

ductions, the sum of \$1,545,000 remains as the amount now required for completion. This amount, it should be recollected, contemplates certain modifications of plan, which have been advised, (see my report of December 1841,) and is exclusive of interest, back debts, and the cost of superintendence.

Provisions are at present unusually low, labor is very abundant; and the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road, recently completed to Cumberland, running as it does along the opposite side of the Potomac from the Canal, affords facilities for completing the work not heretofore enjoyed—as it will enable the contractors to obtain all their supplies, at cheaper rates than they could otherwise, and, will lessen the cost of some of the masonry to be constructed, by diminishing the expense of the transportation of materials. Nevertheless, I have not deemed it prudent to make any reduction in the estimate, *in the aggregate*, on account of these advantages. Indeed, were it not for them, the estimate would necessarily have had to be increased, to make good the losses consequent on a total suspension of operations.

There is so little at present doing on public works in this country, that the Canal might easily be completed in two seasons. Numbers of efficient and responsible contractors are out of employment, and many of them are anxiously looking for a resumption of the Canal operations. And, as the board is aware, there are now in this office numerous offers from able and energetic contractors, to undertake the completion of the Canal at sums within the estimate,—and who would not desire a longer time for it than that named.

The board, by its order of September 13th 1842, extended my duties so as to embrace a general superintendence of the *finished* Canal. A few remarks therefore, in reference to that portion of the line may not be out of place. For several years, the superintendents of repairs, for want of means, have been unable to do all that was necessary to keeping the *finished* Canal in a good and improving condition; and, in consequence, a greater expenditure than would otherwise have been necessary, is now required to put the Canal in proper order, and keep the navigation uninterrupted. Notwithstanding its present condition however, an expenditure, comparatively not large, would put the Canal in such order that its annual repairs, ordinary and extraordinary, and to the extent called for by sound economy, would not thereafter exceed those of the least expensive public improvements of a similar character in this country. I have no doubt they would fall considerably short. In support of this belief I may state, that the 27½ miles of Canal last finished, between Dams No. 5 & 6, into which the water was for the first time admitted in the Spring of 1839, has not since then had its navigation suspended a single day by a breach; and as the same care was given to the construction of the fifty miles of unfinished line, (so far as the work is done,) as was to that of the 27½ miles, there is certainly good ground for the conclusion, that the upper 77½ miles of the Canal when completed to Cumberland,