

# THE COMMERCIAL

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

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The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much  
larger circulation among the business community  
of the vast region lying between Lake Superior  
and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Can-  
ada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also  
reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manu-  
facturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 4, 1899.

## BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN MANITOBA.

AS SIZED UP BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE COMMERCIAL.

A review of business conditions in  
the towns which lie along the main  
line of the Canadian Pacific railway  
west of Winnipeg may prove interest-  
ing to many Commercial readers at  
this season. The opportunity for per-  
sonal study of the situation in these  
various centres has been furnished by  
a visit of one of this journal's staff  
to them, and as this visit included  
practically the whole railway system  
from Winnipeg to the mountains in-  
cluding the Prince Albert and Edmon-  
ton branches, opportunity will be  
taken in future issues to present many  
facts gathered relating to the busi-  
ness centres of the Territories as well.

Those who periodically visit the  
town and villages which constitute  
the commercial centres of this west-  
ern country have abundant opportu-  
nity of gauging the year's progress  
of the country as a whole, as the  
towns reflect with almost unflinching  
accuracy the general condition of  
each district. The year 1898 has in  
itself now become only a memory with  
us, but if its results in the line of ma-  
terial development be considered it  
may undoubtedly be said to be a year  
which will long live in the memory of  
the business men of this country as  
one of great activity and prosperity.

These western Manitoba towns  
bear out this contention. It is true  
that they have not been uniformly  
prosperous or active in a business  
sense, for some of those between Bran-

don and the boundary suffered to some  
extent from a short crop as well as  
from the general rains of the harvest  
season, but even of these it may fairly  
be said that 1898 brought a consid-  
erable measure of true progress.

Even a cursory survey will reveal to  
the visitor the fact that in the dis-  
tricts included in this review, includ-  
ing Portage la Prairie, McGregor,  
Carberry, Brandon, Alexander, Gris-  
wold, Oak Lake, Virton, Elkhorn and  
some smaller points a great deal has  
been done in the past year in the  
erection of new buildings alone. A  
distinctly better class of store build-  
ings is beginning to appear. In Por-  
tage la Prairie and Brandon, of course,  
the business blocks have always been  
of the better types, but in the other  
towns less substantial buildings have  
often been the rule. These are now  
giving place to buildings of brick and  
stone, in many cases, with every  
modern convenience. A better class  
of residences is also beginning to ap-  
pear in these country centres. The  
merchants are now providing them-  
selves with commodious and well-  
built houses, and are furnishing them  
in a style which is quite equal to  
that in the best city homes. Nor is  
the movement confined to the towns.  
The farmers everywhere have built  
largely this year many of them two  
and three thousand dollar houses, and  
have furnished them with the best  
that money can buy. In addition to  
this the same liberal provision has  
been made for the housing  
of machinery and farm stock, so  
that 1898 may be regarded  
as pre-eminently a building year  
in this country. These same facts  
were presented some months ago in  
The Commercial in a series of letters  
on Southern Manitoba, but they apply  
with equal force to the central dis-  
tricts now under review and will bear  
repetition.

It will perhaps be as well to say at  
once that last year was not without  
its disappointments to the business  
community of these central and west-  
ern towns. The farming districts  
heretofore suffered in common with  
the rest of the province from the ex-  
cessive and damaging rains of the har-  
vest season. What otherwise prom-  
ised to be a season of unprecedented  
prosperity was by these rains turned  
into one of some disappointment and  
considerable uncertainty. The damp-  
ening of the grain rendered much of  
it for a time unmarketable and this  
coupled with the seemingly low price  
which was offered for good grain made  
the farmers very slow in coming into  
the market and thus reduced the move-  
ment of money so that nothing like the  
usual fall trade was done. These are,  
of course, well known facts and need  
not be dwelt upon. December was in  
some places a better month, which re-  
lieved the situation a little. Happily  
the loss from the wetting of the wheat  
is now turning out to be not nearly  
so large as was at first expected and  
owing to the installation of drying  
plants for the treatment of this grain  
in some of the large elevators much of  
it is being restored to something like  
its original value. This reduces the  
depressing factors in the present situ-  
ation of the country to the one of low  
prices, and even this seems to be grad-  
ually disappearing before the gradual  
advance in the prices of wheat in the  
world's markets which is going on at  
present. A sharp advance in prices  
if it only lasted for a week would re-  
sult in an immense sale of wheat in  
all these country towns and would put  
a different face on the business situ-  
ation entirely.

The main difficulty with the trad-  
ing community at present is the slow-  
ness of collections. Large sales are  
not at this particular time looked for  
but the merchants very properly ex-  
pect that during the fall and winter  
months there will be a squaring up  
of accounts on the part of all classes  
of customers, and more especially of  
farmers. In this respect the closing  
months of the past business year were  
disappointing, and January has not  
been any better. A careful estimate  
places the proportion of 1898 accounts  
paid up to the end of January at 25  
per cent and some individual mer-  
chants have realized much less than that.  
This has had a detrimental effect on  
business generally.

Notwithstanding these untoward  
features of the situation of the mom-  
ent it is, as has already been said,  
apparent on every hand that 1898  
was a prosperous year in the coun-  
try.

### Business at Vancouver.

Vancouver, Jan. 30.—The British Col-  
umbia market the past week is practi-  
cally featureless. Flour is very  
firm and a rise is anticipated. The  
New Westminster market is again in  
full swing. Fair prices are being ob-  
tained for farmers' produce there and  
the bulk of business is large. In Vic-  
toria and Vancouver business was  
quieter last week and collections not  
so good. The Atlin trade has fallen  
off abruptly since the little flurry,  
and wholesalers are beginning to real-  
ize that the alien bill is not a huge  
success for them at least. There are,  
of course, no United States parties  
outfitting here and the number of Can-  
adians who go north is very small  
compared with the total number  
bound for the gold fields. The north-  
ern trade has been a precarious one  
for some outfitters. While many  
firms have made large sums and  
others financially weak have been  
placed on their feet again, too much  
credit was given, and the effects of  
this are being felt now. A party left  
for the north months ago securing  
goods amounting to some \$10,000 in  
value, strangely enough without se-  
curity of any kind. The firms who  
put up the goods now confess that  
they believe they are in for the whole  
amount involved. Another man who  
sold canoes and had a large business  
at one time with Klondikers, has dis-  
appeared, presumably for the north.  
The canoe man's notes are strewn like  
leaves around the city, all for small  
amounts, though the clean-up repre-  
sented several thousands. A man  
who sold prepared eggs is also sadly  
mourned by too confiding citizens. In  
this case the sum which miscarried  
also amounts to several thousand.  
The Klondike boom naturally brought  
scalliwags with a leaning towards fi-  
nancial manipulation to the front. A  
large business was being done in the  
city, money was free and plentiful  
and wise business men, cautious at  
other times, did not stop to consider  
the moral risk in dealing with those  
apparently conducting a legitimate  
business.

There is no let up in the rapid in-  
crease in population in Vancouver. The  
number of people in Vancouver is now  
estimated to be 30,000, and in spite  
of the building boom it is very diffi-  
cult to get houses.

A combine of sixty Kentucky distil-  
lers with capitalization of \$32,000,  
000 is projected.