

Michigan to the Mississippi, which when carried out, as it no doubt will eventually be, for it is even now in process of construction, will have a very marked effect on the traffic of the St. Lawrence and yet, but a few years ago, that project was looked upon as utopian.

The greater part of the route now under consideration has been so often reported on by Engineers and is generally so well known that a very cursory description of it will serve to convey some idea of the difficulties to be met with and overcome in making it an available highway for navigation.

The first question to be considered in all such enterprises is as to the supply of water where a summit between two great river systems has to be crossed, and in this case it may be at once stated that, at the height of land separating the waters running to the St. Lawrence from the streams flowing to Rainy River, on the Dawson route, there is, according to the reports of the engineers, water in sufficient abundance for the supply of a canal of the largest capacity both ways.

Shebandowan Lake, a large sheet of water on the eastern side, differs but little in level from Lac des Milles Lacs, a still more extensive body of water on the western slope, and Kashaboïwe, a smaller lake intervening between the two, is only eight feet higher than Lac des Milles Lacs. There is an extensive plateau of comparatively level country at the water shed. And it is stated in the old reports of the engineers, who first explored the district, that a dam 16 feet in height at the outlet of Shebandowan Lake and low dams at the outlets of Lac des Milles Lacs, with a dam of suitable height in the narrow gorge at the head of French Portage would give an unbroken stretch of navigation, without locks, of 67 miles in length, clear across the height of land. And this stretch, if so made navigable, would as shown by the reports referred to, be supplied by the drainage of 700 square miles of densely wooded country interspersed with deep lakes in a climate, too, of exceptional humidity, so that no apprehension need ever be entertained of the supply of water failing, and this is a favorable circumstance, not often met with at the summit of a water shed separating two great river systems.

This stretch of navigable water would be within forty or forty-five miles of Lake Superior, at its eastern extremity, but whether a canal should be made over this short distance or some other way of cheap freight transportation devised, is a question which may await future consideration. The difference in level is about 850 feet, that is, between Lake Superior and Lac des Mille Lacs.

From Lac des Mille Lacs, westward, the descent is much more gradual, the first considerable drop being at French Portage where there is a fall of 90 feet, followed by about 15 miles of quiet water. Then Deux Rivières Portage, where there is a fall of 120 feet to Sturgeon Lake, but in the next 75 miles to Rainy Lake, the fall is only eighty feet or thereabouts. From the head of Rainy Lake to Rat Portage, at the outlet of the Lake of the Woods, the navigation is unbroken save for the fall at Fort Frances where a lock is in part constructed. Steamers are already in use on Rainy Lake, Rainy River and the Lake of the Woods.