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#### CANALS INTERESTING STATISTICS.

CANAL SERVICES TO TRANSPORTATION, ANCIENT AND MODERN—CHEAPNESS OF FOOD AND FUEL—DEVELOPERS OF LOCAL RESOURCES—RIVALS OF RAILWAYS IN ECONOMY—WHAT CANADA OWES TO CANALS.

In our last issue we treated briefly the question of railways, as affording such transportation facilities as had been and were of incalculable service to commerce. References were made to the system of private ownership and working of these roads and government ownership and working as well as the mixed system of government ownership of railways, but their operation by private companies under long leases. The subject might have been extended to much greater length, but, as our space is very limited, the narrative of railway history and statement of the railway situation were presented in a very condensed form. It was, however, sufficiently long to exhibit what had been done to provide the world with railways since their first introduction, early in the last century, and to show that for the increase of the productive power of a State, nothing is more important than the extension of means of communication.

We propose to give a very brief sketch of the record of canals and their services, more especially, of these magnificent waterways in Canada. A committee of the British House of Commons, in 1870, reported in regard to the canals of Ireland, "The effect of opening lines of inland navigation, canals, has been, improved agriculture, equalization of prices and fuel in different districts, doing away with the danger of scarcity in both necessities, and advancing the general improvement of the people by creation of new, continuous and constant demand for labour."

This equalization of the supply of food and consequently of prices, is well illustrated by the fact that London, in the days before canals, was occasionally short of food supplies, while not far away mutton was selling at five farthings or less than 3 cents a pound, and other farm products in proportion, because there were no means of carrying them cheaply to market. Old settlers in Ontario tell of the products of their farms having had hardly any money value, as they were without a market.

The convenience of water transport must have been one of the earliest experiences of the human race. An uprooted tree naturally suggested a boat and a river being obstructed as naturally suggested its course being widened and extended so as to form a canal. Hence, such artificial waterways were quite familiar to the dwellers in the earliest ages of recorded time. Canals are known to have been built both for supply water and for navigation purposes in regions now only famous for the antiquity of their extinct civilization. The pioneer of secular historians, Herodotus, expresses his wonder at the canals of the ancient world. China, as in other things, in this respect was many centuries ahead of modern nations, it was intersected with canals before the greater part of Europe had been peopled. The Suez canal may be said to be the revival of one in that region, which was built over 3,000 years ago, and abandoned owing to its becoming blocked with sand, a fate which was predicted of the Suez canal by such eminent engineers as Stephenson and others.

One of the most momentous events in canal records, is the building of one by the Duke of Bridgewater, reaching from his coal fields at Worsley, to Manchester, which led to others by which Liverpool, Hull, Birmingham, Bristol, London and scores of small towns were brought into more or less direct communication by vessels. When the Bridgewater canal was opened, the price of coal in Manchester fell 50 per cent., by which manufacturing was stimulated. At that time \$3 per ton was charged for carriage between Liverpool and Manchester, about 40 miles, and \$9 per ton land carriage. What a terrible burden these rates were on trade; they were absolutely prohibitive of the transit of such goods as are now carried by millions of tons every year. No wonder one letter carrier in those days was enough for all Liverpool, and that all the letters from and to that city were carried on horseback.

England's foreign trade, when the canal system was commenced, amounted to \$150,000,000 yearly, or only one-third that of Canada this year. The increased facilities for transport caused such a volume of exportable goods to be poured into the great ports of England, and so enormously increased the purchasing power of the people as to increase the imports so that, by necessity, a larger class of sea-going vessels were built, and engineers turned their attention to the utilization of steam as their motive