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*Nec aranearum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.*

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## The Politician.

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From the Fredericton Reporter.  
THE COMMERCIAL POSITION OF  
NEW BRUNSWICK.

Amongst the disasters by many with much sincerity predicted as the consequences of the recent changes in the policy of the mother country, that which was supposed most seriously to be threatened, was the decline and ruin of our shipping when placed in unrestricted competition with the shipping of foreign countries. The result of the great experiment has shown that however clear and acute may be the reasoning of individuals or Provinces in the strict line of private or sectional interest, it is but wise to judge and hope favorably of measures which, against the strong tide of such interests, and the time-cemented barriers of prejudice, have gradually urged their way to the favor and adoption of the national councils.

Whatever share other important causes may have in the present highly prosperous condition of this Province, it will scarcely be doubted that one of the most beneficial is that which has enabled the operative lumberman to place our staple product in the hands of the consumer at home, at a charge for transportation so greatly diminished as to be a relief of perhaps not less than twenty per cent. on the prime cost when landed in England.

We have not been accustomed sufficiently to weigh the importance of cheap transportation whether by sea or land, or to regard it, as it really is, as a prime and governing element of commercial success. When we reflect how large a proportion of the cost of almost all the leading articles of merchandise consists of that of transportation, and how small a percentage of variation in that cost will influence the course of speculative enterprise and activity throughout the world, it will not surprise us that an artificially enhanced cost should so long have excluded this Province from the advantages which its geographical position is fitted to command.

It would be an instructive enquiry to trace the influence of the cost of transportation in determining all the great routes of commerce, and on the rise and decay of its chief marts. But as a simple illustration, we may suppose that a merchant, whose transactions amounted to the equivalent, say one hundred thousand barrels of merchandise per annum, should find that by making his purchases or sales at the port of M, instead of as heretofore at the port of N, he can gain a clear difference of no more than 3d. per barrel, this discovery will determine his choice of market, because, as a merchant, his only rational preference will turn upon the clear gain or loss of £1250 per annum involved in the difference of 3d. in price.

It is a small, and to ordinary observation, comparatively not very important difference of cost, involved in the economy of transportation that instigates and directs the great struggle which has for a long time been going on between the principal ports of the Atlantic States, for the largest share of the coveted commercial prize of the day, and western trade. At an early period of the history of those states, it is well known the now relatively small and stagnant town of Newport, in Rhode Island, was a chief medium of their trade. So far as mere excellence of harbor and facility of access from the adjacent coasts and from Europe tended to secure this ascendancy, it might have been retained. But to what ports could the products of the vast territory of America be drawn in the greatest abundance and at the smallest cost? This was the question which tended to determine, which has in a great measure definitely fixed, and which will continue to influence the chief seats of commerce.

The great local advantages of Philadelphia, cultivated by the intelligent and skilful enterprise of the first founders of that city and their successors, notwithstanding a greater distance from Europe, and a more circuitous access by the navigation of the

Delaware, for a long period maintained pre-eminence over New York. But as the great project of the Erie Canal advanced to maturity and eventually linked the latter city by a cheap and capacious medium of transportation with the teeming fertility of the West, the tide of fortune rapidly changed and has long since borne the commercial metropolis of America to its acknowledged and daily strengthening ascendancy.

But New York did not rest satisfied with the achievement of the Canal to bring abundant cargoes at the smallest cost to her daily increasing abundance of shipping. With great economy and good management, with true wisdom and foresight she constructed railroads, to transport, by the shortest route between the ocean and the great inland seas of the West, passengers and property with cheapness and celerity to and from her splendid lines of packets, converting her territory into a thoroughfare of both continents, swollen night and day and at all seasons with a rapid and ceaseless stream of life and business.

Railroads, however, could be made where nature had not supplied great rivers, and where she had denied even moderate facilities for canals. The city of Boston contained too much of an intelligent commercial spirit to permit her ambitious neighbor to reap undivided all the advantages of this modern medium of rapid economic transportation.—Her enterprising citizens connected themselves by railway, first with the nearest towns of importance, and then boldly penetrated the rocky barriers which separated them from the flood of commercial wealth which the canals and railroads of New York were directing exclusively to the outlet of the Hudson.

The reward of this courageous achievement, and of others like it, has been to confer upon Boston a renewal of vigor and a rate of advancement not inferior to the same characteristics of her more powerful and influential neighbor.

Encouraged by the success of Boston in so daring an effort to share in the re-animating commerce of the Lakes and of the West, the long stagnant city of Portland resolved not to remain an inactive spectator; but to turn to similar account geographical advantages perhaps in some respects not inferior to those of either of her more prosperous neighbours. Uniting with City of Montreal in a joint effort to establish railway communication between the navigation of the Saint Lawrence and the Atlantic Harbor of Portland, by the shortest practicable route, this important work has, by the untiring effort and unflagging courage of its promoters, been advanced nearly to successful accomplishment. In the mean time, efforts of a similar kind, not less honorable, inasmuch as they have been made against greater odds, and under circumstances more discouraging have not been wanting in this Province.

Let us now consider for a moment the ultimate tendency and probable results of the eager desire and the herculean labors which for many years have signalized the Atlantic cities in their common struggle to secure a portion of the vast and rapidly growing trade of the Valley of the Saint Lawrence.

That these labors will be attended with a rich and well-deserved reward, sufficient earnest is already afforded in the unrivalled prosperity of all those cities; and their extended lines of artificial works have been found to be indispensable to induce and sustain that prosperity. But that these works, great as they already are, and much as they are likely to be extended, can eventually draw off more than a small portion of illimitable tide of commerce annually augmenting in the Valley of the St. Lawrence, has never been hoped even by their most sanguine promoters.

It was foreseen long ago, and by a committee of the New York Legislature in 1834, it was formally predicted that the foreign trade of their late ports, aided by the public works of Canada, then in progress, would naturally and inevitably incline to the route of the St. Lawrence.

"When the Welland Canal," say they, "shall be completed, and the St. Lawrence improved as designed, goods may be delivered at Cleveland, from London, for less than one half what it now costs by

way of New York and the Erie Canal. Make the Erie Canal a public highway, and the Canadian route will be preferable by one quarter in point of expense. The vast superiority in the great point of economy in transportation effected upon natural water communication, admitting of navigation by large vessels or steamboats, above transportation on canals and railroads, has been satisfactorily proved, by experience upon the Hudson, the Lakes, and the great rivers of the West.

Lapse of time and experience have tended only more strongly to confirm this just estimate of the irresistible influence of the route of the Saint Lawrence on the foreign trade of America. No artificial works can supercede or even approach in economy the invaluable privilege of natural water communication enjoyed by Canada and the Lower Provinces.

This is strikingly illustrated by the result of the rivalry of New York and Boston, in order to bring Western merchandise to their respective harbors at the utmost economy of cost by means of their artificial works. In '51 the cost of transporting a barrel of flour from Detroit by the way of the Erie canal to New York was 79 cents. By way of the Erie Railroad the charges were 75 cents. The cost of the same by the Erie Canal and the Western Railroad to Boston was 99 cents, and by way of Ogdensburg, and thence by Railroad 90 cents. It is probable that the charge for the same by way of Montreal to Portland when the Railway is completed, may be as low as 75 cents. But in each case the charge for Railroad transportation is evidently reduced to the very lowest, if not greatly below the actual working cost, and the profits of the Railways must necessarily be derived from a proportionably higher scale of charges on way freight with the transportation of which competition does not interfere.

Let those rates, low as they are, be now contrasted with those attainable by the route of the Saint Lawrence. It is not doubtful that with ready and full cargoes, a profitable coasting transportation may be carried on at a rate of twenty five cents per barrel per thousand miles. The coasting freight between the Bay of Fundy and the adjoining States is not unfrequently below this rate. It is more than double the mean rate of ocean freight across the Atlantic, or between Great Britain and distant colonial or foreign ports.

Estimating the distance from Detroit by the route of the St. Lawrence to the harbour of Shediac on the eastern coast of this Province at 1400 miles, the cost of transporting a barrel of flour between these ports ought not to exceed 35 cents; and thence by Railway at the same rate of charge as on the American Railways the additional charge of 8 cents would make the total charge for transportation to St. John 43 cents; or 74 per cent. more favourable than by way of the Erie Railroad to New York, or by the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad to Portland; and 109 per cent. more favourable than by way of Odsenburg to Boston.

Why should we continue to pay perhaps not less than £12,000 or £15,000 per annum for the use of the Canals and Railways of our neighbours, when we have better means of transportation already at our own doors comparatively, free of cost? What should prevent the commencement and the eventual success of an honorable and pacific rivalry with our mere advanced neighbours in the acquisition of the western trade?

Canada has already marked out her career, and her first line of independent steam packets may be expected at an early day to be urging their regular course over the shortest route between Liverpool and Montreal. In summer the line will pass by us to the north, and in the winter to the south, not leaving on either hand a solitary passenger, a bag of letters, or even a parcel of cambrie to contribute to the revenues of the European and North American Railway. Yet on this work it may be necessary for New Brunswick to expend about a million and a half of pounds currency in the speculative hope that steam communication with Europe may thereby be induced to centre at the Halifax terminus.

Is it wise permanently and irretrievably

to involve Provincial responsibility in the project?

If it be true—and the facts are mainly evident and undeniable—that we have from the Port of Miramichi, a shorter direct communication by sea with Great Britain, than we have from Halifax, during the summer season; that, due arrangements being made cargoes of American produce of almost every description, southern products excepted, could there be supplied in almost unlimited abundance, at a less cost for previous transportation by 70 to 100 per cent., than in New York and other Atlantic cities, and in better order from the influence of a cooler atmosphere; that, from Miramichi, railway communication may be established with Quebec, within a distance of from 220 to 300 miles shorter than from Halifax; and also that like communication can be effected with the Railway system of the United States at Bangor, in a line more direct and at least 170 miles shorter, than by the proposed route for the European and North American Railway; that both of such lines, diverging from Miramichi, and passing more centrally through the Province would be more generally and widely beneficial, and come less in competition with more economical means of conveyance, than any other lines that have been proposed;—if these several considerations be real, deeply interesting as they must be to the commercial prospects and general welfare of the Province; it seems due to the government, the legislature and public, that they should not be withheld from timely notice and full knowledge, before measures be adopted which may burden the Provincial resources for the purpose of carrying out in its full integrity an enterprise, which, however otherwise commendable, the immediate necessity or expediency of which is so far from clear.

A line of railway from Miramichi by the most favorable direct course towards the railway system of the United States, would intersect the line now in progress of construction from St. Andrews, from 30 to 40 miles from open tide water, and thus establish a winter outlet for the accumulated stock of produce derived from the summer trade of the St. Lawrence. A similar and shorter outlet would be afforded by a branch from Fredericton to Saint John in addition to the outlet to the latter, by means of the line from Shediac. Thus St Andrews and St. John in the Bay of Fundy would be placed, during winter, nearly in the same relationship to Fredericton and Miramichi, which is held respectively by Boston and New York, to Albany and Buffalo. But the cost of railway transportation would be more than 3 to 1 in favour of the winter trade of the Bay of Fundy.

The relative distance of the Port of Miramichi as a centre of the St. Lawrence and European trade, is comprehensively shown in the following table:—

For Ocean Navigation, assuming Galway, in the West coast of Ireland, as a starting point.		Nautical Miles.	
To Newcastle, (Miramichi)	2175	To Newcastle, (Newcastle)	65
To Halifax,	2240	Difference in favor of Newcastle,	240
To Quebec,	2415	" " " "	640
To New York,	2815	" " " "	425
To Boston,	2600	" " " "	305
To St. Andrews and St. John,	2480		
For Railway communication, exclusively within British Territory, assuming Quebec as a terminal point.			
Statute Miles.		Statute Miles.	
From Newcastle, (Miramichi)	330	Difference in favor of Newcastle,	84
From St. John,	414	" " " "	64
From St. Andrews,	394	" " " "	220
From Halifax,	593		
For Railway communication with the United States, assuming Bangor as a terminal point.			
From Newcastle,	250 miles.		
From Halifax,	420	Difference in favor of Newcastle,	170 miles.