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The Canadian Monetary Times.

THURSDAY, MAY 27, 1869.

THE CANADIAN CANALS.

II.

The writer upon the Canadian Canals cannot too highly estimate the importance and difficulty of the subject. Possibly there is no one branch of practical economy which has more bearing on the well-being of the Province, and certainly there is no one less understood. Indeed, as a rule, the subject is lost sight of by Canadian journalism, and there are few circumstances to give it adventitious interest. It is only when some special claim is made to public support, that the least attention is aroused; and then the influence is not healthful. The two schemes, the Ottawa navigation and the Georgian Bay Canal, are cases in point. In both instances there were earnest hearty advocates, and as their efforts were continued, so proselytes were gained. There are very few men who can resist the appeal to their interest put in enticing language. "Here is this scheme, sure "to go—it has this and that support, and is of "great national benefit—look at the statistics "—count up the results," and a formidable sheet of paper appears with tabulated statements of elaborate calculation, proving certain profit. "You see," continues the speaker, "here it is. All this money has to be spent; "there is plenty for every body; throw your "influence in with ours, and participate in "these certain benefits." Who can blame a struggling man, one not well informed on the subject, who sees the project sustained by many most estimable persons, and who is possibly himself taken with the one-sided view advanced—who can blame him, we say, if he joins in the common cry and swells the chorus? The difficulty lies in allowing canal schemes of this character to be taken up by private parties. It is precisely in this situation that the Government should intervene, for a Canadian Canal is not, and by no circumstance can be, looked upon as a private isolated effort. To our mind the difficulty in the Province has been that each canal has been more or less regarded as an individual project. Private influences have been allowed to direct and fashion in part that which should have been considered as a portion of the whole. The navigation of the St. Lawrence is a unity, in short, and anything at all discordant with the requirements which ought to govern that unity, is self-evidently objectionable. Thus the Georgian Bay Canal is quite independent of the St. Lawrence Navigation. As the Welland Canal is at present constituted, that is if the limit be maintained, it would have had one use only. At present a propeller by the Welland can carry 4,400 bbls. of flour. The proposed locks on the Georgian Bay Canal, with but moderately increased expenses, would admit a cargo of at least seven thousand barrels, cheapening of course its freight. But such a vessel must discharge at Oswego, because she could not pass through the St. Lawrence Canals, which have but nine feet depth of water. Therefore the only result which could have accrued, would have been an increase of the trade between Chicago and Oswego, thus giving Buffalo the go-by. Consequently the scheme has found opponents in the latter place, and supporters in the former cities. To the St. Lawrence itself the canal, if completed, could bring no commerce. It is indeed in its bearing anti-Canadian, and would rather carry the trade from the country. Not that there are now special inducements to take exports down the St. Lawrence. We mean, that if New York and Montreal offered equal inducements to the shippers of grain to Europe, the Georgian Bay Canal would be more to the interest of New York. As to the time taken in passing through the canal, and the time taken through the open water of the river, the following figures to us seem unanswerable. It is urged that a propeller taking the open water will have to pass over 400 miles of additional distance, which with a propeller at nine miles the hour may be assumed at 44 hours, and adding for the passage through the Welland Canal 15 hours, we have a total of 59 hours. Against this there is the Georgian Bay Canal, itself 100 miles in length, locking up 475 feet, and locking down 130 feet. As a first-class passenger steamer in the Beauharnois Canal, 11½ miles in length. with 9 locks and a lift of 82½ feet, takes six hours to pass through it, so the Georgian Bay Canal would exact from 60 to 70 hours, at the fastest rate of speed, and without the least *contretemps*. If this reasoning be correct, and we conceive it to be unimpugnable, there can be no saving of time. The gain is simply in the ability to bring larger vessels into the trade, which could not get out of Lake Ontario; and this result is to be effected at a cost of from twenty to thirty millions of dollars. So incomplete is the project, that one of its earliest and ablest supporters, Mr. Tully, saw the weakness of it, and declared that the improvement was only contemplated in connection with the important work of deepening the St. Lawrence Canals. The answer to this view is very plain—Why not then begin with the deepening and enlargement of the St. Lawrence Canals?

Enough surely has been said to show that a scheme of such a character is no portion of the St. Lawrence navigation proper, and as such it ought summarily to be dismissed from consideration; in any case until that navigation be brought to its extreme development. It is the recognition of such a principle as we are now striving to establish; a principle we fear only imperfectly understood. A commercial contest is now being waged. As in the old days when the French held Canada, the positive fighting arose, whether the trade with the Indians should have its passage by the waters of the Hudson or by the St. Lawrence; whether it should follow the *debouchure* of the lakes, or whether it should turn by the southern streams to the Mohawk and thence to the Hudson. These early wars in the settlement of Canada were in reality wars of trade, and it was purely to control its course that Fort Duquesne on the Ohio was constructed, to destroy which Braddock advanced so futilely—to be defeated by a handful of men. It was the recollection of these struggles which nerved the State of New York, then not over rich, and thinly populated to the extraordinary effort of the Erie Canal with its several branches. The policy of this State has been a canal policy, and it has richly earned its reward. The policy of Canada, or rather the want of policy of this country is to neglect the na