

uncertainties and the dangers of ocean navigation have been overcome ; it is due to these agencies if we are to-day so intimately bound up by a community of interests. After this rapid sketch of the progressiveness of the age and the cause that have so much contributed to the diffusion of the world's wealth, I now turn to my subject proper, viz : the influence of railways on continental traffic and their bearing upon the natural and artificial watercourses of the United States and the Dominion of Canada, including the question of canal enlargement for the purpose of attracting the western trade to the St. Lawrence route.

PAST USEFULNESS OF WATERWAYS

Before the days of railways, our waterways were the principal channels for the exchange of traffic, as well as for reaching the seaboard. Both from public and business men, they consequently received much attention with a view to their improvement, not only to afford additional facilities to a constantly growing domestic trade, but also under the then unquestionably correct conclusion that, with the removal of impediments to uninterrupted navigation, the great western traffic would ultimately find its way to the sea, through the great channel which Nature had mapped out for it in the River St. Lawrence. But this, as already said, was before the railway age, when no one dreamt of the important rôle the iron horse was destined to play, when all settlements were confined to the lakes and rivers, which then offered the best available means of summer communication between one locality and another, as well as to transport our surplus production to the sea-board in exchange for the wares of other countries, when the best lands of the interior were either utterly locked up or com-