

## THE COMMERCIAL

recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in western Canada, including that part of the world known as the Prairie Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Northwest.

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## THE RURAL MAIL DELIVERY.

Canada might do well to take up the question of rural free delivery of mail. The time has come when it is the duty of the government to study the interests of those who produce the wealth of the country before almost any other interest, and in Canada the greatest wealth producers are never well, the farmers. There has been a great deal said in recent years about the tendency of population to drift into the cities, the effect of which has been to produce terrible congestion, terrible suffering and terrible waste of energy. The reason for this tendency is not far to seek. The thing for novelty, excitement and amusement which is one of the phenomena of our time, has induced hundreds of people to forsake the quietness and monotony of the cities and their conscious round of activity. The facilities for profit, pleasure and amusement have not multiplied with the farmer so rapidly as with his city brother, and discontent has been the result. President Roosevelt said in effect in a recent speech that the nation which can keep people upon their own farms is a nation which will attain to the highest measure of prosperity. If this is true, and the statement looks like it, it can hardly be challenged, it is the duty of the government to study the business of keeping the people upon the land. Anything which tends to serve that end should be a measure. Considerable financial aid could even be justified in the implementation of this purpose.

The consolidation of rural schools, improvement of country roads, extension of electric railways into rural areas, and numerous other schemes being advocated for the improvement of the farmer's lot. Rural delivery of mails might well be added to this list. In the United States this has already been inaugurated with satisfactory results. Already 13,000 carriers are employed in service, and it is estimated that 20,000 more will be sufficient to provide the service for all of that country. So far the service there has been an experimental one, and that the country a large sum of money and above the revenue derived from the scheme, and predict that in a few years the service will become a source of revenue. When the subject was first introduced in Congress it was ridiculed and deemed as impracticable. That

was in 1893. In 1894 Congress appropriated \$10,000 to enable the postmaster-general to experiment, but that official refused to expend the money as he thought that it would be wasted. In 1895, \$20,000 was appropriated by Congress, but again the postmaster-general refused to act, and it was only in 1896, when \$40,000 was appropriated, that he consented under protest to take up the scheme. In that year 44 routes were selected in 29 States, and the work began. In nearly every case the route's seemed to have been expressly chosen for their unfavorable features in order that the views of the postmaster-general might be vindicated; yet in spite of this fact the service gave such satisfaction to the people that the demand for its continuance became imperative. In 1897 further extensions were made, and an official who had sympathy with the idea was placed in charge. Since then the system has grown amazingly, thanks to generous grants from Congress.

Among other ideas which have been successfully experimented with is a postoffice on wheels. For this purpose

## RECENT RAILWAY DEVELOPMENTS.

Judging by the amount of attention which the Canadian Pacific Railway Company is receiving from the financial papers of the United States in connection with its interest in the Northern Securities Company case, the influence of the big Canadian road in securing the recent legal decision against the Securities Company must have been considerable. It is plainly stated in well informed circles that President Hill feels very sore over the defeat of his pet project and that he blames the Canadian Pacific people for it. Of course, the credit or blame, which ever it may be, can only indirectly belong to any private interest as the national government was the real prosecutor in the case, but at the same time it is quite probable that private influence had something to do with the proceedings being undertaken in the first place.

As a result of the bad feeling which is said to have been engendered by this case between the powerful factions which are behind these great

but is looked upon rather as a return to competitive railroad conditions, and the C. P. R. has gained considerable prestige with the Dakota farmers, who feel that they are being squeezed by the companies which at present do their transportation business. It is not to be supposed that the Canadian farmers would be displeased either if another road should put itself in position to compete for a share of their traffic.

## THE ALL-CANADIAN ROUTE.

Canadian routes are beginning to cut considerable of a figure in the eastward traffic of the territory tributary to the Great Lakes. Tremendous expenditure of money has been made to create an all Canadian route and tremendous efforts are being made now to give this expenditure its proper effect upon the business. There are those who emphatically predict, and can give sound reasons for the faith that is in them, that Canada will in a very few years reap the benefit of her enterprise in building canals by taking the traffic by water away from the United States. The recent removal of all canal tolls by the Dominion government is another step in the direction of securing the traffic to R. Prefontaine in speaking on the subject, states that it is the intention of the government to do everything in its power to secure for Canadian companies the entire traffic of the east. The abolition of the tolls, while involving a considerable sacrifice to the government is, nevertheless, a concession which has been cheerfully made in order to advance the above purpose. It has been followed by the announcement that at least one new fleet of ten vessels will be put upon the Canadian route this year. Others will follow as soon as capitalists have had time to study the situation.

It is confidently stated that with the tonnage available this year it will be possible to carry wheat from Fort William to Kingston for 3.5c per bushel, and from Kingston to Montreal for 1.65c per bushel. This is the extra lake insurance and charges at Montreal will bring the total cost to 5.87c. With a 2c rate from Fort William to Buffalo and the Erie Canal and New York terminal charges the total cost by the United States route would be 6.8c, which leaves a comfortable margin in favor of Canada. In addition to this favorable balance in the eastward rate, the fact is worthy of notice that there is now a considerably larger westbound traffic available in Canada, which will furnish returns comparable with the vessels engaged in this trade.

## CHICAGO COUNTRY HIDES.

Most of the dealers report fair business in nearly all classes of hides. The bulk of sales were made on basis of 8½c for buffs and about the same price for cows. Occasionally a car will cut a trifling high grade selection or to the quality of the hides. Prices of buffs one year ago same week advanced from 4½c to 8½c with sales at 8½c. The principal cause of the advance then was the possibility of a great shortage of hides of very high and packer hides were advancing, but at the present time, no such conditions exist. The tanners, but keen competition and the fact that country dealers appear to be nearly all strong believers in higher prices, they have not pressed sales. Tanners therefore have been obliged to purchase as their wants required, which has forced up prices to the level beyond their value, considering the poor quality of the hides. Eastern tanners have been slow to respond to the advance here and are still refusing to pay the prices asked by most of the dealers.—Hide and Leather, April 24.



WESTERN FARM HOMES—WM. PORTER, OXBOW, ASSA.

a wagon was built and fitted up with a full postal outfit. This proved remarkably successful, even from a financial point of view. It cost \$1,375 per year, and saved, through the abolition of four small post offices, \$1,000 per year. Within a few months of this trial 133 applications were received from the people for similar wagons. Other improvements included the carrying of open notes, parcels, etc. This wagon carried a driver and a clerk, who was authorized to do all the duties of a local postmaster.

As a result of the establishment of free rural delivery in this way, the postal department now reports that it has greatly increased the volume of mail from country districts. The farmers read more and write more, and spend less time in going to and from the nearest town or post office. One Missouri farmer reports that during the past fifteen years he has driven 12,000 miles in going after his mail, all of which travel is now saved to him. He states further that since he can mail his letters by dropping them in a box at the fence corner he has written three times as many letters in a given length of time as previously.

This is the experience with free delivery of mail in rural parts where it has been tried.

It has been estimated that no less than twenty-five million people annually attend the circuses of America in one season.

railway enterprises, it is possible that there will be a fight for western traffic in the near future. The C. P. R. has already demonstrated that it can more than hold its own in any war over transcontinental business and the Hill faction have no desire to again try conclusions at that point, but they are believed to be now planning an invasion of the rich preserves of the C. P. R. in the prairie country of the west, and they hope to get into position in this way to compete with their great northern rival. It is believed that if the necessary charters have been secured the Northern Pacific road will again tap Canadian territory extensively at an early date.

As an offset to this little plan, it is announced that the "So" road, which is controlled by the C. P. R., will this year commence the construction of an extensive system of branches in North and South Dakota, which will cut into some of the richest traffic districts of the Hill lines. Something like 1,000 miles of such feeders will be built as expeditiously as possible. It is more than likely that one of these proposed extensions will reach far enough to connect with the Canadian Pacific branch to Grenada, at the International boundary, thus giving connection between Winnipeg and St. Paul over exclusive? C. P. R. lines.

In the Northwestern States the prospect of such developments as these is not regarded with disfavour,