

## COMMERCIAL INDEPENDENCE AT STAKE.

While Canada has been striving to secure an independent water route of her own, our neighbors, with their characteristic energy, have been directing their efforts to divert to their own channels and for the building up of their own commerce, the great and growing grain trade of the West and North West. While we have been building the Welland and St. Lawrence Canals, and deepening, enlarging and improving our waterway to the sea, they have been building and enlarging the Erie Canal and improving the channel of the Hudson River. The contest between Canada and her neighbor for the control of the water-borne traffic of the West and North West has, not inaptly, been called "The Battle of the Canals." A battle it has been and a titanic one, and on its final issue depends results more momentous than those that have turned upon some of history's most noted conflicts.

### OUR POSITION INSECURE.

As the matter stands to-day, the advantage is with Canada and if we be true to ourselves and prompt to take advantage of the superior position which is naturally ours, this supremacy will remain with us. We cannot afford, however, to sit inactive with folded hands; neither can we afford to waste our energies and dissipate our means in the undertaking of schemes which, however alluring, can give no certain assurance of maintaining our superiority. Our present advantage is so slight that it may easily be lost, as it was lost, temporarily, some years ago, when, because tolls were charged on the Welland Canal, traffic was immediately diverted to the Erie on which no tolls have been charged since 1883. It is true that, when the tolls were removed and the Welland again made free, the Canadian route recovered its ascendancy, but it is evident that our hold upon the control is not by any means an assured one.