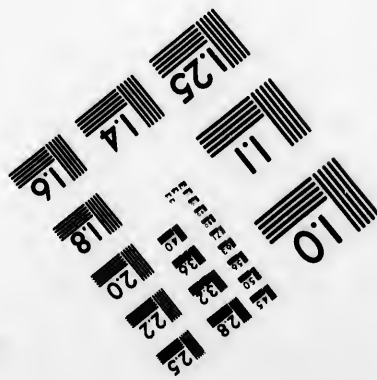
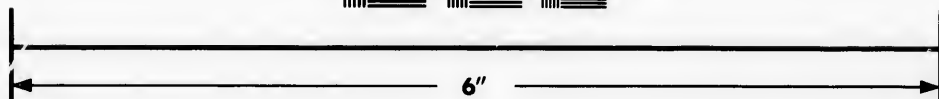
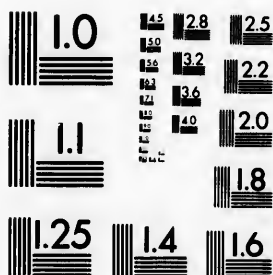


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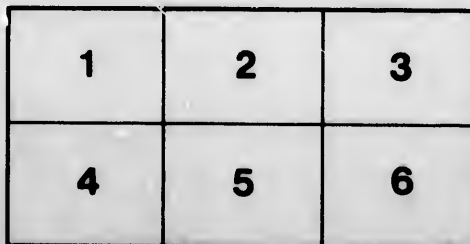
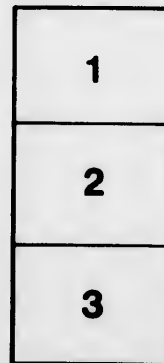
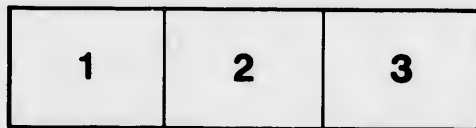
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## THE TRUE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

THE shortening of the route to the Indies by a western passage is a design which has long occupied the attention of maritime nations, and within the last few years various circumstances have combined to deepen the interest of the British public in the subject. The discovery of gold in British Columbia has already attracted thither thousands of adventurers, who are building up a colony that is destined to form the western terminus of a belt of British settlements gradually extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The precious metal has also been found of late, in very remunerative quantities, north of the United States' boundary, on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, and the testimony of hundreds of Canadians who have travelled across the Hudson's Bay Company's territory to the mines of the Far West has completely silenced doubts formerly expressed respecting the practicability of railway communication from ocean to ocean. It is not long since Major Smith and Mr. Wilson, in pamphlets which they published, urged the importance to national interests of this scheme of overland transit. The blue books containing particulars of Government explorations conducted by Captain Palliser and Dr. Hector in 1858-59, furnish evidence to the same effect. Last year Colonel Syngé, R.E., whose mind has been engaged upon the details of the enterprise for twenty years, read a masterly paper before the British North American Association on the subject. The narrative of a journey by Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle from Canada to British Columbia, and a work published by me on the resources and prospects of the latter colony this year, have, I hope, also contributed to stimulate statesmen and capitalists to a deeper consideration of the proposed undertaking.

In Canada, too, great exertions have been made to advance this object. In 1851 application was made to the Colonial Legislature for the incorporation of a company to construct a railway from Lake Superior through British territory to the Pacific. The Bill was read a second time, but afterwards thrown out, solely in consequence of barriers opposed to the action of the railway company by the monopolising claims of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1853 and 1855 application to the Legislature was renewed, but on each successive occasion was rejected on the same ground. Now, however, a more auspicious future seems to be dawning for the promoters of this stupendous work. Repeated attempts have been made by the Canadian Parliament to prove the invalidity of the Company's charter, on the plea that when the territory was conveyed to them by Charles II., it really belonged to France. But the law advisers of the Crown

have dissuaded the Imperial Government from encouraging any proceedings on the part of Canada that would involve the Crown in litigation with the Company, since the tenure of the latter, covering a period of two hundred years, could with difficulty be now legally disturbed. But when the deputation from the Canadian Government was recently in this country, conferring with the Colonial Secretary in regard to the contemplated British North American Confederation, one of the propositions agreed upon was, that the Canadian authorities should negotiate with the Hudson's Bay Company for the transfer to Canada of the entire north-west territory bounded by the Rocky Mountains, that the claims of the Company should be liquidated by fair compensation, and that her Majesty's Government should guarantee the loan to be raised for that purpose. Should this business be satisfactorily arranged, as there is every reason to believe it will, the chief obstacle to the making of this great highway of commerce from Asia to Europe will be removed.

The tide of emigration has, since the earliest swarming of mankind, been rolling westward from Asia, and still advances restlessly toward the lands of the setting sun, undeterred by the turbulent waters of the Atlantic, or the lonely wilds of the great American continent. As certainly as Europe, once the abode of barbarians, has become densely studded with the homes of civilisation, so will the expanse of prairie and forest on British American soil, extending from ocean to ocean, become cheerful with the sound of well-remunerated industry, and beautiful with the ornaments of cultivation. The increasing necessities of this multitude, whose watchword is "Westward, Ho!" will unavoidably create the machinery of transit to which I have referred. Then, as time progresses, and the relation of England to Eastern countries becomes still more intimate, the expediency of making an inter-oceanic railway, to run the entire distance through British America, will be increasingly felt, both on commercial and political grounds.

Control of trade with the East has been coveted as a prime source of wealth by western nations, from the remotest antiquity. Mercantile communities, engaged from age to age in carrying Eastern freight, have invariably prospered from that cause, and the grandest cities of ancient and modern times have owed much of their splendour to this rich traffic passing through them; in the degree, moreover, to which it was at any time diverted from an accustomed channel, the commercial centres that had previously thrived under it declined. The Tyrians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Venetians, Portuguese, Dutch, and English, afford monumental illustrations of these statements.

Alexander the Great had no sooner obtained a footing in India than he set about opening up communication between that country and his western possessions. Failing to discover a suitable overland

route he sent a fleet down the Indus to explore the passage thence to the mouth of the Euphrates. Not satisfied with the route by the valley of the latter river, he resolved to bring the wealth of India to Europe by the Red Sea and the Nile. He, therefore, fixed on the western mouth of that stream as the site of the city which was to perpetuate the memory of his name and his political sagacity.

Antiochus the Great, Tamerlane, and Nadir Shah, all sought, like the famous general above-mentioned, to enrich their kingdoms by fostering commerce with India and the countries beyond; and what privileges they could not secure from Eastern nations by request, they endeavoured to extort by force of arms. In the Persian era a large trade was carried on between Greek cities in the Black Sea and Scythia, north and east, from Siberia to India. Different caravan routes were used from time to time; cities sprung up at the extremities of these routes, and extensive depôts were established at intervals on the way. A chain of mercantile peoples extended at a very remote day from China and India to the Black Sea and the countries in the Mediterranean. Gold was then so plentiful that iron was accounted more valuable, and armour, bridle-bits, and vessels were plated with it.

Mahomet, who in early life was a shrewd merchant, authorised his followers to associate objects of commerce with their religious pilgrimages to Mecca; and the astonishing spread of their faith in the eastern parts of Asia was greatly indebted to this cause. Vast caravans of pilgrims from the distant regions of the East, as well as from the shores of the Atlantic, travelled to Mecca, and the profitable disposal of their wares at this *religious mart* gave a considerable impetus to commerce by sea and land. In the Holy City were exposed for sale the chintzes and muslins of Bengal, the shawls of Cashmere, the spices of Malabar, the diamonds of Golconda, the pearls of Kilcare, the cinnamon of Ceylon, the nutmegs and cloves of the Moluccas, and the silks of China.

The Arabians, under Caliph Omar, experienced a remarkable improvement in their condition from the same potent influence. From barbarian hordes, violent robbers, "dwellers in tents," and despisers of civilisation, they became patrons of art, contributors to science and literature, and founders of cities. So highly did they esteem mercantile relations with the East that they built Bassorah to protect their monopoly of Eastern trade; and it is significant that their overwhelming power as conquerors and as propagators of religion was contemporaneous with their being exclusive carriers between China and Europe. Their trade was universal in the Indian Archipelago, and their vessels plied from the Persian Gulf to all the ports of China. The Saracens were so numerous at one period in Canton that the Emperor granted his sanction to their having a *cauli*



of their own religion. Trade flowed afterwards from the north-west of China to Constantinople, and infused such life into that city that the historian Robertson says the decline of the Roman Empire, of which it was then the capital, was retarded in consequence.

When the commerce of India was conveyed by the Persian Gulf, the Euphrates, and the Syrian desert, "Tadmor in the Wilderness" burst into splendour, like some huge tropical blossom. In presence of great and ambitious neighbours it long enjoyed prosperity, and even rivalled the "Eternal City." Egypt, Mesopotamia, and a large section of Asia Minor, were subdued by its arms, and its renowned queen, Zenobia, did not shrink from contesting dominion with a Roman Emperor. When subsequently Eastern commerce was diverted from the Persian to the Arabian Gulf, the sun of Babylon, Bassorah, Palmyra, and Tyre went down, and Petra arose as a chief medium of supplying Europe with Oriental merchandise. At length the renown of Alexandria eclipsed all surrounding commercial centres. The glory of Venice, "the bride of the sea;" of Genoa, "the superb, the city of palaces;" of Florence, the metropolis of arts; of Bruges, the grand inland point for the distribution of Eastern goods to Western Europe under the Hanseatic league, of Antwerp, Lisbon, and London,—the glory of all these cities, whether as seats of commerce, manufactures, learning, or art, was derived in various degrees from their being mouths to receive Oriental freight for the supply of adjacent countries.

The discovery of a path to India by the Cape of Good Hope not only turned the course of trade carried on between Europe and the eastern parts of Asia, but changed the political "balance of power." The golden tide now swept the shores of Portugal and Spain, and by sharing the boon that had enriched other nations, these kingdoms suddenly rose into commercial magnitude, and vied in opulence, political weight, and maritime adventure, with the proudest nations of that time.

The next important historical event bearing upon commerce with the East was the discovery of America. The hope which inflamed the ambition and roused the energy of Columbus in undertaking that first exploratory voyage westward was that across the untracked waters of the Atlantic lay *the true, the shortest, and the best way to the riches of the East*. All the earlier expeditions of discovery from Europe to the shores of the Western Continent had their origin in this idea. It was in prosecuting the search of a passage to the East that the Atlantic seaboard came to be more accurately known. It was while exploring for a maritime route to China that John Cabot, in the reign of Henry VII., discovered the coast of Newfoundland and afterwards entered the St. Lawrence.

The thought that gave inspiration to all the luckless attempts

that have been made by England, during the last seventy years, to find a north-west passage, was that commerce with the East might be facilitated. After examining every sinuosity of the American shore in both oceans, from north latitude 30° to the Arctic Sea, and expending upwards of one million pounds in the work, it has at length been demonstrated to be impracticable. In passing through the icy portals of the Frigid Zone, in 1850-51, McClure, as far as mercantile interests were concerned, closed the gates behind him. While Polar expeditions have met with defeat, projects have been meditated by France and other powers to pierce the Western Continent within the limits of a foreign country, and, last April, Mr. Laurence Oliphant, M.P., one of the secretaries of the Royal Geographical Society, read a paper before that body on the expediency of cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Panama to unite the two oceans.

But why should England, with unrivalled facilities within her own territory for a north-west passage to Asia and to her colonies in the South Pacific, imperil her monopoly of Eastern trade, and place herself at the mercy of foreign nations? British North America is ready to her hand, a natural link connecting the continents of Europe and Asia, and lying in the track of their nearest and best communication with each other. Why, then, it may be again asked, if this Western route to the East exists, has it never yet become a practical reality? The reason is obvious; the speediest line of transit, though earnestly longed for and industriously sought, has never been sought in the way in which it *does* exist, and cannot be found in the way in which it has nearly always been attempted. A maritime passage has been the object of all preceding ages, and, practically, communication by that medium is impossible. But there is a passage across the continent by rivers, lakes, and land, and that may be made immensely more valuable than any mere maritime passage could have been, even had such been available. "Two irresistible agents are at work, bringing to light the incalculable value of that conformation [across British America] so long deemed an insuperable obstacle. They have changed the requirements for the attainment of the objects of the North-West passage, and have disclosed the inexhaustible latent wealth of a *land* instead of a maritime passage. Railroads and the electric telegraph will cause new commerce and new life to spring up at every step along the distance. . . . It is too late, alas! to lament the waste of life, of money, and of energy, that have been expended in repeated Arctic voyages which were impossible of success, so far as these related to any passage of practical use; but they serve to illustrate very forcibly the predominance of the ideas of *maritime* effort and of *maritime* connection with the Pacific. . . . The lavish and continued expenditure thus incurred appears in striking contrast to the rigid refusal simultaneously main-

tained of all aid to the prosecution of the same work and of the same object in its practicable form by land; and this refusal, amounting almost to opposition, has extended from the days of McKenzie, the first great discoverer of both the northern and western coasts of the continent, and is not yet perfectly dispelled."<sup>1</sup>

The principle known as "great circle sailing," by which distance is abridged in long voyages, may be advantageously followed in travelling westward across America. Communication with the East is made shorter and shorter the farther north its line of route is removed. The application of a string to the measurement of the distance between two places on a geographical globe will at once illustrate the system of sailing or travelling on "the spherical line of shortest distance." The greatest breadth of the Western Continent happening to lie in British North American territory, here (paradoxical though it may seem, but nevertheless in strict conformity with the principle just adverted to, which is universally acknowledged in practical navigation) we have the shortest possible route from England to the East. It is surely an interesting circumstance that where we desired the connection between Eastern Asia and Western Europe should be formed, through America, almost every possible facility for its formation is lavishly afforded. Our place of starting may be Europe, the west coast of Africa, the West Indies, or the eastern coast of the North American Continent; but if the East be our destination, our best route is unquestionably across the great Pacific Central British America. *There* is the point of junction where all the traffic of the continent, south, east, and north, most naturally unites, if its goal be yet farther west, till the eastern antipodes be reached. To this position we are inevitably shut up. It is, in fact, determined for us by the spheroidal conformation of the earth, and the relative distances thereby created. The long continuation of rainless deserts and passless mountains in the territory of the great Republic renders Yankee competition with us, as to facilities of overland transit, hopeless. Can it be uneconomic, then, to open a country having this generality of access, and yet holding such a monopoly of advantage?

If the utmost abbreviation of distance be our object, and the far East the goal, by availing ourselves of the proper season we may shorten the distance from Europe 1,500 miles, by proceeding across Hudson's Bay. But from wherever we may come, we necessarily unite in the great stream of traffic that, bound for the East, in future years will meet on the plains of the Red River or the Saskatchewan. In this region, where the climate is the most healthful on the American continent, and where the flag of England still

(1) Paper read on "Central British North America," by Col. Synge, R.E., F.R.G.S., July, 1864, before the British North American Association.

waves, nature has marked out the most expeditious line of route, and combined every topographical advantage for its completion.

The great water systems of British America are an instructive object of study, and, as affecting the topic under consideration, have never received the attention they merit. The direction in which navigable rivers flow usually indicates the course commerce will take in a country; and, as a rule, a railroad admits of easiest construction through valleys scooped out by the perennial action of streams. But to execute a line across the direction of many water-courses must be acknowledged to be a very cross-grained and expensive operation. Now it is a curious fact in the geography of America that, in the direction of the St. Lawrence, and there only, the rivers of America follow a course east and west. The Mississippi and the Missouri, having their courses close to the British frontier, disembogue into the Gulf of Mexico; the McKenzie, after winding its way through nearly sixteen parallels of latitude, discharges into the Arctic Sea. On the other hand, in that track which possesses the climate most favourable for an overland route, the waters of the St. Lawrence, penetrate well-nigh half-way across the continent. That river joins on to a chain of lakes and navigable streams that finally merge in the Winnipeg River, and by the branches of the Saskatchewan, this water system strikes into the heart of the Rocky Mountains, marking out the practicable passes through that otherwise stern barrier.

As misrepresentations respecting the soil and climate of that section of British North America now under review have prevailed in this country, let a word or two suffice for the inquiry whether the nature of the country in these particulars is incompatible with settlement in, and transit through, it. The space between Fort William, at the head of Lake Superior, and Fort Garry, Red River, comprises large and fertile tracts, varying from 20,000 to 200,000 acres in size. Sir George Simpson, in his evidence on the subject given before a Committee of the House of Commons, in 1856, eulogises the qualities of the soil in the valley of Kamenis Toquoiah. Every one of the ten thousand settlers already cultivating the land in the Red River district is a witness to the abounding agricultural wealth found there. For 400 miles up the Assiniboine, to its junction with the Moose River, there is nothing to be seen but prairie, covered with long red grass. "On the east, north, and south," says Sir George, "there was not a mound or tree to vary the vast expanse of green sward; while to the west were the gleaming bays of the Assiniboine, separated from each other by wooded points of considerable depth." The productiveness of Red River settlement may be inferred from the yield of wheat there, as compared with the average in the adjoining States of America. In Minnesota it stands

at 20 bushels to the acre, in Massachusetts at 16, and in Red River at 40. The average weight, north of the States' boundary, is from 64 to 67 lbs. per imperial bushel, while that of the best Illinois wheat is from 60 to 65 lbs. per bushel. M. Bourgeau, botanist to the Palliser expedition, in a letter to Sir William Hooker, writes thus in regard to the Saskatchewan district:—"This district is much more adapted to the culture of the staple crops of temperate climates—wheat, rye, barley, oats, &c.—than one would have been inclined to believe from its high latitude. . . . The prairies offer natural pasturage, as favourable for the maintenance of numerous herds as if they had been artificially created. On the south branch of the North Saskatchewan extend rich and vast prairies interspersed with woods and forests, where thick wood plants furnish excellent pasturage for domestic animals."<sup>1</sup> A vast coal formation, too, has been traced from the 49th parallel of latitude far beyond the 60th, which, with other elements of wealth in the soil, would seem to indicate that the region is designed to become a great field for human industry.

In regard to the climate of the route, it may be stated generally that the ocean to the windward of America being larger and warmer than that which washes its eastern shores, and the inland waters being so extensive north of the boundary, the climate is tempered accordingly. The isothermal line therefore runs farther north on the west coast than on the east. That line starting from New York, for instance, and drawn across the continent, would pass through Lake Winnipeg to Fort Simpson, which is 1,000 miles north of the commercial capital of the United States. The northern shore of Lake Huron enjoys the mean summer temperature of Bordeaux in the south of France (70° Fahr.), while Cumberland House, in lat. 54°, long. 102°, on the Saskatchewan, exceeds in this respect Brussels and Paris. One of the witnesses before the House of Commons in 1856 stated that on the 1st of May the Saskatchewan country was free from snow, and the river half full of water; and Captain Palliser records that on January 9th, 1858, there was little or no snow on the ground from Edmonton to Rocky Mountain House.

The superiority of our advantages in reference to the courses of rivers, and the basins formed by them, has already been touched upon. We also enjoy facilities immeasurably surpassing those of the Americans in having convenient passes through the Rocky Mountains. The peculiar physical difficulties that oppose the construction of an inter-oceanic railway through American territory, as contrasted with the much fewer trials of engineering skill to be met with on the British side, give us an opportunity of yet being first, if we will, to complete this enterprise, though the rival nation has so

(1) Explorations by Captain Palliser, p. 250.

far got the start. Ever since the discovery of gold in California the ablest military engineers of the United States have been engaged in searching for a practicable outlet in the Rocky Mountains, but not a single pass has been detected for 1,000 miles south of the 49th parallel less than 6,000 feet high. Ten years ago, when Jefferson Davis was Secretary of War, he said, "the only practicable route for railway communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts of North America is through the Hudson's Bay territory, on account of the desert land from the north boundary of the United States to the extreme south of Texas." In 1858 the Governor of Minnesota also admitted that a "great inter-oceanic communication is more likely to be constructed through the Saskatchewan basin than across the American desert." Depressions in the passes north of lat. 49° are generally manageable, numerous, and so well distributed as to leave us at no loss in entering whatever portion of British Columbia from north to south we may desire. Captain Palliser takes notice of eight passes,<sup>1</sup> the altitudes of which were measured by him, the Vermillion Pass, 4,944 feet high, being the most convenient of ascent he had discovered. About three years after the explorations conducted by that gentleman, the Leather Pass attracted attention as the most favourable for wheel conveyances and as requiring the least expense for grading. It is situated in lat. 54°, is 400 or 500 feet lower than the Vermillion, and has a mean clear ascent of only from 3¼ to 3½ feet in the whole distance from Fort Edmonton. It was crossed in 1862 by several parties of adventurers bound for the mines of British Columbia, embracing more than two hundred persons in all. One of these companies travelled with one hundred and thirty oxen and seventy horses. From the lips of many of these emigrants I have received uniform testimony to the clear and level aspect of the country through which they journeyed, and to the practicability of the Leather Pass for railway purposes. From the description given by Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle of their travels through the Rocky Mountains, it will be seen that these sublime heights, covered with eternal snows, are no longer invested to the traveller with repellent terrors. His lordship and his friend thus write: "From Red River to Edmonton, about 800 miles, the road lies through a fertile and park-like country, and an excellent cart trail already exists. From Edmonton to Jasper House, a distance of about 400 miles, the surface is slightly undulating. . . . From Jasper House to Tete Jaune's Cache—the pass through the main ridge of the Rocky Mountains, about 100 or 120 miles in length—a wide break in the chain, *running nearly east and west*, offers a natural roadway, unobstructed except by timber. The rivers, with the exception of the Athabasca and the Fraser, are small and fordable, even at their highest. The

(1) Explorations, p. 14.

ascent to the height of land is very gradual, and, indeed, hardly perceptible. . . . The descent on the western slope, though more rapid, is neither steep nor difficult. From the Cache the road might be carried in almost a straight line to Richfield, in Cariboo, lying nearly due west. . . . This part of the country is mountainous and densely wooded, but the distance is not more than 90 miles, . . . and a road has already been made from the mouth of Quesnelle, on the Fraser, to Richfield, through similar country."

Engineering skill has already triumphed over natural obstacles infinitely more formidable than are here to be encountered, in cutting paths through the Alleghanies in the United States, the Scemmering heights in Austria, and the Bhor Ghauts in India. The railway from Kan-Kan to the Deccan, through the last-named mountains, had to contend with an elevation, in a very short distance, from a base 196 feet to an altitude 2,627 feet, with a gradient of 1 in 48. Twelve tunnels were formed, equal to 2,535 yards; also eight viaducts, eighteen bridges, and eighteen culverts, at a cost of £41,118 per mile, making a total of £597,222. In comparison, too, with the difficulties successfully grappled with by Russia in opening up internal communications through her sparsely populated and much more inhospitable territory, and in extending her trade with China through the interior of Asia, those attaching to our overland enterprise are of the most Lilliputian character.

But the grand question remains to be answered. What would be the real gain to commerce by the proposed undertaking? Would it be satisfactory as an investment? It is the opinion of those fully competent to deal with this practical bearing of the subject that the amount of direct traffic which would be created between Australia, China, India, Japan, and England, by a railway from Halifax to the Gulf of Georgia, would soon render the work a financial success. The following table will illustrate the distance and time in the Vancouver Island, or British Columbian route, from England to Hong-Kong, as contrasted with the present mail route *viâ* the Isthmus of Suez:—

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| Distance, overland by Suez, from Southampton to Hong-Kong,        |                              |
| 9,467 miles, 50—60 days.  |                              |
| Distance from Southampton to Halifax, 2,532 miles, 9 days' steam. |                              |
| Distance from Halifax to Vancouver                                |                              |
| Island . . . . .  | 2,536 miles, 6 days' rail.   |
| Distance from Vancouver Island to                                 |                              |
| Hong-Kong . . . . .   | 6,053 miles, 21 days' steam. |
| Total . . . . .   | 11,121 miles, 36 days.       |

With a clear saving of some twenty days the route now advocated would combine the advantage of shortening the time now spent at sea on the voyage *viâ* Suez by the same number of days, and a large

proportion of passengers who at present travel to China by that isthmus and the Cape of Good Hope, might be expected to select in preference the railway through British North America, as less trying to the constitution as well as more expeditious than the routes now in use. In these busy days, when the proverb, "Time is money," is more signally exemplified than ever, and when the six hundred millions of Orientals in China and India are becoming increasingly interested in our articles of export, an abbreviated communication with these countries cannot very much longer escape the attention of political economists and men of business. Large cargoes would probably continue to be conveyed by the Cape, but light freight, mails, treasure, the better class of passengers, and troops, would be certain to go and come *viâ* the Trans-American Railway. Nor is this all. Not to speak of the reduction of distance to Vancouver Island and British Columbia, which by this mode of transit would be 5,650 miles as contrasted with 9,000 by the Panama route, consider the saving that would be effected in the passage to our South Pacific colonies. The route by the Isthmus of Panama is the shortest practicable one at present in existence, and a steam-packet mail service is to be opened through it, at the beginning of 1866, to New Zealand and New South Wales. But if the intended railway were connected with a line of steamers plying between Vancouver Island and those colonies, Vancouver Island being 900 miles nearer to Sydney than Panama is, the time to Sydney would be reduced to 47 days, or ten days less than by steam from England *viâ* Panama.

But the importance of this railroad scheme is enhanced when its *political utility* is taken into account. Military emergencies may arise, if not in our day, perhaps in some coming generation, when necessity for such a great highway to our Eastern possessions, wholly through British territory, may be strongly felt. Happily Great Britain lives at present on terms of amity with the rest of the civilised world. Can we be certain, however, that in the extension of French power eastward, British and French interests will never come in collision? Is it possible to predict what may be the issue of the noiseless but real aggrandising policy of France in seeking fresh acquisitions of territory in the Mediterranean, and in expending so vast an amount upon the formation of the Lesseps canal across the Isthmus of Suez? In the event of war with that or any other European power interrupting the existing overland passage from England by the Red Sea, it is almost needless to remark that our Indian empire would be placed in imminent jeopardy. Should we, under these circumstances, be destitute of those facilities for the expeditious transport of troops and military stores which the proposed line of railway could alone adequately supply, *actum est* would be aptly descriptive of all we hold dear in the East.



We are the only first-rate power on the globe that is not striving to obtain ready access to the Pacific for commercial and political objects through its own territory. Mexico is virtually under the control of France, and Chevalier, in his recent work on that country, helps us to unravel the secret of Napoleon's conquest of it. The erection of a barrier against the application of the Monroe doctrine by the United States, and the development of the boundless resources of Mexico, are but subordinate acts in the great drama to be played there under French appointment. The acute eye of the Emperor cannot fail to discern that the marvels of commerce and civilisation by which so high a degree of lustre has been shed on the European coasts of the Atlantic, are about to be repeated with probably tenfold greater brilliancy on the American shores of the Pacific. He has deeply pondered the history of Eastern trade, now flowing eastward from Asia, while in the past it has only streamed westward. He sees the imperative necessity of possessing an uninterrupted route over soil of which he has absolute command. Mexico affords this desired facility, stretching as it does from ocean to ocean. A railway is in progress from Vera Cruz, in the Gulf of Mexico, and now rapidly approaches the city of Mexico. Thence it is to be carried westward to Acapulco, the ancient port for Spanish trade with Manilla on the one hand, and Spain on the other. From Acapulco he has resolved that there shall be lines of French steamers in future years plying to China, Japan, the Sandwich Islands, and the more fertile portions of southern Polynesia. French interference in some of the islands of the Pacific of late has been specially noticeable.

Then Russia, whose aggressive policy was regarded by the first Napoleon with more apprehension than was felt by him in reference to any other single European nation, has recently established herself in great maritime strength on the banks of the Amoor river, in the vicinity of China and Japan. She alone of all the Powers of Europe has possessions extending in unbroken continuity from the European shores of the Atlantic, or at least the Baltic, to the Pacific, and all her energies are bent to the gigantic task of completing clear and easy transit from her Asiatic shores, *via* Siberia, to St. Petersburg. That she will eventually have a railway from the Baltic to the Pacific is beyond doubt. Already she is active in building a line of telegraph over this route, and at the present moment there is a fleet at Behring Straits engaged in surveys with a view to bringing that line from the Amoor river across to Sitka, or New Archangel, the capital of the Russian possessions in America. But how shall I speak of the indomitable and restless enterprise of the United States in this respect? The House of Representatives at Washington, several years ago, as is well known, passed a Bill for the completion of an iron road from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In spite of an exhaustive war, and the

discouraging physical difficulties on the route which have been described, the line has been steadily advancing to California, and another from the proposed terminus in that State is being formed to meet it. It is estimated that at the present rate of progress this entire railway will be finished in six years. With a view to the extension of commerce with China and Japan, the lion's share of which already falls to California, among countries on the western shores of the American continent, the government of the United States has just granted a subsidy to a line of steamers about to run between San Francisco and the coasts of Asia. So bold and liberal a measure must bring incalculable commercial returns. Vancouver Island is 200 miles nearer the Amoor river, 300 miles nearer Shanghai, and 240 miles nearer Canton and Calcutta than San Francisco is. Yet we are compelled to stand by and see a neighbouring country, much less conveniently situated to Asia, carrying off the prize that ought to be jealously guarded by ourselves. The young and thriving populations that increase with such fabulous rapidity on the western shores of America will soon be found emulating the zeal and enterprise of ancient nations, in regard to commerce with the East, and that nation which happens to possess the greatest topographical advantages for uniting the two oceans by a railway, and is also quick to improve these advantages, must become master of the situation. The fear cannot be altogether repressed, that notwithstanding the obviously superior advantages presented by our territory for the execution of this noble and desirable work, these may be nullified by our national indifference about the matter, and our designs forestalled by more progressive rivals. Would that the cogent appeal of Lord Bury, some years since (a nobleman who has no equal in the British legislature in acquaintance with this subject), were duly considered by the government and the people:—"Our trade in the Pacific Ocean, with China and with India, must ultimately be carried through our North American possessions; at any rate, our political and commercial supremacy will have utterly departed from us if we neglect that very great and important consideration, and if we fail to carry out to its fullest extent the physical advantages which the country offers to us, and which we have only to stretch out our hands to take advantage of." Through the ignorance and neglect of her rulers twenty years ago, England threw away much rich territory on the north-west coast, and she has still much at stake in the Pacific. She once snatched from Holland the East Indian trade, and if she allow herself to be blinded by past prosperity to the urgent claims of present interest, some rising power may gradually eclipse her commercial glory.

MATTHEW MACFIE.

