

# THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of the west of Lake Superior and the Province 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 along the coast than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

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## A WORD OF CAUTION.

These are days of trial to many business men. In a time of unusual prosperity like the present there is a great temptation to reach out. Expansion is the order of the day. While the wise merchant will endeavor to keep up with the times, he will, at the same time be on his guard against over-expansion. For many men—perhaps the majority of men—there is more danger in times of unusual prosperity than in times of stringency. There is always the danger of outside investments and speculation. Those who are familiar with the history of Manitoba for the past twenty or twenty-two years, will well remember the situation after the collapse of the "boom" of 1881-82. There were very few merchants in the country who were not loaded up with real estate, upon which they were unable to realize, and they were consequently obliged to assign. Most of them were over-extended with stock. Who will say that the same danger may not be present again? The situation is, of course, different now from what it was in 1881, but it is not without dangerous features. There is almost as great a temptation to go into real estate speculations now as there was twenty or twenty-two years ago. We see papers flooded with real estate advertisements, and we know that real estate offices have increased by scores in Winnipeg and other parts of the country during the past year.

While there is a good immigration of new settlers, and considerable land is being taken by actual settlers, the great bulk of the land business is of a speculative nature. Huge blocks of land have been bought up by speculative syndicates, and resold in smaller blocks to other speculators, who in turn are selling to individual speculators. All this is not doing the country any good, but rather harm. It is not assisting in the development of the country. It is not creating wealth. There is danger in this speculative land business. As will be stated in articles appearing in the press lately as well as during the "boom" period of 1881-82. Our agricultural lands may still be cheap, compared with the values of lands in other countries, but there will doubtless be many ups and downs in values as the years go by. Business men will

do well to avoid speculation, and keep their business well in hand. While profiting by the good business doing during these days of expansion, they should be prepared always for a period of contraction, which will come, sooner or later.

Speaking in a general sense, the great prosperity which has prevailed on this continent of late cannot always continue. The enormous capitalizations make an element in the situation which may cause much distress in the future. A wonderful industrial expansion is going on, both in Canada and the United States. When the depression comes and the consumption of manufactures is curtailed, these giant industries of the United States will flood the Canadian market with their wares, and possibly cause much depression in our manufacturing centres. At present these great industries have all they can do in their own market, and they do not feel the necessity of forcing their wares on the Canadian market, but the time will come when there will be over-production.

How long the present period of expansion may continue, is, of course, impossible to say. When the time of contraction comes, it is not likely to be felt as seriously in a new country

in the west, combined with good times and general tendency to speculation in the east, is favorable to the flotation of enterprises of more or less questionable character. We may be prepared to hear of big farming, colonization, and other enterprises. These big farms were tried before, and proved failures in every case, and they will fall again. They will prove an injury to this country, and doubtless a source of loss to those who invest therein. Joint stock farming enterprises are not likely to give any better results now than they did in past years. Another source of danger is the possibility of receiving considerable undesirable immigration through the operations of colonization companies, and the excessive amount of "boom" advertising that the country is now receiving.

## SAVE THE PEOPLE'S ESTATE.

Government irrigation works in India costing \$100,000,000 irrigate about fourteen million acres, and the value of the products of this area often exceeds in a single year the entire cost of the works. Is there a man in Canada who doubts that the expenditure by our own government of a large sum for the reclamation of our western semi-arid lands would be



A COAL MINE NEAR EDMONTON, ALBERTA.

like Western Canada, as in older communities. Our expansion is of a somewhat different nature from that of which we have just been speaking. The features which mark our present period of prosperity are: Two splendid crop years in succession and a large immigration. A continuation of good crops here in the face of an industrial depression elsewhere, would help to keep up the situation here, though prices of agricultural products would undoubtedly be depressed, thus reducing the profits of the farmer. On the other hand, two bad crops in succession here would perhaps cause a serious depression in land values, and cause much hardship throughout the country to the new settler with limited means, as well as to older ones who have over-reached themselves during these times of prosperity.

Really the only unsatisfactory feature so far as this part of the country is concerned, is the speculation in lands, made possible by the extremely bad management of our public domain in past years. There are also evidences of some schemes being placed on the market, relating to Western Canada, which are not likely to result in good to the country. The present period of rapid development

a paying investment, looking at the proposition from a merely cold business standpoint?

The surest way to relieve congested labor markets of eastern cities would be to provide an avenue by which the people could turn to the farms, and the only way to do this is to first stop the further looting of the public domain by greedy land grabbers and next reclaim the western lands by national irrigation works for the benefit of actual settlers and home-builders.

The policy which Western Canada is most in need of at the present time is a National Policy, which would put an immediate stop to the handing over of the public domain to speculators and land-grabbers of all kinds. Not another acre of land for any one but an actual settler, should be the strong demand of every honest citizen who has the welfare of the country at heart. One land corporation, which bought a block of 1,000,000 acres of land in Western Canada last year, is said to have sold it all, already. This land has not been sold to home-builders. It has been sold to smaller speculators in blocks of 5,000, or 10,000 or more acres. The settler will have to pay the price before he gets 100 or more acres, after several foreign corporations have had their rake-off. This

shows the beauty of subsidizing railways with grants of land. If the land had not been given away to railways, or alienated in other ways, this speculation in lands would have been in great measure avoided. Yet the premier of British Columbia has the nerve to publicly state that he still believes in the policy of subsidizing railways with grants of land.

## NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The Natural History Society of Manitoba was organized in Winnipeg last week. There is undoubtedly considerable scope here for the work which would properly come within the sphere of such a society. The Historical and Scientific Society is one of the old institutions of Winnipeg. This society, however, has given attention mainly to history. Those interested in the natural sciences felt that a new and more aggressive society was needed here, which would undertake more practical work. One object of the society will be to secure better game laws, and the improvement and enforcement of the laws relating to the protection of insectivorous birds, etc. There is certainly great ignorance throughout the country regarding the laws for the protection of animal life. These laws could be considerably improved and there is still greater need of better enforcement of the acts. The greatest hope for the future evidently is in the education of the young people to a due appreciation of the value of animal life. Boys are responsible for the destruction of many of our valuable birds, which would have been the case if the boys were given a little instruction in this matter. Much good work might be done in the schools in teaching boys and girls about birds, and it is a study in which most children would quickly become interested. It will also be the object of the society to secure the establishment of a provincial museum. Manitoba is said to be the only province of Canada that has not a museum. Such an institution would not only be of great value to students of natural history, but it would also be a source of much interest to visitors of a less scientific turn of mind.

## BRITISH CANADIAN WHEAT COMPANY.

Leading papers throughout Canada are publishing articles recommending the shares of the British Canadian Wheat Raising Company. These articles might be taken by the uninitiated as editorials, but they are really paid advertisements. They are couched in most extravagant language, such, for instance, as the following: "The shares of the British Canadian Wheat Raising Company present that cannot be equaled by any other commercial enterprise in the British empire." Extravagant language is also used in describing the resources and capabilities of Western Canada generally, as well as with relation to this particular company. One article in the Toronto News, signed by D. S. McPherson, is apparently written to "boom" these shares. It is written in a grandiloquent style, and abounds in overdrawn pictures and absolutely false statements, as witness the following: "Land that produces an average of twenty-five to thirty-five bushels of wheat, and in especially favored sections reaches forty-five and fifty-five bushels per acre, can produce no more than the farmer. And these are official figures in the case of Western Canadian farms."

People who are familiar with the agricultural history of Western Canada, know that statements like this (Continued on Page 565.)