

THE GEORGIAN BAY SHIP CANAL.

By J. C. G. Kerry.*

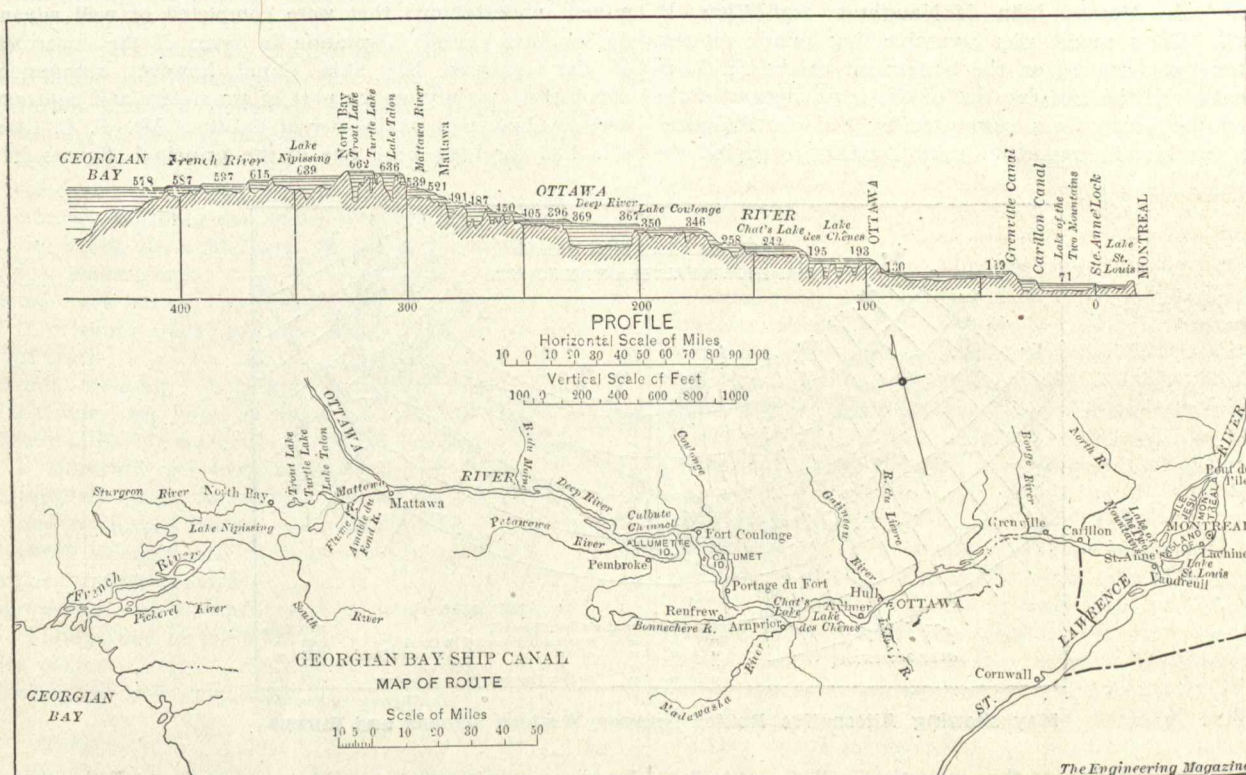
The recent growth of population and industrial activity in the Canadian Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta has once more drawn the attention of the Canadian public to one of the oldest transportation routes on the continent, that which, following the Ottawa Valley, extends from sea level at Montreal, via the Ottawa and French Rivers, to the upper lake level at French Harbor, in the Georgian Bay. Historical evidence shows that this was, in common with most of our great traffic routes, an established and much-used pathway before the advent of European colonization in North America. The Georgian Bay route, as it is commonly called, was used by the first white man to reach the upper lakes, Samuel de Champlain; and it was, perhaps, fitting that the surveys for a modern waterway along the natural route that he followed should be completed, and their results announced, while the tercentenary of his settlement in Quebec was being celebrated with pomp and circumstance by the representatives of three great nations.

Champlain founded Quebec in 1608, and his followers immediately commenced working their way westward by way

the improvement of natural routes of such evident importance is being undertaken, it can be readily answered. Until the present decade Canada has had no need of transportation facilities of the highest order between the upper lakes and the Atlantic; her north and her north-west have lain unoccupied save by the trapper and the fur trader, and practically no all-Canadian traffic has been afloat on her inland seas. At the same time the uncompromising commercial hostility of the United States has prevented its Western people from benefiting in any way by these great waterways, the American tariff laws making the handling of American import trade via Montreal a commercial impossibility.

The natural advantages of the Ottawa Valley and Trent Valley routes were recognized at an early date by the Canadian railways, and to-day the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway follows Champlain's route up the Ottawa River, while the Grand Trunk Railway has for many years sent its Western grain traffic by the path which that explorer travelled from the Georgian Bay to the eastern end of Lake Ontario. The efficiency of the railway has materially delayed the advent of the canal.

Following Champlain to the West came the Jesuit mis-



Plan and Profile of the Projected Route of the Georgian Bay Ship Canal.

of the Ottawa River, choosing this route because that via the St. Lawrence River was barred by the hostile Iroquois from their settlements in what is now the State of New York; this accounts for the early use of the northern route just as at a later date the hostility of the United States to British interests accounted for the building of the Rideau Canal in preference to the opening up of the navigation of the St. Lawrence River. By 1613 Champlain had penetrated inland as far as the present town of Pembroke, and in 1615 he made his memorable journey to the Georgian Bay and thence via the Trent Canal route to Lake Ontario. To-day the canalization of the Trent waters, commenced by the British Government about 1835, and then abandoned on account of political disturbances in Canada, is rapidly approaching completion, and the canalization of the waters of the Ottawa and French Rivers is one of the major projects under consideration by the Canadian Government.

If any question is asked regarding the late date at which

sionaries, whose "Huron Mission" is, perhaps, the most picturesque and saddest incident in Canadian history. It is over two hundred and fifty years since that mission was wiped out in the annihilation by the Iroquois of the people to whom it was sent, but the writings of its members as recorded in the "Relations des Jesuits" made the Georgian Bay route familiar to western Europe centuries ago. It is worth noting that recently the main lines of the great lake and rail terminal which the Grand Trunk Railway is building at Tiffin, on the Georgian Bay, were deviated to avoid the ruins of the old headquarters of that pioneer mission.

By the same route came the Sieur de la Verendrye almost a century later on that expedition which brought him finally, as the discoverer of the far North-West, to the Rocky Mountains. Later, for a short time after the conclusion of the American War of Independence in 1783, Montreal became the centre of the fur trade and the Ottawa Valley and the French River its highroad. The short and savage struggle for the commercial mastery of the North-West between the North-Western Fur Trading Company of Montreal and the Hudson Bay Company brought the route into a prominence which ceased when the contract ended in the amalgamation of the two companies into that great corporation which for

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