

would have justified. It had appealed to the Government of the United States in vain: that Government on whose suggestions and on the plans of whose officers the great dimensions and national character of the work, so pregnant with the expenses which now oppress us, had been adopted. It was embarrassed with debts beyond its ability to pay; and this vast enterprise, upon the completion of which depended the prosperity of so extensive a portion of our country, was not merely languishing, but was about to expire.

Under such circumstances, the convention of 1834 was held: having for its principal objects to lay before the several Corporations interested in this work, its opinion of the condition of the company, and of the means necessary to rescue it from the destruction so imminent and then impending.

For these purposes committees were appointed and empowered to address memorials to the several Legislatures of the United States, of the State of Maryland, of the State of Virginia, and of the State of Pennsylvania. A committee was also appointed to estimate the probable cost of completing the canal, and particularly of that part which was necessary in order to extend it to the vast deposit of bituminous coal in the vicinity of Cumberland; a deposit which, when once attained, cannot fail to develop a degree of wealth to the State unrivalled and without a parallel, and of bestowing, by its immense trade, the most flattering returns upon any cost which has ever yet been estimated for the work.

The Board does not consider it necessary to go farther back in a narrative of the affairs of the company than the period of the convention of 1834. If a knowledge of its affairs beyond this period is desired by any one, it can be found in the several Annual Reports of the company; and that of the general policy and inducements to the undertaking, may be found condensed in the memorial authorized by the Convention to be laid before Congress. But, in order that the opinions of that Convention may be known, as well of the condition of this company at that time as of the means which were then considered adequate to extend the canal to the vicinity of the coal region, it will refer to the reports presented to the convention, and to the memorials which it authorized to the Legislatures