

There is considerable complaint about the progress of work on

THE SAULT STE. MARIE CANAL

when it is considered that during last season 2635 sailing vessels, 6501 steamers and 443 unregistered craft, with a registered tonnage of 7,221,935 tons, carrying 7,516,022 tons of actual freight, consisting of 1,629,197 tons of coal; 2,228,707 barrels of flour; 16,231,854 bushels of wheat; 2,133,245 bushels of other grain; 57,561 tons of pig and manufactured iron; 168,250 barrels of salt; 33,456 tons of copper; 4,095,855 tons of iron ore; 315,554,000 feet of lumber; 5,947 tons of silver ore; 33,538 tons of building stone; and 312,410 tons of unclassified freight, or general merchandise, passed through the single American lock between the 15th day of April and the 4th day of December, some idea of the enormity and increase in the traffic may be gathered. The slight accident to the cofferdam last fall shows what a little thing might paralyze the whole commerce of the great lakes, and how important is the prompt completion of the Canadian Lock.

While on the subject of canals it may not be inopportune to draw your attention to the celebrated

FORT FRANCIS LOCK.

When this work was started during the MacKenzie regime, the intention was to use the water stretches in connection with the then proposed method of building the Canadian Pacific Railway. When this idea of building the railway was abandoned, so was the lock, although a large amount of money had been expended. I am credibly informed that a very small amount properly expended would make the lock passable for large steamers. With the inexpensive improvements in the navigation of the Rainy River contemplated by the Dominion Government there would be uninterrupted navigation from Sturgeon Falls on the eastern end of Rainy Lake, to Rat Portage on the Lake of the Woods. By the building of 90 miles of the Ontario and Rainy River Railway from Sand Lake westward to Sturgeon Falls, Port Arthur would be brought within 150 miles of this immense stretch of navigable water, on which the distances are, approximately as follows: across Rainy Lake 53 miles; the Rainy River 80 miles; the Lake of the Woods to Rat Portage 72 miles, or to the Northwest angle of the Lake of Woods 48 miles. All this territory and its trade on both sides of the boundary would be rendered tributary to Port Arthur. There is today on the North American continent no other such an area of valuable territory, valuable not only for its immense forests of pine and its mineral resources, but also for the large tracts of fertile lands found on each side of the boundary which remains untapped by any railway system and without means of being opened up or developed in any way.