valuable source we shall refer for the most interesting and authentic account of the Kaministiquoia itself, premising only that its upper waters, as well as the remainder of the route to Lac la Pluie, are much obstructed by impediments to the navigation, in the removal of which the forced labour of convicts might for some years be usefully and advantageously employed. Sir George Simpson's description includes all that can be said in proof of its admirable adaptation for the objects of a settlement, for which it possesses an additional recommendation in its situation on the open waters of Lake Superior, in the direct line of steam navigation from Canada.

* The produce of the copper mines on the American shore this year has been valued at one million sterling.—*Illustrated News*, February 16.

“ The river, during the day’s march, passed through forests of elm, oak, pine, birch, &c., being studded with isles not less lovely than its banks ; and many a spot reminded us of the rich and quiet scenery of England. The paths of the numerous portages were spangled with violets, roses, and many other wild flowers ; while the currant, the gooseberry, the raspberry, the cherry, and even the vine, were abundant. All this bounty of nature was imbued, as it were, with life, by the cheerful notes of a variety of birds, and by the restless flutter of butterflies of the brightest hue. Compared with the adamantine deserts of Lake Superior, the Kaministiquoia presented a perfect paradise. One cannot pass through this fair valley without feeling that it is destined, sooner or later, to become the happy home of civilized men, with their bleating flocks and their lowing herds ; with their schools and their churches, their full garners and their social hearths. At the time of our visit, the great obstacle in the way of so blessed a consummation was the hopeless wilderness to the eastward, which seemed to bar for ever the march of settlement and cultivation. But that very wilderness, now that it is to yield up its long hidden stores, bids fair to remove the very impediments which hitherto it has itself presented. The mines of Lake Superior, besides establishing a continuity of route between the east and the west, will find their nearest and cheapest supply of agricultural produce in the valley of the Kaministiquoia.”—*Journey*, vol. i., p. 36.

The second locality proposed for settlement is the southern extremity of James’s Bay,* the central position of which, with respect to the rivers flowing into Hudson’s Bay, and its proximity and readiness of access at the same time from this country, appear to recommend it for the purpose. It affords direct access for shipping, through Hudson’s Straits ; besides which, there is a river-communication by means of the Rupert

* We assume that no opposition would be offered to the establishment of a Penal Settlement on James’s Bay by the Hudson’s Bay Company ; who, if we have been correctly informed, are disposed to regard the proposal with favour. Over the Kaministiquoia River they have never claimed any special jurisdiction whatever.

and Sanguenay Rivers, with the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which, by a judicious expenditure of labour, may be so far improved as to be rendered, after a few years, the ordinary channel of intercourse with England. As already stated, it affords also practicable water-communications, at present in use, respectively with Lake Winipeg, with Lake Superior, and with Montreal. Situated in latitude 52° North, (about that of the middle parts of England,) James's Bay enjoys a climate certainly not inclemently severe, being sheltered from the Atlantic by the high lands of Labrador, and the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The shores of the bay are for the most part low and alluvial, and well adapted for cultivation and the rearing of stock.—(*Extracts 2 and 3.*) The banks of the rivers afford a fine growth of timber, which might become a valuable article of export; and the country in many parts appears, from the best accounts, to be rich in mineral deposits of various kinds, but chiefly of copper, lead, and iron.—(*Extracts 1, 2, and 3.*) The fisheries of Hudson's Bay and Straits, and of the neighbouring coast of Labrador, are described as yielding an inexhaustible supply of cod, salmon, and herring. Whales and seals appear likewise to be abundant.—(*Extracts 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.*)

This brief summary of the advantages for settlement presented by James's Bay, is amply confirmed by the subjoined extracts from Reports and Publications of Officers in Her Majesty's service and that of the Hudson's Bay Company. They are from the most diverse sources, and of dates ranging over a period not less than a century, yet singularly uniform and consistent, both as to the facts and the character of the testimony they afford. For convenience of reference, these extracts are given without commentary, numbered, and in order; an arrangement which, notwithstanding it may possess disadvantages for the general reader, we have considered best suited for our immediate object—a simple and authoritative statement of facts.

1. *Extract from "The Life and Travels of Thomas Simpson, the Arctic Discoverer," by Alexander Simpson, Esq. (Chief Trader of the Hudson's Bay Company.)* London: Bentley, 1845.

"I have a strong opinion that the *copper deposits* will be found of much value; moreover that their working would be by no means an impracticable scheme, when once the way has been opened to private enterprise by well-directed Government efforts. In these straits and bays I also believe that our whale fishermen would find a rich and virgin field for the prosecution of their daring but lucrative enterprise."—P. 408.

2. *Extract from the "Report of the Committee of the House of Commons appointed to Inquire into the State and Condition of the Countries adjoining Hudson's Bay, in the year 1749."*

"Robert Griffin, a silversmith, who had been five years in the Hudson's Bay Company's service, said, that he melted six ounces of ore which was brought from the East Main (Labrador coast of James's Bay) by Captain Mitchell, and which produced about six ounces of lead; that he did this by the order of Joseph Isbister, the Factor or Governor of Albany, who is now at Fort Churchill. That the Governor stood by him while he made the trial, and that the witness can swear 'tis good lead. That the witness told the Governor it was pity that the captains did not take in this lead for ballast instead of stones, to which the Governor replied that they did not want any such discovery; but he cannot tell whether Isbister informed the Company of this transaction; that the Governor ordered the witness to try if he could extract silver from the ore, who told him he had not proper instruments to make such experiments, to which the Governor answered that the Company had no occasion for it—that they wanted encouragement for nothing but their furs. That he imagines there are great quantities of ore in the East Main, having known several quantities brought from thence, from 1 to 15 lbs. weight; and he is further confirmed in that opinion from the report of the Indians, (whose language he understands,) who have told him that there were great quantities of ore on the East Main. That he imagines the trade in ore would be as advantageous as that in furs,

there being wood enough in the country to smelt it; nor would it interfere at all with the fur trade, only more hands must be employed. That he thinks the trade to Hudson's Bay capable of being extended, which might cause a greater consumption of European goods, but for that purpose proper settlements must be made. * * * And being asked the question, he said that if he had a grant of 100 acres of land, he would settle there with all his heart."—P. 33.

The report contains much other evidence to the same effect from several other witnesses.

3. *Extract from "Seven Years' Residence in Hudson's Bay," by J. Robson (one of the Witnesses examined by the above Committee). London, 1752.*

"Upon the whole, the countries surrounding Hudson's Bay and Straits, have a sea-coast of above 2,000 miles extent from 52° 30' to more than 65° North latitude; great part of which is in the same latitude as Britain. Upon this sea-coast are many broad and deep rivers, the sources of which are at several hundred miles distance south, south-east, and south-west of the bay. * * * The soil is fertile, and the climate temperate, fit for the produce of all kinds of grain, and for raising stocks of tame cattle, and the coast abounds with black and white whales, sea-horses, and various kinds of small fish; also many valuable mines and minerals; and a vast tract of land to the south-west still to be discovered and improved."—P. 81.

4. *Extract from "The Present State of Hudson's Bay," by Edward Umfreville. London, 1790.*

"Within the limits of Hudson's Bay and Straits, the countries abound with most kinds of quadrupeds, &c., whose skins are of great value. The numerous inland rivers, lakes, &c., produce fish almost of every species; and in the seas in and about the straits, and the northern part of the bay, white and black whales, sea-horses, bears, and seals, are killed in great numbers by the Esquimaux, whose implements for this purpose are exceedingly simple."—P. 98.

5. *Extract from "A Voyage to Hudson's Bay, by the Dobbs gall y, and California," by Henry Ellis, Agent for the Proprietors in the said Expedition. London: H. Whitridge, 1748.*

"At the mouths of the rivers, especially those more to the north, are plenty of fine salmon, trout, and another which is a tolerably good fish, resembling a carp, called a sucker; and there also comes with the flood tide, great numbers of white whales, which might easily be taken, and large profits made of their oil: seals, too, frequent these coast, but in no great numbers, except as far north as latitude 65°."—P. 186.

6. *Extract from a "Report, dated 2nd October 1848, addressed to Vice-Admiral the Earl of Dundonald, by Captain Granville C. Loch, R.N., upon the Fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador."*

(Parliamentary Paper for 1849. No. 327.)

"I am assured that 360 French vessels, from 100 to 300 tons burthen, are engaged in the Bank fisheries, employing from 16,000 to 17,000 men (exclusive of the coast fishermen). All these vessels return to France every winter; their crews spend the money they make there, buy the fitments they require there, sell their cargoes for the use of their countrymen at cheaper rates than the Newfoundlanders can to the Colonists, and are knit together in a body by the regularity and system of their duties, and man their country's navy if required. The French annual Bank fishery averages a catch of 1,200,000 quintals, and nearly the entire quantity is sent to the West Indies; Guadaloupe and Martinique consume two-thirds, and the remainder is exported to other islands.*

"The injurious extent to which trade in caplin (bait-fish) and contraband articles is carried on, cannot be better shewn than by stating that upwards of £20,000 were realised last year by the sale of that bait (caplin) to the French. So it is very apparent that unless either the Home or Colonial Governments take steps to establish a legal transfer of this commodity for the benefit of the revenue,

* Captain Loch gives no estimate of the produce of the British and American fisheries on this coast.

or shew more decision and method in the employment of means for its suppression, that it is in vain to rely upon any consistent aid being received from the Captain of the single ship appointed to protect the entire fishings of Newfoundland and Labrador."—P. 14.

The facts and evidence now submitted, will, we trust, render needless any further references to authorities, to support the assertion that these countries possess ample resources for the support and beneficial employment of a population. It remains only before we conclude, that we point out in a few words their special adaptation to the objects of a Penal Settlement. For 'his purpose they appear to us to combine every requisite that can be desired—proximity to this country and readiness of access, being, as compared with Australia or Van Diemen's Land, at our very door;—a healthy climate—no means of escape—no population with whose interests or occupations the advent of convicts would interfere; and lastly, a territory fitted by its great natural advantages to become the home of a vigorous and enterprising race, and which being in great part deserted by its ancient inhabitants, is already left free to the civilizing influences of the axe and the plough. The great extent of the country, and the various fields of useful occupation it affords, will be found favourable, at the same time, to the application of a regulated scale of punishments, on the system of a classification of labour, proportioned in severity to the nature of the crime, and the subsequent good conduct of the offender. The better class of convicts, whose promise of reformation and future usefulness may have entitled them to the indulgence, might, for example, be employed in raising agricultural and other produce for the support of the general establishment; others again in the various processes connected with the prosecution of the fisheries; a third class might be set to labour on the portages, and in removing the obstructions to the navigation of the rivers in various parts of the country; and a fourth might be assigned to the Mining

Companies of Lake Superior, where the regularity and system of a public body would be found to obviate the inequalities and abuses to which the practice of assignment has been found liable ; or, as in the case of Siberia, where the system has been found to operate with so much advantage, they might be employed in mines, set apart for the public service by the Government, and which would in every respect be found an advantageous substitute for that profitless species of labour known under the name of Public Works.

These and other details of organization will however, form more fittingly, subjects of future consideration. At the present stage we shall rest satisfied, if, in recommending a return to our ancient policy of transportation to our American colonies, we have succeeded in demonstrating its practicability, and that there is a reasonable prospect of its being attended with such advantages, local or Imperial, as may induce a revision of our present cumbrous and expensive system of penal discipline.

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