

CANADA.

the St. Lawrence, "with reference to any future probable changes in the cost of forwarding by either route." We contend on the contrary that under a system of free navigation, sea-going freights from Quebec will be reduced on the average to within a shilling per barrel of the rates which may thereafter prevail at New York, if they be not in fact brought nearer by competition to an equality. We have compared the necessary expenses of a vessel of 500 tons trading between New York and Liverpool, and Quebec and Liverpool respectively, and we see nothing in them to prevent such a vessel carrying produce from either port to Liverpool, at nearly the same rates of freight—the reason being that, as the charges necessarily incurred by the ship are about the same in both cases, it follows that, what yields a remunerative profit in the one case, must yield it also in the other. And taking the sea-going freight in connexion with the inland freight in both cases, we contend that the conclusion is irresistible in favour of the St. Lawrence being the cheaper route, inasmuch as the cost of transport from the upper lakes to Quebec is on the average, and in the nature of things must continue to be cheaper than it is or will hereafter be, from the said lakes to New York *via* the Erie Canal. This view of the case is now so generally admitted that we were not prepared to find the very opposite asserted by the Council of the Board of Trade, in the petition in question; and were the said petition intended to have effect upon public opinion in Canada only, we would not deem it even worth the trouble of refutation, believing that the convictions of the community will universally condemn it. But as it is intended to have effect in England, where, unfortunately, the details of Canadian affairs seem to be but little understood, we consider it our duty to enter fully into the merits of the question, in order to refute the Council's statement.

For this purpose, we will take Cleveland on Lake Erie as our point of departure, and will show the nature of the route from that city to the city of New York by way of the Erie Canal, and compare it in all important points of view with the route by way of the St. Lawrence. We will suppose in the first place a vessel loaded at Cleveland with 2,500 barrels of flour to be conveyed to New York by way of the Erie Canal. She proceeds to Buffalo, at the foot of Lake Erie. Here she discharges her cargo into canal boats capable of carrying at the utmost but 700 barrels each, thus requiring three boats and a large portion of a fourth to carry her single cargo. These four boats proceed to Albany through the Erie Canal, which is 362 miles long; and at Albany their cargoes are again transhipped into barges for New York. The time occupied in going from Cleveland to New York by this route is usually 16 days.

On the other hand, a vessel loaded at Cleveland with 2,500 barrels of flour intended to be conveyed to Quebec by way of the St. Lawrence, takes her departure, and passing through the Welland Canal, of 28 miles in length, and such of the St. Lawrence canals as she deems it advisable to use (in all only 36 miles long), she reaches Quebec without once breaking bulk, and generally accomplishes the whole distance in about six days.

Thus, then, recapitulating the relative merits of the two routes, we have 362 miles of canal navigation by the Erie Canal against 64 miles by the St. Lawrence; we have a trip occupying in the former case 16 days, against 6 days in the latter; and we have two transshipments in the one case and none in the other. Can any one then deny or doubt, under these circumstances, that the St. Lawrence is, in the nature of things, the cheaper route to the sea?

But let us now examine and compare the actual charges of forwarding by the respective routes. Tables furnished by the Canal Commissioners of the State of New York show, that in 18 years ending with 1847, the average rate of freight of a barrel of flour from Buffalo to Albany was 77 cents. It was also 77 cents for 1847 alone; and for the present year, we feel confident that the average will be rather over than under 77 cents. The average freight from Cleveland to Buffalo is 16 cents, and from Albany to New York, 8 cents. Then with regard to the freight of merchandise upwards from Albany to Buffalo per 100 lbs., the same authorities show that for the period of 18 years ending in 1847, the average rate of freight was 76 cents. It was only 40 cents, however, for 1847 alone; and after a careful examination of the rates current during the present year, we feel confident that the average for it will prove to be about 45 cents per 100 lbs. From New York to Albany it is 4 cents, and from Buffalo to Cleveland it is 15 cents.

On the other hand, the rates by the St. Lawrence this year have ruled as follows:—(and we may remark that we cannot extend our comparison into former years, inasmuch as the St. Lawrence canals, upon which the superiority of the St. Lawrence route chiefly depends, were only this year thrown open for public use) that is to say, from Cleveland to Quebec the average rate for a barrel of flour was 60 cents, and from Quebec to Cleveland the average rate for merchandise was 30 cents per 100 lbs.; goods having been carried both ways, however, at rates strikingly under these, which we have waived in establishing the above averages. For instance, flour was carried from Cleveland to Quebec at equal to 40 cents per barrel, and salt and fish from Quebec to Cleveland, and even to Chicago, on Lake Michigan, at equal to 20 cents per 100 lbs. And if this has been done while the Canadian forwarder has had but little upward freight, what may we not expect when, like his rival of the United States, he is provided with both freight and emigrant passengers upwards, as he doubtless will be when our commerce and navigation are rendered free from restrictions. Is it not, we ask, reasonable to suppose that he will then be able to reduce his charges both ways and yet secure to himself remunerative profits?

Let us now recapitulate, in tabular form, the foregoing facts in order to show the contrast they afford in a striking point of view:—