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Col. R. McKim  
With reports of the Convention

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West Virginia University

SPEECH  
OF  
JOSEPH SEGAR, ESQ.  
OF ELIZABETH CITY COUNTY,  
ON THE  
COVINGTON & OHIO RAILROAD,  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS CONVENTION,  
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PUBLISHED BY RESOLUTION OF THE CONVENTION.

In responding to the call which has been made upon me to address the Convention, I have but a single position to take—to which only shall I speak—and it is this: That the Covington and Ohio railroad, which is to connect the James river canal with the Kanawha and Ohio rivers, and, by its connexion with the Central railroad, to form a continuous line of railway from tidewater to the Ohio, is *the* improvement of the State—is that one of her railroad enterprises which more than all others together concerns her welfare, and most demands her fostering patronage and care.

The proposition is a bold one, I confess; but if I do not here to-day demonstrate its truth, it will be, not for want of strength in the proposition itself, but the feebleness of the advocate into whose hands its vindication has fallen.

In assuming this high ground, it is not my purpose by any means to underrate any of the railroads of the State. They are all valuable in their place. They are all part and parcel of the State's prosperity. They are destined to contribute, each one and all, to that green wreath of glory which, in no distant future, is to garland the brow of Virginia.

I am not here to disparage the Danville road—poor Whit. Tunstall's folly it used to be called, but indeed an enduring monument of his genius and his patriotism—a monument, Sir, of his statesmanship, which will endure and yet endure, when the deeds of the mere politician shall have been forgotten forever, or be remembered only to be despised. Alas! Mr. President, that so gifted a benefactor of his State should have so soon passed to the grave! Would to God that he were here to-day to enlighten us by his counsels, to animate us by his enthusiasm, and to sustain, by his gushing eloquence, the noble enterprise we are assembled to advance!

Pardon the digression, Mr. President; but, Sir, I could not forbear pausing, as the Danville road crossed my mind, to drop a tear over the early

grave of one of the noblest of spirits, and truest of the benefactors of Virginia.

I am not here—I was going on to say—to speak lightly of the Danville road. It is an important work. A new thrill shall it waken along the valleys of the Roanoke and its tributaries, and an untold trade cast upon one of our cities; but it is a local work only, compared with that great central one, which is to join the seaboard of the State to the boundless west.

The Orange and Alexandria road, and “modest little Manassa,” I do not undervalue. They are doing wonders, I learn, in developing the resources of the country through which they pass, and are fast building up a Virginia city on the banks of the Potomac; but they are branches only of a trunk, mere neighborhood works, in comparison with the grand trunk line stretching from tidewater to the Ohio.

Nothing have I to say against the Norfolk and Petersburg, and the South-Side roads: they are links in the great chain which is to bind together the tides of the Chesapeake and the floods of the father of waters.

And still less have I to say against the Virginia and Tennessee road.—Sir, it is a noble enterprise. Even without the New river branch, it is a magnificent improvement. Traversing one of the most productive regions ever vouchsafed by God to his creatures; a region abounding in every mineral that can minister to the comfort of man or the wealth of a nation—emboweling coal, iron, lead, gypsum and salt enough to supply the demands of a continent: traversing, I say, a country like this, and destined, when the Lynchburg and Gordonsville connexion shall have been made, to be the main thoroughfare of the south-western travel, it will be surpassed by few works of the kind in the country; but to Virginia, it will be of secondary importance only. Yield precedence it must to that great central improvement, which will furnish, as I propose presently to show, the easiest, the most natural, the directest, and far the cheapest line of transit between the East and the West, and the surest instrumentality for attracting to our seaboard the western trade, and supplying to the State her two missing elements of greatness, commerce and manufactures.

Sir, there is not wanting a single consideration to characterize the Covington and Ohio railroad, with its connexions, as the most important of our internal improvements.

Common sense tells us that a railroad is valuable in proportion to the amount of transportation it can do, and the cheapness with which it can do it. If it have not the capacity to accommodate the freights of the country, or if its charges for transportation be so high that the producer cannot afford to transmit his products by it, it is utterly worthless, except for purposes of travel. Now engineers are agreed that the capacity of a railroad, both as to the amount to be transported and the cost to be charged, is in strict proportion to its grades. That is to say, the lighter the grades, the more tonnage it can carry, and the less the cost of carrying it. And the reasons are, that on light grades, heavier loads can be conveyed, with the same amount of motive power, than can be on heavy ones; and that on the former, the wear and tear are less, and the expense of annual maintenance proportionally smaller.

Of the superiority of light over heavy gradients, a few illustrations will be submitted.

The grades of the railroad from Boston to Albany, as it was originally constructed, were sixty-nine feet to the mile. But with these high and expensive grades, involving light loads and heavy transport charges, Boston could not compete with New York, and her lighter grade railroads, for the trade west of the Hudson. And accordingly it is now proposed, in order to

bring down the grades to forty feet, and thus cheapen transportation, to make a tunnel through the Hoosack mountain four miles in length, and at the cost, besides sacrificing a portion of the old road, of several millions of dollars. For a city seeking a heavy trade, the money would be well expended, because the additional trade that would be attracted by the increased capacity of the road for carrying freights, and by the greater cheapness of transportation, would be full indemnity for the additional outlay.

Another and still stronger example. In selecting a section of the Erie railroad of forty-eight miles in length, the alternative lay between two lines, one offering grades of sixty, the other of fifteen feet to the mile, the former estimated to cost \$571,000 less than the latter. But the latter, the costlier of the two, was adopted, because, while it would cost, for construction, \$571,000 more, the annual working expenses would be \$133,000 less. In less than five years, therefore, the annual saving, in the way of expenses, would fully make up for the difference of cost, and there would be annually thereafter a saving of \$133,000—a sum sufficient to affect materially the rate both of transport and of profit.

A third illustration. The Baltimore and Ohio railroad, it is well known, is doing an immense business, and deriving from it an immense revenue; its gross receipts reaching four millions of dollars a year. But in consequence of its steep grades, requiring machinery so enormously heavy as constantly to break up the superstructure of the road, its working expenses are sixty-one per cent. of its gross receipts. That is, it requires \$2,440,000 of its earnings to keep up the road, which leaves for distribution to the stockholders the sum of \$1,560,000 only. Hence the great depreciation of the stock in the road since its completion to Wheeling. Now, had this great thoroughfare the easy grades of the Covington and Ohio road—29 feet to the mile—how different a result would it exhibit? It would be able to do more than twice its present business; it could afford to do it much cheaper; the wear and tear and working expenses would be much less, and the net revenue of course greater.

A fact of very recent occurrence, is also strongly significant on this point. But a few days since, a convention of the superintendents of the four principal northern railroads, the Baltimore and Ohio, Pennsylvania Central, the Erie, and the New York Central, was held in the city of New York, to consider the propriety of advancing the charges for transportation, the present rates, after paying expenses, not allowing reasonable return on the capital invested. It was agreed materially to advance them, which is an admission that with the high grades, and consequent expensive working of those roads, no dividends can be declared without higher transit charges. The low grades of the Covington and Ohio road, would have saved the necessity of such an advance. It is an admission, too,—full of import,—of the great costliness of railroads as a medium of transportation.

The great desideratum, then, in railroads, is low grades. They are best for every body and every interest; best for the farmer, for the lower the charges for transportation to market, the more net proceeds he realizes from the products of his toil; better for the consumer of every class, because the less the cost of sending forward the merchandise consumed, the less the price of the article consumed; best for the social welfare of the people, for the less the charge upon intercommunication, the less the embargo upon those social interchanges and sweet courtesies of life, that make up so much of the happiness of man; and lastly, best for the State herself, because the less the annual expense of working her roads, the more income will she derive from her investment in them. Indeed, it may be safely assumed, that a railroad cannot effectually fulfill *all* the purposes for which railroads are

designed, unless its grades be low, and that its success in accomplishing those objects, will be in proportion to the lightness or heaviness of its grades.

These positions concerning grades being conceded, what a subject for congratulation to the friends of internal improvements in Virginia! Sir, my heart bounded with joy when, for the first time, I learned that the 105 and 92 feet grades of former surveys of the Covington and Ohio road, had been brought down by subsequent reconnoissances to the comparative level of 29 feet to the mile. I rejoiced, because I saw in the fact, incalculable good for Virginia, advantages peculiar to her, not vouchsafed to another, the gift of God to this most favored land of ours, which no amount of man's energy or means can ever offset. I see in it, if not commercial empire, certainly commercial importance and power. I read in it the unmistakable and glorious assurance, that Virginia must and will take to herself a liberal share of that mighty trade of the great and fast-growing west, which is conferring wealth, prosperity, power and renown, upon so many States around her.

Sir, we have the best avenue in all the land to the great valley of the west. There is *no* approach to it like ours. In the vital point of grades, we have infinitely the advantage over every competing line, within the State or without it. Nowhere along the whole Alleghany range, save between Covington and the mouth of Greenbrier, does the mountain bow down to 29 feet the mile!

Important truth! Incalculable its value to Virginia!

Of its practical importance in reference to the western trade, we have a striking illustration in the fact, well ascertained by scientific test and by practical experience, that on the low grades of the Covington and Ohio road one-half more of freight may be carried, with the same amount of motive power, than can be on the Pennsylvania or Erie road, and more than twice as much as on the Baltimore and Ohio. Or, to take an illustration furnished me by an able engineer, Mr. Ruggles,—to whom, I take this occasion to say, the State owes much for his zealous devotion to her great central work,—the same power that will carry 78 tons on the 116 grades of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, will carry 192 on the 53 feet grades of the Pennsylvania road, and 307 on the 29 feet grades of the Covington and Ohio.

Sir, a distinguished engineer once said that the difference between a four feet eight and a half inches and a five feet guage, was "worth an empire." The proposition was boldly put, though I do not mean now to controvert it; but, if it had been said that the difference between the twenty-nine feet grades of the Covington and Ohio road, on the one hand, and the fifty-three feet of the Pennsylvania road, and the sixty feet of the Erie road, and the one hundred and sixteen feet of the Baltimore and Ohio, was "worth an empire," the proposition would have been, certainly, an approximation to the truth, for in that difference there is, so far as the heavy trade is concerned, almost an "empire's worth."

In respect, then, to gradients, this Covington and Ohio road of ours stands without a rival.

In the next place, it is an admitted point that that railroad will be most prosperous, both for trade and for revenue, that can command the largest amount of travel, because, travel paying much better than any other tonnage, the greater the passenger traffic, the larger the fund for meeting the expenses of the road, and the more the revenue from travel, the greater the capacity to reduce the charges for the transportation of heavier freights.

That this characteristic of a good road belongs, and preeminently, to our central line of railway, I am sure I need scarcely argue. That it will command a very large western travel, is a question simply of distance, of grade,

and of climate, and all these concur to give the Central road the preference over every competitor. If not the shortest in measured, it certainly is, in equated distance; that is, considering the low grades of the Virginia line, which admit of great speed, and the mild climate of the whole region it traverses, the western traveler, at least from many points on the Ohio, can reach the northern cities in much less time, and with far more certainty by the Virginia route, than he can even by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. The latter has, to Washington City, the advantage of thirteen miles only, and to Baltimore of thirty-five; but this advantage is far more than counterbalanced by the easier grades and better climate of the Virginia route. I have been informed, indeed, by skilful engineers that, on the principle of equation, it is, from the Ohio river to Washington City, one hundred miles less distance by the Virginia Central railroad, than it is by the Baltimore and Ohio. If this be so, it is conclusive, absolutely conclusive, in favor of the Virginia line, time and certainty being, with the traveler, controlling considerations.

And then the vast flood of travel that railroad facilities will pour upon the mineral spring region of the State! Of the effect of these facilities, we have the best type in what we now see around us. The extension of the Central railroad even to Staunton, and of the Virginia and Tennessee to Christiansburg, by reducing the stage portage, has already had the effect of filling to overflowing every watering-place in the mountains.

But when the Central road shall have been made a continuous thoroughfare to the Ohio, its eastern section opening to the Virginia springs the whole Atlantic region, and the western connecting them by near and easy approach to the expansive and expanding west; when the crutched cripple and faint invalid shall no longer, by rugged mountain and jolting stage coach, be forbidden the health-giving waters which the goodness of Heaven has bidden to gurgle in almost every mountain streamlet of ours; when the space-annihilating power of the railway shall have made a journey from eastern and western city to the mountains of Virginia a mere jaunt of pleasure—an airing excursion, as certainly it will be: I say, when these things shall have come to pass, a tide of travel will set in upon our mountain watering-places, dreamed of now in no man's philosophy. That the passenger business alone will pay all the expenses of the road from its western end to its seaboard termini, I have not a doubt. When 25,000 persons visit Saratoga in a single season, it is certainly no extravagance to compute at 50,000 the number that will annually resort to the numerous watering-places in the mountains of Virginia. Shall we, by seeking another connexion with the west, give up this large travel, and the immense profit it will bring? Sir, I trust not. Madness will indeed rule the hour, if we do the suicidal act!

Thirdly, I suppose I may safely assert that the internal improvement experience of the country has settled another point—that, where there is a large heavy trade to be transported from a distant producing back country to the seaboard market, a line of transit compounded of railroad and water channel, is more effectual and reliable for obtaining the trade than one altogether railroad. And the reasons are apparent: first, the water line is the cheapest of all the modes of transit, and being the cheapest, the heavy trade with avidity seeks it—as naturally seeks it as the duck does the puddle; and, secondly, because the railroad, unless its grades be unusually easy, rather eschews the heavy trade, for the reason that it breaks up the road, increasing the expenses of annual maintenance, and lessening the net earnings.

Of the comparative cost of the various modes of transportation, I am enabled to furnish the Convention with the most satisfactory and interesting illustrations. By a recent report of Mr. M'Calpine, the very eminent chief

engineer of the State of New-York, it appears that the cost of taking a ton of freight from Lake Erie to the City of New York by the Erie canal and the Hudson river, is \$3 16; by the New York Central railroad and the Hudson, \$6 19; and by the Erie railroad, \$8 43.

From these data it will be perceived, that an unbroken water carriage is the cheapest, and much the cheapest; a transportation, compounded of water line and railroad, the next cheapest; and a continuous railway conveyance not only the dearest, but much the dearest.

According to these results, our compound line, to wit: the Covington and Ohio railroad and the James river canal together, is better adapted to the obtaining of the heavy traffic of the west than any unmixed railroad line, no matter where located, whether on the north side of James river or south of it. It is the cheaper of the two modes of transit, and hence the heavy trade of the west, arriving at Covington, the western terminus of the canal, will desert the railroad, and take the canal. Over the heavier grades of the Central road *from Covington to Richmond*, you cannot well force it; from the canal, you cannot drive it.

In proof of the strong tendency of the heavy trade to prefer the water line, whenever it can find it, I refer to the fact stated in Mr. McAlpine's report, that "*wherever a choice has been between the canal (Erie) and the competing railroads, all heavy articles, and those not requiring speedy transit, chose rather the canal.*" And another most significant fact is mentioned, that the railroads of New York carry more freight to the canal than they take of the legitimate business of the latter. These facts demonstrate, most clearly, the vast importance of the James river canal as a component part of the great line of transit, by which we are to draw trade from the west to the seaboard cities of the east. They show, palpably, the decided preference of heavy trade for water transmission, and furnish us the incontrovertible assurance that our best reliance for diverting the western trade from the channels by which it now passes off to the northern cities, and attracting it to ourselves, is, after all, on the water line portion of our connexion with the west.

For my own part, Mr. President, I cherish no very sanguine hope of wresting the western trade from our northern rivals by any through transit of which water conveyance is not a constituent part. The competition between the northern lines bidding for the western trade, is so very spirited and active, and the channels in which the trade has been sweeping so deepened, that we cannot expect to detach it, save by the employment of some extraordinary inducement. A pure railroad transit, I fear, will never furnish that inducement—the distance will be too great, and the cost of transport too high. But *this* is absolutely certain: that, with a mixed line, consisting of the Kanawha and Ohio rivers, the Covington and Ohio railroad, with its light grades, and the James river canal, we can, and will clutch from our northern rivals, a generous share of the western trade now monopolized by them.

I have thus endeavored, Mr. President, to establish three points in favor of our great central improvement: first, that the Covington and Ohio railroad has lower grades than any thoroughfare across the mountains tending westward; secondly, that our central line of railroad, taken as a whole, is bound to command a very large passenger traffic; and thirdly, that by virtue of its compound character, the central improvement is much more likely, than any pure railroad connexion, to bring to the seaboard the heavy trade of the great back country with which it makes its western connexions.

The full application of these truths, I propose now to make, and by the application, to make good the position with which I started—that the central connexion with the Ohio, is *the* improvement of the State.

What is it, let me ask, that we propose to ourselves by a connexion with the West? What did the great mind of Washington contemplate when it struck out the great idea of a connexion between the eastern and the western waters? What was in the mind's eye of the sagacious Marshall when with fervent zeal he pressed upon his native State the opening of a communication between tidewater and the Ohio?

Was it the flitting travel that is here this hour and gone the next? Was this the low object of their aspiration? Sir, they struck for something nobler and more substantial—something they were looking to, that builds up the city and enriches a State—trade, with a great producing and consuming back country. The western trade it was, that fixed their patriotic gaze.

And that is now the great want of Virginia. For the want of ready communication with the great back country beyond us, we have no commerce worthy the name. So we desire to open a trade with the millions of our fellow-citizens of the West. We want them to send forward to our cities of the seaboard a portion, at least, of their immense productions to form the basis of a foreign and domestic commerce, and we want the merchants of those cities to send back to them, in exchange, a portion of the imported merchandise and manufactured fabrics they annually consume. We want the numerous producers of a vast interior, and the merchants of our seaboard, in near proximity and close commercial relations together.

We want, identically, Mr. President, what New York wanted when she constructed her great Erie canal—that eighth wonder of the world—that grand, magnificent conception, which has made the name of Clinton immortal—that wonderful work which has given to its owner commercial and political empire, and the princeliest revenue that ever fell to the lot of a republican State—a revenue that might, if she chose so to devote it, free her people of all taxation, and dispense the blessings of education through the length and breadth of her broad domain: I say, we want, precisely, what the empire State wanted when she planned her great canal—the western trade.

We seek, what the people of that enterprising Commonwealth pursued, when they built two railroads to the lakes, costing more than \$70,000,000—the western trade.

That which induced Boston to expend millions for opening a railway communication with Albany and the lakes and for tunnelling the Hoosack mountains, we want—the western trade.

We want what Pennsylvania was looking after when she contracted a debt of \$40,000,000 to open a connexion with the west—the western trade.

We want what Maryland wanted, when, by her own means and those of her enterprising people, she expended \$25,000,000 on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad—the trade of the mighty west.

We want just what South Carolina and Georgia are striving for in sending out their railways far into the western regions—our rightful share of the wealth-giving trade of the great western valley.

The western trade, then, being the prize before us, let us see if it be glittering enough to tempt our ambition. What is its amount, and what its value?

Why, Sir, the trade of Cincinnati alone—a city at our very doors—lying, if I may so speak, athwart our very threshold—whose commercial relations ought to be with Lynchburg, and Richmond, and Petersburg, and Norfolk instead of Baltimore: the trade of Cincinnati alone, import and export, exceeds one hundred and five millions a year! If there were no other trade than this to strike for, it were well worth the blow. But the whole commerce floating on the Ohio and Mississippi is more than five hundred millions

per annum, of which, it is estimated, one-half at least, crossing the country by artificial channels, finds a market in the Atlantic cities.

Here, then, is this trade of which we speak—vast in amount and in monied value—vast enough to make a score of States prosperous and great—so vast, that the States around us have spent three hundred millions of dollars to draw it to their doors.

But *can* we get it, and *how* are we to get it—these are the important inquiries.

Sir, we can get it; it is rightfully ours—the lion's share, I may almost say, ought to be ours; the God of the earth has put it almost in our grasp; if we do not spurn His providence—if we are true to ourselves—we *will* have it.

I have already shown that Virginia is entitled to the transit of a large portion of the western trade; that, naturally, its track to the seaboard is through her domain. The only remaining inquiry is—*by what avenue shall we take it?*

Shall we reach it by the New river branch of the Virginia and Tennessee road, or by the Covington and Ohio and its connexions? Sir, by the one, the New river branch, we can never realize it; by the other, we can and will.

In exhibiting the contrast I propose between the New river branch and the Covington and Ohio railroad, allow me to say, that I am actuated by no hostility either to the great trunk line itself, or to its proposed branch down the New river. On this subject of internal improvements, I have endeavored to know no sectional feeling. I have bowed at no local shrine. I have worshiped only at the altars of Virginia. May my spirit be blasted, if ever I kneel at any other!

Sir, I may safely invoke the record of a very humble public history to bear me witness, that I have been the partisan of no particular improvement. I have had the pleasure, I might say, the distinguished honor, of voting for them all. For the Virginia and Tennessee railroad I struggled as hard as he who struggled hardest, and to-day as a Virginian I am most proud of this honorable memorial of her enterprise, and I voted, too, for the New river branch, because, among other reasons, it was part of the compromise entered into at the Union Convention. Hence it is I declare that, in making a comparison unfavorable to the New river branch, I am not to be regarded an enemy of the South-western road, or of any of its branches, or of any of the interests depending upon them.

But, on this occasion, as I have endeavored to do on all others, I shall look to the good of the whole State, and to it only. And discharging my duty to the State, I am bound to speak out plainly on the pretensions of this New river branch.

Sir, there is a fixed purpose to set aside the great Central railway, and to substitute for it a road from Christiansburg, on the Virginia and Tennessee road, down the valley of the New river to the Ohio. The project had its origin years ago—I know almost the hour of its inception—and it is gaining ground every day, certainly in the eastern portion of the State, if not in other quarters. And the grounds are well known on which the effort is making to reconcile the people to the substitution. The New river branch is said to be cheaper than the Covington and Ohio. I have heard it said time and time again—“this Covington and Ohio road, with its long tunnels and rocky route, will bankrupt the treasury; therefore let us abandon it, and take a far cheaper line, to-wit: the New river.” The very plausible and captivating, but most fallacious idea is held out, too, that the New river branch will secure the western trade beyond fail to the cities of Virginia, and particularly will build up Norfolk, while the Central road, or any improvement on the north side of James river, will but furnish an avenue for its diversion



to Baltimore. And at the last session of the legislature, the proposition of substitution, for years favored, and on all fit occasions strenuously enforced, emerged from shadow to substance, and "took a local habitation and a name." It was formally proposed, and by a very distinguished gentleman from eastern Virginia, to stop in the woods the Central railroad, and then look to the New river branch for the western trade! Even since I arrived here, I have learned that a distinguished member of the Assembly from the south-west, who has hitherto on great State grounds sustained the Covington and Ohio railroad, has given up the latter for the New river line.

Such is the scheme. Sir, it will be to Virginia a fatal thing—as fatal to her as the Grecian horse was to Troy. It will defeat, and defeat forever, the great end which lies at the basis of her system of internal improvement; that which comprises its grand philosophy—the attainment of the western trade. It is a scheme pregnant with ruin to every great interest of the commonwealth, and blight to every hopeful prospect.

Sir, I enter my solemn protest against it. To life's last hour I shall war against it. As I love Virginia, and hope for her greatness, I must cry out against the destroying scheme, and here, to-day, I solemnly warn my countrymen against it.

Standing here, then, as the partizan of no road, but the friend of all, and hoping to help avert a ruinous policy, I must say, and do say, that we can never, by the New river branch, bring within Virginia any material amount of the western trade.

First of all, its heavier grades present a most serious obstacle.

It must be borne in mind, in all attempts to reach the trade of the west, that commercial relations when once formed, like those of close consanguinity, are not easily ruptured, and that that trade—the thing we are now seeking—is pursuing its course to the seaboard by fixed and established channels, and that if we would divert it from those channels, and entice it to avenues of our own, we can only do it by offering to it the inducement of a better transit. What the inducement is that is potent to change the channels of trade, is now positively ascertained, and well understood. It has become a settled law, that the *cheapest* route takes the heavy trade.

On this principle, the New river line can never compete with the Covington and Ohio, for the transmission of the bulky products of the west. The grades of the former are 60 feet to the mile, those of the latter, only 29. Applying, then, the law of grades which I have already illustrated at length, that the lower the grade the cheaper the transportation, and bearing in mind that the cheapest line of transit is the one surest to take the trade, we are brought irresistibly to the conclusion that, for alluring the trade from its more northerly channels into our own, the New river line, compared with the Covington and Ohio, is absolutely without pretension, and altogether out of the question.

Sir, can a railroad with 60 feet grades, compete, for heavy freights, with one of 29? It never can, because, first, on the principles already established, on a grade of 29 feet, a given amount of motive power will move nearly twice the load that it can on one of 60 feet; and, secondly, because on the 60 feet grade the crushing of the superstructure will be much less than on the 29 feet grade, and consequently, the cost of working the road much greater on the former than on the latter. It is ascertained by scientific test, that, on the Covington and Ohio road, 73 per cent. more of freight can be transported, with the same motive power, than can be on the New river branch. In other words, a train of cars coming eastward laden with western freights, will come by the Covington and Ohio road with nearly twice as heavy loads as it could come with by the New river route. And

this difference, common sense will say, is conclusive in favor of the transport line possessing the advantage of the difference.

Or, to illustrate by the test of the relative rise and fall of the two routes, the total rise and fall from the mouth of Greenbrier to Lynchburg, is 5,360 feet, while between Covington to the mouth of the Greenbrier, it is only 1,407.

But another consideration comes in to establish greater cheapness for the Covington and Ohio route, and, of course, to stamp superiority upon it.

It has already been demonstrated, if, indeed, it required demonstration at all, that a compound line, the compound consisting of railroad and river or canal, is cheaper than one wholly railway. Then the heavy staples of the west arriving at Covington may, by means of the canal, reach Lynchburg, Richmond or Norfolk, cheaper, and much cheaper too, than they can by the railroads leading to those cities respectively. Lynchburg will gain 90 miles of cheap water transportation in lieu of costly railroad transportation, Richmond will get 230 miles of cheap canal navigation in place of 198 miles of far more expensive railroad carriage, and Norfolk will have 350 miles of the cheapest of all modes of transport, in lieu of the expensive line of railroads on the south side of James river. Each city may get the western trade much cheaper through the compound line than it possibly can by a pure railroad transit, and therefore it is that the Covington and Ohio road, connecting with the canal at Covington, presents far the surest chance for giving to western productions a transit through Virginia, and a market in her cities.

Another point is against the New river line: it cannot command the travel, and not commanding the travel, it cannot control the trade. That it cannot command the travel, is most apparent.

I have already shown that, as to a large portion of the western travel bound north, the central railway of Virginia, in consequence of the more rapid transit, will have the preference over the Baltimore and Ohio. Over the New river branch it will have the controlling advantage in shorter actual distance, it being from the Ohio river to any northern city 51 miles less by the Central railroad, than it is by the Virginia and Tennessee and its New river branch, via Lynchburg, Gordonsville and Alexandria.

Or, to take Cincinnati as a point of departure for western travel, it will be 124 miles farther from that city to Baltimore by the southern line through Lynchburg, by the Gordonsville connexion, than it will be by the Parkersburg branch of the Baltimore and Ohio road.

This difference in measured distance I hold to be conclusive against the New river line, and in favor of the Central railroad, because it has become a law of travel, as well settled as any physical law—the compound result of steam, the instincts of man, and the “go ahead” spirit of our people—that the traveler seeks the end of his journey by the shortest and speediest route. No matter on what errand bound, whether of gain or of pleasure, whether going off to some distant point where business calls, or returning to that resting-place of his affections, his home—no matter of what vocation, whether farmer, merchant, lawyer, physician, mechanic, or common laborer, he hurries on, brooking no avoidable delays, to the end of his journey, by the quickest route that is offered to his choice. On this principle, the traveler from the west moving to the northern cities, will not tolerate the southern deflexion involved in the New river route, but will adhere rather to his accustomed track, the northern thoroughfares.

Not able to command the travel, it will want, necessarily, the ability to take the trade. And why? Because no railroad can sustain itself without a fair passenger traffic. It cannot support itself by freights alone. Take from any railroad its passenger business, and in order to pay working ex-

penses and make a dividend, it would be compelled to levy such exorbitant rates of transportation, that the producer could not afford to transport by it. Hence, the New river branch, having little of the western travel to help pay working expenses and give remunerating profit to the stockholders, would be under the necessity of levying *all* charges on the freight, and this would most effectually drive from its track the heavy trade of the west.

To the western travel, which will be commanded by our central railway to the Ohio, but which the New river route cannot command, add the travel to our mineral springs, which the former will generate, but which the latter never can, and we shall be at no loss in determining to which line belongs the superiority as a thoroughfare for travel.

But there is one view of the subject which is conclusive against the New river branch as a medium for the western trade, and that is, that even if it had the best grades in the world, it would be totally inadequate to its accommodation.

We are told by Col. Garnett, the able engineer of the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, that the business of this great thoroughfare will be limited only by its capacity for transportation—in other words, that it will have, independent of the New river branch, as much business of its own as it can possibly accommodate. And the Board of Public Works, in their late report, speak of it thus: “The entire road runs through a country of unexampled fertility, and no part of the Union is capable of producing a greater variety of crops, while its minerals, for quality, number and quantity, are scarcely equalled in any portion of the world. The deposits of salt and gypsum are inexhaustible and of unusual purity, and the coal, iron and lead abundant and rich. *When completed, it will necessarily be sought by productions and travel more than equal to its facilities for transportation.*”

Well, sir, if the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, to whose trunk its auxiliary New river branch is to conduct the western trade, will have as much business of its own as it can attend to—if it is to be gorged with its own legitimate tonnage, in God’s name how is it to accommodate any more—how take in the vast trade of the west?

Build, then, this New river railway, and the consequence will be that either the tonnage brought by it to Christiansburg must rot in the depots there, if indeed there be any room for it in those depots, or a portion of the peculiar business of the main trunk be unaccommodated for want of capacity for transportation. One thing is certain—both could not be accommodated, and consequently, the one or the other would suffer.

There is but one escape from this dilemma, and that is by the construction of a double track from Christiansburg to Lynchburg to accommodate the excess of business furnished by the New river branch. But this would involve very heavy additional expenditure, as much perhaps as the construction of the road between Covington and the mouth of Greenbrier; and it would involve also the enormous injustice of giving two railways to one section, and none at all to another just as worthy, and that has no outlet from its mountain fastnesses to the markets of the world.

I have thus endeavored to show that the New river branch, in connexion with the Southside railroads, is, to say the least, an unsafe reliance for obtaining the western trade, and that, for that great end, the Central line has infinitely the advantage.

I do not pretend to say that this branch should never be built. Hereafter, when the accumulation of western products shall be such as to create a very struggle for transit to the seaboard, and when, having accomplished the best of all connexions with the west, the central connexion, the State shall be in a condition to prosecute subordinate enterprises, and to construct a

double track from Christiansburg to Lynchburg, it may be policy to make the branch road from Christiansburg to the mouth of Greenbrier; but as yet, there is no need for it. It must bide its time, remaining, all the while, entirely subordinate to that more imposing and more effective central improvement, which presents the lightest grades, the best curvatures, the best chance for a great passenger traffic, and the cheapest transit between the commercial cities of the east, and the broad area of western production and consumption.

Nor do I mean to say that the Southside roads, with the New river connexion, will not be entirely adequate to the transmission of the lighter trade eastward from our tidewater cities to the distant interior. For the transmission of dry goods, lighter manufactures, liquors, teas, and the like, to the western consumers, the southern line, including the New river branch, will be of no small value to the cities of Norfolk, Petersburg, and Lynchburg. For this valuable commercial purpose, it furnishes perhaps the most convenient and the speediest instrumentality. But let us not, oh! let us not, in order to get this subordinate auxiliary improvement, sacrifice that nobler principal one, which is absolutely certain to bring within the State that heavier trade, which is the only sure basis of an animating and enriching commerce.

In a word, as a *branch* of the Covington and Ohio trunk, the New river road may be admissible; but as a *substitute* for the great trunk itself, it is utterly inadmissible, not to be thought of for a moment.

Nevertheless, we shall have our share, and a noble share too, of the commerce of the great valley. We *have* a route pointed out to us plain and palpable, by nature's finger, that can, must, and will secure it to us.

Sir, I have long thought, as I have already hinted, that a very large portion of the products of the Ohio and Mississippi country, ought to have its depot in Virginia. And here, to-day, I venture the prediction—I pray that it be noted—that, in five years' time from the completion of a railroad from the Ohio river to the western terminus of our great canal—for great it is,—the transit of a very large portion of the trade of the country watered by the Ohio and Mississippi and their numerous tributary streams, will be through Virginia, and her cities the shipping points for it.

I know, Sir, that on this subject we are prone to be incredulous. We have been so long accustomed to see the stream passing by us, rolling its strong current to reservoirs beyond us, that we despair of ever seeing it turned in upon ourselves, but turned in it will be, if we will extend the canal to Covington, and build thence a railroad to the Ohio.

Sir, we all know that a most remarkable revolution is going on in the trade of the great Mississippi valley. In times past, the whole of it went down stream to New Orleans, for the best of all reasons, that it had nowhere else to go. New Orleans was then the sole depot of that enormous trade. But the magic-working railway was introduced, and line after line of artificial transit has been built across the country from the western interior to the Atlantic cities, being to those cities what the Mississippi was to New Orleans, so many channels of transit, and conductors of trade to them. The result has been that more than one-third—one-half says DeBow—of the trade that once passed down to New Orleans, two hundred and fifty millions in value, now passes by the artificial lines to the northern cities, the cities of Virginia not realizing a ton of it, though nearer to it, except by the round about course of the northern cities, and by thoroughfares not her own.

Nor is it difficult to account for this change. Almost every article of western production suffers material damage from the climate of N. Orleans. Bacon is often a total loss, tobacco never less than 10 per cent. Butter, lard, beef, corn, pork, flour, even cotton, and almost every article, is soiled

either by the damp, hot climate, or by other causes. For this reason alone, produce very naturally eschews the New Orleans market.

Another reason is the great unhealthiness of New Orleans.

Next come the dangers of the western navigation and of the Florida coast, all which are avoided by the artificial transit. The value of this consideration may be estimated from the following statistics of casualties on the western rivers: In January last, 18 steamers were totally lost, and 12 more or less injured; destruction of property, a million of dollars, lives lost, 19. In February, 12 steamers were lost; destruction of property, one million, lives lost, 80. In March, 12 steamers were lost, and one hundred human beings "found a watery grave." And in the first six months of the year, the total loss was, seventy steamers sunk or destroyed by fire, and more than one hundred and fifty barges and coal boats, valued at \$2,000,000, and two hundred and fifty persons drowned or killed by other casualty.

Then we have the high charges on produce sent forward from N. Orleans. These are, river insurance  $1\frac{3}{4}$  per cent., fire insurance  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., weighing, double drayage, storage and pilotage, which, with the loss by soilage, make a shipment by way of New Orleans so costly as to drive a large portion of the trade across by railroad and canal to the cities of the seaboard.

Again, the price of most of the western staples is better in the Atlantic cities than it is in New Orleans, which further induces the artificial transmission.

And lastly, New Orleans is too remote from both the foreign and domestic market, to be a favorite point for shipment. A ton of produce arrived at an Atlantic city, Norfolk, for example, is from 2,500 to 3,000 miles nearer the European foreign markets than it would be at New Orleans.

These are some of the causes which have wrought the extraordinary change in the current of the western trade.

But whatever may be the reason, there is the fact staring us in the face, undisputed and indisputable, that nearly or quite one-half of the trade that once swept down to New Orleans, is now transmitted by the inland artificial routes to the Atlantic seaboard.

Well, sir, the grave inquiry is, while this rich stream of trade is sweeping across to the seaboard, what direction ought it to take? Ought *all* of it to pass off to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston, and *none* of it to us? Is that the natural direction—the direction which God and nature have pointed out? Sir, the present course of the western trade is a violence to nature, a contempt of her laws, a scorn of the goodness of the Deity. We, Sir, instead of having *none*, ought to have *most* of the trade that is now borne from the bosom of the Ohio river to our northern rivals.

That the fructifying current will set in upon us, if our enterprise will but open a channel for it, I will now show by a few familiar examples, which seem to me as conclusive as mathematics itself.

In the spring of 1853, 12 hogsheads of tobacco made in Kanawha, and 20 made in Putnam county, in this State, were sold by Messrs Deane & Brown, in Richmond. How came those hogsheads to Richmond, and at what cost? Why, sir, they were sent down the Kanawha river, thence up the Ohio to Wheeling, thence by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to Baltimore, and thence shipped to Richmond. And the transport charges were as follows: from Kanawha and Putnam to Wheeling, \$3 per hogshead; from Wheeling to Baltimore, 40 cents per hundred pounds, or \$4 per hogshead; and from Baltimore to Richmond, \$1 25 per hhd.; besides other incidental charges on the way, making the entire cost near or quite \$10 per hhd., or an aggregate, for the 32 hhd., of \$320!

Now I pray to know whether, if the Covington and Ohio railroad were built, these thirty-two hogsheads of tobacco would have taken this out of the way direction to the Richmond market? Would they have traveled 230 miles up the Ohio to Wheeling, 380 miles across to Baltimore, and 330 down the bay and up the James river to Richmond, when, by the Virginia line, they might have reached the same point in less than half the distance, in a fourth of the time, and at less than half the cost? No, Sir: attracted by the greater convenience, and the superior cheapness, directness and expedition of the transit, they would eagerly take the Covington and Ohio railroad and the canal to the cities of Lynchburg, Richmond, and Petersburg, the best tobacco markets in the world.

Now what is true of these thirty-two hogsheads of tobacco will be found true of most, if not all, the eighty-six thousand hogsheads annually raised in the States of Kentucky and Tennessee. Avoiding the ten per cent. soilage by the climate of New-Orleans, they will take transit by the Virginia improvement to our cities, instead of going down the rivers to New-Orleans, and thus our cities will monopolize almost exclusively the tobacco trade of the west—an item in the western trade of the utmost moment.

Another illustration. Some time since I saw from the newspapers that several cars laden with bacon from Cincinnati, left Wheeling per the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, bound for the eastern markets. Now I desire to know, whether, if we had our central connexion completed, we might not have bid for the factorage, as well as the transportation of this article. If the Ohio river were all the while navigable all the way to Wheeling, we should have the advantage of 136 miles of railroad transit, by our line, to 380 by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, over easy and not expensive grades on our line, and very heavy and expensive ones on the Baltimore and Ohio. With these advantages, supposing the Kanawha river to be improved to a point which will reduce the railroad portage on our line to 136 miles, and with the further and decided advantage of water transportation from the eastern terminus of the railroad at Covington, bacon could be sent forward from Cincinnati to the eastern markets cheaper than it could be up the Ohio to Wheeling, and thence by Baltimore and Ohio railroad eastward.

But suppose the Ohio river to be so low above the mouth of Sandy, the western terminus of our railroad, as not to admit of navigation above that point, what then? Why the up-stream trade would be *forced* to take the Covington and Ohio railroad at the mouth of Sandy where deep water begins, or encounter the much costlier transit, per railroad, all the way from Cincinnati to Baltimore, an alternative not likely to be embraced.

Again: Flour is sent from St. Louis up the Ohio river to Portsmouth, above Cincinnati, forwarded thence by the Ohio canal to Cleveland, thence by the lakes to Buffalo, thence by the Erie canal to Albany, thence down the Hudson river to New York. Now, if the canal was completed to Covington and the Covington and Ohio road thence to the Ohio, who supposes that a barrel of flour from St. Louis, or any point below the western terminus of our road, would take this extraordinary route? Would it come several hundred miles up the Ohio, 310 along the Ohio canal, 250 along the lakes, 363 by the Erie canal, and 160 down the Hudson, in order to reach the seaboard, suffering, too, several transshipments on the way? Sir, this would be its history—*it would pass a little further on beyond Portsmouth, take the Covington and Ohio railroad and the canal, and reach the cities of Virginia in less than one-half the distance, in much shorter time, and at one-third of the cost.* Now what is true of this barrel of flour is true of all the trade coming up the Ohio, no matter where from, seeking a market in the Atlantic cities. It will all take our line eastward, find a depot in our cities, and be thence

distributed to the various points of demand, whether domestic or foreign, leaving the whole profit of the factorage to our merchants, and laying the foundation of a prosperous commerce for the State.

I shall now submit to the Convention a few illustrations which come nearer home, and which must strike with thrilling effect the heart of every Virginian, unless it be as flinty as the granite rock.

An intelligent merchant of a Richmond firm assures me that on the 25th of July last there were sent off to the firm from Hebron, near the centre of Ohio, 50 hogsheads of bacon. They went north to the lakes, and thence by the lake shore and Erie railroads to New York, and thence to Richmond. At the time I passed Richmond, on my way to this Convention, this bacon had not come to hand.\* The cost of transportation was \$437!

Now there is much moral in the history of these hogsheads of bacon. First, the bacon was one month and a half on its way to the point of consignment. There was not only a considerable loss of interest somewhere, which is a damper upon trade, but the tardiness of the transit destroyed the *certainty* of supply, which is indispensable to an active commerce. Commerce, indeed, demands nothing more than it does certainty. Supply must be co-existent with demand, or nearly so, or there can be no busy trade or extensive commerce. The merchant of Richmond, for example, who ordered the 50 hogsheads of bacon, might find the demand for it gone before he received the article. Secondly, \$437 were paid, for freight, to the northern lines of transport. How much better would it have been if these \$437 could have been paid to Virginia improvements! (This firm, it may be well to note, has paid from January to August \$11,000 for western freights, principally to the Baltimore and Ohio railroad.) And, thirdly, why should the Richmond merchant be compelled to have bacon sent him from Ohio, up to lake Erie, and then many hundreds of miles by railway, or lake, or canal, and then several hundred miles round by the ocean, and a hundred and fifty up the James river, before reaching its place of destination? Why should it describe, in its transit, this almost entire circle, when, if *our* connexion with the west were completed, it would reach Richmond in almost a straight line, in a little more than a third of the distance, in a tenth of the time, and at a third of the cost? Sir, how would not the commercial relations of Virginia, with the great State of Ohio and all the west, be stimulated and enlarged, if our central line of communication were established? If we get bacon from Ohio by the long, circuitous, slow and expensive northern route, how much more of this and other staples should we not receive, had we our straight short, speedy, and cheap transit to the Ohio? And how much merchandise of all sorts would not our merchants send back to the consumers of Ohio and the west, which is now supplied to them exclusively by the northern merchants, only because *they* have avenues of western intercommunication while *we* have none?

From the same source I have the following interesting facts: On the 19th of July, 60 casks of liquors were started for Richmond, per steamer up the river for Wheeling and the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. On getting up the river, the water was so low that the steamer could not proceed, the casks were transhipped on board an open scow, and by that conveyance reached Wheeling. Three days ago, when I passed through Richmond, the shipment had not reached.†

Here, Sir, is a striking illustration of the advantage we have over the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, and every other thoroughfare having its western

\* I have since learned it did not reach Richmond until the 4th of September.

† It did not reach until the 11th of September.

terminus on the Ohio above that of the Covington and Ohio railroad. For a considerable period of each year, often for eight months, the river above that point is so shallow, that navigation on it ceases. During all this period of low water, the trade coming up the Ohio, which is navigable at nearly all seasons to the mouth of Sandy, will be *forced of necessity* to take the Virginia line, though it will need no compulsion to make it take that direction. It will prefer it—rejoice in it. A valuable trade, therefore, which hitherto has sought the Baltimore market, will be intercepted, and directed to the cities of Virginia.

The same merchant also informs me that he frequently imports bacon from Cincinnati by way of Baltimore and New York, a distance of more than 1500 miles—half as much as the breadth of the Atlantic—when, with the Covington and Ohio connexion, it might reach Richmond in a little over 600 miles, and most of the way by water transportation, the cheapest known to man. The cost by the northern route, he informs me, is never less than \$1 25 per 100 lbs.—no small tax both upon the producer and the consumer.

And even now, as I gather from the same authority, various commodities are actually received from St. Louis in Richmond by way of Baltimore and New York. Ought this course of trade to be—will it be, when we shall have tapped the Ohio by our central improvement?

These illustrations are to my mind conclusive to show that the course of a very large portion of the western trade will be through Virginia, and its depots in her cities, the moment we open a communication with the Ohio. It cannot, and will not, persist in its present circuitous, dilatory and expensive track; but coming down by the numerous tributaries of the Ohio, and from the Missouri and the upper Mississippi, it will be borne up the stream of the Ohio by the cheapest possible transit, will stop at the terminus of the Covington and Ohio road, and in a few days' time, instead of five and six weeks, find itself at the wharves or in the warehouses of our own cities, instead of those of the north.

Sir, this change in the course of western commerce must and will come to pass. Take up the map, and you have ocular demonstration of the cheering truth. Trace with your finger the track which a ton of produce *now* pursues to reach the seaboard city, then follow the line which it *may* take when Virginia shall have carried her great central thoroughfare through to the waters of the Ohio, and you have a demonstration of the vast value of that noble enterprise and of the commercial regeneration of Virginia, which human induction can no more refute than the palm of the hand can unseat the everlasting hills that surround us.

If authority be wanting to strengthen the position I have taken, it is at hand. "This route," (the Ohio connexion through Virginia,) says Mr. De Bow, one of the shrewdest thinkers in the country, "is destined, when completed, to work a vast change in the destination of western produce."

All we want to render success absolutely certain and entirely complete, is some thoroughfare that shall successfully compete with the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, not the Wheeling branch only, but the Parkersburg also, when it shall have been completed. We have but little to fear from the Pennsylvania line from Pittsburg to Philadelphia—its western terminus is too far up the river and the cost of transit through it too high—and still less have we to apprehend from the circle-describing routes farther north. It is the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, with its double branch to Wheeling and to Parkersburg, that stands most in our way. In a very short time the Wheeling arm will be extended, by the central Ohio railway, to that great commercial centre, Cincinnati; and a little after, the Parkersburg arm, through the southern Ohio line, will also be in communication with Cincinnati. Sir, it is this



enemy that we shall have to battle hardest against; but though the struggle will be fierce and every inch of ground contested, we shall come off the victors. Through the Covington and Ohio railroad shall we conquer. By it we can hold out to the trade stronger inducements to come to us, than the Baltimore and Ohio road, even with its double branch, can offer to it, to pass from us. The distance from Cincinnati to tidewater in Virginia is, it is true, a little more than it is from Cincinnati, by the Parkersburg branch, to Baltimore. But our line has the advantage of river navigation from Cincinnati to the mouth of Sandy, and to the head of navigation on the Kanawha, and of canal carriage from Covington eastward to the ocean. Indeed, it will be a struggle between 563 miles of continuous railway, on the one hand, and 136 miles of railroad and water line the balance of the way, on the other. In this contest, the compound line must triumph, because, as already shown, it can furnish the cheaper transit, which cheaper transit, it has also been shown, is sure to seize, if I may so speak, the heavy trade.

I repeat, sir, we must have a line of communication with the west, that shall be able to compete with our great rival, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. That line, I fear me, is not to be found in the New river branch. Its want of the western travel, and the consequent necessity it would be under of levying very high freight charges for its support, its heavy grades, and its greater length of railroad transportation, leave little hope of its successful competition with the Baltimore and Ohio railroad.

Not so, I rejoice to say, with the Covington and Ohio connexion. Presenting the very shortest distance from navigable water in the west to navigable water in the east, that is, from the Ohio and the Kanawha to the canal and to the tidewaters of James river; with its proximity to the James river canal; with its light grades and consequent capacity for heavy loads and cheap transmission; and with the abundant travel it will command, it will be enabled to put down freights to the lowest point, and thus successfully competing with the Baltimore and Ohio road, to obtain us our share of the western trade.

But, besides these, the God of nature has blessed us with other advantages which he has denied to others, and which not all the money and all the enterprise of the north can ever countervail. He has said to the States north of us, your canals for five months in the year shall be bound by ice, and your railroads obstructed by the winter's frosts and snows; but to Virginia He has said, *your* railroads shall *not* be obstructed by the snows and frosts, and *your* canals and rivers shall, from the first to the last day of the year, bear upon their bosoms the products and the trade of the country. And this advantage it is difficult to estimate. There can be no doubt, however, that when the Virginia connexion with the Ohio shall have been formed, a considerable winter trade will find its way to the seaboard through it, which at other times would take a different direction. And I predict, today, that the very first winter after the completion of the Covington and Ohio railroad, New York, empire New York herself, beholden to Virginia, will be seen shipping her supplies of merchandise, via Richmond and Covington, to her customers in the west.

And while the fiat of Omnipotence, for several months of the year almost dries up the channel of the upper Ohio, the territory of Virginia commands a point on that great channel of inland commerce, to which the steamboat may glide unobstructed at almost every season of the year. Why, sir, at the moment at which I now speak, the river above Guyandotte is not only forded by man and horse, but the very boys, rolling up their breeches to the knee, are playing their pastimes in its channel, and harmlessly crossing its almost exhausted stream. And in the last report of the Baltimore and Ohio Rail-

road Company it is stated, that the low water below Wheeling the past season had seriously impaired the business of their road.

Sir, it is palpable to my mind that, with a wise policy, we are *bound* to share largely the western trade. As I have often argued heretofore, with our great south-western improvement, the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, stretching to the Mississippi, on the one hand, and the great central connexion, reaching the Ohio, on the other, we shall gain a large portion of the trade now going down stream to New Orleans, and as large a share of that which is carried off by opposing channels to the cities of the north.

These are some of the considerations, Mr. President, which have conducted my mind to the conclusion I have all along been endeavoring to establish to the Convention—that the central improvement is *the* improvement of Virginia. Sir, it is Virginia's great work, Virginia's great hope. For commerce, for manufactures, for prosperous finances and unoppressive taxation, for vivified and vivifying industry, for honor and renown, it is her grand dependence. I do not intend, Sir, as I have said before, to disparage any other of the internal improvement enterprises of the State, but the deepest convictions of truth and of duty, and justice to the honored State of which I am an humble citizen, and whose prosperity and grandeur I crave beyond all other public objects whatsoever, constrain me, force me to say, that all our other public works are subsidiary and secondary only. I solemnly believe, and before God and my country I do here, to-day, dare say it—that this central improvement of ours is not only worth all our other public works together, but all that the State, with the amplest means, could build in a generation. A miserable sectional jealousy, or some petty strife between this city and that, or a local selfishness that makes no oblation at Virginia's shrine, or honest error even, may for a while longer conceal this great truth from the people, but sooner or later, and not ere long, the mists in which sectional discord, and petty interest, and unenlightened mistake, have enveloped our domestic policy, will vanish before an enlightened and patriotic statesmanship, and the conviction seize every mind, that the central improvement is, indeed, the centre of our system of internal improvements, more valuable, far, than any one or all the rest together, and the only reliance for the redemption of the State. I devoutly believe that, without it, perpetual insignificance will be her doom.

But objections are taken. It is said that the Covington and Ohio road will cost too much. It will cost ten millions of dollars, I have been often taunted. Well, Sir, suppose it shall cost ten millions, wo'nt the work be worth ten millions? Sha'nt we get the worth of our money? Is'nt the western trade worth ten millions of dollars? Is'nt the commercial regeneration of Virginia worth ten millions of dollars? Is'nt the honor of Virginia worth ten millions of dollars? Is'nt it worth ten millions of dollars to give her back her ancient glory and renown—to bring “the light of other days around her”—to restore to her the political power her supineness has lost her? Is there any patriot son of hers that would begrudge ten millions of dollars for the grand and glorious objects which will be accomplished by opening a direct communication with the west? Ten millions of dollars! Why, Sir, N. York has expended near a hundred and thirty millions for the very same objects,—is'nt that for which N. York gave a hundred and thirty millions, worth, to Virginia, ten millions? Ten millions of dollars! Sir, compared with the ends to be attained by this great highway to the west, the sum to be paid for it is utterly insignificant, is absolutely nothing. It will be worth to Virginia ten times ten millions, aye, hundreds of millions. New York has been many times reimbursed for her expenditure on her railroads and canals, great as it is. Hundreds of millions have been added to the value of the

property of her citizens, commercial greatness and political predominance have gathered around her, and her well-replenished fisc, replenished too by the operation of her public works, affords her the ample means of paying the taxes of all her people, and educating every poor man's and poor woman's child within her borders. And yet we talk and higgie over ten millions of dollars for an improvement which is to work for us similar results, and which, in ten years from the time of its completion, will ten times repay us in dollars-and-cents indemnity, and, a thousand times, in the resuscitated commerce, the thriving manufactures, the wakened enterprise, and the augmented political power which it will as surely bring to the State as the shadow follows the substance.

But the New river branch will cost much less, it is said. Well, suppose the Covington and Ohio road shall cost more, is'nt it worth more? Is not a good article worth more money, and cheaper, in the end, than an inferior one? I have shown, I think, clearly, that the New river branch can never secure for us the western trade, while the Covington and Ohio railroad will: is'nt a road that *will* bring us the western trade, worth more, and much more, than one that will *not*? Shall we not be compensated, and fully compensated, for the additional cost, in the additional advantages conferred?

But the New river branch will *not* be cheaper. I have already demonstrated that, without a double track from Christiansburg to Lynchburg, the New river branch would be wholly useless. Then to make the New river branch worth anything at all, the double track must be built; and when to the cost of constructing the road from Christiansburg to the mouth of Greenbrier, you add the cost of the second track from Christiansburg to Lynchburg, I apprehend it will be found that the New river branch will cost quite as much as the road from the mouth of Greenbrier to Covington. From the mouth of Greenbrier to the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, is 77 miles; from the point of junction to Lynchburg, the distance is 86 miles: total 163 miles. The distance from Covington to the mouth of Greenbrier is 64 miles: so that the question of cost will be between a road of 163 miles in length, and one of 64—difference 99 miles. I shall enter into no arithmetical calculation on the subject. It will be apparent to all that, considering even the difficult work on the Covington and Ohio road, there can be no very great difference in the cost of the two, the 99 miles, on the New river route, of excess over the Covington and Ohio, being ample set-off against the tunnels and other difficulties of the latter. Those, therefore, that "lay the flattering unction to their souls," that the New river route will make less demand on the treasury than the Covington and Ohio, will find themselves grossly mistaken.

Every argument of cost, therefore, that can be used against the construction of the Covington and Ohio railroad, applies with equal force to the New river branch.

But admit the Covington and Ohio road to be all its friends claim it to be, this is not the time, say some, to construct it—the financial condition of the State does not allow its construction now. Not the time to construct it! Sir, for more than a quarter of a century I have been sickened by this cry of procrastination. It is the old song of the demagogue and the antediluvian. No improvement was ever yet proposed in Virginia that the cry was not rung—"it is not the time." Sir, when *will* the time be? Have we not slept and slept on, and while we were ingloriously slumbering, allowed our more enterprising neighbors to run off with the rich prize that we had only to stretch out our hand to grasp? And have we not, for want of a connexion with the west, lost millions annually to the State?

Sir, this is the time, the "accepted time," and I propose to show that there is nothing in the financial condition of the State to disallow the immediate construction of this great work.

The debt of the State, I confess, is considerable, and ought not heedlessly be added to; but I stand on the no questional foundation of the official reports of the fiscal officers of the State when I say, that there is nothing in the condition of her finances to forbid the immediate appropriation of ten millions, if so much be required, to make the road.

On the 30th of March, 1853, in pursuance of a call made by the House of Delegates, for a statement of the debt and liabilities of the Commonwealth, a report was made by the first and second auditors furnishing the statement required. By this statement, which I believe to be entirely unimpeachable, the debt of the State, after crediting her with her productive stocks, is put down at \$7,680,000. The contingent liabilities were estimated at \$11,854,000, being for appropriations to various works of internal improvements, for which a call will, at some period or other, be made upon the State. But these \$11,854,000 of contingent liabilities are on account of subscriptions to public works, principally the Southside, Norfolk and Petersburg, Virginia and Tennessee, Central, Orange and Alexandria, and Manassa's gap railroads, which will be completed, most of them, at least, by the next meeting of the General Assembly, and which, it is confidently expected, will then be paying into the treasury at least the interest on their cost. If they pay this interest, the debt of the State will be reduced to the amount of the principal on which the interest shall be so paid, that is, pretty much to the amount of the cost of the works. Most of the prospective liabilities of \$11,854,000, therefore, will in less than two years' time have lost the character of debt, and have become productive investment. Accordingly, when the Legislature meets again, instead of finding the debt of the State increased by the amount of the \$11,854,000 of contingent liabilities, it will find it nearly where it was at the date of the two auditors' report, that is, about \$8,000,000. If this be so, there can be no reason why the Legislature should not appropriate the ten millions required for the completion of the Covington and Ohio road. *With* the ten millions of additional appropriation, made on that account, the debt of the State will not exceed twenty millions, an amount which her tax-payers can easily bear.

And not only does the condition of the finances allow the completion of the work, but the gravest financial considerations *demand* it, and without delay.

Sir, without the Covington and Ohio railroad what are we to do with the canal? Have we spent eight millions upon it just to leave it in the woods, with no western connexions? Suppose New York had stopped the Erie canal half way between the Hudson and the lakes: would she have the enormous trade that is now borne on its bosom, and the revenue of three millions and more that she now receives from its tolls?

What is to become of the eight millions we have invested in the canal? Shall we, by constructing the New river branch, and making it take the place of the Covington and Ohio, draw off the business from this best of our inland lines of transit? Shall we be content with the two or three hundred thousand dollars that we now derive from it, when, by constructing its great feeder, the Covington and Ohio railroad, we may just as easily get a million?

I hold that the immediate effect of the construction of the Covington and Ohio road will be to convert eight millions of unprofitable, into eight millions of profitable stock; and I so hold, because an amount of trade will be thrown upon the canal at Covington limited only by the capacity of the road to

carry it forward. Just as much tonnage as the railroad can by possibility convey to Covington, just so much will the canal receive from this western feeder; and this western, together with the way tonnage it will take up, will furnish a business and a revenue that will reimburse the State for every dollar she has expended on it.

And then your Central railroad from Richmond to Covington—are you to stop this improvement too in the woods, instead of throwing upon it the great stream of western travel, and thus making profitable the State's investment in it? And the Orange and Alexandria road—will you not, by turning on it that portion of the western travel bound to the north, make certainly profitable the State's investment in that work also?

Then the state of the case is simply this: that by appropriating ten millions to complete the Covington and Ohio railroad, we make eminently available three other important State works, and as inevitably profitable all the stock held in them by the State, amounting to more than thirteen millions of dollars. In other words, by constructing the Covington and Ohio road, we build a great feeder for the canal, the Central road, and the Orange and Alexandria.

Sir, by completing it, you wipe out instantly near twelve millions of the public debt, and reduce proportionably the taxes of the people, besides furnishing in all future time a generous revenue to the treasury, and bringing to the State commercial independence, and all the blessings and advantages which have been found to result from a good system of internal improvements.

Am I not right, then, in saying that grave financial considerations demand the completion of this work?

But the trade, it is said again, will diverge at Staunton and pass off to Baltimore, instead of coming to the cities of Virginia. The New river branch, with the Southside railroads, say the friends of the latter, will secure the trade, past doubt, to our own cities, while the Central railroad will but furnish a channel for its passage from us to Baltimore; therefore, say they, let us stop the Central road short of the Ohio valley, and connect that valley with the seaboard by the New river branch from Christiansburg to the Ohio.

This specious argument has made more friends for the New river route, and more enemies for the Central improvement, than perhaps all others together. I know that in the tidewater region of the State, this consideration has weighed more heavily on the public mind than all the rest. But, Sir, the idea is a phantom altogether, which should frighten no mind from its propriety, and I propose now to show that it is as baseless as a dream.

Before the argument can be available, it must be first shown by those who use it, that a branch road from Staunton to Winchester will be made. Now, with the whole Southside, a considerable portion of tidewater, and all our cities, except perhaps Alexandria, against it, how is this branch to be built?

I do not mean to be understood, Mr. President, as saying that I am opposed to such a branch. Were I in the legislature to-morrow, and the question should come up for my consideration, and the condition of the finances would allow, I should not hesitate to give my vote for its construction, because I am for free trade and for justice in railroads as in everything else, and because, when we once reach the Ohio, there will be trade enough to gorge every outlet at its command. In New York there are three great trunk railroads—monster railroads, they may be called—stretching across from the great lakes to the Hudson, with innumerable branches, and all these, trunk lines and branches, besides the canal whose capacity is equal to that of twelve single track railroads, are absolutely gorged, taxed to their utmost power of transportation, so vast is the stream of trade that sweeps,

in ever rushing volume, from the west to the seaboard. Then why, Mr. President, oh! why, Sir, should we be distracted by sectional jealousies and local feuds, wrangling among ourselves about this road and that, when there will be "enough and to spare" for all, and when, by "falling out on the way," we are retarding the progress of our internal improvements, and postponing the day of the State's redemption!

But, in truth, there is no hazard of losing the trade. Insurmountable obstacles oppose its diversion to Baltimore.

In the first place, the heavy trade of the west *will never reach Staunton*, and, of course, if it never reach Staunton, it can never diverge from that point to Baltimore. It can never reach Staunton, because the canal, for the reasons already stated, will intercept the heavy trade at Covington. The heavy trade will not want the railroad, and the railroad will not want the heavy trade. The trade will eschew the railroad, because it will have, in the canal, a much cheaper transmission, (which with the heavy trade is a conclusive consideration,) and the railroad, while it will delight in the light trade and passenger traffic, will prefer to be without the heavy tonnage, because it breaks up the road, and, by breaking it up, so increases the expenses of keeping it up, as to leave little or nothing for the stockholders. I am assured by the President and many of the stockholders of the Central road, that they would much prefer never to take on their road from Covington a single ton of the heavy trade, because, to use a common but expressive adage, "it will cost more than it comes to." Considering, therefore, the repugnance of the heavy trade to the railroad, and of the railroad to the heavy trade, we may regard it absolutely certain that the heavy trade of the west *will never reach Staunton* in its transit eastward, and, therefore, cannot "diverge from Staunton to Baltimore." Another reason I should have stated why the heavy trade of the west will be repudiated by the Central railroad: that road will have as much local business as it can accommodate, and will have no room for the heavy trade from the west.

Secondly, trade delights in the shortest and cheapest transit. On this well settled principle, it cannot, admitting it to have arrived *at* Staunton, pass off thence to Baltimore, because it is eighty-two miles farther from Staunton to Baltimore, than it is from Staunton to Richmond. It will cost more, necessarily, to get a ton of trade from Staunton to Baltimore, than from Staunton to Richmond. Besides, in its transit from Staunton to Baltimore, it would encounter the embarrassment—an embarrassment that trade ever abhors—of passing through the hands of three distinct companies, and would, before reaching Baltimore, suffer charges and delays to which it would not be subject in an unimpeded transit to Richmond. Then, until the instincts of man's nature are changed, the trade will go on to Richmond, for no man, constituted as men generally are, will send his crops to market by a long and costly channel, when a short and cheap one is at his choice.

Thirdly, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, which is to take up the filched trade at Harpers Ferry, has, like the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, as much business of its own as it can accommodate. Tonnage, I am informed, already lingers in the depots along its line, waiting its turn for transit forward. Well, Sir, if the Baltimore and Ohio railroad has as much of its own appropriate business as it can provide for, how can it send forward any portion of the western trade passing through Virginia?

There is but one way of invalidating this reasoning, and that is by showing that the Baltimore market is so much better than the Richmond, that the farmer will gain more, in the better prices, by sending to the former, than he would save by the shorter and cheaper transit to the latter. But this, I apprehend, can never be made to appear. Ten years ago, Baltimore was, I

own, a better market than Richmond. But things have changed somewhat within that time, and it is indisputably true that, now, Richmond, for most of the staples of the country, is as good a market as Baltimore. For the great staple, wheat, particularly, Richmond is indeed the better market. And the philosophy of the change is, that the very same instrumentalities that have hitherto made Baltimore the better of the two markets, are beginning to exert their agency in Virginia. The very same causes that have hitherto given Baltimore the predominance in this regard, I mean internal improvements—ready channels for commercial exchanges—are at work upon Richmond. By the inland avenues of inter-communication, trade is concentrating upon her, assorted cargoes are gathering in her warehouses, capital is attracted to her, her manufactures, particularly of flour, and consequently the demand for the raw material, are largely increased and increasing, and the consequence is, that, having avenues, though partial only, both for conveying to her the heavy trade of the interior and sending back to that interior the lighter trade which the country usually receives in exchange from the city, she is enabled to offer better prices than formerly, and is become actually as good a market as Baltimore, and for some staples a better one. The instrumentalities that have wrought this change are, thus far, partial only in their operation. Not one of our improvements has as yet fulfilled its function. Not one has yet reached the far-distant interior where lie, in unmeasured profusion, all the elements of a giant commerce. But when the great improvements we have on hand shall have accomplished their destiny—which may no ill-starred sectional jealousy delay—when our internal lines of transit shall have stretched out to the Ohio, on the one hand, and to the Mississippi, on the other, connecting an almost illimitable back country with the seaboard market towns of our State, then, not only Richmond, but others of our cities, will equal, and, I honestly believe, excel Baltimore as selling marts for the productions of the country.

Richmond, it should be noted also, has suffered much for the last few years for the want of proper wharf accommodations. While the dock has been repairing and enlarging, there has not been sufficient space at the wharves at Rocketts for the speedy unloading of vessels, which has operated as a decided disadvantage to her trade, particularly her grain trade. I have been informed by masters of grain vessels that they have been delayed at Rocketts, in the busy season, for a fortnight, before they could deliver their cargoes, and I have myself known masters of vessels, within the last year or two, to refuse to take wheat to Richmond because of these delays, and the attendant expense. But this obstacle no longer exists. The tide-water connexion is now completed—a joyful event for the whole State, and particularly for Richmond and Norfolk—the old dock substantially repaired, and an enlarged one of very extended capacity added, which will accommodate a large amount of shipping, and afford to vessels of all classes that can reach them, the best facilities for dispatch. By the tide-water connexion, too, the enormous tax imposed on the planting interest by the expensive transportation from the basin to the shipping at Rocketts, is avoided, the evasion of which charge is so much bounty to the planters, and encouragement to the trade of the city. Hereafter, then, we may very safely regard Richmond entirely equal, as a market, to Baltimore, and as presenting equal attractions to the trade.

There is no just ground, then, for the apprehension that the Central railroad, when connected with the Covington and Ohio, will divert the trade to Baltimore. In my poor judgment, if the Almighty had reared against Baltimore a mountain half a million of feet high, and impervious to the pick-axe and to powder, it would not be a more insuperable barrier against the diver-

sion of our trade, than are the forbidding facts and circumstances which I have just addressed to the consideration of the Convention.

Another specious notion has gone abroad, which has had no small influence in impairing the good name of the Covington and Ohio railroad—that a southside connexion with the west will tend, far more than a northside one, to build up our great seaport, Norfolk.

Mr. President, I am the friend of Norfolk. No one would more rejoice in her commercial prosperity and renown. As a Virginian, I should glory to see her fulfilling the high destiny which has been so often predicted for her, and which the God of nature, in bestowing on her the noblest harbor and the finest shipping port on all the seaboard, seems to have destined for her. And while advocating with earnest zeal the internal improvement policy of the State, the hope and the faith have never deserted me, that one of its precious fruits would be, the renovation of this ancient city of ours.

Many, I am aware, are skeptical and despondent about her future—I am not. I am not hopeful only, but sanguine, that among the results to be wrought by the full development of our system of internal improvements, will be the commercial distinction of Norfolk. To my thinking, she is destined to be one of the great commercial points of the country, and certainly the entrepot of most of the merchandize which will pass through our various lines of improvement to the interior of our own State, and of the remoter west.

But what instrumentality is it that is to work for her this change of destiny? If she rely upon the insignificant neighborhood trade which she now enjoys, through her present channels, she will lean upon a broken staff. That trade will only keep her just where she now is. But it is in the trade of our own productive interior, and in the western trade, that lies her commercial redemption. When she shall receive her just proportion of this trade, and return for it an equivalent amount of foreign and domestic commodities and fabrics, her commerce will revive, and go on prospering and to prosper. In fine, she *must* have her share of the western trade, as well as the cities north and south of her, or remain forever insignificant.

Will she get her share of this necessary trade? She will, I doubt not. But how? that is the vital question.

My own impression is, that for the trade which is to give her importance as a commercial city, she must look, not to the railroads on the south side of James river, but to the central improvement, consisting of the James river canal and the Covington and Ohio railroad.

I do not look with any confidence to the south-side railroads for the trade that is to build her up, and for several reasons: first, with a system of railroads in which revenue must be consulted, must be, indeed, a controlling consideration, the charges for freights must be such as not to favor cheapness of transportation. In the northern States, where railroads have been constructed chiefly by private capital, and where indemnity is looked for, more in commercial return than in money dividends, the transit charges may be put much lower than they can be in Virginia, where the State has a large investment in railroads, and on which she must have a dividend, or annually tax her people to keep them working. Nothing but very easy grades and a very large passenger business can obviate this necessity for high rates of transport, and neither of these advantages, as I have already shown, appertains to the southern line.

The high charges, therefore, that must attend a continuous railroad transportation from the Ohio to Norfolk, a distance of 520 miles, and which will be aggravated by the heavy grades from the mouth of Greenbrier to Lynchburg, are very unfavorable to the transmission, by railroad, of heavy freights from



the Ohio to Norfolk. I fear, on this account, that very few tons of the heavy trade of the west will ever, by railroad, reach the warehouses of Norfolk.

The railroad, indeed, is, under any circumstances, a costly instrumentality, and it is only under the most favorable circumstances that it can be relied on as a medium for the transportation of bulky freights, particularly for long distances. As proof of its costliness, we have only to refer to the fact that, all over the country, the railroad companies are advancing materially the charges of transportation, in order to keep up their roads and make dividends, former rates having proved insufficient.

In the second place, if the line of railroad from the Ohio to Norfolk were entirely continuous and unbroken, and under a single direction, there might be some better hope of getting the western trade by way of the south-side railroads,—but, unfortunately, a ton of trade coming from the mouth of Sandy, must pass over four distinct railroads, the New river, the Va. and Tennessee, the South-side, and the Norfolk and Petersburg. Now it is well attested by railroad experience, that where several railroads connect, it is in the power of one company seriously to embarrass another. The thing has frequently happened in our own State. An embarrassment of this sort recently happened between the South-side and Danville roads, and no one can have forgotten the serious difficulties which for a long time existed between the Richmond and Fredericksburg and Central railroads, prior to the construction of the independent branch of the latter from Richmond to the junction. When several roads connect, their must be perfect identity of interest and harmony of action, or delay, injurious discrimination, or other injury, is sure to be the consequence. Now, with the strong jealousies unfortunately existing among our cities, is it altogether certain that Norfolk may not be put to disadvantage as to the interior or western trade seeking the seaboard through the southern line? In order to get a ton of trade, must she not get around Petersburg? Is it not well known that Petersburg contemplates *shipping at City Point* the trade coming eastward on the South-side road, instead of allowing it to pass on to Norfolk? For this she is not to blame. Very naturally, she desires the factorage of the trade coming down the South-side road, but if she let the latter slip from her, she loses the former. She has, accordingly, made very effective arrangements to secure both, as the following extracts from the last report of the President of the South-side Railroad Company will show:

“It has been known to the directory as well as the stockholders, for a long time past, that it is of great importance to the success of the road that its eastern terminus should be at City Point, the head of ship navigation. \* \*

\* \* The plan proposed by the Board is to purchase from the city of Petersburg the Appomattox railroad, under certain limitations and restrictions, and to make it a part of the South-side railroad.”

And at the last annual meeting of the stock-holders, the following preamble and resolution were adopted:

“Whereas, it is of great importance to the interest of the South-side Railroad Company, that they should have an unbroken track from Lynchburg to City Point, under the control of one President, and a Board of Directors:

*Resolved*, That the President and Directors of this Company are hereby authorized and directed to enter into a compact with the city of Petersburg, having for its object the purchase of the Appomattox railroad, depots, engines and other property belonging to that road, or if a purchase cannot be effected, to make a contract of lease of said road and property for a term of years, or to make any other arrangement by which the use of said road and depots can be secured to the South-side Railroad Company.”

Petersburg, it will thus be perceived, has very sagaciously concluded that the "*eastern terminus of the South-side road should be at City Point, the head of ship navigation;*" that her interest requires her to have "*an unbroken track from Lynchburg to City Point;*" and thirdly, that the road should be "*under the control of one President and a Board of Directors.*"

Why does she wish *the terminus of the road to be at City Point?* Obviously, because it is the "*head of ship navigation,*" and that she purposes *thence* to make shipping of her trade.

Why does she desire to have the Southside road "*under the control of one President and a board of directors?*" The reply is ready: To avoid the embarrassments already referred to, which *rival roads might interpose*, and to render certainly available her arrangements for keeping the trade to herself: in other words, to have the whole game in her own hands.

Well, since the last meeting of the stockholders, the City Point railroad *has* been purchased, and the "*cockade city*" *has* an "*unbroken track from Lynchburg to the head of ship navigation,*" and the thoroughfare which is to take the trade to her, *is* "*under the control of one President and one board of directors.*"

And the design is entertained also by this enterprising city, to have a water navigation of 17 feet to her wharves, either by improvement of the Appomattox river, or by a ship canal, and knowing well her enterprise, I have no doubt she will accomplish her purpose. Then she will have the full swing of the trade of the Southside road.

I do not make mention of these matters to the disadvantage of Petersburg. By no means. I give her credit for her sagacity and her enterprise, and I do not hesitate to say that if she does not attain success, she will at least deserve it. And if she does ship a large trade at City Point, I am sure I shall not repine at it. What I desire is, that *Virginia* shall have the trade, the profit of the factorage, the credit, as well as the gain, of shipping from her own waters and in her own bottoms—which of her cities shall catch the trade, is to me immaterial—so it is a *Virginia* city, it is all I care for. I have brought up these facts as a warning to my fellow-citizens of Norfolk, that they are looking in the wrong direction for the influences that are to woo back the genius of commerce to their city.

A similar motive impels me to bring to their notice a third reason why it is impossible, absolutely impossible, for Norfolk to obtain the western trade by the southern line. I have already demonstrated that the heavy trade of the west *can never reach* the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, which is a part of the southern line, because that road, having as much business of its own as it has the capacity to accommodate, *cannot take any more*. Well, if the heavy tonnage of the west is never to reach the Virginia and Tennessee road, in the name of common sense, how is it ever to reach Norfolk by the southern line? This is conclusive, and impeachment of the argument is altogether inadmissible, because, as it has been already stated, the chief engineer and the board of public works have declared, that the Virginia and Tennessee railroad will be taxed by its own local tonnage to the utmost limit of its capacity.

I regret, Sir, that I am under the necessity of exhibiting to view these unpalatable truths; but as I am party to none of the sectional contests that have so long thwarted the efforts for the internal improvement of the State, and as that great object will best be promoted when seen by the plain light of truth, I have concluded to keep nothing back. Perhaps when we come to know precisely on what ground we stand, we shall profit by the knowledge.

To what avenue, then, shall Norfolk turn for the trade that is to redeem her fortunes? Sir, in my judgment, and from first to last I have held the opinion, she must turn her eye to the great central improvement of the State. There is the anchor of her hope. The trade which she will derive through other and subordinate channels, will be auxiliary, of course, but auxiliary only. But for the bulk of the business which is to give her commerce, in its honorable sense, she must look to our central line of transit to the west.

By this line the heavy products of the west can be sent forward to her, not only cheaper, but far cheaper, than they can be by any railroad line whatsoever—just as much cheaper as 350 miles of water transmission is cheaper than nearly the like amount of railroad transportation. Take an example: A worthy citizen of Norfolk, it is well known, is largely engaged in the bacon trade of the west, Cincinnati being the point of his operations. A part of his stock finds a market in Norfolk. Now, suppose this citizen wishes to have 100 hogsheads of bacon forwarded to the Norfolk market, would he have it sent all the way by railroad from the mouth of Sandy, or would he have it forwarded by railroad to Covington, and thence by canal and river to Norfolk? Clearly by the latter, and for obvious reasons. First, in passing through the hands of three different and rival companies, over three rival roads, each perhaps gorged with business destined for different and opposing points, the shipment would inevitably be much delayed in its transit, all the while subject to damage. As proof of this liability to delay, where the transit is to be over different roads, we need only refer to the fact already mentioned, that freights transmitted on the lines of western and northern railroads, are often many weeks on the way. Secondly, a greater net profit will be realized by forwarding by the compound line, because it furnishes the cheaper transportation. I am very willing to leave the decision of the point to the intelligent citizen to whom, though not naming him, I have taken the liberty to allude, and by his decision I shall be content to abide.

The truth is, that the general principle already so often referred to and illustrated, that the cheapest line takes the trade, applies as well to Norfolk as to any other city of the State. Indeed, its application is universal, and its universality is founded on a basis that never changes, the instincts of the human constitution. One thing is most true: if Norfolk does not get the trade by the cheapest route, *she will never get it at all*. And I make free to tell her that if she cannot get the western trade by the Covington and Ohio road, and the canal, and James river, *a fortiori*, she can never get it by the Southside railroads. If she expects the owner of western produce to send it to her by a costly route when he can send it by a cheaper one, she will wait until the sands of time shall have run out to the last atom. She must come in, then, for her share of the western trade by the central improvement, or not at all.

But Richmond is feared. Sir, without cause. The idea that all the trade will stop at Richmond, is altogether a delusion.

The notion is, that all the trade that shall come from the west to Richmond, is to come by the Central railroad, and must needs stop there. Fortunately for Norfolk, little or none of the bulky trade of the west will ever reach Richmond by the Central road, for the reasons already explained. Until the canal be filled up, the Central railroad will take little or no western trade to Richmond.

But supposing the heavy trade all to come eastward by the canal, it is thought by many that Richmond will monopolize it, and, of course, that none of it will go on to Norfolk.

This, too, is a delusion. Richmond, with all the capital on earth, and all the enterprise that ever city had, will be powerless to arrest all the trade

coming down the canal. And the reason is clear: she has not sufficient depth of water, and never can have, to allow the approach to her wharves of the largest class of merchantmen, which is the class that can most profitably engage in the foreign trade, it being well understood among shippers, that the larger the size of the vessel, the cheaper it can take freights. The reason is, that while the largest-sized vessel can carry much the most tonnage, the expense of working it does not increase in strict ratio with the tonnage. It costs but little more to work the largest-sized ship, than it does one much under its dimensions.

Now the application I propose to make is this: when we shall have opened our central communication with the west, *there will be a large foreign trade at some point or other in Virginia.* That is inevitable. A torrent stream of trade will come rushing in upon the State from the west, which will far more than supply the domestic demand. The excess will remain as the basis of a foreign trade. But where shall the depot of this excess be? At what point will the superfluous products gather, which are to furnish the basis of a foreign commerce? Not at Richmond, for the reason just given, that Richmond cannot most profitably engage in the foreign trade. Sir, Norfolk will be the point, because she has the deepest water; because she has a harbor where the storms of heaven are harmless; because at her wharves the proudest merchantman can swing; and because, consequently, her merchants can more profitably engage in the foreign trade than those of Richmond or any other city above her, which is on the line of the western trade. At Norfolk, there will be no bars, as at Richmond, to obstruct the noble merchantman as it nears her wharves; there will be no lightering of freights for miles down the river to the half-loaded ship, as is now the case from City Point to Harrison's bar; there will be, to reach her secure and ample port, none of the sinuous curving that marks the James from New Ports News to Richmond: no, she is in two hours' sail of the ocean outlet; outward bound from the moorings of her harbor, a ship may be a third of the way cross the ocean before the lighterage to Harrison's bar is half finished; and inward bound, she may reach the wharves of our seaport, unload, reload, and be off again on old ocean's track, before the ship bound up James river shall have reached the soundings of City Point, much less of Warwick or of Richmond.

Norfolk, then, is the chosen point for the foreign export trade which, as sure as nature's laws, is to be founded on the mighty trade which is to rush down, in torrent sweep, from the west upon Virginia. And it will be the point not only for that export trade, but for the return import trade which is the necessary consequence of the export; for, having the avenues for distribution to the consumers of the interior, the return cargoes—a thing never heretofore happening in Virginia to any extent since the revolution—will also find in Norfolk a distributing depot. When these two things shall coexist—the forwarding to the foreign market, and the bringing back of the return cargo for distribution to the points of demand—the foundation will have been laid, deep and sure, of the commercial prosperity of Norfolk.

I do not pretend to say that none of the trade coming down the canal will stop at Richmond. Much of it will. Not only what will be for her own immediate demand, will stop there, but a considerable portion of the tonnage will go coastwise to the domestic markets; but, in my judgment, the bulk of the heavy tonnage will be taken down to Norfolk in the canal boats, without breaking bulk, there to await shipment to the foreign points of demand.

Sir, Norfolk, let me tell her, has nothing to fear from Richmond. Richmond is, indeed, her natural ally, and, as I well know, harbors no jealousy of her sister of the seaboard. And I would, Sir, that all the cities of the State were as enterprising, as unjealous, and as generous as Richmond. Sir,

she was the very first to march up to the support of internal improvements, and with patriotic cheerfulness she has contributed largely, profusely, I might say, of her means, to advance the great interests of the Commonwealth. Though herself the largest tax-payer in the State, she has never hesitated to vote most liberal appropriations to every city, section, and interest. From constant conference and association with her delegates, in the General Assembly during the last six years, I am enabled to say that there was no delegation in all the Assembly less sectional, more just and liberal to other interests, or that looked more steadily to the good of the whole State. Sir, I deem it an act of simple justice to say thus much in her behalf, because the charge is not unfrequently made against her of a grasping centralism, which has been the source of much prejudice towards her, and which I know to be grossly unjust. I trust, Sir, that this injustice will cease, and that her patriotic and generous example will not be lost upon her sister cities, but that, for the future, they will all throw their jealousies to the winds, bearing in mind that each *must* have, and *will* have, its appropriate trade, and that the mighty floods from the south-west and the west will roll down enough for them all.

Sir, this is not the first time I have endeavored, in my feeble way, to point out the bearing on Norfolk of our western improvements. In February, 1849, on the floor of the House of Delegates, when making an argument for the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, I expressed similar views to those I have to-day advanced, and as they were much better expressed than I can repeat them now, I beg leave to quote them now as follows:

“Virginia, then, if she be only true to herself, must accomplish a brilliant commercial destiny. She can grasp, if she list, a portion of the trade of New Orleans, on the one hand, and of New York, on the other. Let her construct the South-western road to reach ultimately to the Mississippi, and push on her grand central line to the Ohio, and through these two great channels of transit will be borne down to her cities the assorted cargoes which alone she requires for her commercial regeneration.

“Then, Sir, and not before, we may look for, for Norfolk, something of the bright destiny predicted for her by Mr. Jefferson. By a law of trade as arbitrary as the power of gravitation, the immense products coming down the canal, will speed on with all the velocity of steam, to the best shipping point on the seaboard, (which is Norfolk,) to be thence distributed to the various markets of the world, where demand calls for and invites supply.

“Some, I know, in Eastern Virginia, maintain that Richmond will monopolize the new trade, but the idea is preposterous. Who ever heard of a city becoming a great shipping depot, at whose wharves the bold merchantman never swung? Why does the produce, arriving at Albany, through the grand canal, hasten down the Hudson to New York? Why, but that New York has a good harbor and deep water, and is the point on the seaboard most eligible for shipment to the markets of the world? Sir, in the immense and active trade which will spring up so soon as the Virginia improvements shall roll down the vast produce of the west, no delays will be tolerated in getting it to the seaboard; and, as in New York, the canal boats will be towed down to Norfolk without breaking bulk, and there take in, instead of at Richmond, their return loads of merchannize for the western market. Commercial capital will be attracted to Norfolk as the fittest exporting and importing point; the business of *consignment*—the least riskful and most profitable of all the branches of mercantile pursuit—will spring up there, and Norfolk become the chief importing city for the great markets opened in the west.”

To what I then said I will add that, on the *consignment* business, I place a high estimate as a means of the commercial success of Norfolk. It is a large item in the business of New York, and consists of foreign remittances of goods to the American merchant to be by him sold, on commission, for foreign account. It involves no home capital, but the American consignee, who acts as salesman for the foreign consignor, gets the factorage. It is, therefore, as I said, "the least riskful and most profitable of all the branches of mercantile pursuit," but it is a branch of commerce pretty much monopolized by the merchants of the city of New York, which is the principal seat of this branch of the foreign trade, because, by her various lines of internal transit, whatever there is to be sold, can be at once sent off to any and all the markets of the interior. But when our lines of improvement shall have reached the great west, Norfolk will be the most eligible point for this business of consignment. She will have this advantage over even New York—that *at all seasons* she can send forward supplies to the great interior markets.

I will only add, in conclusion, on this branch of the subject, that, against the York river railroad, the water line portion of our central improvement is the surest protection to Norfolk. The trade reaching Richmond per railroad, *may* find its way to York river, but that which comes down the canal, never can or will, because, without breaking bulk, and at less cost, it can keep on down to Norfolk, and find there the best shipping point in the land.

But one more objection remains for me to consider, and that is, that the Covington and Ohio railroad ought not to be made on State account. Sir, to my view, it ought to be constructed on that principle, and that only. It is a great State work, standing far above all considerations of mere place or section. It is common to all sections of the State, reaching the interest of all, and involving the common glory and renown. Sir, a great State work which is for the common good of all, it seems to me, ought to be provided for by the common means of all. And besides, if we do not build it on State account, most probably, we shall never build it at all, because all the spare private capital of our people has already sought investment in our public improvements. And for one, I do not hesitate to say, that I prefer that it should be wholly built by the State, because I religiously believe it will be a good investment for her. For the same reason that, were I a citizen of New York, I should prefer the Erie canal to be owned by New York, do I prefer that the Covington and Ohio railroad should be owned by Virginia; and that reason is, that in union with the State works, with which it is to connect, and which it will fully redeem, it will yield to her treasury a noble income, to prosecute other enterprises, to sink the taxes of her people, and to shed throughout her limits the blessed lights of education.

In conclusion, allow me to say, that the prime object on which all sections and all interests should cordially unite, and which demands the hearty co-operation of every citizen who loves and is proud of his State, should be—*to get the trade of the west within Virginia*. That is the grand point. To bring the trade within her borders, let us, without looking to the consequences to this or that city, or this or that section, call to our aid the best instrumentality. Once inside the State, let it seek that one of our cities which shall offer to it the greatest inducement. If Richmond hold out the greatest inducement, let Richmond have it. If Norfolk, let Norfolk have it; and so of our other cities. If all are entitled to a share, let each have its share, and this, in truth, will be the result. But let us, Oh! let us have the trade within the State, and redeem the "good old mother of us all" from the provincial position which has been so long the degradation of herself, and the injury of her people.



