

COMPARATIVE REMARKS ON TWO PROJECTED COMMUNICATIONS WITH LAKE HURON.

In no point of view is the Rideau Canal of more essential value to Canada, than as a successful experiment on the practicability of adapting her Lakes and Rivers to Steam navigation, by which means the expense and difficulty of excavation may be avoided, and water communication procured in situations where it might be otherwise unattainable.

Her navigable streams are so numerous that she has only to choose for improvement those that will contribute most to her advantage, and the peculiar situation she occupies, being directly between the Ocean and the most extensive body of Lakes yet discovered on the face of the Globe, will enable her to turn that inland navigation to a purpose which must greatly increase her influence and prosperity. She may hold the Key of the internal Western Commerce by forming easy access from the interior to her own Sea-port.

It is, therefore, on the judicious application of her physical advantages to this object, that her future prosperity will chiefly depend.

There are two lines of navigable Waters through Canada, capable of being converted into communications with Lake Huron. One on the direction of the Ottawa to Montreal, to accomplish which, and settle the adjoining country, a Company is now forming in England and Ireland on a very broad and substantial basis. The other is by Lake Simcoe, the Shallow Lakes and River Trent, to Lake Ontario, in reference to which, Resolutions have issued from a meeting of the inhabitants of that quarter.

Dazzled by the local advantages which may result from the undertaking, they seem to have lost sight of a most important point, which a more enlarged national view of the subject might have led them to contemplate. At first sight the measure appears to have so much the same object, that almost the only question seems to be, which is most practicable; but upon closer inspection they will be found of very different character, in respect to their future bearing and effect on the general interests of the country.

A commercial communication by the Ottawa, being through its whole line so distant from the frontier, and so much shorter than any Route which the Americans can command from New York to the Upper Lakes, must ensure a great proportion of their trade to Montreal, and prove her great counterbalance against the local advantages which New-York possesses in other respects. But if the communication be made by Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario, nothing would be gained, and much might be lost. We should merely reach the same point to which the Welland Canal already leads—the lower end of Lake Ontario, where a choice may be made between New-York, by Oswego, or Montreal, by the St. Lawrence. It is, no doubt, true that the new route would be shorter and safer, but so much the worse in a national point of view; for we should only hold out the stronger temptation to the Americans to enlarge their Canal from Oswego to Albany, which they have already in contemplation, and which they will, no doubt, place on such a footing as to make the expense of transit within the limits of the charges on our St. Lawrence Canal, (should it ever be completed,) so that the chance of any trade from the American side of the Lakes, by the Simcoe route, will be reduced to the comparative state of the markets at Montreal and New-York.

In order fully to illustrate a case so immensely important to the country, it may be necessary to state it more geographically.

Our local advantage consists in the great winding in the chain of the Lakes, in the extraordinary extension of Lake Huron to the Eastward, and in that of Lake Erie to the Westward. The Americans have opened a communication to Lake Erie, the second in the chain of about five hundred miles to their chief Sea-port. We have it in our power, by an interior communication along the Ottawa of about four hundred and fifty miles from Montreal, to enter the third Lake (the Huron) at a point six hundred miles more advanced in our American Mediterranean. Thus we can reach that central position where the Huron, Michigan and Superior may be said to meet, by a route little exceeding five hundred miles, whereas the Americans must wind their tedious way eleven or twelve hundred miles to the same point. But let the Isthmus between Lakes Huron and Ontario be once penetrated by a navigation, and our advantageous ground is lost, a direct inlet is unfolded from Oswego to the Huron, and thus assisted, the maritime advantages of New-York would no doubt absorb from all rivals the trade of the West.

Those who are interested in the improvements on the St. Lawrence, may suppose that a Cut by Lake Simcoe would materially increase their revenue, but they may find themselves greatly mistaken. It might, and in all probability would, have a contrary effect. The Americans would then have the strongest and most substantial inducements, as already remarked, to enlarge the Canal from Oswego to Albany; and, if necessary to secure the trade, they might throw it entirely free of toll. It would not be too great a sacrifice for the object we should, by a needless act, present to them; and it is a sacrifice which their great resources and freedom from debt would enable them to make without financial inconvenience.

The accommodation given to our neighbours by the Welland Canal, on their passage to Oswego, is unavoidable, there being no other way of forming a navigable communication with our own side of Lake Erie. But in the present case we are under no such necessity, for we can command a line to Lake Huron of which no rival could take any advantage. Were there no other means of reaching Lake Huron, by a short or direct route, but by Lake Simcoe, something might be said in favor of the measure. If the high, barren ridge which girds the lands along the waters of the Trent, were the northern confines of the fertile lands of Canada, we might submit, as we have been obliged to do, on the Welland Canal, to divide the facilities of our approach to Lake Huron with our neighbours. But the case is wonderfully different when we consider that an immense body of fertile land lies beyond, or to the northward of that ridge, through which the great river of the Ottawa flows, forming nearly of itself a spacious and unbroken navigable communication in the very heart of the country from Lake Huron to Montreal, which must always be considered, from its local situation, the commercial focus of both the Canadas.

The enterprising spirit of the people of the United States has been often noticed, and I am verily persuaded that they would most readily provide the necessary funds for a communication by Lake Simcoe on the largest scale. They would thank us for the permission to do so, and chuckle at our simplicity. It would complete for them a ready and direct highway from New-York to their immense and fertile North Western possessions, and we should thus have the honor of crowning the grand object of their enlightened citizen, De Witt Clinton, in a more perfect manner than his most sanguine views could ever have anticipated.

I again repeat, that the essential advantage which Canada may derive from her situation, would be entirely