MONTREAL SECTION

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FRENCH BANK AMALGAMATION.

No Confirmation Forthcoming—Money Conditions in England—Transcontinental Railway Progress.

Monetary Times' Office,
Montreal, Dec. 26.

That construction work on the National Transcontinental Railway is going on apace is manifest from a statement made by M. P. Davis in Montreal, the other day. Mr. Davis, in company with his brother, is contractor for a large section of the road. He says that, at present, there are some 2,000 men at work on the contract which runs east of the south shore approach to the site of the Quebec Bridge, for about 150 miles, to within 50 miles of the New Brunswick border. It is expected that all these men will be kept employed during the winter, which is, fortunately for construction purposes, proving a mild one. The frost has not as yet struck in very deeply, and as soon as it thaws out in the spring the number of men will be increased. It is expected that the work will be completed next October. Thirteen sub-contracts, covering the distance mentioned—with the exception of about 20 miles—have been given out. The portion not given out consists of some pretty heavy work, but this will not delay the completion of the work next fall.

Time is Extended.

Holders of more than 80 per cent. of the $14,000,000 first mortgage 5 per cent. bonds of the Canada Southern Railway Company, which mature on January 1st, have agreed to extend the time on the bonds five years, on the consideration that the interest is increased to 6 per cent. In making this announcement, Messrs. J. P. Morgan & Company, state that they have extended the time limit under which bondholders could avail themselves of the new arrangement to Jan. 1st.

An informal gathering of the directors of the Dominion and Iron and Steel Company was held in Mr. Plummer's rooms at the Windsor Hotel here, last Monday, and it was the intention of the president to proceed to Toronto the following day to consult certain interests there. Mr. Plummer arrived here in company with ex-Judge Wallace Nesbitt and Mr. A. M. Stewart, of Toronto. Mr. James Ross also came up from Halifax the same day, and along with him in his private car were H. A. Lovitt, of Halifax, and Charles S. Campbell, of Montreal. The case closed on Saturday, and it is thought the Supreme Court will hand down its judgment around the middle of January.

Reduction in Price of Gas.

It is stated that, at a meeting of the directors of the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company, to be held this week, the price of gas will be reduced 10c. per thousand feet, and that of electricity 15 per cent. A sliding scale will also probably be adopted by which the price of gas will be automatically reduced 10c. per thousand feet for every increase of 1 per cent. in the dividend paid by the company.

Mr. W. I. Gear, vice-president of the Robert Reford Company, and a past president of the Montreal Board of Trade, returned to Montreal a few days ago, after an absence of about two months in England. Being questioned by the representative of the Monetary Times regarding the financial outlook on the other side, he said:—

"I do not pose as an authority on financial matters, and anything I might say is simply what others have told me. I met many financial men who told me that money was available in England at all times for those who had proper security to offer. From which, I suppose, one might argue that they considered that the difficulty was not so much lack of money as a lack of desirable security. It would seem, too, that many securities which might have been considered acceptable some time ago would no longer be regarded as desirable. Hence, borrowers are having a harder time getting money."

"How did you find conditions, generally?"

Unsettled in England as Elsewhere.

"Unsettled, much as everywhere else. The results of my personal observation are not very enlightening. After viewing rapidly the poverty of one section and the great wealth of the next, one is left in a state of uncertainty. There is undoubtedly a great deal of hardship in some parts of the country, which will require more than ordinary assistance during the coming winter."

"Does your company intend to place any new ships on the St. Lawrence route next season?"

"I am not at liberty to say anything about that. It is still too early to talk about the outlook for next season. I may say that the shipbuilding trade is extremely quiet. Orders on hand are being rapidly filled, and there are very few new orders to take their place, and this will naturally depress the price of steel, and there would seem very little doubt at the present moment that ships will not cost so much to build for some time to come as they have done during the past few years."

Grand Trunk Pension Scheme.

The Grand Trunk Railway has announced the details of its pension scheme. This company is to bear the whole cost of the fund. The employees will not be assessed anything for its maintenance, and all, from the highest official to the track walkers, will participate in it. At the first of the new year, the rules will be published and forwarded to every employee of the road. They require absolute retirement from service of every employee reaching the age of 65 years. Those who entered the service before the age of 50 years, and who served 15 years, or more, are entitled, with the approval of the pension fund committee, to an annuity of one per cent. of the average annual salary paid for ten consecutive years, for each year of uninterrupted employment. That is, for 30 years service, with an average salary of $1,000, the employee would get 1 per cent. of $1,000, or $10 for each year's employment, or a total pension of $300 per annum. The company has voted $200,000 towards the fund; and it is expected that it will require about $85,000 per year to maintain it.

French Bank Amalgamation Story.

The story that one of the large French-Canadian Banks of Montreal is about to absorb several smaller banks, has again been revived by one of the local papers. While there is nothing new in this story, and while it is quite possible that such a thing is about to take place and would be an advantageous occurrence, an investigation by the representative of the Monetary Times a few months ago entirely failed to discover any sufficient justification for an announcement of this nature. That there is some talk in this direction, as already stated, is not denied, but it would not seem to be one of the occurrences which are apt to take place in the immediate future. Certainly there are a number of small French-Canadian banks which it would seem desirable to amalgamate under one strong head.

New Westminster is progressing to the extent that a new land registry office is required. An official of the Lands and Works Department will prepare an estimate of the cost at once, and it is probable that the amount will be included in the estimates this coming session.

A permanent exhibition of preserved fruits and minerals will be installed in the rooms of the Vancouver Tourist Association. This has been much needed, for visitors, who are many during the summer months, have not been able to see what is produced in the Province, nor what mineral specimens there are. In Victoria, the exhibits in the government department are extensive and have proved that the expense in keeping them up is worth while.