

My Lord,

As the Rideau Canal, in this Province, has occupied the attention of Parliament, I beg leave to submit to your consideration my views on the subject, in the expectation that you may be pleased to use your influence, in order to put a stop to the execution of it upon the present impulsive scale.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your Most Obedient Servant,

JOHN CAREY, Editor of the Observer.

RIDEAU CANAL.

Remarks of the EDITOR of THE OBSERVER.

This "grand and magnificent undertaking" from which the public were led to anticipate such vast and important advantages, has, through the secret influence of some ignorant or interested individuals, dwindled into a ditch! Orders have been received from a law to make the locks of the same dimensions as those of the Lachine canal, i. e. 108 feet long, 20 feet wide, and five feet deep!

The cause of these unexpected and impolitic orders, is unknown to us: we fear the nonsensical jargon of Mr. Hume on Canadian affairs, has been paid so much attention to by ministers, that those opposed to the security, happiness, and prosperity of this extensive and fertile province, have had it in their power, to defeat the recommendation of His Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland and the late lamented Commander of the Forces.

It must be within the recollection of our readers, that His Excellency felt more than an ordinary interest in this undertaking; that he announced to parliament, last session, "that the canal would be made on a scale more extended than he had ventured to assert; and that an officer of rank and science had arrived for the purpose of superintending its execution."

"This information was highly gratifying to every man in the community; and upon it our sanguine hopes of seeing a canal commensurate to the wants and extent of this fertile country, rested."

But, how bleak and barren is the present prospect? The Lower-Canadians, in order to enrich Montreal and secure a monopoly of commerce, beneficial to themselves and injurious to the interests of Upper-Canada, have made the Lachine canal for boat navigation—the Directors of the Welland canal, in order to advance the price of their own lands in the neighbourhood of Saint Catharines, extinguished the hope of seeing Steam-vessels ascend from Lake Ontario to the Upper lakes; and to cap the climax, the British government, misled, no doubt, by ignorant or interested individuals, is, contrary to the wishes of His Excellency and the whole province, pursuing the same impolitic and pitiful system.

When Colonel By, military engineer, arrived here, we did expect, knowing him to be a gentleman of the most enlightened and liberal policy, that the Rideau Canal would be made on a scale sufficiently large, not only to answer present but future purposes; but this fond expectation, we lament to state, is blasted.

That this canal, small as are the dimensions of its locks and their unsuitableness for military, naval, or commercial purposes on an extensive scale, will prove of great advantage to the section of the country through which it passes, no man can deny; but, beyond that section, its benefits will be but little felt.

Viewing the extent of this canal—the short distance to cut, (31 miles) to open steam-navigation between Lachine, in Lower-Canada, and Michilimackinac in Upper-Canada, (a distance of 110 miles)—and taking into consideration the commercial and agricultural interests of the country, we cannot avoid condemning the weak, delusive and impolitic plan adopted by ministers. Surely, if the government and the country secure power and derive profit from a canal formed for row-boats, the security and profit arising from it, if formed for steam-boat navigation would be ten-fold!

It is termed a military canal. What nonsense! It does not merit the term—nor will it, according to our views, answer the purpose intended. If a military canal be necessary for the defence and protection of Upper-Canada, let it be made on a scale that will enable us, in case of disaster or defeat, to regain what may be lost—if it is not

confined to the tardy transportation of troops, arms, ammunition, stores and provisions; but let the locks be made on a scale sufficiently large to receive vessels of 140 feet keel and 40 feet beam, and we can build and equip, at pleasure, steam-war vessels on any part of the canal, and despatch them to Lake Ontario; and except the locks be made upon this enlarged scale, we venture to assert, that the canal, so far as relates to military and naval operations, will be productive of nothing but disappointment & disaster.

It must be evident to every man who witnessed the operations carried on in Upper-Canada during the late war, that nothing but our naval ascendancy on the lakes, in case of future hostilities, can save this province from the grasp of the enemy—an enemy who have convinced us that they can, like the natives of the fast-anchored isle, give and take blows.

From the revolution that has taken, or must shortly take place in naval and military affairs by the application of steam, our ascendancy can only be maintained by its power—and most certain, upon that power and its application, the fate of this province will hang.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that our naval power should be annihilated, would a canal of five feet water, its locks 20 feet wide, enable us to overcome the disaster? We say, No! Something more than the mere conveyance of troops, ammunition, stores, &c. will be required to retrieve our loss. Ships will be necessary: how are they to be obtained? Surely, not by building them on the shore of a lake in the possession of a bold, crafty and victorious enemy? It is true, we may retain possession of the naval dock-yard at Kingston; but, the conveyance of material for ship building to that port, would occupy more time than it would take to build and equip them on most parts of the canal. Therefore, the locks should be made of the dimensions suggested by us: for, if made upon the present narrow, impolitic plan, and once defeated, our power and our hopes, must vanish for ever!

If the canal should be executed according to the scale now and heretofore suggested by us, it would, perhaps, form one of the greatest and safest naval and military arsenals in the world.—Secured by narrow and well-guarded passes, and an impenetrable forest, an enemy could approach it—the dry and wet-docks furnished by it, at a very trifling expense, would be sufficient for the whole British navy; and the expense of completing it on this grand & enlarged scale, would not incur more than an additional expenditure of 15 per cent, upon the sum appropriated for the completion of the canal on the smaller scale.

It may appear doubtful, that an additional expenditure of 15 per cent on the sum required for the completion of the canal on the smaller scale, would be sufficient to make it on the larger. But, when it is understood, that the width of the smaller canal, (60 feet) is sufficiently spacious for the larger; and that 13 or 15 of the locks, are so nearly formed by chasms in rocks, that but very little filling in, or excavation is necessary, that doubt, we trust, will be removed.

These observations merit the serious attention of Earl Dalhousie, Sir Peregrine Maitland & Colonel By; for, this canal will be a criterion whereby future generations and future administrations, may decide upon their wisdom. We think it impossible that they would approve of the canal on the smaller scale, because it can neither add to our military nor naval security. But, in after times, when its defects will be felt the error will be ascribed to them: for no man will believe, that a nation all great and powerful and liberal, as Great Britain now is, would, without the recommendation of these exalted personages, risk, for a paltry saving, the glory

of her name, and the security and true interests of this extensive colony.

Expedition, which is the life and soul of commerce, of war and of every undertaking, and to which Nelson and Wellington ascribed all their achievements, will be destroyed if the canal should be made pursuant to the late order. From Kingston to the Ottawa, (a distance of 133 miles) the cutting and embankment necessary to complete the canal, will not exceed 30 miles—103 miles being already formed by a chain of navigable lakes and rivers. Should the canal be executed on the smaller scale, the boats employed on it must be rowed the whole distance, as a towing-path, (if one could be formed, which we very much doubt) would cost 3 times as much as the excavation and embankment.

From this statement it is evident, that all that is required to complete a steam-navigation from Lachine to Michilimackinac, is the enlargement of the locks on the Rideau and Welland canals, the benefit of which in following up advantages or repairing losses, in time of war, would be incalculable both to our army and navy.

Boats, ammunition, stores, &c. starting from Lachine in a steam-boat, would arrive at Kingston in 50 hours—if the canal be made for row-boat navigation, as is now determined on, the trip will occupy a week—in case of adverse wind not less than a fortnight!

When we look to Great Britain and view the statesmen at the helm of affairs—gentlemen whose ideas are not chained down to the fleeting occurrences of the passing moment; but whose great and comprehensive minds are occupied in devising and arranging plans for the benefit of future generations, we think it impossible, that, if they were in possession of all the circumstances of the case, an object of so much importance to the government and the country, as the navigation of the Rideau canal by steam-vessels, would be sacrificed on account of a paltry saving of a few thousand pounds.

We entered so fully into this subject in previous numbers, in order to point out its advantages as a commercial navigation, and the great revenue that must arise from it, that a repetition is unnecessary. Every man is convinced of its utility and productiveness—all are satisfied that the revenue of the canal will be sufficient to liquidate, within seven years after its completion, the whole expense of making it.

Whilst writing on this subject, we would most willingly address a few words to our representatives; but, when we look back on their past conduct, and view the rejection of bills and measures of vital importance to the happiness and prosperity of the colony, all hope of making an impression on their hard minds vanishes; and, therefore, we fear we shall have to give them up to their constituents as incurable!

As many of our readers may be unacquainted with the line of country through which the canal passes, a statement may not be uninteresting. From Kingston to the Rideau (a distance of 63 miles, and 134 feet 10 inches of an ascent,) the land is of very little value, being composed of rock the greater part of the distance. From the summit level, at the Rideau to the Ottawa, (a distance of 65 miles, and 285 feet of a descent) the land is of the first quality. The route comprises a rise and fall of 437 feet, which are to be surmounted by 50 locks. No canal can furnish a more abundant supply of water or finer falls for Hydraulic purposes than this, which will be fed by innumerable lakes, one of which (the Rideau) is 40 miles long, from 11 to 37 miles wide, and from 12 to 40 feet deep. Indeed the water power of this canal would be sufficient to propel the whole of the machinery in Great Britain and Ireland.