

WINTER AND ITS PROSPECTS.

WE have now entered upon the winter months, which give promise of unusual business activity and animation. Taking it all in all, the fall has been an exceedingly fine one. We have enjoyed a larger share than usual of the glories of Indian summer—dark, dull November forgetting, for once, to be gloomy. This fine weather has been a fortunate circumstance for our Agriculturists, and we feel convinced that next year's harvest will show the excellent use they have made of it.

Now that December has come, however, there is an earnest desire felt in all sections of the province that winter may come on, and good sleighing set in, as early as possible. This is particularly the case in the newer settlements of the country. In many of the best grain-producing sections of Canada West, the roads are yet so bad that the farmers cannot bring their crops to market until there are heavy falls of snow. For several years past, many of the back settlers viewed the approach of the winter months with comparative indifference, for their crops were so poor that they had very little to dispose of. Not so this year. A complete change has come over "the spirit of their dream." With but few exceptions their barns are crammed with wheat, oats, barley, peas, hay, and other produce of the fields. Repeated enquiries convince us that excellent though the late harvest was in the old settled parts of Canada, it is in the newer townships where the greatest increase took place. Never before did these settlers reap such bountiful crops, and it is no wonder that they are impatient that rude bores, with his "ruffian blasts," should hasten on good sleighing, so that their crops may be conveyed to market with the merry music of the bells.

Not over one half of the Agricultural productions of this year can yet have reached market. The probability of the abrogation of our present commercial regulations with the United States has no doubt quickened the movement of produce, and where the farmers have had good roads it is probable that very little grain is in store. But in many large tracts of country, where the farmers are not so favourably situated, scarcely a bushel has yet been turned into cash, and therefore we think the estimate is not too high that one half of the late harvest's yield is yet in the hands of farmers. With the first good fall of snow this produce will come out with a rush. At the present time the state of the roads prevents farmers taking advantage of the capital prices going. But they are all on the alert. That the Reciprocity Treaty is expected to terminate in March next is known in the smallest settler's cabin in the land, and as soon as ever they can get out to market the receipts of grain must become unusually large. Judging from these circumstances, there can be little doubt that during the ensuing winter months Canada will be as busy as a bee-hive—business will be brisk and money plenty.

The prospect this winter is not only encouraging to the farmers, but to the entire business community of the province, particularly the retail traders. The poor success which has attended farming for a few years past, has been heavily felt by the latter class. In districts long settled, the scarcity of money has prevented the farmers from purchasing anything that their families could do without; hence business has been flat and unprofitable. In newer localities, the retail dealers have generally had large sums in their ledgers against settlers which it was impossible to realize, the burden in many cases being such that they could not weather the storm. The great bulk of retailers had a difficult time during the late depression. The last two months has afforded them some relief, and it is gratifying to believe that ere the close of the winter months those who are not hopelessly insolvent, will occupy a better position than they have done for several years. Hundreds of settlers will be able this season to clear off accounts which have been accumulating for three or four years past; in fact the largest portion of individual indebtedness to retail dealers should be wiped out during the next three months. Sensible business men will take care that old claims are no longer neglected by those who are able to pay, and we trust that, learning wisdom from the past, they will take care not to risk their own safety again as business men by that indiscriminate system of credit which has ruined so many.

The statements published by our banking institutions show that there is a large amount of money in circulation throughout the province at the present time. After the winter fairly sets in, and the produce of the back settlements begins to come out, there is

every probability that the circulation will be still further augmented. This must result in giving an impetus to all branches of trade, but prudent men will be guarded against anything partaking of a speculative character. Under the inspiring influence of increased business, the merchant may feel inclined to buy more largely, the grocer to load his shelves with goods, the mechanic to double his machinery, and others to follow their example. But all would do well to be cautious about incurring heavy liabilities, relying upon future prosperity to liquidate them. Next year's crops may be a failure; we know not how the breaking up of our American trade may affect us, and so we might speak of other contingencies. Under these circumstances, our business men, during the approaching winter, should, if we may be pardoned the comparison, "make hay while the sun shines," but they should also be careful not to forget that sunshine is not always with us.

Many persons, particularly foreigners, regard our Canadian winter as a dull, dreary period. This is a great mistake. It is decidedly the liveliest period of the whole year. Business is then so brisk, that our cities, towns and villages, present scenes of bustle and activity of the most enlivening character. Money is plentier than at other times, purchases are generally larger, and if the province be prosperous, all classes seem more directly to share in it. It is also our season of festivity and merry-making, for the pleasures of which our pure, bracing atmosphere creates a relish which the Southron may sigh for in vain. The coming winter months promise to be more enjoyable than usual, for Canada has seldom experienced more sound healthful prosperity, and its gratifying effects must permeate all classes of society.

BRITAIN IN AMERICA.

TWENTY years ago the British Colonies, inhabited by the descendants of Europeans, which now number their population by millions, were but weak dependants upon British bounty. Although they have been steadily growing in wealth and strength, the old system under which they had been founded has until recently remained almost unchanged. No wonder that at last some Englishmen began to grumble; no wonder some public speakers and public writers adopted the views of Goldwin Smith, that the Colonies should be cast off.

But one day in the Canadian Parliament there came a dead lock of parties—a short time after a small Canadian steamer went down the Gulf to Charlottetown—the best talent of all the Provincial Governments in British North America then met in old Quebec. A powerful colonial deputation next went to England; and both in England and the Colonies people suddenly arose from a lethargy which now seems incomprehensible. British statesmen—like a father startled by finding his son, who left his house in boyhood, returning a few years after, as strong and tall as he—for the first time awoke to an understanding of the new era that had dawned upon the empire. One of two paths they had to take; they had to bid the colonies set up in business for themselves, or else to take them into partnership. Generously, yet wisely, they have chosen the latter course, and the drift of recent steps both here and in Britain has been in this direction. The question of defence was first discussed, and a course decided on. We have been organizing our militia thoroughly, while England has been strengthening our most important citadel. Next came the consideration of our trade relations, and we believe each future step will be in the direction of free trade between Great Britain and the colonies and the colonies themselves, while each colony will be encouraged to make such special agreements with neighbouring nations as may suit its peculiar position. The policy of Great Britain used to be restriction. It used to be thought a political crime to allow a colony to manufacture so much as a horseshoe nail. It used to be thought a blunder to let any colony feel its strength. It now seems to be the broadly liberal policy to develop the industrial as well as the other resources of each colony to the utmost, and to encourage its trade to the fullest extent. Then it used to be thought a question of time how soon a colony would revolt and sever forcibly the tie that bound it to its parent state. There now seems to be growing a feeling, alike in colonies and mother country, that the longer we all remain united the better it will be for us, and that, sinking narrow views or the definition to a hair of our respective duties and liabilities, we should go on doing with all our might the best for each other we can.

Visions of a more glorious future for the empire than even its glorious past, has dawned, and we Canadians begin to feel that these colonies are indeed another Britain in America.

IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT.

IT must be a matter of the greatest satisfaction to the friends of progress, in Canada, to know that our Minister of Emigration has expressed himself decidedly in favour of something in the shape of a homestead law. Nothing could be more foolish than the idea of spending money on the encouragement of immigration to this country, when we know that so large a percentage of those who actually arrive on our shores, take the first opportunity of going to the other side of the lakes. It does not matter whether the inducements held out to them to go are *bona fide* or not; the fact is what we have to deal with. They do go; and the Homestead Act is undoubtedly the great lever, either directly or indirectly, by which they are impelled. Thousands go to take advantage of that liberal provision, and thousands more go to replace those native workmen in the United States, who are continually seeking the West, to avail themselves of the liberality of their Government.

The Homestead Act is one of the wisest measures that could possibly have been devised for the peopling of a new country. The best proof of its wisdom is its tremendous success. The rush of people is still to the new lands of the West, in spite of the high wages offered and paid in the older States of the Union. It is certainly astonishing that after so many years of such marked success in the States, nothing has, as yet, been done towards some liberal disposal of our Public Land. Surely we ought to be as willing to encourage the settlement of this country as they are on the other side of the lines, of theirs. But we have never tried the effect of a liberal policy in accomplishing it, even though, by so doing, we should eventually reap a great reward. As the Hon. Mr. McCre has expressed himself publicly, in the presence of some of his colleagues, in favour of a homestead law, or "some substitute for it," it is to be hoped that they will agree upon some measure before the approaching session of Parliament, and that we will at once commence to derive the benefit of it. It is an undoubted fact that, except in some few favoured localities which are all long settled, farming in Canada is a poor business; and any man who will take a tract of bush land, especially in Lower Canada, and will agree to settle on it, deserves it, and ought to have no impediment thrown in his way by Government, in the shape of a demand for purchase money.

There is one particular respecting bush land, to which we would call the attention of settlers in Lower Canada. In Upper Canada, where the cost of labour is much higher than in Lower, it is nothing uncommon for parties to take in hand to clear land merely for the sake of the timber for the manufacture of ashes, where the timber is adapted for that purpose; but in Lower Canada there appears to be no regular or systematic way for the entire manufacture of ashes, the farmer generally merely burning the wood and selling the raw ashes at an unremunerative price.

If the system of which we speak as existing in Upper Canada, was remunerative when ashes were at a low figure, it must yield a handsome profit when they sell, as latterly, at nine dollars per 100 lbs. The clearing of bush land appears to be the principal objection which immigrants urge to their remaining in Canada; and if it can be shown to them, that they can make at least a living by the manufacture of their bush into potash, and have no payments to make on their land, we have no doubt that thousands who now seek the western prairies would prefer to remain in this country.

The question of inducing settlement in Canada is one which the people ought to force on the consideration of the Government. It is the one more than any other which affects our existence as a people. Our prosperity and material advancement are directly dependent upon it, and the sooner we grapple with it the better. One difficulty which has been urged against the free disposal of land is, that the Government could not demand the payment of arrears and instalments on land already sold. Certainly in the localities in which they were making such gifts, they could not, and it would be only fair that they should refund whatever they have received from settlers in such localities. But it could in no wise affect such cases in the older settled districts.