

This estimate gives the sum of \$181,000,553 as the aggregate value of the lake exports and imports for the year 1848, of which, upon the principle before mentioned, one-half may be set down as the nett value for that year—\$90,500,276.

Such are some few of the many facts from which some estimate may be formed of the immense commerce of the lakes. The great increase of the articles of flour and wheat, as received for a series of years prior to 1848, at Buffalo, the principal receiving depot of the lake commerce, on its way to the eastern markets, furnishes something like an index of its general increase in other productions. Reduced to an equivalent in wheat, they rose from 2,780,000 bushels in 1841 to 10,688,564 bushels in 1847; and, adopting 17 per cent. as an approved rate of annual increase of the aggregate lake commerce, in ten years, or in 1857, its nett value will be \$170,545,257.

The above facts and figures enable us to form some idea of the present commercial condition of the lake valley. But who can measure its prospects in the future? The experience of the few past years teaches that its growth has surpassed all prior calculations, and past estimates have seldom kept pace with existing realities. It has become quite impossible to proportion, in advance, the increase of this region in population, wealth, and commerce, to the increase of its facilities for communicating with the eastern markets. The future refuses to be governed by rules of past experience. If the commerce of this valley is to increase from sixty-three millions in 1847 to ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY MILLIONS in 1857, who will undertake to measure it at the expiration of another quarter or half of a century? And if it now crowds our channels of communication almost to stoppage, and, consequently, finds its way disadvantageously through them to market, what will be the condition of things in fifty, twenty-five, or even ten years hence, unless some portion of it can find its way to the ocean through the channel of the St. Lawrence, which nature has constructed for it with so liberal a hand?

Further, we cannot overlook the very important fact that the free navigation of the St. Lawrence would, in effect, for commercial purposes, add three thousand miles to our ocean-coast. It would convert the lakes into great ocean-inlets or bays, and their ports into ocean-harbors. Whitehall, Burlington, Oswego, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukie, Chicago, and all our lake towns and cities, would be substantially upon the ocean. They could thus carry on a direct export and import trade with Liverpool, with China, or any other remote country of the globe which may be accessible from the ocean. It would open their valuable timber forests, and enable them to send ships, as well as cargoes, for sale to the English marts, or those of any other country by whose navigation laws it might be permitted. Such a change in geographical position could hardly fail to produce a great revolution in the commerce of the Northwest, not by way of diverting it seriously from its accustomed channels, but by opening new fields of enterprise, stimulating new industry, and giving new employment to labor. No apprehension need be entertained that existing artificial channels would not continue to be taxed for transportation, as now, to the extent of their capacity for public use and advantage. We have already shown the probable future increase of our lake commerce; and all apprehension like that suggested should be dispelled, when it is also considered that the population of the Northwest alone,