

The Welland Canal.

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\$1,320,655.54.

After leaving the "Galops" we have to travel a distance of 226 miles, partly by the river, but chiefly by Lake Ontario, and then we come to, perhaps, the most important part of our Canal system—the Welland Canal, which connects Lake Ontario with Lake Erie, by carrying the navigation around the famous rapids and falls of the Niagara River. The early history of this work shows what difficulties attended its commencement, and it is obvious that had not the public men of Canada become in time fully alive to the importance of the interests involved in its construction, the Welland would not have been built as soon as it was. It would be impossible within the limits proposed for this sketch to give anything like a full history of the obstacles that impeded for years the successful accomplishment of this all-important outlet for the trade of the western country.

As early as the month of February, 1816, a joint Committee of both Houses of the Parliament of Upper Canada reported on this and other works connected with inland navigation, and Colonel Nichol subsequently introduced a bill to appropriate money for a complete survey of the best route of water communication between Lakes Erie and Ontario, as well as between Lake Ontario and Montreal. No decisive action, however, resulted from this step, and we do not again hear of the project until two years later, when a Committee of the House reported favourably on a petition from the people of Niagara (old Newark), and suggested the formation of a Committee to carry out the work. In 1821 a Commission was appointed to consider the subject of Inland Navigation, and it reported in 1823 in favour of constructing the Welland of such dimensions as would accommodate the class of vessels then navigating the lakes. The result of this report was the incorporation of a private company, on the petition of W. H. Merritt and others, in 1824, under the title of the Welland Canal Company, who proposed to establish the necessary communication by means of a Canal and Railway. They intended running up the natural waters of the Welland River, and to pass across the township of Thorold, tunnelling through the high ridge of land about a mile and a half, and then proceeding directly by a canal to the brow of the high land; then a railway was to descend the high land, and connect by means of another canal with the navigable waters of Twelve Mile Creek, so as to afford the required egress to Lake Ontario. The canal portion was to be of capacity sufficient to accommodate boats of not less than 40 tons burden.

Public meetings were called, surveys made, and other steps taken to excite public opinion in favour of the undertaking; but it will show how little interest was taken, when we mention the fact stated in an official document, that at the ceremony of