

NAVIGATION OF THE LOWER ST. LAWRENCE.—The Quebec *Chronicle* of Wednesday contains an ably written letter on the above subject. The writer says that "he does not believe in the navigation of the Gulf and River during the whole winter months;" but he contends that it could be kept open later in the year and opened earlier, so as to be closed for no longer period annually than about two months.

"Why," he asks, very fairly we would say, "should our ocean steamers, or our steamers plying with the Lower Ports, cease their regular trips in the latter end of October, or early in November, when sailing vessels are seen every year, with very few accidents comparatively, navigating the River and Gulf of St. Lawrence as late as December?"

The writer then goes on to say:

"I must here note that it is a known fact, generally admitted by every experienced seaman in the Lower St. Lawrence, that there is no salt water ice formed in the Gulf before the month of January, to impede navigation in the least. But let us suppose that the fresh water ice about or below Quebec in December, might be in some seasons an impediment to steamers going up beyond the Traverse; why should they not run to and from River du Loup, or thereabouts, after a fixed period, say the first of December; and there land mails, passengers and light freight, if it was found impracticable for heavy freight, which even dispensed with at that season of the year, would be of very little importance, at least for the first few years, until the object in view would be attained, and experience would have suggested improved means of supplying the wants of trade."

Holding these opinions, the *Chronicle's* correspondent is, of course, anxious to have their correctness tested. The manner in which he purposes to have this done is as follows:

"I would then suggest that one of the Government boats, such as the *Lady Head*, and one of the Gulf Ports S. S. Company's boats, say the *Gaspe*, (both being screw boats), should be chosen for the purpose. After the fifteenth of November, the Government might double the postal allowance to the *Gaspe*, to enable the Company to pay the extra charge that would be made for insurance at that season; or else have the boat insured at the charge of the Province. These two boats might ply weekly till the first of December between Quebec and Pictou, each going the ordinary route they have followed this summer. After the first of December, should there be too much ice about Quebec, they might ply between River du Loup and Pictou, and this without any inconvenience, as, for the first year, they should be expected to take very little freight, if any, in these late trips; and consequently could take in at Pictou coals for the round trip. As to their ports of calling between River du Loup and Pictou, I do not know of any reason why they could not land mails and passengers, at some point outside the harbors, if they could not get to the very wharves, inside the rivers. The last trip of both boats would be down to Pictou, of course, and from thence to Halifax, where they should remain during the winter, or perhaps be employed to some other purpose by the Government."

"In the ensuing spring, the first boat could leave Halifax, say about the fifteenth of March, for the first year; and having to enter the Gulf by St. Paul's, might make a straight course for Baie des Chaleurs, calling at the Magdalen Islands to land mails, which, for that purpose, might be sent to Halifax during the winter; and also pick up the unfortunate sailors, who, being wrecked on those Islands every fall, have to spend there a long and dreary winter. The Baie des Chaleurs and Bay of Gaspe, I am positive the steamers would find sufficiently clear of ice to land mails and passengers outside the harbors, at some point at the entrance of the bays."

"The boats could follow this route to River du Loup without any great difficulty for the first few trips, or at least till about the fifteenth of April, after which they could undoubtedly reach Quebec, if not before, and this they can always ascertain by telegraph at Father Point."

Whether the correspondent be right or wrong in his views, there can be no doubt whatever as to the importance of the subject of which he treats. It is to be hoped the matter may receive the attention of the Government, for even where the Intercolonial Railroad completed, the expense of carrying freight over it between Halifax and Quebec must always be a serious drawback to its utility in a commercial point of view.—*Montreal Witness*.

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The Canadian Monetary Times.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 19, 1867.

A VERY interesting discussion took place in the Constitutional Convention, now in session at Albany, on a proposition to enlarge the Erie canal. As the canal now stands it has fifty-seven double and fourteen single locks, one hundred and ten feet long by eighteen feet wide, and is navigated by canal boats, ninety-seven feet long and seventeen and one half feet wide, which draw five to six feet of water and carry two hundred tons. It has been recommended that the canal should be enlarged so that the locks would admit boats two hundred feet long and twenty feet wide, carrying a cargo of five or six hundred tons. Those who advocate the enlargement do so on the ground (among others) that it will cause a great increase of tonnage passing through the canal and give an adequate outlet to the ever increasing product of the Western States. This has been met by an able argument that discloses facts of the greatest interest to all concerned in the various highways to the ocean. One of the delegates, Mr. Conger, treated the subject in a manner well calculated to attract serious attention to the results of his research. Without accepting his conclusions as final, or his figures as unimpeachable, we must admit that it will be a difficult matter to controvert many of his statements.

By his calculation, it appears that the Erie Canal tonnage from the Western States increased ninety-nine per cent. from 1852 to 1861. In fact, from 1822 to 1864 the per centage of increase varied so little, that an increase of a half per cent. over ninety-nine per cent. is all that can be made out. He estimated, therefore, that from 1866 to 1884, allowing the same average rate, the period embraced will show only one hundred and one per cent. of increase. He then undertook to correct, what he called, the remarkable statements which appear in reports regarding the capacity of the great West for the production of food. The sum total of all the acres in the United States somewhat exceeds 1,570,000,000. The acres in the

eight States, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin, including ponds, lakes, bogs, &c., sum up a little over 318,000,000, of which 285,000,000 are said to be capable of being put under cultivation, and one-sixth only of this immense area is as yet cultivated. Were there 285,000,000 of acres occupied by farms and distributed between improved and unimproved acres, as all the farms in the country are, and on the same average, the increase in amount under cultivation would not be over two per cent.; and, if every acre were in a farm, and every farm received the attention which the farmers of the West are now giving to their lands, at best, the amount under the plough and under farming care could not be increased more than two and a half per cent. Every farm embraces a certain portion of waste, pasture, or what is called unimproved land. Taking all the farms of the United States, of land enclosed and cultivated, we find that the improved portion is a little over 163,000,000 of acres, while the unimproved portion of such farms is a little over 240,000,000, or for two parts under cultivation, three parts are unimproved. It should be considered further, that a large portion of this land stretches away beyond the line where it is possible to raise even corn. In fact, let the West do its utmost, let its States be fully populated, and let every acre that is capable of being occupied and put under ordinary farming management, be taken in it cannot, within the next half century, develop its production of wheat and corn beyond the present rate more than one hundred per cent. In 1860, the United States produced 173,000,000 bushels of wheat, or 5½ bushels to each inhabitant. The Western States produced 102,250,000, or 10 bushels to each inhabitant; the Middle States 30,500,000, or 3½ to each inhabitant; the Pacific States 7,660,000, or 13 8-9ths to each inhabitant; and the New England States about 1,000,000, or about 11½ quarts to each inhabitant. From present indications, the question in regard to the supply of cereals, especially of wheat, is not entirely to be determined by the production of the Western States, or the facilities for the transmission of the products of their farms to the seaboard. Of the 1,254,000,000 bushels of grain of all sorts produced in the United States in 1860, the Western States yielded 674,000,000, the Middle States 208,000,000, the Southern States 348,000,000, the New England States 25,000,000, while the State of New York produced 79,000,000. In ten years, from 1850 to 1860, the increase in proportion to the population, taking the States and Territories together, of the amount of grain produced was only eighty-seven hundredth of a bushel to each individual. Therefore, even if population increase, if farms be multiplied, if the work of cultivation go on, unless the increase from 1860 to 1870 be much more rapid than from 1850 to 1860, a very small fraction of a bushel will represent the extra gain in the cultivation of grain. But there is another important consideration—the home consumption is increasing. Thirty-one millions of people have to be fed, and eighty-nine millions of domestic animals have to be provided for, and as the yield increases, the home demand keeps pace with it.