

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MAY 5, 1885.

WAR AND TRADE.

As day after day brings news from Europe the impression is strengthened, that a war between Britain and Russia is unavoidable, and even the most unwilling amongst us are gradually being forced to the belief, that the great struggle must soon be entered upon. Already the British House of Commons has without a dissenting voice voted a credit for war purposes which in magnitude has no precedent, and the most peacefully inclined of the British statesmen of the present century, Mr. Gladstone, in his late speech, has practically sounded the first note of the tocsin of war.

Patriots, like soldiers, cannot afford to be philosophers, when their country calls to arms, and their duty is not to reason why, but to respond to the call. Still it is only reasonable to attempt to measure the fearful consequences of the great strife which must shake both Europe and Asia with volcanic force, until the reverberations are felt over our own broad continent.

If as is stated by one reliable war historian, the struggle of thirty years ago between Russia on the one hand and Turkey and her allies on the other cost a million lives, what must be the mortality caused by the threatened struggle now that the facilities for slaughter within the reach of mankind are so much more effective than in the days of the Crimean campaign. The calculation of such a problem should be sufficient to force a shudder upon the most cold blooded arithmetician who ever scratched a figure. And yet there are those who unthinkingly speak of the gain that will arise from the fearful crash to others who are not combatants. It is not an uncommon sight to see in journals, claiming to be enlighteners of mankind, cool statements of the benefits this continent and more particularly the United States will gain in a trade way by an Anglo-Russian conflict, and the tone of many of them indicate, that their authors have in their minds the wish father to the thought. To them gain is gain even if it has to be dragged from among the mangled dead of a hundred sanguinary battle fields, and counted in almost within hearing of the groans of

wounded and dying. Yes, there are those who would drag trade through this sickening heap, if only gain were the result, and it does seem singular that the greatest producer of intercourse between man and man, and the greatest strengthener of the bonds of friendship between them should be thus divested of its very elevating shade, and made to appear only a means of acquiring gain, a field for selfishness to the silencing of every tender chord in humanity.

But after all the heartlessly selfish, who thus calculate upon profits by the slaughter of their fellow men, follow but as shortsighted policy. They are simply eager to grasp present gains no matter what future losses may be entailed thereby. Even taking a purely trade view of such a war as now threatens, there may be temporary gain to this continent from inflated prices while it lasts, and our products are sold on excited grasping markets of western Europe, but there will come a reaction, and just in proportion to the inflation of war times will be the depression which will follow. Such affairs like water find their own level, and like water if forced above that level when they recede they cannot avoid going below it for a time. Some trade philosophers accept it as an axiom, that contraction follows expansion as a natural law, which is as arbitrary in trade as in other spheres. While not indorsing this alleged axiom, we believe it may be taken as a general rule, subject to about the usual exceptions of such rules, and may be relied upon implicitly in reference to war inflation. The misery and wretchedness which it entails will invariably bring about a depressing reaction which will more than counterbalance all the gains of inflation. This may be applied too in the case of profit on this continent through a war in Europe, for in Europe is our controlling market and by its fluctuation our trade prosperity or adversity is measured. Injury to the country where our market is, means injury to ourselves, unless we have sunk to that depth of selfishness as to believe that what injures other people must benefit us. This may be found to work right in other spheres of life, although we doubt if such a principle can be verified under any circumstances, and in trade it is unquestionably rotten to the core. Let, therefore, those who are dependant upon trade here as well as in Europe wish for peace and prosperity everywhere. Without peace

there can be no real trade prosperity, for war and trade are as much enemies as fire and water.

CONFLICTING LEGISLATION.

In a confederation like that of Canada it requires nice judgment to decide what should be the scope of legislation for the central Government, and what should be left in the hands of the local or Provincial Governments. Errors of judgment in this respect often cause serious and tantalizing complications, and it is to be feared that Canada has made more than enough of these during the past ten years, and that the complications in her case will yet prove to be beyond the controlling power of our legislators.

In connection with the land question Canadian statesmen have established the anomaly of controlling the lands of one province from Ottawa, without so much as consulting the wishes of the people of that province in the matter, while all other provinces are allowed the control of their own lands without the interference of the central Government. From such an anomaly complications must arise, for the duty and even the safety and stability of a confederation depends upon its meeting out justice alike to all under its control.

But our Ottawa legislators in their desire for centralizing power have gone beyond anomaly in some instances, and landed into the absurd and even ludicrous. It would be difficult to find a more ludicrous piece of legislation than the attempt to regulate the whole liquor traffic of the Dominion by an Act of the Parliament passed at Ottawa. The most advanced nations of the world have long ago concluded that this vexed social question can only be regulated by local authority, and have acted upon the conclusion. If therefore nations of Europe, which comprise in their population only one or two races of people, and are each socially almost a unit in tastes and prejudices, have found it impossible to regulate such a question except by local control, what an absurdity it is for Canada with its five millions of people of mixed races, colors and creeds sprinkled over half of a continent, and with a climate and other conditions as varied as its population, to attempt its regulation from one central point. Yet a little over a year ago such an act was passed at Ottawa, and as might be expected each province has since treated it as a piece of ornamental legislation, and On-