

THE CHIGNECTO SHIP RAILWAY,

—THE—

SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BAIE VERTE CANAL.

Brief Review—Historical
and Political.

Col. Morse, R. E., Chief of
Royal Engineers.

One hundred years ago.

The Battleground between
French and English.

A Highway for Defence in
Time of War.

R. C. Minnette, P. L. S.

Francis Hall, C. E.

The first proposal for a canal to connect the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence with the Bay of Fundy was made during the French regime by the Abbé de la Loutre, the enterprising leader of the French colonists of Acadie.

In 1783 Colonel Robert Morse, Chief of the Royal Engineers, was ordered by Sir Guy Carleton, Commander-in-chief of His Britannic Majesty's forces in North America, to make a report on the "state of the defences, with observations leading to the further growth and "security of the colony of Nova Scotia," which then included New Brunswick and a part of the State of Maine. In this report Colonel Morse suggested "the idea of opening a water "communication between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Bay of Fundy," which, he said, "would be attended with good effects," and he spoke of "the many and great advantages "which would result to the country from such a communication."

In this respect all the engineers who have studied the project from that date have been in perfect accord with Colonel Morse, who, however, looked upon such a communication mostly from a military and naval point of view. He regarded the Canal as a means of naval defence, whereby war vessels could pass from sea to sea for the purpose of attack or defence without running the gauntlet of a hostile fleet on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia.

This isthmus of Chignecto is historic ground. Two-and-a-half centuries ago Fort Lawrence was the headquarters of Chevalier de la Vallière, the Seigneur of Chignecto and Governor of Acadie. From his day until the fall of Quebec the country within sight was almost continually the theatre of stirring action. The French regarded the possession of the Isthmus of Chignecto of strategic importance as a half-way station between Port Royal and Louisburg, Cape Breton, on the one hand, and Quebec on the other.

The English fought and struggled for its possession, as it afforded the French a base of operations from which the English settlements could be harassed. The tide of combat rolled around it intermittently for 150 years. It has been captured and recaptured in the French and Indian wars, and during the American revolution a small army of volunteers from the neighbouring republic besieged Fort Cumberland.

The heights of Fort Cumberland have frequently beheld fleets of war-ships flying the Lilies of France, and the White Cross of St. George. It ranks with Louisburg and old Port Royal in historic interest and importance, and was rightly considered one of the keys of Canada.

Should there be war between Great Britain and any European power there is no doubt that a highway for vessels of war, such as gun boats and torpedo boats, would be of the greatest possible advantage to Great Britain and Canada in the defence of the Maritime Provinces.

In 1822 the Government of New Brunswick instructed Mr. Robert C. Minnette, Provincial Land Surveyor, to make the first actual survey of a canal, which he accomplished in that year.

In 1825 Sir Howard Douglas, Governor of New Brunswick, employed Mr. Francis Hall,