

acter or class of vessels composing the mercantile marine of a country scarcely second to any in the world. It is also necessary that more complete statements of the trade and commerce of the great cities of the Atlantic seaboard and on the Gulf should be laid before Congress annually, and these improvements in their arrangement could be made, and they might be fuller in detail than those hitherto submitted, with comprehensive statistical accounts of the coasting trade and navigation, and distinguishing between steamers and other vessels.

It is proper to remark that the present arrangement of returns of the internal and coasting trade is mostly governed by the law of 1799, when the trade was in its infancy, and commerce received rather than created law.

In the discussions which have taken place in Congress, of late years, in relation to great public questions, such as the public lands, or the improvement of rivers and harbors, the most meagre statistical statements have been adduced in many cases, and loose hypotheses assumed in others. This is attributable to the absence of authentic official returns, and is conceived to be a justification for presuming to bring this subject to the attention of Congress in this report.

In the absence of statistical statements, published by national authority, the value of works containing statistical returns upon which reliance can be placed is greatly enhanced; and this opportunity is embraced of commending, as one source of valuable information in making this report, the publications called "Hunt's Merchants' Magazine," "De Bow's Review," the "Bankers' Magazine," and the "American Railroad Journal," as the most valuable in this country.

The undersigned is fully aware of its having been asserted by those who have limited means of forming a correct opinion, that the value of the lake trade has been everywhere overstated. It is true that in some cases approximations, from the want of official data, are, of necessity, resorted to; but that is not the fault of those who have the matter in charge.

The basin of the great lakes, and of the river St. Lawrence, is fully delineated on the map attached to the report on Canada. Its physical features, and the influence it must exercise on future moral development, are without parallel and historical precedent. It is an American treasure; its value to be estimated less by what it has already accomplished, than by what it must achieve in its progress.

The attention of the civilized world has been directed with great interest to the constant and progressive emigration from the Old World to the New. In former times, hordes of men changed their country by means of long and toilsome journeys by land; but never until the present age have multitudes, and, in some instances, communities, been transferred from continent to continent, and from one hemisphere to the other, by such means as are now afforded in the New York packets, clipper ships, and ocean steamers. These vehicles but represent the genius of an era destined in future times to be designated as the "age of enterprise and progress."

That portion of the "Great West" at the western extreme of the basin of the St. Lawrence has received a larger share than any other portion of our country of the valuable addition to our national riches.