

For six long months of the year, therefore, Quebec and the other ports and harbours of the river were unavailable, and trade was virtually suspended. For six long months communication between one province and another was virtually stopped. Not even the power of steam could contend against the inert force of the frost upon those waters. Against the power of the current, sweeping downwards from Niagara, the steam-ship could ply successfully her upward course; but when the waters of that current became congealed in winter, her power necessarily became suspended also.

But the ice was not the only difficulty attending the navigation of the St. Lawrence. Even during the summer, the contracted dimensions of the Welland Canal presented a serious obstacle to the navigation. As far as Lake Ontario, sea-going vessels of 700 or 800 tons burden could with ease accomplish the navigation; but from that point, no vessels of greater burden than 300 tons could reach the upper chain of lakes. At this point, therefore, transshipment became necessary, either for imports or exports. The produce coming from Lakes Erie, Huron, Michigan, and Superior, and from the great prairie cities of the West, such as Buffalo, Chicago, and Detroit, had to be brought down in vessels of a size sufficiently small to navigate the canal, and to be transhipped into larger vessels for the sea-voyage. In the same manner, imports from Europe had to be transhipped into small craft, to effect the same navigation,—thus depriving these growing centres of population and trade, each containing from 90,000 to 200,000 inhabitants, of the main facility of direct inter-communication.

The rapid growth of these cities,—yet in their infancy,—the development of the rich and fertile districts by which they are surrounded, and of which Mr. Cobden declared a year ago that they would “produce grain enough to feed all Europe in addition to their own requirements,” rendered improved communication an urgent necessity. The Grand Trunk Railway of Canada was designed to effect the object. Following the course of the St. Lawrence, and uniting all the principal towns of Canada, it brings the whole country to the best ports on the sea-board by the nearest route, and affords the greatest facilities for communication with Europe by a passage 600 miles shorter than any other that can be made between the continents. It maintains its chain of communication, moreover, without either of the drawbacks attending the river navigation. The whole course of the Grand Trunk Railway can be traversed without change of vehicles, and the line is open for traffic irrespective of seasons.

In its extent, its social, mercantile, and political bearings, and also in the important position which it holds as an enterprise, the Grand Trunk Railway may be, therefore, said to stand unrivalled. Regarding it as a work conceived and entered