

**THE SALE CANAL.**

**VISIT OF MINISTERS.**

The Borough of Sale, in Gipps Land, is connected by railway with Melbourne, and is also within three miles of a navigable stream. This stream is called the Latrobe River, and empties itself into Lake Wellington, the westernmost of the famed series of Gipps Land Lakes. The Sale wharves are at a point on the Latrobe River, about 19 miles from Lake Wellington, and near the junction of the Glenagarry River with the Latrobe. From that point upwards the main stream is known as the Thomson River. Steamers drawing about 6ft. (the maximum) of water, ply on the lakes between the Sale wharves and Bairnsdale; and, in fact, Sale has water communication with the outer world via the Gipps Land lakes entrance, the improvement of which is now proceeding. The short distance of three miles between the Borough of Sale and its wharves has always been a drawback, inasmuch as it has involved the extra handling of goods, and caused great inconvenience to passengers. In the first instance, the town would have been built on the stream had it not been for the low-lying lands on the banks of the watercourse. Several years ago the idea of "taking the lakes" to Sale was mooted. It was, on the other hand, proposed to continue the Gipps Land railway to the wharves. But the latter project was open to so many objections that it was soon abandoned. The railway would have to be carried a long distance on piles over country liable to be flooded; the old settlement would have been seriously injured, if not totally destroyed; and a new township would have had to be built in a most uninviting spot—a morass. As soon as the railway to the metropolis was finished, the people of the district entered upon a serious agitation for the purpose of bringing shipping to the town. There was, however, a preliminary work to be done, and that was the substitution of a swing-bridge over the Latrobe River, just above the wharves for a fixed bridge which spanned it, and was, of course, an obstacle to the extension of the limit of navigableness. The Government recognised the necessity of this improvement, and a capital swing bridge was erected by them about two years ago, at a cost of £11,200.

When Sir John Coode was here some years ago, the Government of the day obtained a report from him as to the project of making a navigable canal to Sale. In his report, dated August 7, 1880, he referred to the necessity of "snagging" the Thomson River for a distance of a little over a mile from the wharves, stating that the width was ample for such craft as might be expected to engage in the trade with Sale. From the point up to which the river should be cleared a canal would have to be cut to Sale. The Thomson River has been cleared for the required distance by the Government, at a cost of £1,500. The depth along this section of the river at low summer level is about 17ft., and the width on the surface at summer level is 80ft. With regard to the canal to connect the town with the river, Sir John recommended that one should be cut that would enable vessels to be brought close to Sale, viz., to within 150 yards of Foster and Raymond streets, which may be considered the centre of the town. He said:—

"These works consist in the formation of a canal about 1½ miles in length, commencing at the point where the swinging basin would be constructed under proposal No. 1, passing across two very sharp bends in the course of the river towards M'Arduill's Gap, and from thence to a point in the western swamp, about 500 yards south-

M'Arduill's Gap, and from thence to a point in the western swamp, about 500 yards southward of the junction of Foster and Raymond streets. From this latter point the canal would be widened out to partake of the character of a floating basin of 200ft. in width, and 1,200ft. in length, the end nearest the town being further widened to 800ft. for a length of 500ft. to enable vessels to turn. Wharfrage might be constructed along the north and eastern sides of this basin from time to time, as the necessities of trade may require, and a branch railway could be readily formed from these wharves to connect with the present line. The bed of the basin, and the canal, would have a uniform gradient of 6in. per mile, the depth at the upper end being 10ft. at low summer level. The bottom width of the canal would be 45ft. throughout, and the permanent side slopes two to one, thus giving a waterway of about 8ft. in width at low summer level, increasing somewhat at the lower end, in consequence of the proposed declivity at the bed. The construction of the canal and basin would necessitate the excavation and dredging of about 140,000 cubic yards of clay and other 'free getting' strata. I purpose disposing of the materials so obtained in the formation of a bank on either side of the canal, as shown on the cross section, also in filling up the old channel of the Thomson, were diverted at the two sharp bends before described, and in raising the level of the land around the proposed basin. In the first instance it would not be necessary to widen out the basin to 200ft., as previously described, seeing that this width can be afforded by dredging at any time hereafter when required. I have therefore calculated that the canal as carried through the southern portion of the basin up to and joining with the swinging site, the excavation for the latter being, however, included, similarly, with a view to curtail expenditure, I have provided only for a length of 250ft. of wharfing, to be constructed at the upper end of the eastern face of the proposed basin. Additional wharfing might be readily added when required. I estimate the cost of the canal and basin, and of the works in connexion therewith, also of 250ft. of timber wharfing, and clearing, and 'snagging' the bed and banks of the Thomson as before explained, at £26,700, inclusive of contingencies, plant, and supervision. To this sum must be added the cost of the swing bridge."

It is proposed to carry out this plan with modifications. For instance, the stuff excavated is not to be utilised for banks on each side of the canal, as it is thought that they would have the effect of retaining water in floods. It will be spread on the low-lying lands in the vicinity.

Lengthy negotiations as to the matter have been carried on between the Government and the Sale Borough Council, and they have now been virtually concluded. The borough council is to undertake the construction of the canal, and to receive from the Government a subsidy of £15,000, the Government lending the balance. All the unalienated Crown lands adjacent to the canal are to be vested in the council, with power to sell or lease them, applying the proceeds to the payment of the principal and interest of the loan. The Government is to connect by rail the basin of the canal with the Gipps Land railway; and a bill is to be passed authorising the council to construct, maintain, and manage the canal. In the Loan Act of last session, a sum of £25,000 for the purpose of the canal was included. In framing this bill, care should be taken to relieve the Government, if possible, from all responsibility for any damage that may be done by the construction of the canal to riparian rights, or in the way of flooding lands. Yesterday the Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Customs visited the district, for the purpose of making inquiries and inspecting the route of the canal. They were accompanied by Messrs. J. B. Patterson, W. M'Lellan, A. M'Lean, A. Harris, F. C. Mason, C. Smith, and P. B. Wallace, M.L.A.'s; Mr. Speight (Railway Commissioner), Mr. A. Wilson (secretary for Ports and Harbours), Mr. W. Thwaites, C.E. (of the Public Works department, who has surveyed and made plans of the proposed work), and Mr. J. G. W. Wilmot. At Traralgon a deputation waited upon the Ministers, and presented (through Mr. J. Peterkin), an address welcoming the Ministers and eulogising generally the Government, to which Mr. Kerferd briefly replied. The party also received a hearty welcome at Sale, where, on arrival, they were entertained at luncheon by the mayor and corporation. Mr. G. H. Wise, the

mayor and corporation. Mr. G. H. Wise, the mayor, occupied the chair, and about 50 gentlemen sat down to the tables. After the usual loyal toasts,

The CHAIRMAN proposed "The Ministry," stating that they had conferred many benefits on the district. Moreover, the thanks of all Australians were due to them, and specially to the Premier, for their efforts to bring about federation. (Cheers.) If New South Wales did not come into the Federal Council arrangement soon she would find herself in a very awkward position. (Cheers.)

Mr. KEARNEY, in responding, said the Premier was prevented by sickness from attending. The other day, when Mr. Service was sick and depressed, he read in *The Argus* a cable message that the Enabling Bill had passed the Imperial Parliament, and the news had a marvellously stimulating effect upon him. (Cheers.) There was no doubt that the Dominion of Australia would be respected by the nations of the earth. An accepting bill would be promptly submitted to Parliament. (Cheers.) Years ago, when visiting Sale, he had said that, if he were a resident of the place, he would not rest until shipping was brought to it. (Cheers.) In these days of competition, it was most important that goods in transit should be handled as little as possible. The Yarra had been improved at Melbourne, it was proposed to construct a canal from Liverpool to Manchester, and Sale was now to have its canal. (Cheers.) The present Parliament had done more good work than any previous Victorian Parliament. In fact, it had passed more measures, and more important measures, than any three previous Parliaments. It would soon go to the country with a record of which it could be proud. (Cheers.)

Mr. LANGRIDGE also responded.

Mr. P. PLATT proposed "Parliament," coupling with it the names of Messrs. M'Lean and A. Harris, the members for North Gippsland.

Mr. M'LEAN, in responding, said there would be some difficulty in preparing the Sale Canal Bill, as there was no precedent for it here. Eight or ten steamers were continually plying on the Lakes, and the existing gap between the head of the navigation and the railway terminus was productive of great inconvenience and loss. (Cheers.)

Mr. A. HARRIS also responded.

Mr. PATTERSON expressed the hope that at the general elections the public would not be

guided by cliques. There was a great difference between parties and cliques. (Cheers.)

Messrs. Mason, M'Lellan, and C. Smith also responded.

The party then drove down to the swing-bridge (which turned well), and inspected several points on the canal route. They returned to Melbourne last night.