

A reference to the map will show, that the vicinity of the Niagara River, at the Terminus of the Eastern Branch of the Great Western Railway of Canada, is the focus of the various communications, by which the traffic of the interior is conveyed to the Atlantic. Among these channels of communication may be mentioned—the Erie Canal,—the New York and Erie Railroad, 100 miles in length, from New York to the Niagara River,—the direct line of Railways from Boston to the same point, 500 miles in length,—and various other lines of railroad, which radiate in different directions through the States of New England and New York*.

Detroit, opposite Port Windsor, the Western Terminus of the Main Line, is in like manner, the focus of the extensive Railway and Canal communications of the North-western States, including Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the upper part of Ohio†. A large portion of these important communications are already completed, and in successful operation.

Michigan, for instance, although one of the latest settled and least populous of those States, has already 700 miles of Railway completed or in progress. Among these, a Main Trunk Line of 200 miles in length, in direct continuation of THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY of Canada: from Detroit to New Buffalo, on the Michigan Lake is now open, and has paid highly remunerative dividends, with a rapidly increasing traffic.

The stream of traffic between Detroit and the State of New York is at present carried on entirely by the circuitous and dangerous navigation of Lake Erie, which is closed during half the year.

The importance of this traffic may be judged of from the fact, that upwards of eighty large steamers, averaging 450 tons burthen, and whose estimated cost is £1,560,000,—a sum exceeding the estimated cost of The Great Western Railway,—are employed on Lake Erie, in addition to upwards of 100 other vessels, of different classes: and it appears from official returns, that the number of passengers carried, to and from Detroit direct, during the season of navigation in 1850, was 116,000, independent of the large numbers carried beyond Detroit, by the Upper Lake Steamers, which may fairly be estimated at double the number of passengers, landing at, and departing from Detroit.

The passage between Detroit and Buffalo, by first class steamers, occupies, under most favourable circumstances, about 36 hours. But the navigation is suspended by the ice during half the year; while during the remainder, it is liable to frequent interruptions, from the storms to which Lake Erie is peculiarly subject. By the RAILWAY, the journey will be performed AT ALL SEASONS IN TWELVE OR FOURTEEN hours.

There can be no reasonable doubt, therefore, that the Great Western Railway will at once absorb the greater portion of this traffic, and will become, in connection with the system of railway communication at either extremity, the high road for the traffic of the Western States with the Atlantic.

No competing Line can be made to divert this traffic: as, THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY of CANADA affords the most direct route between the foot of Lake Erie and Detroit, and any other Line, to connect those points, must wind round the Southern shore of Lake Erie, increasing the distance by at least 125 miles.

Again,—such is the fortunate position of the Great Western, that it must form an essential part of that other great, though more northern, Line of communication, commencing at the head, and extending along the Canadian shores of Lake Ontario, through Toronto and Kingston, and thence on the borders of the St. Lawrence River to Montreal, Quebec, and Halifax,—with branch Lines stretching out from Oswego to Syracuse,—from Cape Vincent to Rome,—from Ogdensburgh to Boston,—and from Montreal to Portland, Boston, and New York*. Most of these Lines are completed.

It is not professional skill that has placed the location of the Great Western on the precise ground that will thus enable it to control the trade and travel of such a vast portion of the Canadas and the prosperous American States, east and west of its termini. It owes its value and all these incomparable advantages to the physical formation, and great geographical divisions of the country.

The direct Line of travel from the Atlantic coast of the New England States to the Mississippi, has been controlled by that distribution of hills and valleys, which formerly ruled the location of the Erie Canal, and carried that work due west through the central and richest portions of the State of New York, in which great Cities have since grown up, and the highest grade of national prosperity has been nearly reached.

This Line of trade and travel is brought to the Niagara frontier of the Canadian and American possessions, a little south of the western end of Lake Ontario, and a little north of the eastern end of Lake Erie, where Nature seems to have provided for its further progress by bringing the opposite cliffs so near together, that it is practicable there, and *there only*, to pass over, by a single arch, the waters discharged by the great cataract of Niagara.

This important and indispensable line cannot be deflected to the South,—for Lake Erie lies in the way; and it cannot diverge to the North,—for Lakes Ontario and Huron intervene in that direction. It *must* pass between the Lakes Erie and Ontario, and cross the waters of the former, below the Niagara Falls, and thence traverse the succession of valleys and level plains which are found in the same parallel, in Western Canada. It cannot deviate from this course until it again encounters at Detroit the narrow channel that connects the Northern lakes with Lake Erie, and which separates Canada from Michigan.

* See annexed Sketch, No. III.

† See Note B, respecting the dangerous navigation of Lake Erie.

See Sketch, No. II.