

### Dry Goods.

The outlook for the trade is not good and this week reports from the country are decidedly unsatisfactory, more especially from Ontario, where failures and assignments seem to be the order of the day in all the country towns. In consequence orders for spring delivery are treated in a very cautious manner, and the trade grow more and more so as time progresses. Then too, buyers are indifferent and will only handle what they see an immediate prospect of realizing on, which is borne out by the fact that some lines which last year were long ago placed in consumption, are not touched as yet, which does not seem to trouble purchasers a bit; whereas last year stacks of post cards and telegrams were the order, with urgent demands for immediate shipment, "or else you can cancel order," etc. As a consequence it would seem reasonable enough to expect a much smaller business this spring than last, and this is what most people expect, although some think that if only the right kind of weather can be had the city demand may pick up.—*Montreal Gazette.*

### Hudson's Bay Route.

British millers and grain merchants will note with interest that the project of a Hudson's Bay railway, which has been in the air for many years, is now apparently engaging the serious attention of the Canadian Government. This is the more noteworthy seeing that hitherto this project has excited but languid interest in the ruling circles at Ottawa. Whatever may be the cause of the change, the fact remains that the *Empire*, the official organ of the Dominion Government, has lately called attention to the advantages of a Hudson's Bay railway as destined to form another link between the Northwest of Canada and the rest of the civilized world. This line would strike southwards from the Bay and connect Manitoba and the American Northwest, to say nothing of the Pacific coast, with Churchill, a port standing at the mouth of the Churchill River, which would form the terminus of the line on the Hudson's Bay side. It is urged by the *Empire* that Churchill is rather nearer to Liverpool than either Montreal or New York, and the chief prospective advantage held out by the promoters of the scheme is the anticipation that this port would speedily attract an important grain fleet. In this way another outlet would be found for the excellent wheat of the Canadian and American Northwest provinces, and an additional stimulus provided for the development of the cereal resources of those regions. The general commercial importance of the scheme is sufficiently indicated by the consideration that a railroad joining the Canadian Pacific line with Churchill would place Winnipeg almost as close to a seaport as Toronto, while San Francisco is as near to Churchill as to Chicago, which would mean that the shipment of goods from that important Pacific point to Churchill would save the rail journey from Chicago to New York and 150 miles of water carriage. The only objection to the Hudson's Bay project is that the navigation of this inland sea is, by reason of ice, very dangerous if not impossible during many months of the year. It is alleged, however, that Port Churchill to the right kind of vessel is open for nearly six months of the year, that is, from the end of July to the beginning of December; and as the essential object of the scheme is to provide the

Dominion with another outlet for its grain, the building of the railway would involve the erection at Churchill of sufficient storage accommodation, where the wheat and barley of the Northwest might be received even in the hard season, to await the time when summer had unlocked the navigation to the grain fleets.—*The Miller*, London England.

### Business in British Columbia.

The week just past has been a quiet but solid one in business. Merchants are beginning to realise, those who have inaugurated it, the benefits of the lessening of the credit system, and, though the volume of their transactions may not be increased by it, the same is much more satisfactory.

The real estate market has much improved and it is fast assuming the lively movement of some periods of last year. This is the result to some extent of the favorable building and industrial prospects of the coming summer.

Wholesale trade presents few changes and remains practically unaltered. The sugar market is unsettled, but, though experiencing fluctuations in the meantime, quotations are the same as last week. Canned goods in some lines have advanced.

Eggs during this week have taken a rapid tumble. The market has been supplied heavily from California, and they are selling to the trade at 20 cents a dozen. The cause of this is the recent blockade on the American Pacific lines of railway. Numerous large consignments from eastern points were delayed, and as soon as the blockade was removed they all reached the California market at once producing a glut. The market was further congested owing to the fact that eggs during the delay and on account of the severe weather became chilled, and as they soon sour an effort is being made by the southern dealers to dispose of their consignments as rapidly as possible. Victoria, too, has been filled up as a consequence. A carload of Nebraska eggs, only twelve days in transit, was received this week in fine condition. Another is on the way which was caught in the blockade and has been over a month shipped. So that eggs are likely to be plentiful as well as cheap during Lent. Fresh eggs are selling all the way from 45 to 60 cents per dozen.

Butter is still weak and the market "horribly dull," as one dealer expressed it. Manitoba Dairy is particularly weak, and as a means of disposing of it, some parties are peddling it around town and retailing it from house to house at from 20 to 35 cents per pound. Dairy is jobbing at 20 cents and creamery at 23 cents. A great mistake made by the Manitoba dealers in their trade with British Columbia is their desire to hold back and quote high figures at the beginning of the season. They add rates from points in Ontario to Winnipeg to freight rates from the latter place here, whereas dealers here can get much more favorable through rates themselves than those the Manitoba dealers make their count upon, and are inclined to go by Winnipeg to Ontario. The result is that the Manitoba article accumulates, as it has done this season, and it is shipped in here in quantity late in the season and the market is overloaded, just at a time when the California cheap butter is beginning to move, and the Manitoba butter should be off the market. If the Manitoba dealers occupied this market earlier in the year they could dispose of their stocks to good ad-

vantage, before they came in competition with the California supply, and thus avoid the depression which has followed their policy of the present time.

The potato supply is easier, and prices have a lower tendency. Potatoes are wholesaling at from \$38 to \$40.

Apples are practically out of the market. California lemons are selling at \$5 and \$5.50; Sicily lemons, \$7.50. Small Riverside oranges, \$4; Washington Navals, \$5.50; Riverside Seedlings, \$4.25.

Small fish are very scarce and quoted at from 8 to 10 cents per pound; halibut and salmon are worth 15 cents.

There is no change in flour and feed quotations. There is very little farm produce coming in from the Fraser, except hay, which is bringing \$18 per ton. Prices are as follows: Manitoba Patent, \$5 65; Manitoba Bakers, \$5.35. Oregon flour, \$5 to \$5.15; Spokane Falls, \$5; Hungarian, \$5.75. Oatmeal holds as follows: Standard, \$3.15; granulated, \$3.25; rolled oats, \$3.50; chopped feed, \$30; bran, \$24; short, \$38; oil cake, \$38; corn meal, \$2 85 per sack; wheat, \$38; oats, \$35.—*Vancouver News-Advertiser.*

### A Substitute for Cotton.

It is reported from New York that both jute and cotton are likely to be superseded by another plant known as okra. It has long been known that okra produces a good fibre, but heretofore faults of cultivation and manufacture have prevented growers making a commercial success of it. Recent improvements in the methods of handling okra have, however, been so successful that the manufactured article is said to be superior to cotton, ramie, jute and all similar fibres. Okra, of course, is vastly cheaper than any of the fibres named, and it has the further advantages of being a quick-growing annual and of producing a fruit for which there is always a ready market.

### Droll Humor.

The following is an exact copy of a letter received by several Winnipeg wholesale houses, from a western firm, trading in a small way, names of course being omitted:

"GENTLEMEN,—Sorry that we are so far behind and that our orders being refused and that we have no money to help ourselves, we are obliged to fail. Kindly look into the matter at once and oblige, yours ———"

This letter is quite unique in its line, and contains an amount of grim humor which forced even the creditors to smile audibly, notwithstanding their prospective losses, which, it may be noted, will not be very heavy.

A BRITISH COLUMBIA senator has made a motion in favor of the establishment of a Dominion mint, for the coinage of gold and silver. What is our protectionist government doing that we have been so long without a mint? Canada has abundant wealth of gold and silver, but we are entirely without a gold coinage, and our silver and copper coinage is manufactured in England. This is protection with a vengeance, but it is the style of protection this country has been getting right along. British Columbia as a crown colony had a mint, and united Canada should be able to keep up such an institution.