

# THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

**Nineteenth Year of Publication**  
**ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY.**

Subscription—Canada and the United States—\$2.00 per annum in advance, or \$2.25 when not so paid; other countries, \$2.50 per annum in advance.

Changes for advertisements or stops should be in not later than Thursday morning.

Advertisements purporting to be news matter, or which profess to express the opinion of this journal, will not be inserted.

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D. W. HUGHAN,  
Publisher.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very large circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific coast than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, DECEMBER 22.

## CHRISTMAS GREETING.

The holiday season is again with us. The Christmas bells are ringing. At this time of the year the feeling of good will is expected to prevail among men more generally than at any other time. Sociability and friendship is for a short period at least allowed to replace or displace business anxieties. Here in Western Canada we have every reason to allow for the full enjoyment of the holiday season. The year now drawing to a close has by no means been an unsatisfactory one. While in the grain growing districts the crop has not been up to the usual standard of excellence, yet it might have been worse. On the whole the country has made substantial progress, and a fair degree of prosperity is being enjoyed. Poverty and want, as it is known in many other countries, is unknown here. In this new country, if we have not many very wealthy men, we have also very few cases of poverty. For those really in need, we are sure help will be freely extended during the holiday season, so that all will be made to feel that this is a time for good feeling and good will among men. Business men are looked to provide the bulk of the assistance for the needy, and they are usually not slow to do their duty in this respect.

The Commercial wishes all its readers a Merry Christmas.

## SPREADING ACCOUNTS.

One of the dangers which constantly beset the average merchant is the tendency to spread accounts. This is a double danger, from the fact that in spreading accounts there is not only the disadvantage of increasing the number of creditors, but also to unnecessarily increase the liabilities at the same time. Where the accounts are kept down to the smallest number possible, it may safely be taken for granted that liabilities are also kept well within bounds. It is certainly a great advantage to the average merchant to have as few creditors as possible. Only those who have exceptional financial standing can afford to buy widely with impunity. When a squeeze comes, the merchant who has kept his accounts down to a small number will certainly stand in a much better position than the one who has spread out liberally in this respect. The larger the number of creditors, the more difficult it will always be to arrange for any desired favor in time of need.

But while the spreading of accounts is a source of danger, owing to the difficulty of arranging with a large number of creditors in time of need, undoubtedly the greatest direct danger resulting from wide buying is the tendency which it exerts to increase liabilities. It is as sure to result in increasing liabilities beyond what is necessary, as is the course of the sun from the east to west. Every additional account is almost sure to add something to the merchant's liabilities beyond what would have been necessary without this account. As the safety of the merchant whose financial position is not strong, lies largely in keeping his stock and liabilities down to the lowest point necessary to meet the demands of his trade, so also his greatest danger is in spreading his accounts, with its necessary ineluctable increase in liabilities.

A representative of a jobbing house which has a large trade in the west, and which has escaped with remarkably small losses during recent years, was heard to remark the other day that when they found a merchant was spreading his accounts freely, they were very careful about selling him goods. He instanced one case of an order they had declined to fill, on the ground that the merchant had too many accounts. Within two years the merchant had assigned. This, he said, was a feature which they watched very closely, and whenever a merchant was suspected of buying widely, his credit was curtailed.

It is surely a great source of strength to any merchant to have as few accounts and as few creditors as he can get along with and meet the reasonable demands of his trade.

## FINAL MANITOBA CROP BULLETIN.

The final official crop report for Manitoba was issued at the close of last week. The wheat crop is placed at 89 bushels per acre, making a total of 13,000,000 in round numbers. While this is a heavy reduction in the wheat crop, it is pleasing to note that a large increase in the production of live stock, poultry, dairy products, etc., is apparent. The production of dairy produce is placed at 2,068,000 pounds of dairy butter, compared with 1,354,000 pounds last year; and creamery at 1,254,000 pounds, compared with 1,002,000 pounds last year. Cheese 1,021,000 pounds, compared with 848,587 last year. Beef cattle exported, 16,000, compared with 12,000 last year. The number of live animals held by farmers shows a good increase in all lines, except sheep, of which latter there is a decrease from 33,000 head last year to 25,800 this year. The decline in the sheep industry is no doubt due mainly to the trouble from wolves, which has rendered sheep raising unprofitable to many farmers. There is a fair increase in the area of land prepared for crop in the spring, the figures standing at 1,558,800 acres, compared with 1,492,000 acres last year.

## THE DAIRY TRADE

### MANITOBA CHEESE.

Manitoba cheese has had considerable advertising of late which has not been very beneficial to the holders of the commodity, owing to what has been said about the poor quality of a portion of the make. This has tended to depress business in the Manitoba product. It is therefore pleasing to be able to say something of a more encouraging nature about this industry.

While there are some factories which have not turned out first-class goods, it should not be taken for granted, as some have evidently supposed, that all our cheese is not good. There are a number of factories which make excellent goods. As a proof of this we are shown a letter this week from a party in Ontario who had received a shipment of our cheese, in which he stated that the goods were fine quality and thoroughly satisfactory. Manitoba makers have carried off first prizes on a number of occasions at the leading exhibitions of the continent. At the great Chicago fair the highest awards obtainable were secured by Manitoba exhibitors of both butter and cheese. Unfortunately more will be heard about one bad lot of dairy goods than is said about scores of shipments of fine goods, and thus the impression is created that all our cheese is medium or poor quality. Just as good cheese can be made here as elsewhere, and those who have heard about a poor lot of Manitoba cheese should not run away with the impression that it is all alike. Buyers need not unnecessarily shun our cheese, for by using care in selecting they will be able to get the quality they desire.

## SHORT WEIGHT PACKAGES.

Considerable inconvenience and annoyance has been caused produce houses by the custom of some creameries of packing boxes short weight and invoicing them as full weight packages. We have a letter from a Victoria, British Columbia, produce house this week, complaining of this practice, and offering to give us the names of creameries which have habitually shipped 56 pound packages, stamped and invoiced at this weight, while containing only 52 to 54 pounds of butter. Where this occurs frequently in the shipments from a creamery, it may be considered as something more than an error, though it might of course result from carelessness on the part of employees of the factory. Of course there is a natural shrinkage in weight on package butter, but not as great as mentioned in our complaints, and usually in packing butter an extra quantity is put in to cover shrinkage in weight. The shrinkage is greater of course where the butter is long time, but under ordinary circumstances does not usually exceed one pound.

## THE LUMBER TRADE.

### CLOSE OF THE NORTHWESTERN MILLING SEASON.

As the mills have shut down because of the closing in of winter, so live cargo shipments ceased for the same reason and the various markets which depend for their pine upon the mills of Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior are taking account of stock and making up their minds whether or not their buying policy of the past season was a wise one. Reports from the head of Lake Superior show that there is a large stock of lumber on docks, with the majority of it unsold. This by itself does not seem to be an unfavorable feature and might indicate that the season has been an unsatisfactory one in the way of lumber distribution, but a study of the conditions at the markets shows a counterbalancing which somewhat offsets the impression made by the mill stock reports. All the markets during the winter and the mills were sold out more closely than ever before. Consequently there was not what sometimes exists for continuous and heavy buying, and owing to the weaker condition of the market, the wholesalers largely declined to buy or ship. Until fall was well advanced they could not be convinced that a general and further decline would take place. What concessions were made on low prices boards etc., only whetted their appetites and they were looking for a decided slump in prices. But the mill men had composed to themselves the advantage they had gained through two years or more of manatory. They refused to

make any material concessions beyond those noted, cheerfully piled up their stocks, and in some cases, when their docks were full, shut down the mill for a time.—American Lumberman.

## THE OTTAWA CUT.

Something of interest about the important industry of lumbering is gathered from the remarks of the president at the recent annual meeting of the Bank of Ottawa. He considers the figure of 800,000,000 or 900,000,000 feet of lumber produced within a radius of five miles of Ottawa city an over-estimate. The total manufacture of sawn lumber, he is informed, does not greatly exceed 600,000,000 feet. Then as to heven pine, the quantity of white and red now held in Quebec is only 1,353,000 cubic feet, against 2,304,000 cubic feet for spruce. This quantity of square and wane pine at Quebec is the smallest on record.

## LUMBER TRADE NOTES.

The demand for southern yellow pine has been unusually large this month and a report an exceptionally good trade doing.

The pulpwood resources of Northern Minnesota are being actively explored by capitalists from various parts of the United States.

Hardwood lumber trade is quiet in Western Canada and the United States at present and there is very little buying movement anywhere.

Manning & McClure, of Stonewall, Man., are putting in a sawmill plant the Gilm district, Lake Winnipeg, the machinery for which they have ordered from the Stuart-Arbutnot Machinery Co., Winnipeg. Capacity about 20,000 feet per day.

S. and Levi Sanders are putting in a small sawmill at Ethelbert, on the Canadian Northern Railway, northern Manitoba, for which they have purchased a plant from the John Abel Co., Winnipeg. The same company has also sold a portable plant to D. Cote, of Otterburn, Man.

Richey & McDonald have purchased a sawmill plant from the Stuart-Arbutnot Machinery Co., Winnipeg, which will be set up at Makinak, in the Canadian Northern Railway. In northern Manitoba. The first car of machinery has been forwarded. The mill will have a capacity of about 30,000 per day.

The lumber mills of Duluth and Superior report their season's operations during 1900 to have resulted in a cut of 416,326,000 feet of lumber as against 427,708,000 feet last year and 423,333,000 feet the year before. The quantity remaining on hand December 1 was 168,238,000 feet as against 114,138,000 a year ago and about the same quantity two years ago.

In spite of the fact that it is something of a foregone conclusion when the lumber manufacturers of the north actually engaged in sawing logs into lumber nor cutting standing pine into logs, the situation is very active to-day, says the Minneapolis correspondent of the American Lumberman. The mild weather of the past few months has given a fresh impetus to building operations, and a large quantity of white pine has gone into consumption. Builders and contractors generally are so rushed with orders that they are worried over the slightest matter which prevents them from working. Minneapolis and St. Paul and the northwestern states are at the beginning of a building boom which promises to rival that of 1898, although in all probability it will not create so much activity as did the previous one in the year mentioned. Building statistics for Minneapolis show that the new structures erected up to December 1 cost over \$1,000,000 in excess of those erected during the entire twelve months of 1898. Should a reasonable amount of mild weather be experienced during December it is more than probable that the record this year will show an excess of \$1,800,000 over any previous year during the decade. In business blocks Minneapolis is experiencing a decided building boom this year, and the same is true of St. Paul, although not so pronounced an extent. During the year two buildings devoted to the wholesale trade, costing nearly \$1,000,000 were built. Three more are in process of construction and plans are on foot to build several others, including a great number of mercantile, as soon as the spring opens. The building boom is not confined to business blocks alone; many fine residences are being erected in all sections of the city.