

PREFACE.

THE Commissioners of Internal Navigation, in putting to the Press the following Reports, have been actuated by the consideration that, as they are the fruits of much time, expense and labor, applied to subjects of great and growing interest, they ought by a multiplication of copies to be protected from the risk of accidents such as on a recent occasion involved some of their plans and estimates in a destruction common to many public documents. They have also been induced to think it of some moment that these papers should be submitted in a printed form, and as generally as possible to the inspection of those, at whose cost and for whose benefit, the surveys which they detail and illustrate, were projected and executed.

The advantages to be derived from a well organized system of improvement in our water communications are too obvious, and too generally admitted to require that their value should be here pointed out.

If a retrospective glance be cast upon our domestic history for the last seven or eight years, no circumstance will stand out more prominently than the change which has taken place in public sentiment on this particular subject. Within that brief space, that is, during the present administration, the people and Legislature of this Province, incited perhaps by the spirit-stirring examples before their eyes, have not only been led to consider that which had not previously engaged their serious attention, viz. the means and practicability of improving the natural facilities for navigation presented by their magnificent lakes and mighty rivers, but they have actually commenced on an extensive scale the construction of canals and harbours, the mere mention of which would within a very few years have been ridiculed as the wildest of dreams, and for the accomplishment of which the probable resources and energies of the colony a century hence would have been then conceived unequal. Within this short period, then, (and it assuredly comprehends a most memorable epoch) is to be dated the happy nativity of that spirit of public enterprise, which by stimulating commerce and agriculture, and holding forth the brightest rewards to well directed industry, is destined to guide and quicken our march in the highway of prosperity.

To the late Mr. Nichol, whose zealous devotion as a Member of Parliament to objects of this nature renders his untimely end a great public loss, is to be accorded the praise of having been the first to recommend the improvement of our navigation to the attention of the Legislature. By his exertions the Statute of 1821 was passed, authorising the appointment of a Commission "for the purpose of exploring, surveying and levelling the most practicable routes for opening a communication by Canals and Locks between Lake Erie and the Eastern Boundary of this Province."—Of this Commission he became himself a member, and attended to its duties, until his melancholy death, with characteristic intelligence and zeal.

How far the objects of the Statute have been satisfactorily accomplished, it rests with the Legislature and the Country to determine, when experience and examination shall have afforded the means to judge. In the Estimates for the various Canals referred to in the reports, it cannot be imagined but that some errors may exist, notwithstanding the care with which they have been framed; but if on the one hand unexpected difficulties might occur in opening any line of Canal laid down, it is on the other, very probable that facilities which originally escaped notice would on further examination be discovered. Such circumstances, if they shall be found to occur, will scarcely occasion surprise, when it is considered how many more obstacles combine to perplex the Engineer in a country but partially and recently redeemed from the wilderness, than in those which having been long and thickly peopled, must necessarily be more perfectly and intimately known.

It will be seen by the Reports that the attention of the Commissioners has been chiefly occupied in exploring two great lines of navigable communication, i. e. one between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, and the other between the latter Lake and the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers.