

abandon the undertaking in despair. After the lapse of 50 years, we are perhaps hardly qualified to judge correctly on the subject, but there can be no doubt that most serious errors were committed by the promoters of the work, errors, which were condoned by the majority of the representatives of the people, and which we are not inclined at this time to view with severity. At the same time we cannot but regret, that the author should have rendered it necessary for us, in order to establish the truth of history, to advert to facts which he has either concealed or misrepresented. We have already noticed that the first scheme submitted to the public contemplated a canal to be built at a cost of \$160,000, and that Mr. Merritt in his speech in Nov., 1824, on the occasion of turning the first sod, was still of opinion that this scheme was feasible and adequate for the purpose. In about three months later Mr. Merritt writes: "I have consequently changed the whole scheme or system of our canal." This was written from York, the capital of Upper Canada, to Dr. Prendergast, whom he informs that he "left home with power to act as I thought proper." Mr. Merritt had in fact undertaken a work entirely beyond the resources of any private company likely to be established at that time, indeed beyond the ability of the Province itself, and it may be proper to observe that the change of plan was adopted at the instigation of Mr. Yates, of New York. The consequence was that for years the work was carried on under the greatest possible disadvantage, but it must be admitted at the same time that, but for the indomitable perseverance of Mr. Merritt, it would have been delayed for many years. It is a question whether Mr. Merritt would not have served his country better by making energetic efforts to procure the construction of the work by the Government in imitation of De Witt Clinton, who had encountered an opposition quite as formidable as any which could be anticipated in Upper Canada. Such, certainly, was the opinion of men just as much alive as Mr. Merritt was, to the importance of the work, but who believed that his policy had led to great waste of money, and had even retarded the completion of the canal on its enlarged scale. We cannot venture to pronounce an opinion on this point at so great a distance of time, but we do not hesitate to affirm that such works as canals connecting such inland seas as Lakes Erie and Ontario with our noble river, and likewise with Lake Champlain, ought to be in the hands of the Government of the country and not in those of a

private company. It is but recently that we were in negotiation with the neighboring republic on the subject of a commercial treaty, by one of the provisions of which the Dominion would have been bound to construct a canal between the St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain, and yet a private company has obtained a charter to construct that very work, and has for years failed, as the Welland canal company failed, to get private capitalists to subscribe for the stock. There is evidence to be found in the appendices to the numerous reports of select committees of the Upper Canada Assembly on the Welland Canal that the vacillation which was exhibited by the projectors of that work in its early stages was one cause of the opposition with which they had to contend. That opposition was unceasing, and was doubtless stimulated by Mr. Merritt's avowed political opinions. Before entering on the subject of the controversy between Mr. Merritt and his Parliamentary opponents on his canal policy, it may be desirable to notice that in 1823 he visited England for the first time with a view to obtain assistance from the Government, and subscriptions to the stock of the company. During that visit he was examined as a witness before the celebrated Committee of the House of Commons, which sat during the session of that year to consider the affairs of Canada. Mr. Merritt gave it as his opinion that Upper Canada was far behind the adjoining states in prosperity, and his panacea at that time was to hand over Montreal to Upper Canada in order that it might have a sea port. We may cite his own words: "I maintain we only want the city of Montreal to enable us to produce similar results on a much greater and more beneficial scale." He objected to a union with Lower Canada, and he declared: "We have good reason to be satisfied with our form of Government." Soon after his return to Canada the elections for the tenth Parliament of Upper Canada were held, and Mr. Merritt was nominated as a candidate by his friends, but did not then succeed. We learn from the biography that Mr. Merritt's journey to England formed a new epoch in his life, and led to his turning his attention to politics. He commenced his political career as a follower of the old Bureaucratic party, popularly known as the Family Compact. He could hardly at the time have taken a different line. Among the earliest advocates of the Welland Canal, as we learn from the biography, were Bishop Strachan, Chief Justice Robinson, and Mr. Henry John Boulton, while Mr. Mackenzie appears to have opposed all the schemes of

the company, both in Parliament and in the press. The tenth Parliament in which the Reform party had a majority was of short duration, having been dissolved on the death of King George the 4th in 1830. Mr. Merritt was not a candidate at the general election, and the seat for Haldimand was contested. It so happened, however, that the rival candidates were both carried off by the cholera epidemic of 1830, whereupon Mr. Merritt was elected to fill the vacancy. He seems to have voted steadily with the Government of the day, which was favorable to his measures for improving the navigation, and he voted for the expulsion of Mr. Mackenzie, a fact which his biographer has omitted to record, although he specially refers to the fact of the expulsion. It is unnecessary to enter into the history of this expulsion, which we notice chiefly because there can be little doubt that it produced a powerful effect on Mr. Mackenzie, and led him to retaliate, when circumstances enabled him to do so, on all who had taken part in that proceeding. During four years Mr. Mackenzie was excluded from the Legislature, during which time he paid a long visit to England, and was courteously listened to by the Imperial authorities in Downing Street. At the ensuing general election, in 1834, Mr. Merritt was re-elected, but the Reformers obtained a majority, and during the first session Mr. Mackenzie procured the appointment of Government Director on the Welland Canal, fully determined to investigate all the acts of the Corporation which by this time had become dependent on Government aid for carrying on the work. Those who have read Mr. Lindsay's "Life and Times of W. L. Mackenzie," a work which embraces much the same period of history as the biography now under consideration, will be able to comprehend Mr. Merritt's troubles during the year 1835. Mr. Mackenzie made St. Catharines his headquarters, and instead of performing in the usual perfunctory manner, duties, which till then had been considered honorary, he made an investigation such as a skilled accountant would institute into the estate of an insolvent debtor to which he had been appointed assignee. Mr. Merritt's biographer makes a serious charge against Mr. Mackenzie, in the following words:—"He so far forgot his position and transcended the limits of propriety as to obtain his (Mr. Merritt's) private memoranda, and afterwards publish the same in his general charges against the officials of the Welland Canal," and this "whilst enjoying the friendship and hospitality of our subject." Mr. Lindsay, the son-in-law of