

Tuesday last to a Government organ says, to appoint Mr. J. H. Ashdown, of Winnipeg. The proposal is not welcome, we venture to think. Mr. Ashdown is a successful and a very respectable merchant, who has lived in Manitoba for more than thirty years; but we have yet to learn that he possesses the breadth of knowledge of transportation matters that is necessary for a member of the commission. There must certainly be, among friends of the Government in Ontario, men who have superior qualifications to Mr. Ashdown. And we dissent entirely from the doctrine that a western man should be placed in a position of such far-reaching importance just because he is a Western man, and in spite of his lack of experience which other men possess.

—A special despatch from Washington expresses the disappointment of President Roosevelt and Senator Fairbanks that Sir Wilfrid Laurier does not favor another sitting of the joint high commission to consider reciprocity between the United States and Canada, and other matters in dispute. And his letters declaring to call another session are described by the Senator as "curt." They are not more curt than the treatment accorded to Canada by the so-called "jurists of repute" chosen by the United States to settle disputed matters between the countries. Sir Wilfrid is a gentleman, not a petty huxterer; and he was at a disadvantage in discussing matters with men of narrow views and made-up minds. He knows, however, when he is snubbed, and when Canada's fair claims are slighted, and we cannot wonder that he is in no hurry to subject his country and himself to another useless wrangle.

WINNIPEG AFFAIRS.

All accounts from the East go to confirm the general belief that 1904 has been a good year for Canada. Your factories are well employed, your merchants are busy, your farmers are prosperous. Up here we, too, are prospering; there is no exception to the rule. In this city are abundant evidences of enterprise and thrift. The Realty Gazette of last Friday tells of big sales and small sales of land within the city limits, with a buoyant tone in not only central residential property, but also in suburban acreage. Notably, among the sales to record is a terrace, which sold for \$35,000, a block of five houses for \$50,000, a piece of Portage Ave. property, near the Y.M.C.A., for \$50,000, a parcel in the north end at \$30,000, and some suburban acreage in St. Boniface for \$35,000 or \$500 an acre. Two-thirds of the money involved, it is stated, comes from outside sources, indicating either new residents or fresh capital or both.

There are now 12,170 houses in Winnipeg, plus the number erected during the present year, which are stated to have cost in the aggregate \$2,500,000. The assessments made for 1904 were \$15,920,710; and it is estimated that \$6,000,000, if not \$7,000,000, will have to be added for actual erections and the increment due to increased land values. With all the new buildings erected, either for dwellings or for commercial purposes, the demand has not been met and rents are still high. The assessment commissioner estimates the population of the city to-day at 78,000. That the increased activity everywhere seen is real seems to be proved by the clearings of the banks. For the week ended on 8th December, the aggregate clearings were \$9,846,101, an increase of almost three millions over the corresponding week of 1903.

Some of the new buildings in Winnipeg are upon a scale which indicates belief in the still greater growth of the city in the near future. The best proof of the importance of this capital of the Prairie Province is in the style and dimensions of the five-story building to be erected for a post-office. The existing post-office, erected twenty years ago, was a good one for that day, but the new one will be big enough

and handsome enough for Toronto, a city of almost a quarter million population. The Provincial Government is erecting on Broadway a land titles building of stone, of good appearance and dimensions. The Carnegie Library is almost finished, a new hospital is proposed, and the contract has been let by the Manitoba Government for an agricultural college. Then there is to be, at the angle of Main St. and Broadway, a union depot for the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railways. To these add churches, fire halls, schools and the constantly growing list of warehouses and dwellings, and it will be seen the confidence people have in Winnipeg as a great city in the future is being wonderfully shown.

Mentioning fire-halls recalls the fact that the community is aroused to the need of making fire-fighting appliances keep pace with the growth of the place. Mr. Robert Howe, an inspector for the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, has lately been making an inspection and report. His last inspection was made in 1901, and he finds an increase of nearly 80 per cent. in population since that date, with all that this implies. The necessity of a high pressure water system to protect high buildings is admitted by the city authorities, and is emphasized by recent fires. There are a great many wooden houses in the city—which covers a great deal of ground—and some of them are in the congested district, and therefore are a menace to the down-town streets, where greatest merchandise values are congregated. The city engineer, the chairman of the fire and light committee of the council, and the C.F.U.A. inspector, are hard at work framing a system of fire protection that shall be adequate to the risks that recent events have shown are to be provided against.

Winnipeg, 19th December.

MERCATOR.

PACIFIC OCEAN STEAMSHIPS.

Editor, Monetary Times:—

Sir,—After my return from a southern trip, I looked through a few back numbers of your valued paper. In your Sydney correspondent's letter, dated 13th June, and published in your issue of the 5th of August, I found some rather curious assertions concerning your humble servant which want some correction. Evidently your correspondent jumps at conclusions without knowing what he is talking about.

I did go to Vancouver via Suva, as your correspondent suggests, but did not do the journey in 21 days. I left here on the 24th of February and landed at Vancouver on the 28th of March. This makes 35 days for the journey, adding the extra day which is put in to adjust the difference in time. Your correspondent did not know, apparently, that the "Moana," which made the trip, was detained at Sydney for a week, which obliged me to stay for eleven days at Suva.

In how far I can be accused of slandering the Canadian-Australian Steamship Co., in simply stating facts, I leave to your readers to decide. I have no reason to say anything unpleasant with regard to the Canadian-Australian Steamship Co. The company have always treated me well, and my four trips across in their ships have always been very pleasant. The treatment on board was all I could desire, and, if not pressed for time, I shall always make use of this line by preference.

But all this cannot obscure the fact that the 'Frisco service is, with regard to speed, the more suitable for New Zealand. I wish it were otherwise, but as long as the Canadian-Australia Steamship Company does not call at a New Zealand port, and does not put faster steamers on the route, she cannot expect to cater successfully for the New Zealand passenger traffic.

Now with regard to the "visionary" line for a quicker service to New Zealand, your correspondent, F. W., is just as badly informed. What is wanted, and what I have all along advocated, is a cargo line of steamers from Vancouver to New Zealand direct, and this line, far from being "visionary" may be sooner in operation than your correspondent seems to expect. Such a line has to be established if ever Canada will derive the benefit of the New Zealand preferential tariff. The matter has the fullest attention in interested