

THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of Ontario, Quebec and the 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 Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also ranks the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

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THE COAL PROBLEM.

The high price of anthracite coal is a serious matter for the consumers of this class of fuel. Anthracite coal has been commanding high prices for some years. In 1895 this class of coal sold in Winnipeg, delivered to consumers, at \$5.50 per ton, but the following winter it was advanced to \$10. Last winter it sold at \$10.50. This season the price is abnormally high, on account of the great strike. But even under normal conditions, the price of anthracite coal makes it almost a luxury here. As conditions have ruled of late years, we cannot hope to receive Pennsylvania anthracite at much less than \$10 per ton, delivered to consumers in Winnipeg. This price makes the fuel bill a very important item of expenses to our people.

We are, of course, not entirely dependent on the Pennsylvania article. There are enormous deposits of coal in our own country. The country bordering on the Rocky mountains is sometimes spoken of as one of the greatest coal regions in the world. Coal of good quality is certainly found throughout a vast area of territory in the western portion of our prairie region, and rich discoveries of coal have also been made at many points in British Columbia. The difficulty in connection with these native coals is the long railway hauls from the mines to the eastern portion of the prairie region. These coals, of course, do not compete in point of quality with the Pennsylvania anthracite for domestic purposes. When the heavy freight rate for the long railway haul to the railway is added to the other costs of mining and handling the coal, the price of these western coals in the Winnipeg market is proportionately as high as the normal value of the Pennsylvania coal.

Cheap transportation is the one thing necessary to secure cheap fuel. The improvement of navigation on the Red river, by opening navigation between Winnipeg and Lake Winnipeg, would bring cheaper supplies of wood fuel from the forests to the north of the city. The improvement of the Red river might also be considered the first step towards establishing a cheap transportation route for coal. Along the Saskatchewan river in Alberta

there are many fine deposits of coal. This coal is used for local purposes at Edmonton and other points in Alberta. Coal has also been mined at Edmonton for shipment by rail to points as far distant as Calgary, about 200 miles. These coal deposits exist right along the river bank. We have a natural waterway between Winnipeg and Edmonton, via the Saskatchewan river, Lake Winnipeg and the Red river. There is navigable water all the way, with the exception of a few obstacles which could be overcome at a very moderate cost. With the improvement of this natural waterway, northern Alberta coal could be laid down in Winnipeg at a cost of about \$2 per ton.

The value of water transportation for heavy freight is too well known to require comparison to elucidate the point. Pennsylvania coal is sold in San Francisco at about the same price as in Winnipeg. It is taken there by water around Cape Horn. Welsh coal has sold in the same port at as low as \$6 to \$7 per ton. The water rate

Bicycle Advance.

For the first time in several years bicycle prices are not declining, says the Commercial Bulletin, of Minneapolis. The bicycle has at last found a reliable and stable position in the list of merchantable commodities and prices are on a basis more satisfactory to all of the trade. Prices for next year have been announced and the new schedules show a considerable advance. The figures for 1903 are from one to three dollars per wheel higher than during the year past.

For years the demand for bicycles has been so much smaller than the output that competition for trade has forced the prices down below the cost of production. This continued until last year when the bicycle trust sold a large part of its output at prices that yielded no profit if they did not yield a profit in order to make trouble for the independent manufacturers. This kind of campaigning discouraged some of the independents and forced the trust into a reorganization.

This year for the first time since bicycles ceased to be the rage of the nation is on a business basis. There is a steady demand for wheels up to certain limit and the output has been whittled to that limit. Instead of endeavoring to drive its competitors out of business the trust is willing to take

frame on big wheels. The demand for ladies' wheels has greatly decreased, partly owing to the increasing popularity of the diamond frame with some lady riders, and the fact that many of the fair sex have deserted the wheel entirely. In 1900 one big manufacturer estimated that fully 50 per cent of the output was in ladies' wheels. This year it is doubtful if it will be over 15 per cent.

Mocha Skin Gloves.

The skin of the mocha, a variety of sheep, native of Arabia, Abyssinia, and around the head waters of the Nile, is much used in the manufacture of the gloves. In 1868 a large glove manufacturer of Johnstown, N. Y., made carter gloves, mostly from vast-liquor-dressed antelope skins. After the extermination of the buffalo, the supply of antelope skins was also greatly diminished, and experiments were made with various other light skins in order to find a suitable substitute. In 1877 two boxes of skins of an unknown variety were shipped to Boston, Mass., from a port on the Arabian side of the sea. They appeared to be haired sheepskins, and were sent to be dressed as usual, as dressed out so well, a Boston house was induced to import more. Two



FORT FRANCES CANAL LOCK.

Started many years ago by the Mackenzie Government, and remaining since that time in an unfinished condition. See article on Page 245.

on coal from Lake Erie ports to Duluth and Fort William often ranges as low as 20 to 25 cents per long ton, and it has been carried at 15 cents per ton. These rates indicate what might be done by the improvement of our waterways, in the direction of supplying cheaper fuel to the people.

The valley of the Saskatchewan river will in time support a great population. Sooner or later this valuable water route will be developed. There is no question as to the practicability of the route, and none of the improvements necessary to open continuous navigation would be very costly. The south branch of the Saskatchewan river could also be developed to bring coal from Lethbridge or other points in Southern Alberta.

This is not a visionary scheme. These rivers and lakes have been navigated for years. Think of coal from the mines of northern and southern Alberta being transported to Winnipeg at a rate of 25 cents per ton—a rate, as quoted from Lake Erie ports to Duluth, Double or triple the rate and the cost would still be wonderfully low, compared with the expensive railway haul. The statement that this western coal could be laid down in Winnipeg at \$2 per ton, by the development of the water route, seems, therefore, to be well within the possibilities of the future.

orders at a profit and allow the independents to stay. This year's operations will not pay dividends on watered stock but wheels are being sold at a fair profit to the manufacturer instead of two dollars loss as was the case last year.

There are now about twelve bicycle plants in the country where there were 150 to 200 in 1900. With this slump it is little wonder that the American Bicycle Company has found that the prospects were too heavily capitalized when the trust was formed, and that it is necessary to let the water out at once. From 60 to 75 per cent of the country's output is controlled by the trust, so that on a reduced capitalization the American company will be in a fair way to make a good showing. The independent companies have their output for the coming year sold and some of them have withdrawn from the market. There are now but two big independent factories in the west. Both of these plants are in Chicago.

Everything in the bicycle sundry line has advanced, with the exception of tires, which have declined. This is due principally to the higher price of steel and other raw material used in the manufacture of sundries. There are no important improvements on the 1903 wheel, but the finish is better. Dainty colors will be rare on many of the high grade wheels. The bicycle trade has seen big changes during the past six years. The bicycle agent has almost disappeared. The trade is now principally in the hands of the hardware retailer. The juvenile wheel is no more. Instead the manufacturers are turning out a machine composed of a small

time in an unfinished condition.

years later a New York importer sent an agent to Aden, in Southern Arabia, to collect these sheepskins. The name mocha came from the fact that the first bales came with mocha coffee, and as this name seemed as appropriate as any, it has continued in use.—Shoe and Leather Journal.

'Complaints of fuel shortage are general in western Manitoba. The railway companies get the blame, as they are short of cars. The situation is quite serious.

A strange method of cooking an egg is sometimes employed by shepherds in the East. The egg is placed in a sling and whirled round and round until the heat generated by the motion, has cooked it.

An agent at Stanbridge, Quebec, reports the recent invention and trial of a machine for laying bricks. He describes the machine as one which is worked by two men and a lad, and says that it will lay from 400 to 600 bricks per hour. Door and window pieces cause only a slight delay for the purposes of adjustment. It is suited for all plain work, like walls, sheds, mills, factories, row of cottages, piers of bridges, and, in fact, everything except the very finest class of work. Considerable pressure is put upon the bricks, and the machine that the work is done much more firmly than is possible by hand. It will, the commercial agent says, do the work of six or seven skilled bricklayers, and the opinion is expressed that such a machine, adapted to build a factory, say, 60 by 40 feet, could be put upon the market for the equivalent of \$500.