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THE "LONDON TIMES" ON THE ST. LAWRENCE ROUTE AND SUBSIDIES TO OCEAN STEAMERS.

(From the Times Aug. 6, 1859.)

In most ages of mankind the destinies of States have depended on the track of commerce. Cities have been made and unmade, and kingdoms elevated or depressed, by simple and silent changes in the course of trade. The mighty ruins in Asiatic plains mean often nothing more than that the adoption of some new route by a line of caravans left a proud and stately emporium stranded and desolate. The ancient ports in the basin of the Mediterranean whose historical names arrest every traveller's attention have become what they are because commercial revolutions took away their shipping, and with their shipping their vitality. Venice, Lisbon, and Amsterdam have felt in latter days the ebb of trade, while its flow has been sufficient, as we see, to create in San Francisco, Singapore, and Melbourne such interests as in former days could never have been conceived. There was once a time, when the critical region of the world was India, and when upon the communications between that country and Europe the fortunes of intermediate States seemed permanently to turn. But India has now been compelled, if not to relinquish, at any rate to divide her pre-eminence. There is another region with more important commerce, though a less romantic history. Instead of the diamonds of Golconda and the silks of Bengal, we see the breadstuffs of Ohio and Michigan absorbing the expectations of Europe. The West is eclipsing the East,—all the more so because it is new, limitless, and inexhaustible. We may trade with America for centuries and yet find it more productive than India is now. That prodigious continent is a perfect nursery of States, and the link connecting the two worlds is strengthened by the fact that more goes to the commerce between them than gold and goods. We supply America with people. The tide of population, which from the earliest ages set in from the East, is now carried onwards to the West more marvelously than ever. It is transported across the Atlantic, and then again pushed to the western extremities of the new continent, until nothing but a second ocean separates it from those eastern highlands in which our race took its rise.

We are not indulging in these reflections without a practical object. At this moment the route of commerce far more important than that by which Augsburg or Bruges was left to rise or fall is trembling in a political balance. How are the products of Western America to reach the expectant consumers of Europe? By what track are the swarms of European emigrants to be carried into the spacious and fertile provinces of the West? Through what channels is this interchange of exports to pass? What cities are to be enriched; what States to be elevated; what nations to be aggrandized? There is a double choice before us. The alternative is Canada or the United States, and the rivalry for the noble prize has been gallantly maintained. Unfortunately, the fight is not a fair one, and England stands chargeable with unwittingly damaging the chances of that competitor whose interests she might naturally be expected to prefer.

The geographical position of Canada places its territories between those of Western America and the Atlantic Ocean. The great river St. Lawrence and the vast inland lakes with which it is connected offer a natural and convenient highway for the traffic of the West. Were it not for the ice of winter and certain difficulties in the navigation, it is probable that Quebec would have become the great emporium of this commerce in spite of all competition. But the people of the United States, fully alive to the interests at stake and animated by the importance of the contest, omitted no efforts to give this lucrative traffic a turn towards the south. A slight deflection would do the work, and carry it off to the ocean by New York and Boston, instead of through the waters of the St. Lawrence. At first the Americans succeeded. While Canada was engaged with locks and lighthouses, canals and tugboats, the United States pushed on their chain of railways, and Boston and New York became fairly the *termini* of Atlantic navigation. Canada, however, was keen, resolute and unconquerable. She held on her course with steady pertinacity, and the British Government encouraged her exertions by guaranteeing a loan. At last, after an expenditure of millions, the route was complete, and the course of traffic to the mouth of the St. Lawrence was as clear as to the American ports. But here there arose another difficulty. The Americans had, as it were, possession of the ocean. Liverpool had been linked by great steam navigation companies to New York and Boston; in those ports, therefore, would commerce still tend—that of corn from the West, that of men from the East. Not to be outdone in the struggle, Canada then built steamers of her own, and suddenly appeared with an Atlantic fleet, like the Romans against the galleys of the Carthagenians. Thus, at length, the field seemed fair, and if, other things being equal, Canada had really the best ground, now was the time for Canada to win.

In these days, however, commerce, like war, is an affair not merely of courage and resolution, but of loans and subsidies. Canada found arrayed against her not only steamers, but subsidized steamers—not only rival lines, but rival lines established and maintained by the contributions of her own natural protector and ally. The Cunard line and the Galway line both running from British, not to Canadian, but to American territory, were founded upon subsidies from the British Government, so that our own loyal dependency was likely to be worsted in the race through the aid which we ourselves contributed to her competitors. What was Canada to do? She had already pushed abreast of her rival at all points; she had opened communications, constructed always, and launched a steam fleet. There was only one thing more to be done, and that was to subsidize her own line, as we had subsidized the lines against her, and this she did. She had spent £650,000 in building her steamers; she now paid £45,000 a year to put them on a level with ours, and the enterprise has succeeded. The Canadian line is as good as the Cunard line, and it would be hard to say more. One of its vessels—the "*Hungarian*"—has actually made three consecutive voyages across the broad Atlantic in less than 28 days altogether.

