

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine

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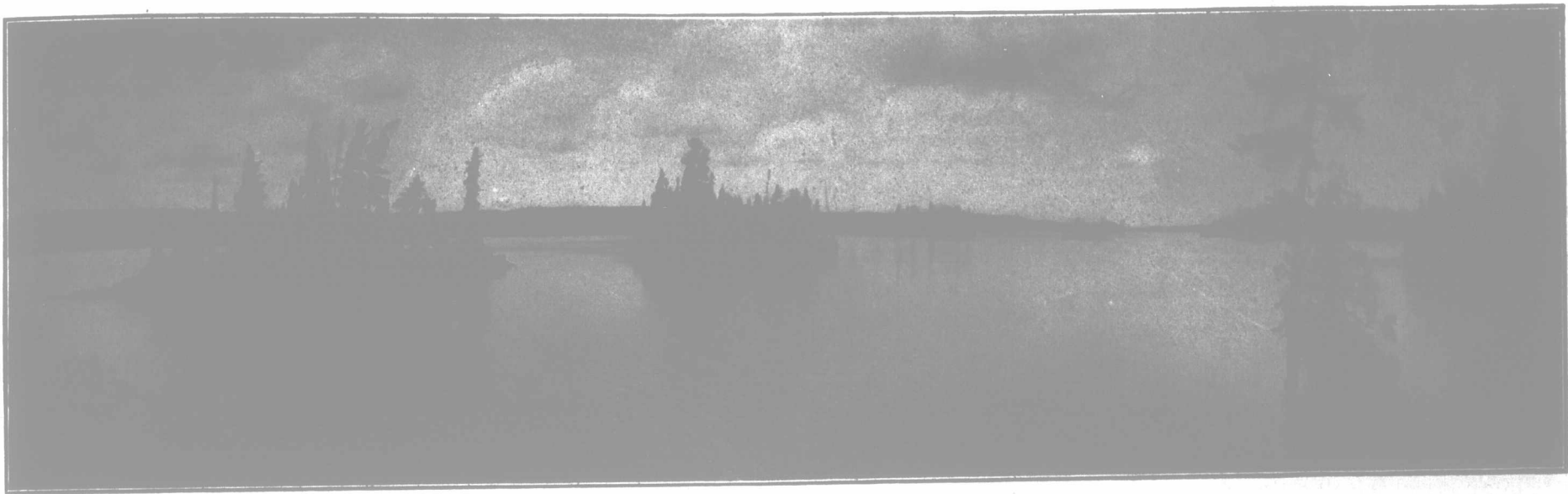
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Proposed Georgian Bay Canal, Canada's New Waterway

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The recent congestion of the grain traffic at Georgian Bay ports and the apparent inability of the railways to handle the traffic offered to them by upper-lake steamers in a reasonable time has been a source of much anxiety to everyone interested in the progress and prosperity of Canada. We are but at the beginning of the development of the Northwest, yet here we have the assertion made that unless speedy means are provided to prevent a recurrence of the vexatious delays in unloading grain vessels at Midland and Parry Sound, there will be great loss to the farmers of the West and incidental injury to all the allied interests. The fact is strikingly sent home to us by the statements of Mr. McLaren, M. P. for North Perth, who has just returned from a trip to the Northwest extending over the harvest months. Mr. McLaren is not generally over-optimistic in his views regarding Canada's advancement, but he is so struck with the progress of the Northwest that he asserts we may look next year for an increase in the wheat crop of the country to the extent of forty per cent. over the present year. The problem will be how to market it so as to secure for the grower a fair return for his labor. It is apparent that the present facilities for handling the crop are defective when Georgian Bay is reached. The trouble is to provide means to take the grain from the Bay to the seaboard. We will have the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway by and bye. It will give much help in the solution of the transportation problem; but it is quite evident that this is not all that is required. Indeed, the first effect of the construction of its branch to the head of the system of inland navigation at Port William will be to greatly aid in increasing the traffic by rail to the head of Lake Superior, which will in turn add to the freight requiring to be handled at lower Georgian Bay ports, en route to the seaboard. We may expect the railway companies to continue

their efforts to provide cars for conveying the grain from Midland, Parry Sound and other ports to the ocean steamship; but there is a limit to what railway men will be inclined to do in this respect; we cannot expect the railway managers to go on providing an indefinite quantity of rolling stock for use during a comparatively short season, to be laid up the remainder of the year.

There are many who believe that only by the construction of a waterway connecting Lake Huron with the St. Lawrence via the Ottawa River can the reasonable prosperity of Northwestern Canada be fully assured, and we await the report of the experts who have been surveying the proposed route of the Montreal, Ottawa and Georgian Bay Canal with a more than passing interest. This is likely to be presented to Parliament at its ensuing session, and much may depend upon the results that have been ascertained.

It is intended that this new waterway shall extend from the mouth of the Ottawa River near Montreal to the Georgian Bay. Unlike the system of canals that connect the inland lakes on the borders of the United States, it will be an all-Canadian canal, from the Great Lakes to Atlantic tide-water. It will extend up the Ottawa River to the mouth of the Mattawa, and from thence by the last-named stream to a chain of small lakes on "the height of land," through which it will go to Lake Nipissing, which it will enter at the now prosperous town of North Bay. From the south-west corner of Lake Nipissing the canal will proceed by way of French River, at the mouth of which it will enter Georgian Bay.

Some doubts have been raised as to the feasibility of this great waterway. But from the day—sixty years since—when the Duke of Wellington first proposed the construction of the canal, to the present, eminent engineers who have looked into the scheme have been unanimous in their declaration that there are no undue obstacles in

the way. Marcus Smith, the eminent civil engineer, has declared that there is no physical difficulty in the way. Mr. Wicksted, C. E., considers the conditions most favorable. The water supply, he says, is ample, and the facilities for constructing locks are phenomenal. A. M. Wellington, another authority, says: "The finest place upon the globe for a deep-water canal is the Ottawa River route." Andrew Bell, C. E., asserts that "there probably is no river on this continent from which so large an available amount of power can be obtained. The falls and rapids are distributed in such a manner that it is possible to make use of a very large percentage of the power. Walter Shanly, C. E., believes that with the waterway established the Ottawa Valley might become the greatest milling country in the world. Sir William Van Horne maintains that the construction of the waterway should be of great benefit to the general trade and commerce of the country. And Mr. Higman, Dominion Electrician, says: "The power that could be used for electrical purposes is infinitely superior to Niagara for the reason that the power at Niagara is confined to a radius of, say, 40 miles, and the Ottawa River affords power along four hundred miles at convenient distances. The electric power could be used as fuel for the smelting of iron, and the country all along the route abounds with iron; it could be used for railway purposes, for canal purposes, and an endless variety of purposes. The generating stations would occur at such convenient intervals that they would only stretch from thirty to forty miles either way, so that there would be a continuous current right along the whole route." The editor of the New York Engineering News speaks of the proposed canal as being on a route provided through Canadian territory for American commerce. Nor have statesmen been backward in recognizing the importance of the proposed great waterway. Sir John Macdonald as well as Sir Wilfrid Laurier have both looked with favor on the proposition, and the late Hon. Alex.