

The Chignecto Ship Railway.

WILL IT PAY?

To the Editor of the Sun:

SIR, — So many people have asked me "Whether the Ship Railway will pay," it will be easier to avail myself of your columns, with your kind permission, than to reply by letter to those inquiries in detail. The interest felt in this great public work is growing so widespread that I think it will be of advantage to furnish the public with an expression of opinion on the question of its paying capabilities. I venture to say there was never a work on which more study and care have been bestowed than on this isthmian transit. The promoters have had great difficulties to overcome in the prejudice and incredulity which first beset the project, but there is now a great change in public opinion. People no longer think it impracticable. On the contrary, all intelligent people now concur in its entire feasibility, and this is a great advance, for its benefits were liable to be overlooked by confusing the commercial question with that of practicability.

With the promoters — who are all practical men — the question was not whether loaded ships could be moved by rail or be lifted from the water, for that problem had long ago been solved by actual experience and practice.

The real difficulty was how to construct this great work and carry it out on a paying basis, and to find a good line that would answer all requirements.

The time has gone by when engineers could afford to give their time and money to projects that would not stand a commercial test. The real difficulty was how to build a Ship Railway, seventeen miles long, involving very heavy work on the line itself, besides large docks, entrance channels, breakwaters, hydraulic lifts, and other expensive machinery, for a sum of money that would enable a fair return to be made on the outlay, and at the same time practicable to work at rates of tolls that would inevitably draw business and create new trade from the Gulf ports south, and also compete successfully with other channels, especially the present route by the Straits of Canso and around Cape Breton.

This economical as well as engineering problem has now been successfully overcome by patient study and perseverance, and the cost and feasibility of the work settled by the practical mode of obtaining tenders from responsible parties willing to construct and work the line considerably within the capital of the company, which is five millions of dollars.

Will it pay the country? The promoters never entertained a belief that this undertaking would pay in the early years of its working with-