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THE GROWTH OF CANADIAN COMMERCE.

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NOTHING more truly indicates the condition of a nation than the rise or fall of its commerce with other countries. As its commercial tides ebb and flow, so may the nation be said to prosper or decline—advance or retrograde. A contracting annual commerce indicates “something rotten in the state of Denmark”; an expanding commerce tells not only of important resources, of national industry and enterprise, but of growing wealth, power and influence.

Looked at from this point of view, the condition of Canada, especially since the Confederation of the Provinces, may justly be described as satisfactory and hopeful. Our progress may not have been so rapid as that of particular States of the neighbouring Republic, or of one or two of the Australian Colonies, whilst under the first stimulus of the gold excitement. But it has been less fitful than the latter, and the volume of our annual commerce has been marked

by a steady, and, since the Union, a rapid expansion.

The “blue books” issued by Parliament each year have very few students. They are, it must be confessed, not very attractive to the general reader, but the facts which they contain are highly important, and deserve more consideration than they generally receive. Let us see if they cannot tell us something interesting about the extent and character of our commerce, the different nations with which we deal, and the exchanges which annually pass between us.

The Union of the Provinces, on the 1st of July, 1867, naturally divides our commercial, as it does our political, history. Prior to that time, our public records contain only the Trade Returns of Ontario and Quebec; since then, we have those of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick included. Taking these divisions in their order, we find that the annual commerce of the late Province of Canada rose from a mere trifle in 1841,