

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, AUGUST 5, 1884.

SOLID BUSINESS BUILDING.

There can be no better proof of a city being in a safe and promising, if not rushing condition, than the erection of valuable and solid buildings therein. During the fall of 1881 and summer of 1882 a large number of buildings of every description were erected in Winnipeg, but it was a fact to be regretted, that with few exceptions they were of a flimsy description, and more like the makeshifts of a new frontier town, than the structures fitted for a growing commercial centre. Indeed, many of them were of a most dangerous description, that should never have been tolerated here, and have contributed much towards maintaining the high premiums on fire insurance, which have been so burdensome upon the trading community of the city. Yet these buildings only illustrated the state of trade here. They were purely temporary structures, as dangerous by their existence as the inflated state of affairs which brought them into construction and use. Such structures cannot be expected to improve with age like whiskey, and while those who have tenanted them during the years, may have remaining a little of that feeling which the prosperous immigrant has towards the old boat that carried him over, no one is really sorry at the hope of their early disappearance, and all are more or less pleased that the work of replacing them with more substantial structures has commenced in real earnest.

As the buildings of two years ago illustrated the unsafe condition of trade then, so the substantial ones, being erected this summer, illustrate the solid state of everything connected with this city's progress. After the trying year which we have passed through, it might be expected that few people would be prepared to embark in constructing expensive and solid business buildings here; yet, strange to say, 1884 will see more substantial structures for purely mercantile purposes erected than any previous year of Winnipeg's history. As the worthless and unsafe traders have been weeded out during the past two years, so have the undesirable class of property owners, and those left are not slow to discern that trade recovering and being rebuilt upon a sound basis requires,

and will pay for, buildings of a substantial character, while it could not possibly go ahead with equal strength in the sheds and boxes it has hitherto been carried on in.

Only the trader, who has for years paid ruinous insurance premiums, can fully appreciate the advantages conferred by having good, and comparatively fire-proof premises in which to carry on business. Fire insurance, while it is a precautionary move that should be adopted by every man carrying a stock, is at times quite a burden to carry, and once our leading streets are lined with good brick and stone structures, and the old fire traps removed, no one who has not gone carefully into figures upon the subject, can imagine how much our whole trade structure will be relieved from a load, and what an amount of extra security will be infused into its every avenue. In the item of fire insurance premium reduction therefore, it pays both tenant and property owner to have solid and fire-proof buildings.

But there is another point which property owners and builders do not take into consideration as fully as they ought. Agents of loan companies here have been complaining of late that the field for loans on city real estate is much more limited than it ought to be in Winnipeg. There are, no doubt, a number of reasons for this, but one very powerful one is that they do not care to advance money on many of the fire traps with which the city abounds. It does seem unreasonable for THE COMMERCIAL to have to quote week after week 10 per cent. for some loans on city real estate, or, in fact, upon any rent producing property. Yet, there are many properties on which no loan company would let out funds, even at this advanced figure, and all owing to the flimsy nature of the structures thereon. On a lot 50 by 100 feet a solid brick or stone building can be constructed just as successfully as a wooden fire trap, and yet the lot itself is of value in procuring a loan with the former upon it, and utterly valueless with the latter. For instance, on a newly constructed solid brick block, which is an ornament to Main street a loan was made a few days ago at 7 per cent. interest, and the owner had no difficulty in procuring funds at this rate from a company which would not advance a dollar at 10 per cent. on some buildings in this city. This is certainly a powerful economy argument

to property owners, and one they would do well to pay attention to.

But when economy is brought into the field there is no argument can be brought against constructing solid buildings only. A flimsy wooden structure, bringing even 20 per cent. return on money invested, will not last longer than a dozen to fifteen years, and in all probability in less than five its return will be greatly diminished, while a solid brick or stone structure, yielding only 10 per cent. returns will in all probability yield that and more to the grandchildren of its constructor, should it descend in regular manner. We want plenty of such solid structures in Winnipeg, and it is to be hoped that within a very few years, every fire trap on our leading business streets will be replaced by a brick or stone building; or, if any are then in existence, that they will be tenantless monuments of short-sighted investment.

MANITOBA GRAIN INSPECTION.

As the harvest draws near the question of inspection of Manitoba grain comes up, and becomes more important every day. It is now admitted on all sides that the grain export business of the province requires some kind of organization, having grown to such proportions as to be beyond the manipulation of a few buying organizations, who may have secured an early foothold here. There is no movement which will furnish a better foundation on which to build future organization, than the establishment of a rigid system of inspection and grading of grain raised in the province and Northwest. Hitherto grain has been shipped out of the country without grading, or graded in transit at Duluth, Minneapolis or some other point, and there stored and mixed in the same bin with the products of other places, and afterwards shipped therefrom as Duluth or Minneapolis No. 1, No. 2, or whatever it may have been graded. In this manner the individuality of Manitoba as a grain growing province has been entirely lost, and any merits her products were possessed of, have been credited to other places. With an estimated surplus of not less than 5,000,000 bushels from the crop of 1884, the Northwest is certainly in a position now to stand or fall by its own grain, and the opportunity of its so doing can only be had by the fixing of grades, and appointment of a local inspector or inspectors. Arrangements