PROGRESS OF THE COUNTRY.

THE Finance Minister closed a two hours and a half speech with an explanation of the reasons why the volume of Canadian trade was less this year than the preceding one, and gave statistics showing the general progress of the country. The falling off in our total exports last year arose from the great decline in our sales of cattle, horses, &c., to the United States, which decline was no less than $10,000,000. The counterbalancing feature to this, is the fact that our transactions with the Maritime Provinces increased largely during the year. In 1863 we sold them only to the value of $935,000, but last year, our exports to them ran up to no less than $3,418,000 This is a very gratifying fact, and affords grounds to hope that in future the trade between the eastern and western parts of our new Dominion will swell to still larger dimensions.

We are glad to learn that so far during the present fiscal year, the exports of the Dominion have been satisfactory. During the three months ending the 30th Sept., 1866, the amount of our exports was $10,172,142; during the same period this fall, they were $10,946,114 —showing an increase o $773,972. This is a good start, and we hope it is an earnest of a prosperous year.

THE COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL PROSPECTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN CANADA.

GREAT financial and commercial depression exists in the United States. One of the best journals of New York, in a late issue, says:—"Money is scarce, *confidence is greatly* impaired, and the general markets are almost in a state of paralysis. One or two heavy failures have occurred, and this has served materially to heighten the depression" Another reliable paper presents an equally gloomy view. "Since 1857, a year of failure," it says, "failures have not been so common as at present; and business men are of the opinion that if the newspapers were to adopt the system adopted at that time, of printing the daily list of firms that have gone into insolvency, universal distrust and panic must speedily follow." All kinds of trade are dull—e pecially dry goods. Many of the smaller manufactories in New England are stopped, and almost all the rest are running upon half time. "Tens of thousands of operatives through the country," says an authority, "are either deprived of their resources altogether, or are working on half time." The same journal represents the greatest dis ess as existing among all the wholesale and retail merchants. The *Shipping List* is one of the best commercial papers in New York, and it speaks in the same tone. A few days ago it held this language.—"The state of trade was never more unsatisfactory than at present. And after speaking of the universal distrust of the future that prevails among all classes, and the tremendous fall in prices and consequent ruin of merchants who have enormous stocks on hand, it thus concludes.—"This state of affairs is the inevitable reflex of that fictitious prosperity which the country enjoyed during the war—the inexorable penalty affixed to the violation of the natural laws of finance and political economy" Many more extracts of the same nature might be quoted, but enough has been said to show that the financial and commercial interests of the States are in a critical position And that is a fact of vital importance to Canada For, it is needless to observe that a crash in the States would not fail to be followed by a collapse in Canada, unless timely precautions were taken on our part. In order to judge of our condition we will now turn and take a brief and comprehensive survey of the financial and commercial prospects of Canada.

At the outset, it must be remembered that 1867 in the Dominion presents a marked contrast to 1857 Ten years ago the reciprocity treaty existd with the United States, and consequently our business transactions with our neighbours were infinitely greater than they are to-day So that if now a commercial panic was to break out in the States, and was to spread to Canada, it would not have such a wide-spread and disastrous result as the panic of '57 had Again, over-trading has not been carried on to the same extent for the past few years as it was during the few years that preceded 57 Our merchants and business men had their fingers badly burned that year, and the lesson has not been altogether lost on any of them the burnt child dreads the fire. Again, there has not been the mad speculation—the unholy haste to get rich—this year that there was a decade ago. True, in most of the important cities of Canada an advance has of late taken place in real estate but it has been a legitimate increase in value. It has been caused by the increase in population and wealth in those cities. There has been no transmutation of bogs and fens into villages and towns on paper, and no auctioneering off of hundreds of acres of brush and swamp under the captivating description of town and park lots. Hundreds and thousands were ruined by the purchase of such real estate ten years ago, and the wholesome lesson has not been forgotten yet.

Besides this, the crops for the past few years have been very good. The repeal of the reciprocity treaty, it was feared, would have been a great blow to the farming community; but, thank Heaven, that fear has not been realized. New markets have been opened up to Canada, and farmers never received a better price and more constant demand for their grain than they have since the repeal of that treaty. So greatly have the agricultural classes been blessed within the last four years, that they have been enabled to emerge from under a cloud of debt; and from being impoverished debtors, they are now prosperous and independent yeomen. Nor has the ground yielded bountiful harvests alone; the wealth of our mines has at last been brought to light. Iron and copper mining never paid better than they do at present. The gold regions of Madoc are said to yield a hundred dollars to the ton, and less than ten dollars per ton would pay; and this is a discovery of yesterday. The Goderich salt wells is producing an unlimited supply, and its quality, as tested at the Paris Exhibition, is unsurpassed in the world. This, also, is a new discovery. Then there are the oil regions, where fortunes have been lost and made by grasping speculators; but the wealth that has been produced there, has diffused itself over the entire Dominion, and the amount lost to producers by the cheapness of oil has been more than counterbalanced by the gain to consumers Silver mines of great value are also said to have been discovered in the Superior country. In all these discoveries the country has been a gainer, and if there has been speculation in mineral and oil lands, still wealth enough has been got out of those lands to save the public from harm. The land operations of 1857 were of a different character. Then there was all loss and no gain.

It is not alone the agricultural and mining interests that are better off to-day than they were four years ago, but the same may be said of the mercantile and business men. As a general thing, all the various branches of trade and commerce have been active during the past year. What are known as "smashing" businesses have not been carried on to any extent. Moderate profits and quick returns have been the order of the day, and consequently trade is sounder and better able to exist through dull times and to face a crisis, should one be precipitated upon us from the States, than if it had been carried on recklessly as in former years. With a prosperous and independent farming community behind their backs, shop-keepers will have no fear but that they will be able to pay their way and to carry sufficient amount to profit. They must, however, continue to display prudence and economy in their transactions, both with their customers and in their dealings with wholesale houses. With regard to wholesale houses, they have done a fair remunerative business during the past year It must be borne in mind, however, that large houses are generally the first to feel a commercial crisis They have already felt their discounts curtailed by the disturbance of the money market produced by the suspension of the Commercial Bank; and should a crisis happen in the States, they would be the first to feel it in Canada. It is also correct to say that even in such a case a liberal discount policy on the part of the banks would enable the wholesale houses to weather the storm without suffering any material damage That such assistance as is required should be promptly extended if necessary, is the opinion of all who would wish to avert calamity from the most important mercantile interests of the country. At present, although the banks are chary in discounting, money is plentiful, and may be had at low rates. In fact there are more parties seeking good investments for their money at from seven to nine per cent than are borrowing at those rates.

In reviewing the various causes which have effected trade and commerce during the last year the bankrupt laws must not be over-looked. The effect of those laws has so far been apparent in the number of traders and non-traders who have taken advantage of them. Every *Gazette* for the year past has sen forth its list of bankrupts from every village, town and city in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The presumption is that those were all honest but unfortunate men, the victims of imprudence and the hard times that came in with 1857 and following years. It is not to be supposed that any of them were fraudulent, or that they took advantage of the act to cheat their creditors. We may draw the inference, then, that these men, being freed from their embarrassment, and having learned wisdom by sad experience, will prove useful members of society and profitable and safe business men Starting anew, they are not likely to be entangled in over-trading and speculation, and they ought to regulate their conduct on sound business principles

We have now concluded our survey of the present position of affairs in Canada and in the United States. It is with great pleasure and with thankfulness to Him who is the author of the success of a nation as well as of an individual we conclude that 1867 promises to the last to see the Dominion enjoying peace, plenty and prosperity. Whether, indeed, we compare this year with 1857, which was a year of failures and losses, or to years that we considered fortunate, we must admit that 1867 ought to be marked with a white stone. Notwithstanding this pleasant conclusion, however, it must be remembered that now more than ever ought our business men, wholesale and retail, and all of our agriculturists to act prudently and economically. The port is in sight, but it may not be gained without a storm. But even if it is, it is well known that prosperity following on the heels of adversity is apt to lead weak-minded people into extravagance and reckless living, and when this happens invariably the last state of such is worse than the first. The dull times *and the tight times are not all past yet, and those only* will live and thrive through them who act prudently and properly in the day of prosperity.

WORTH KNOWING.

QUITE a number of valuable statistical returns have recently been laid before the Parliament at Ottawa. Among these is the second part of the "Miscellaneous Statistics," prepared by Mr. Langton, the Auditor-General. It will be remembered that a number of articles were published in the *Trade Review* on the first part of these statistics, which appeared several months ago. The present "blue book" is altogether devoted to showing the number of ratepayers, assessed value of real estate, the debts due by municipalities, and similar facts relating to them In our limited space we cannot give the details of these statements, but we have prepared the following tables for Ontario and Quebec respectively, which we think will be interesting to our readers —

I.—*Total Municipal Returns of Ontario for* 1866.

Assessed Value Real Estate	$238 201,657
" " Personal Property	26,295,087
Total Liabilities	17 779 985
" Annual Revenue	4 471,879
" " Expenditure........	4 830,987
Number of Acres Assessed.	19,017,722
" Ratepayers Assessed	296,995

As a general thing, all of the above items are larger in 1866 than in the preceding years. This fact affords satisfactory evidences that the country is not standing still, but is making steady progress forward. The returns given for the Province of Quebec are by no means so full and complete as those of Ontario. Their accuracy is open also to some doubt, for it is found very difficult to get the officials of the different municipalities to send full and correct returns to the Department when such information is not paid for. This has always been a defect in our statistical information, and it is to be hoped that some means will be found hereafter to get the returns of Quebec in full The following is all the information which the "blue book" under consideration gives—that is, the totals of the information:—

II.—*Total Municipal Returns of Quebec for* 1866.

Assessed Value Real Estate.	$168,922,711
" " Personal Property.	1,147 107
Number Acres Assessed......	13,378,2?1
" Ratepayers Assessed. ...	201,653

The items of personal property given above does not include Montreal and Quebec, and cannot be taken to indicate the real amount of personal property in Quebec, but simply the amount which is assessed. As to the value of real estate given both for Ontario and Quebec, it is doubtless much greater than the figures given above, for it is notorious that in nearly all our municipalities property is insured by assessors below its actual value.