

The work of the expedition occupied three years, and the results appeared in 1860, when, for the first time, the outside world had the opportunity of forming an idea of the wealth and value of the territory locked up by the Hudson Bay Company. Nothing, however, was done for five years, when this territory and British Columbia were annexed by Canada. Agitation to open up the region, however, was fruitless, until, after a stormy debate in the Canadian Parliament, permission was given to a syndicate to carry a railway through to Vancouver, concessions of land being given, and the line to be completed in ten years. The syndicate had money and "grit"; it bought out the rights of the Hudson Bay Company for £300,000 cash and one-twentieth of the produce of the land-sales and set to work. Within a few days of five years, half the stipulated time, the last rail was laid, and trains ran across the continent. The company made no elaborate surveys. It showed the purchasers of land their two pegs facing the railway-line, and gave them the measurements and bearings of their boundaries. He contrasted the condition of the country he explored forty years ago with its present state, and said he knew of no parallel in the world to its progress. Perhaps a hundred and fifty Europeans might then be found in the whole region—now its population was reckoned by hundreds of thousands, and along its railway-line were great cities with every appliance of civilisation.

During the five months and a half in the year in which the lakes were open to navigation they conveyed from this territory 30,000,000 tons of goods, which he contrasted with the 9,000,000 annually conveyed through the Suez Canal. In other respects the changes had been enormous. The populous Indian tribes had almost vanished, those that remained having taken to the woods. Of the countless herds of buffalo, he believed about thirteen individual specimens survived. Many of the species of native birds had wholly or partly disappeared. He spoke of the barbarous and wanton destruction of the native fauna. The last great buffalo hunt was in 1890, when thirty thousand head were killed, and the race practically exterminated.

Mr. W. T. L. Travers, in moving a vote of thanks to Sir James Hector for his address—which was rendered the more interesting because of the production of his original large-scale map—said the eminent services of Sir James Hector in connection with pioneer work in Canada had never been properly recognised in New Zealand, but his name would always be associated with the discovery of the only practicable pass (the Hector Pass) through the Canadian portion of the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Travers also gave an interesting description of the rapid settlement of the country referred to by Sir James Hector in his paper.

A very remarkable plant was exhibited by Sir James Hector.

By the last English mail Sir James received a peculiar root from Sir Walter Buller, who is at present travelling abroad, and which had been picked up in a cave at Mexico. The accompanying instruction was to "place it in water." Sir James did so, and within twenty-four hours a plant of the genus *Lycopodium* came to life and developed in an astonishing manner, shooting out leaves and giving every indication of a thriving existence. The plant was thrown back a little by being placed in the sun, but looked quite healthy when placed on exhibition. Sir James said that some held that it was probable that life had lain dormant in this plant for a hundred and eighty years until suddenly revived by contact with water in the manner stated.

Mr. Kruger's signature and two Transvaal coins bearing the ex-President's head were exhibited.

They were sent from South Africa by Trooper Gillespie, a member of one of the New Zealand contingents, to his brother in Wellington.