

son's river for the pack animals of the British Columbia gold-seekers. With this party of more than 150 people were a woman and three little children. The little children were well cared for, for the emigrants took a cow with them, and these infant travellers were supplied with milk all the way on their long journey to the Leather Pass in the Rocky Mountains. I look upon the successful journey of the Canadian emigrants in 1862, across the continent, as an event in the history of Central British America of unexampled importance. It cannot fail to open the eyes of all thinking men to the singular natural features of the country which formed the scene of this remarkable journey. Probably there is no other continuous stretch of country in the world, exceeding 1,000 miles in length, and wholly in a state of nature, which it would be possible for 100 people, including a woman and three children, to traverse during a single short season, and successfully, and indeed easily overcome such apparently formidable obstacles as the Rocky Mountains have been supposed to present.

On a review of what is now known of Central British America, the following facts cannot fail to arrest the attention and occupy the thoughts of those who think it worth while to consider its future, and its possible relation to ourselves during the next and succeeding generations.

We find in the great basin of Lake Winnipeg an area of cultivable land equal to three times the area of this province, and equal to the available land for agricultural settlement in the province of Canada. It is watered by great lakes, as large as Lake Ontario; and by a vast river, which in summer is navigable to within sight of the Rocky Mountains. It contains inexhaustible supplies of iron, lignite, coal, salt, and much gold. It has a seaport within 350 miles, *via* the Nelson River, of Hudson Bay, which is accessible for three months in the year for steamers.

This great basin contains the only area left on the American continent where a new nation can spring into existence.

This is a complete refutation of the statement made by the hon. member for Hochelaga, that communication with those colonies is impossible. In a part of the lecture from which I have just quoted, Professor HIND says that, between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods, the distance is only about 200 miles, and when once that is got over, an immense valley more than a thousand miles in length is attained—a magnificent valley, which may form part of the Confederacy and provide an outlet for our population. The hon. member for Hochelaga also told us, that if we accepted Confederation we should subsequently be drawn into a legislative union; but he well knows that by the Constitution which is submitted to this House, the question of a Federal union only is mooted. If at a subsequent

period our descendants should choose to have a legislative union, that will be their affair and not ours; if they do choose to have it, it will be because they will then be strong enough to have nothing to fear. Further, without entering into all the details relating to the position, as to religion, of Lower Canada in the Confederation, I must call attention to the fact that the total population of all the provinces, in 1861, was 3,300,000 souls, and of these the total number of Catholics amounted to 1,494,000. Thus they will be numerous enough to protect their religious and other interests; and those interests will be in a position of safety in the local legislatures. We do not seek to be allowed privileges which others have not; we only wish that our rights may be respected as we respect those of others. French-Canadians are not, have never been, and will not become persecutors either in political or religious matters under the Confederation. I appeal to men belonging to other religions to say whether we have ever proved unjust or persecutors to them. That part of the population of Lower Canada which is of foreign origin will have nothing to fear under the Local Government, any more than we shall have anything to fear under the Federal Government. But in consideration of what has been said by the honorable members for Hochelaga and Lotbinière, and of the mistrust which they have endeavored to create in the minds of the French-Canadian and Catholic population of Lower Canada, I think the House will allow me to read an extract from a letter written by His Grace the Archbishop of Halifax, who is likely to understand the interests of the Catholic population quite as well as the two honorable members in question. This is the reply which he makes to those who pretended that we had reason to fear invasion of the country by the Fenians:—

If there be fifty thousand men already prepared to invade this country, as you admit, instead of laboring to keep us in our present disjointed and defenceless position, you should rather call on all to unite where a single man cannot be dispensed with, and gird on our armor for the *rencontre*. If responsible government, which the great and good men of this country won for us, be a precious heirloom on the lilliputian scale on which we now find it, instead of bartering it away for nothing by Confederation, as you say, we shall rather, in my opinion, add to its lustre and value, and ennoble and enrich it, and make it boundlessly grander and more secure for ourselves and those who are to come after us. We obtained