

### SHELL BUILDINGS.

It will take several years yet to convince the people of Manitoba, possessed of surplus funds, of the folly of expecting enormous returns from their investments, and a period of general depression will in all probability be the first thing that will carry general conviction upon the subject. The profits in property speculations of the last two years have to some extent demoralized the solid business ideas of this class, and now that the chances of making money rapidly in that line are gone, there is an eagerness to clutch at everything which holds out the promise of profits of a speculative character in their extent.

This desire to make money rapidly and at great risk shows itself very plainly in the class of buildings which many have erected on prominent thoroughfares, and for which ransom-like rents are demanded on account of their location. It is not uncommon in this city to find a mere shell of a building erected on a business street, and the proprietor of the same asking a rent which will return the full cost of building and present value of lot (inflated though that may be), in two years or at the furthest three years. The wild speculative mania has even gone further than this, for buildings of the class described have been erected on leased lots, when the term of lease did not extend beyond two or three years, inside of which time the party constructing expected to clear all expenses of building, rent of lot and a heavy profit. A glaring instance of this class is to be found in the C. P. R. House, which was burned down some ten days ago. The ground on which this shell of a structure was built, was leased for two years at a rental of \$150 a year. It was rushed up as hurriedly and as cheaply as possible and when finished a ruinous rent was asked and actually got for the place. The whole construction expenses were somewhere about \$6,000, and the first tenant leased the house, (if the affair deserved such a name), at \$750 a month, just \$9,000 a year, or \$2,850 more for the year's rent, than the cost of the building and the rent of the lot. As might be expected, the first tenant after two months occupancy left the city rather hurriedly, leaving quite a number of people anxiously inquiring after him, since then the rent has been materially lowered, and the original owner and constructor has not

made quite so large a profit as he expected. The present proprietors, will no doubt feel somewhat relieved when they receive the \$3,000 for which the building was insured.

Now this building stood on Main Street, the best business thoroughfare of Winnipeg, and besides being an unsightly pile of boards and shingles, was one of the most dangerous fire-traps that could be located in the heart of any city, as its burning proved. Inside of seven minutes from the first cry of fire was raised, and from the first small blaze was perceptible inside, the flames were rushing from doors, windows and every aperture in the building. Such was the time taken by watch by a representative of THE COMMERCIAL, who watched the fire from its first discovery and alarm. The efforts of the Fire Brigade were powerless to save the Johnston House, a much more substantial structure adjoining, and only their unceasing endeavors, and the fact that a gap of a street cut off the fire to some extent, prevented other buildings from sharing a similar fate. It must also be borne in mind that this conflagration cost two lives.

There are numerous structures in Winnipeg, of recent construction, almost if not as great eyesores, equally dangerous to both life and property as fire-traps, and constructed for the same greedy speculative purposes. The erection of such is not criminal, for the reason that no law as yet prevents their being built, but the parties who do build them, and with the recklessly greedy aims we have described are nevertheless morally criminals, and in connection with the burning of the C. P. R. House it is difficult to see how such parties are morally free from guilt in connection with the deaths which have resulted.

Last winter the city council passed and afterwards recinded a by-law marking out a fire limit. In the recinding of the same they were doubtless acting for what they considered the best interests of the city, and not to restrict building operations on account of the scarcity of solid building material. This difficulty is now obviated, as plenty of brick are in the city. The fixing of a fire limit now could not be considered a hardship, and such action would prevent any increase of the evil stated. The cure would be only partial, however, even when the fire limit ordinance was backed by other strict meas-

ures; and only a recognition by local capitalists in general, of the fact, that money must now be made in a slower and more methodical manner than during the past two years, will prevent such dangerous and flimsy structures being built in Winnipeg.

### Winnipeg Wholesale Trade.

#### AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, CARRIAGES, ETC.

The trade in this branch of business has been very little during the week, and in goods for sale during this season almost nothing. A few cutters and sleighs have been despatched to country houses, but no implements have been called for. Shipments to country agents of stock for spring business has commenced more generally, and will increase rapidly during the next few weeks. Wholesalers anticipate a very heavy demand for these goods.

#### BOOTS AND SHOES.

In these goods there has been a slight rush during the week, owing to the arrival of certain lines which had run out in the city. The trade was principally in rubber goods and made quite a lively finish up to a very successful seasons trade. A lull of about a month is now expected, and during that interval wholesalers will be preparing for a heavy spring trade, which is the prospect at present.

#### CLOTHING.

The same dullness continues in this branch, and this mild weather of the past week has cut short any sorts orders that might have been expected. Orders for goods for spring delivery are getting more numerous, but goods for immediate use are not wanted. Wholesale houses have a considerable portion of their spring stocks now in transit to this city, and some have their representatives now in eastern markets finishing purchases. Collections are reported reasonably good, and a feeling of confidence in a good spring business is general among the trade.

#### CROCKERY AND GLASS WARE.

The rush of business in this line has continued during the past week, and wholesalers report considerable business doing yet. The holiday trade is over, however, and a quietness during the next few weeks is very likely to ensue. The demand for staple goods is steady, and promises to keep the trade from falling into actual dullness during the winter. The territory of the trade has widened out very much during the past two months, and a good wholesale business will henceforth be done in this line, which three months ago was only in its infancy in the city.

#### DRY GOODS.

There has been a more hopeful feeling in this line of business during the week than we reported in our last issue. There has been a short revival of the demand for sorts, and travellers who have returned from journeys report the prospect of a very large spring trade. None of the wholesale houses have received any quantity of spring stock, but quite a number of or-