

the last two decades, and there is no reason why it should not continue to do so in the next. That would give it in 1870 about three and a half millions of people, most of them farmers and producers, and farmers who, by the help of their fertile soil, the ease of its cultivation, and the general use of agricultural machinery, are able to produce a very large amount of grain or meat to the working hand.

These fleets of sail-vessels and steamers, and these railroad-trains which go Eastward thus loaded with grain and provisions, return West with freight more various, though as valuable. The teas, silks, and spices of India, the coffee of Brazil, the sugar and cigars of Cuba, the wines and rich fabrics of France, the varied manufactures of England, and the products of the New England workshops and factories, all find a market in the Northwest.

What, then, is the proper and sufficient outlet of this commerce? The Canadians, although their share of it is only one-quarter as large as our own, have shown us the way. They have constructed canals connecting Lakes Erie and Ontario, and others around the rapids of the St. Lawrence.—Let us do the same on the American side, so that vessels may load in Chicago or Milwaukee, and deliver their cargoes in New York, Boston, or Liverpool, without breaking bulk. To Europe this is the shorter route, as the figures will show—

Distance from Chicago to New York	
by lakes, canal, and river.....	1,500 miles.
Distance from New York to Liverpool.....	2,980 "
	4,480 "
Distance from Chicago to Montreal by	
Welland Canal.....	1,348 miles.
Distance from Montreal to Liverpool.....	2,740 "
	4,088 "

The St. Lawrence River is the natural outlet of the Lakes, and, if rendered accessible to us by canals, must be the cheapest outlet. It is well known that a few years ago corn was worth on the prairies of Illinois only ten cents per bushel, when the same article was selling in New York at seventy cents, six-sevenths of the price being consumed in transportation. The consequence was, that many farmers found it more for their interest to use their surplus corn for fuel than to sell it for ten cents.—The great disturbance in values caused by the war and the vast demand for grain and forage for the army, have reduced this disproportion in prices very much for the time, but it may be looked for again on the return of peace.

Now it would seem that one of the most important questions to be settled in this country is how to cheapen food. If by the construction of these canals to give access to the St. Lawrence, grain can be laid down in New York ten cents a bushel cheaper than it now is done, the saving on the present shipments of breadstuffs from the Lakes would be ten millions of dollars annually. It is probable, however, that the saving in freight would be much greater than this, if the canals were built of sufficient capacity to admit the largest class of Lake vessels. This direct trade between the Upper Lakes and Europe was commenced a few years before the breaking out of the Rebellion, and was beginning to assume important proportions, when the war put a stop to it, as it has to so much of our foreign commerce.

While the present article was in preparation, the bill for the construction of these canals passed the House of Representatives, as also one for the deepening of the Illinois and Michigan Canals, concern-

ing which the report of the Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, of Illinois, chairman of the committee of the House on the defence of lakes and rivers, thus remarks:—"The realization of the grand idea of a ship-canal from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi, for military and commercial purposes, is the great work of the age. In effect, commercially, it turns the Mississippi into Lake Michigan, and makes an outlet for the Great Lakes at New Orleans, and of the Mississippi at New York. It brings together the two great systems of water communication of our country,—the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, and the canals connecting the Lakes with the ocean on the east, and the Mississippi and Missouri, with all their tributaries, on the west and south. This communication, so vast, can be effected at small expense, and with no long delay. It is but carrying out the plan of Nature. A great river, rivalling the St. Lawrence in volume, at no distant day was discharged from Lake Michigan, by the Illinois, into the Mississippi. Its banks, its currents, its islands, and deposits can still be easily traced, and it only needs a deepening of the present channel for a few miles, to re-open a magnificent river from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi."

It is a very important point, in considering this question of the enlargement of existing canals and the construction of new ones, that they have, under the new conditions of naval warfare, come to be an important element in the harbor defences of the Lakes. We have the testimony of Captain Ericsson himself, whose Monitor vessels have already done so much for the country, as to this availability. He writes,—"An impregnable war-vessel, twenty-five feet wide and two hundred feet long, with a shot proof turret, carrying a gun of fifteen inch calibre, with a ball of four hundred and fifty pounds, and capable of destroying any hostile vessel that can be put on the Lakes, will draw, without ammunition, coal, or stores, but six feet and six inches water, and consequently will need only a canal wide and deep enough to float a vessel of those dimensions, with loads of sufficient size to pass it."

Great Britain has already secured to herself the means of access to the Lakes by her system of Canadian canals, and the Military Committee of the House express the opinion, that, in case of a war with that power, "a small fleet of light-draught, heavily armed, iron-clad gunboats, could, in one short month, in despite of any opposition that could be made by extemporized batteries, pass up the St. Lawrence, and shell every city and village from Ogdensburgh to Chicago. At one blow it could sweep our commerce from that entire chain of lakes. Such a fleet would have it in its power to inflict a loss to be reckoned only by hundreds of millions, so vast is the wealth thus exposed to the depredations of a maritime enemy." We were saved from such a blow, a few months ago, only by the failure of the Rebel agents in Canada to procure, either, by purchase or piracy, a swift armed steamer.

Ever since the War of 1812, England has been preparing, in the event of another war, to strike at that, our vital point. In 1814 the Duke of Wellington declared "that a naval superiority on the Lakes is a *sine qua non* of success in war on the frontier of Canada." Years before, William Hall, Governor of the Northwestern Territory, made the same declaration to our Government, and the capture of Detroit by the British in 1812 was due to their failure to respond to his appeal for a naval force. In 1817 the Lakes were put on a peace establishment of one gun on each side, which was a good bargain for England, she having at that time