

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAULT STE. MARIE CANAL.

By William Gilbert Irwin.

Few save those directly or indirectly interested in the commerce of the Great Lakes fully realize the import upon the various lines of industrial endeavor of the traffic of our great inland seas. In no other way is the magnitude of this internal shipping so fittingly exemplified as in the immense tonnage which annually passes through the Sault Ste. Marie canal, which forms that important artificial waterway which obviates the natural barrier between Lake Huron and Lake Superior, and thus opens up to interlake shipping the greatest link in the world's greatest chain of unsalted seas.

Aside from establishing Duluth as a most important point of shipping, this great canal has been responsible for the marvelous agricultural, commercial, industrial and mineral development of the great Northwest through providing cheap water transportation facilities to the Atlantic. Through the wonderful development of the iron ores the canal has been a factor in establishing the industrial prestige of Pittsburgh and other iron and steel manufacturing centres. In fact, no similar expenditure of capital by any state or any nation has conferred such vast benefits to a wide area and to so extensive a population.

The time has come when the accomplishments of the human race in the wide domain of commerce and industry are no longer subordinated to the enactments of war and conquest, and for some time important events in the peaceful fields of industry have been marked

by exhibitions of work along these lines. The observance of the beginning of the work which resulted in the construction of this great canal is to be appropriately observed, and although it has not yet been decided just when this event is to be celebrated, there is at this time a bill before Congress for an appropriation for this purpose.

So far as concerns the American canal, the idea was first originated by Gov. Mason, of Michigan, in his message to the Legislature in 1837, the year after Michigan was admitted to the Union. On March 21, 1837, the Legislature of that State passed an act authorizing a survey and appropriating \$25,000 for the work. This original survey, made under the direction of John Almy, recommended a canal 75 feet wide and 10 feet deep, with two locks, each 100 feet long, 32 feet wide, and 10 feet deep, the estimated cost of the work being \$112,544. On September 7, 1838, the State of Michigan entered into a contract for the construction of the canal with Messrs. Smith & Driggs, of Buffalo. Work was not begun until May, 1839, and was soon suspended owing to a clash between the United States military authorities and the contractors, which resulted in the ejectment of the latter, and thus ended the first attempt at canal-making at this point.

On March 27, 1840, the Michigan Legislature passed a joint resolution protesting against Federal interference with the work, and three days later a memorial on the subject was forwarded to Congress.