

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MARCH 20, 1883

THE BUILDING OUTLOOK.

The building operations in Winnipeg during the coming season promise to be on an extensive scale. Several large buildings which have been in progress during the winter are approaching completion, and all along the principal streets excavations are being made for large blocks, upon which the work of construction will be begun as soon as spring opens. The depression through which we have passed may have had the effect of deterring some of the more timid from going as extensive into building as they otherwise would have done, but this will not affect the grand total of operations to any appreciable extent. The reaction from an year ago was only something to be anticipated, and the sooner it came, and business got down to a proper basis the better.

This critical period has come and gone, and although some may have been considerably pinched thereby, and a few of the weaker have had to go to the wall, still the trade of the city and country generally, will be all the more healthy for having passed through the ordeal of purification.

With regard to the rate of wages there will not likely be much difference from last year. The amount of work to be done will supply plenty of labor for all classes of mechanics who may come to swell the list of those already here.

In the prices of building material no great change is anticipated, but what alterations there are will certainly be in the direction of a lower price. Lumber will, it is expected, be lower than it was last year, owing to the increased production, and the improved facilities for bringing the out-put of the mills in our own country to market. The beginning of the Thunder Bay branch and the opening of lake navigation will allow the product of eastern lumber to be brought through our own territory, and save the round-about all-rail route via Chicago and St Paul. Prices of American lumber are also tending downwards consequent upon the tremendous production in the Northern States. Lumbermen there are showing signs of alarm lest there be an over-production which may cause a big tumble in prices—so much so that at a recent con-

vention of lumbermen in St. Paul, it was decided in another season to limit the production to a certain extent and thus ward off the possibility of a glut in the market, and a repetition of the stagnation in the trade which occurred a few years ago in the eastern parts of the continent.

Brick will be manufactured very extensively and the increased competition will prevent any rise in prices in that direction; in fact a reduction is anticipated. There is a fair supply on hand, held over, from last season.

So that take it all round it seems as if the price of building this year will in all probability be to an appreciable extent below that of last year.

CHINESE VS. WHITE LABOR.

At present Chinese labor is being very largely employed on Canadian Pacific Railway construction on the Pacific side of the Rocky Mountains. Opinion differs very much as to the advisability of encouraging that class of immigration. Some going so far as to contend that it should be put a stop to by law. Mr. Herman Clark, who has done most of the work of construction on the Northern Pacific Railway, discussing the relative value of Chinese and white labor in building railways, says he has "no use" for Chinese cheap labor. He claims that white labor, although demanding higher wages, is invariably cheaper, and alleges that his experience with both varieties in building the Northern Pacific warrants him in that statement. While the Chinamen choose their own foremen and work as they please, the Scandinavians and Danes employed divide the work among themselves, hire the boss, whom they require to do his share, finish their self-imposed task, and then, having drawn their pay, are ready for another job. They are peaceful, industrious and sober, and when the railroad has no further use for them they buy land along the line, build villages, cultivate farms, and straightway begin adding to the wealth of the country. Several towns, some of them containing from 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants, have been laid out and are principally peopled by Scandinavians. No such good results, adds Mr. Clark, has ever come from the employment of Chinese, and the Northern Pacific would not have been completed till the summer of 1884 unless a liberal supply of white laborers had been secured.

No special fault seems to be found

with the Chinese in the above unless it be that they do not settle and form towns along the line of railway, or that they do not work rapidly enough.

TRADE IN THE STATES.

Our neighbors across the line are feeling not a little uneasiness over the condition of trade in that country, and also recognize the necessity of a properly constituted bankrupt law. One of the leading trade journals of New York, discussing the question the other day, expressed itself very plainly. The bankrupt law unfortunately, it says, has not been passed. People who were inclined to doubt the desirability of such an enactment are changing their opinion, and there is quite a general regret that the bill failed. This feeling has gained ground from the fact that there is under existing methods of legal procedure too much opportunity for excluding creditors from an equal division of assets. There is an uneasy sense that business troubles are impending, and events of the past few weeks have done much to excite it. It is a question if there is any immediate cause of alarm, but we are impressed that there is reason for the exercise of caution and conservative business judgment. Credits ought to be narrowly watched and reduced as far as practicable without creating panic and confusion. The trade ought to shut down on "cheap credits" and make ready for emergencies which may or may not arise, but which, nevertheless, the signs of the times indicate to be possible.

REDUCED IMMIGRANT RATES

Representatives of the leading railways in the North-west recently met in Chicago when it was decided to reduce the rate on immigrant moveables, \$10 per car, taking effect on April 1st. This step was deemed necessary in order that the roads might secure a share of the patronage that would otherwise be diverted from them and appropriated by the lake lines of steamers. To counteract this it was necessary to hold out inducements in the cheapness of rail transportation which would equalize those proffered by the steamers. The extensive preparations being made by the lake steamship companies show that they mean business this season, and unless the railways deal liberally, a large portion of traffic will be diverted via Prince Arthur's Landing or Duluth.