

## THOUGHTS ON DEFENCE.

From a Canadian point of view.

BY A CANADIAN.

(Continued.)

To recapitulate, we have from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to Montreal an uninterrupted navigation for the largest class of sea-going vessels through Canadian territory of 986 miles and from Montreal to Cornwall, or St. Regis, a combined navigation by river and canal of 67 miles, 1053 miles in all perfectly defensible. Defensible, in summer season, by a judicious exhibition of gunboats, directed against an enemy which, on these waters, possesses no corresponding resources, or the means of creating them. The configuration of the "north shore," from the Island of Orleans to Lake Ontario, suggests the idea of a gigantic natural fortress of which Quebec, Montreal and Kingston are three huge bastions, moated by the St. Lawrence, which forms the intermedial curtains, armed by the guns of an ubiquitous flotilla. Until the enemy can, with a superior force, breach this barrier, the whole north shore of the St. Lawrence is unassailable. The south shore may suffer but the suffering will be short. The vain, costly and profitless character of the contest will soon develop itself, and the enemy will cool down, calculate chances, retire discreetly, and, to us a familiar phrase of his own, will "foot the bill."

The series of the St. Lawrence canals recommences at Cornwall, and extends upwards in four divisions connected by navigable reaches, the united length of canal is 32 miles, the whole distance from Cornwall to Kingston 108 miles. The locks on these canals, including the Beauharnois, are 200 x 45, with 9 feet of water on the sills. They are all subject to the same inconvenience, but not the same reproach. In time of war they are liable to quick destruction, but on the upper canals there was no choice of site, the evil was unavoidable. On the Beauharnois canal the remedy was within reach. They were built to subserve commercial purposes and have done their work as is evidenced by the progress of the country. In the event of war, they would be useless. In preparing for a war we must use them as best we may. They may be considered to be opened for navigable purposes between 1st May and 20th November.

There is, however, another line of water communication between Montreal and Kingston lying to the north of the St. Lawrence, and not directly exposed to annoyance or interruption in case of war. It is composed of the Ottawa and Rideau canals, which ascend the River Ottawa to the capital and from the capital extend to Kingston. The whole length of this interior line, from Montreal to Kingston is 246 miles. These works were constructed for military and defensive purposes fifteen years before the St. Lawrence canals were commenced. Although inferior in capacity and convenience, the dimensions of the locks being 134 x 33 and 5 feet water on the sills, they are of great importance as a subsidiary line of defensive transportation, and, failing the St. Lawrence, would be of immense value.

Thus it will be seen that we possess a line of interior defence, re-inforcing our frontier, of peculiar strength and capability, which extends from the ocean to Cornwall, a distance of 1053 miles and a further line from Montreal to Kingston by way of Ottawa, of 246 miles, impenetrable to an enemy. He can put no war ships on our waters below Cornwall and without aid such as this, he could not transport an armed force across the St. Lawrence. Even presuming that he possessed the command of Lake Ontario, and could use the dockyard at Sackett's Harbour without interruption, he could no more run down the rapids above Cornwall under our guns than we could ascend them under his. It must be obvious, therefore, that under these conditions of offence and defence, the north shore of the St. Lawrence, for a distance of 1053 miles, is, as has before been said, unassailable.

From Cornwall to Kingston, and from Kingston to the Sault Ste. Marie, on Lake Superior, the waters of our rivers and lakes divide the frontiers of Canada from those of the United States. From Cornwall to Pointe aux Iroquois the coasts on both sides of the river are equally protected from a descent, by rapids, with intervals which could hardly tempt a predatory excursion by the prospect of a safe return. From Prescott to Kingston, and from Kingston to the entrance of the Welland Canal, at the western extremity of Lake Ontario, these inland waters are navigable by the largest ship that floats, without let or hindrance, beyond an adversary of superior strength and the superiority will rest with the party which can show its strength first.

"If you intend to hold Canada you must command the lakes," was a dictum of His Grace the Duke of Wellington, uttered some 50 years since. But 50 years have made a great change in Canada, and the lessons of wisdom, even though wisdom still, admit of some qualification now. The command of the lakes, although of great importance, is not indispensable to the defence of Western Canada, nor would the loss of it, at the first outbreak of a war, be regarded as irreparable or irrevocable. Railways and turnpike roads now-a-days, supply far greater facilities of communication and conveyance than existed by water way in 1812. Then, any interruption of water communication above Kingston threatened

the soldier with starvation. He might and actually did, march from 300 to 500 miles with his kit on his back and through days provision in his haversack, but when his store was exhausted how was he to advance, how retire, unless replenished. The wild forest, and the war path through the wilderness, offered no supply of food. Stores, therefore, had to be provided beforehand and at given distances, and to be renewed when reduced and his provision could be secured, in sufficient quantity, by water communication alone. Hence we may be able to appreciate the value of the command of the lakes at this time.

But circumstances have changed, and the same importance does not attach to the command of the lakes which was justly assigned to it fifty years since; supplies and conveyance abound, independent of water communication, and, admitting any superiority in the American marine at the first outbreak of war, a brief space would equalize numbers. The first iron-clad gunboat would redress the balance. The operation so skillfully conducted by the French Emperor during the late war in Italy could be easily renewed in Canada. Gunboats could be placed as expeditiously on Lakes Erie, Huron and Ontario as on the Lago di Garda. All that is required to accomplish this object, when the time comes is due preparation now. An invasion of our lake shore by means of shipping, by the employment of a fleet of transports, is made doubtful, by the fact, that the American coasts offer neither ports nor harbours of sufficient capacity to shelter a fleet adequate in number, and sufficiently protected at the point of embarkation; such an invasion would compel combinations, open the separate attack, and to the risks entailed on detachments. Such combinations would be costly and hazardous. They would, indeed, hardly be attempted, superfluously. Nature points out unmistakably the lines of advance upon Canada, and teaches her people how and where to meet them. They are now just the same that they have ever been. Buccaneers expeditions may be made to be repulsed and punished, but our lake shores are protected from expedition in force, by the disability to make them in sufficient strength and with sufficient concert, and by the power of resistance to be found on our coasts, and in the natural defensibility of their approaches. We may also add that the power of modern artillery, and the defensive ingenuity which devised the torpedo, all combine in the present advanced school of civilized warfare, to strengthen artificially such parts of our coasts, as nature has not already fortified.

(To be continued.)

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