

Trunk. In winter, it is somewhat hard to say what will be the fate of the northern portion of the line. If it be subjected to such management, and to such results as marked the Grand Trunk last winter, the inference is that it will experience the fate of the Riviere du Loup and the Three Rivers branch. After a couple of months of winter, it will become impassable, and the snow will rest upon it in peace. While this extraordinary expenditure is the great feature to the east of the Dominion, we have the Ottawa route, hanging over central and north-western Canada. Ontario might well enquire, what counterbalancing benefit was to be extended to her population. We might here diverge from the main question, and inquire from what population the Dominion revenue is principally raised, and leave the sister Province of Quebec to tell us what sum the inhabitants of that part of the Dominion contribute. We would then be in a position to claim some equivalent, some equipoise, some sectional expenditure, by which the interests of Western Canada should be advanced. We say that with justice and with propriety this line of argument could be taken. It is not, however, our intention to follow it. We will examine the scheme of this Ottawa Canal, purely on its merits, and on the results promised, we were nearly writing threatened, because once upon a time, there was much vigor shewn in its advocacy.

The Ottawa has an ill name for experiments and blunders. One of the great arguments for placing the seat of government there, used to be, the admirable fortifications which could be placed on Citadel Hill, the site of the present parliament buildings, to defend the city from—the river, a stream unapproachable, except through the Rideau Canal, and through the narrow canals to the east. It is here that that gigantic blunder, the Rideau Canal, was perpetrated. An expense incurred by the Imperial Government, it is true, but which never gained the most shadowy result, except dissatisfaction. It is supposed to have cost five millions of dollars. But even its narrow limit was made unavailable by the extraordinary proceeding of building three locks on the Grenville Canal, 106 ft. x 19 ft.—while the remaining locks would admit a boat passing through 127 ft. by 32 ft., drawing 5 feet of water. It is here that the Ottawa members sold their support for the commencement of the memorable Chats Canal, given out as a political job, at prices wholly below the value, and which still stands a monument of executive folly, unfinished and useless. Indeed, that it is unfinished is a mark of wisdom, for it would have been valueless; that it is useless, is proved by this Ottawa scheme, which is again claiming the

privilege to swallow up about twenty-five million of dollars.

We do not wish to write flippantly on this subject, for its importance cannot be over-rated. It has always been the case with Canada, that the country has been without a canal policy. Our system, such as it is, is an adaptation of isolated efforts of men who saw a good operation, and so advocated a certain improvement. Thus the necessity of the Lachine Canal was seen a few years after the Conquest, and the design was fostered by the Imperial Government, which, with the persistent kindness which has marked the course of the Mother Country to this Province contributed to its construction. The Cornwall Canal may be considered a more legitimate operation; for it was the work of the Upper Canada Legislature, under commissioners who performed their work in a careful manner. It is true the engineering work of this canal is as bad as it can be, but that was not the fault of the non-professional men. It was not possible to force Lower Canada to construct the Beauharnois Canal; and it was not until the Union that that indispensable link in the navigation was made. In the extreme west, the Welland Canal was seized by a knot of men, and the result of their mismanagement, and their desire to enrich themselves, has cost the country a serious sum. Even off the main route, we have the several projects dictated by private ends, more than by public advantage. There is what is known as the Trent Navigation; and we have at our own door the Georgian Bay Canal. The proprietors of this scheme are also applicants for aid. Possibly they may urge that it would be a just counterpoise to subsidise that scheme, and the Ottawa route together; and that then, justice would be observed, and the various populations equally benefitted.

For our part we do not approach the subject in any local spirit. We wish simply to examine the results which are claimed for the route, and we set entirely out of sight everything else. We will even cease to inquire if anything better can be done. We will take the project as we find it, and we will accept the arguments offered by its advocates. What there is to be gained by spending twenty millions or so by improving the Ottawa navigation? We presume that we need not consider the question of settlement west of Pembroke. It must, indeed, be an enthusiast, who at such a cost wishes to place a few settlers around Lake Nipissing, or send some northern stragglers to Lake Temiscamingue. Some few statistics of the progress of settlement on the eastern shores of Georgian Bay, by the county of Simcoe, will furnish data of what we may expect. We have then

but one ground of advocacy—commercial necessity; a quicker transit for produce between Chicago and Montreal. Nothing seems easier than to establish this argument. The map is opened, and the course shown. "Look" exclaims the advocate, "See instead of going south by Lake Huron and passing through the unpleasant navigation of Lake St. Clair, and so by Lake Erie and the Welland Canal to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, we at once come to the south of the Manitoulin Islands, enter the French River to Lake Nipissing, and taking the Mattawan we go directly by the Ottawa to the Lake Saint Louis, at the foot of the Beauharnois Canal. We positively save 368 miles." "Wonderful!" says the listener. At least one or two generals have said so; men, too, who have the reputation of being good soldiers, and not without sense. But what are these 368 miles really worth in time, and in controlling the course of trade? It is argued that the trip between Chicago and Montreal can be made in 44 hours less time than by the St. Lawrence, and that freights will be reduced in value 37 cents a ton. Here is the result, the cost of which, says Mr. Walter Shanly, who examined the route, will be twenty-five millions of dollars, an expense which takes us only to the city of Ottawa. That is totally independent of any improvement of the Ottawa, itself and the Grenville and Carillon Canals to Lake Saint Louis. How does the matter now stand? It is conceded that the route by the St. Lawrence to Montreal—the most inland Canadian harbor for sea-going vessels—in comparison with that by the Erie Canal to New York, is in every way pre-eminent; that the cheapest and slowest by the St. Lawrence is in every way superior to that by the Erie Canal and the Hudson. The difficulty is not in getting to Montreal. The difficulty is at Montreal. For when you bring produce thither you have no vessels to carry it away to Europe or elsewhere. That is, the vessels are regulated by the imports. So long as these are light, there will be a scarcity of vessels to carry away large cargoes. Therefore, however much you reduce the cost of river navigation, the question is untouched—we will not say unremedied, for literally nothing is done to bear upon it. The comparison may be roughly made that between any given point at the West, and Montreal and New York, there is a difference in time of ten days in favor of the former, at half the cost. What need then is there for any Ottawa Canal, even on the data which those who battle for it pretend to advance in its favor? But are we sure that this very advantage is gained? Does the saving of 368 miles of distance represent a saving of time. The Ottawa route is from Georgian Bay; a canal route in which you