

WHAT WE THINK.

—The idiotically placed railway swing bridge pier, which has been a serious interference with the successful use of the canal at Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., has been removed & the bridge replaced by one which extends across the whole width of the canal. The pier should never have been provided, and it would be interesting to learn who recommended it in the first instance.

—The railway traffic returns for the current year are, up to date, of a most satisfactory character. The C.P.R. leads with a tremendous increase, the approximate gross earnings for Jan. & Feb. showing an increase of \$455,000, the Grand Trunk figures for the same period showing an increase of \$189,930. Other lines, there is every reason to believe, generally show increases. With the absence of any rate disturbance the outlook for the year is very bright.

—Some opposition papers are attacking the Baldwin locomotives recently brought in for the Intercolonial, stating they are not working satisfactorily & that they are not what is required. The question of the importation of locomotives for a Government line may, perhaps, be a debatable question, but the quality of the Baldwins is beyond question. There is no better locomotive made, and we are inclined to think that Mechanical Superintendent Joughins, who is responsible for the specifications, knows what is required on the I.C.R. better than the political newspaper critics.

—The scheme for the consolidation of electric railway interests, with the Buffalo Railway as the central figure, & including the Niagara Falls Park & River Ry., particulars of which are given on pg. 89 of this issue, is, we have reason to believe, expected by the directors of the N.F.P. & R.R. Co. to go through. While we should be sorry to see the control of this line pass out of local hands they cannot be expected to refuse a good offer for a property which so far has not proved a remunerative investment, & which could undoubtedly be operated more economically & successfully as part of the consolidated system proposed.

—The fallacious idea that a reduction of passenger fares would produce such a large increase of travel as to more than compensate the railways was given utterance to at the recent annual meeting of the Toronto Board of Trade, when the President, referring to last year's rate cutting between the two principal lines, said that if the results were analyzed he thought it would be found that the railways were not sufferers to any material extent in consequence of the low rates which prevailed, as owing to the increased traffic any deficiency in net earnings must have been very largely overcome. The figures, however, tell a different story. The disastrously low rates prevailed during 9 months of last year. The Grand Trunk reports show that in 1898 that line carried 6,833,464 passengers, against 6,533,024 in 1897, & the passenger receipts for 1898 were £1,025,258, against £1,083,912 in 1897. So that in 1898 the G.T. carried 300,440 passengers in excess of the previous year, for which it received £58,654 less in cash. The handling of 300,440 more passengers required the use of more equipment, more train men, more clerical work, & involved other expenses, while \$285,410 less was taken in. The C.P.R. does not publish its passenger & freight receipts separately each month, & at the moment of writing its figures for 1898 are not available, though they will probably be received before this paper goes to press & room may be found for them elsewhere. They will probably be found to tell

a very similar story, though not perhaps to quite the same extent.

—The announcement from Ottawa that the Dominion Government has decided to build a telegraph line from the terminus of the Government system at Quesnelle, B.C., to Dawson City, Yukon, on the ground that the ministers have decided that the franchise is too valuable & too important to be allowed to go into any but Government hands, is hardly a surprise, as there have been strong rumors to that effect for some time past, but it is a curious decision in view of the record of the Government on the question. At the last Dominion session acts were passed incorporating the Dawson City & Victoria Telegraph Co., & the Northern Commercial Telegraph Co., both being empowered to establish telegraph communication between British Columbia & Dawson City. The latter Co. does not seem to have done anything under its charter, but the first mentioned charter was acquired by the Canadian, British Columbian & Dawson City Telegraph Co., which has been organized in England with a share capital of £300,000, & which recently issued £225,000 1st mortgage debenture stock. We were recently informed that this Co. had let a contract for the construction of the line, & that the Resident Engineer had been despatched to British Columbia to start the work, so that no doubt considerable expense has been incurred. When the prospectus of the debenture stock was issued we felt compelled to criticise it adversely on account of the visionary estimates it contained, but we want to see the Co. get fair play, & now that the Government has decided to build a line & ruin the franchise, the Co. is certainly entitled to liberal compensation. If there are reasons to-day for the line being built by the Government, they doubtless existed a year ago, & the two charters above mentioned should not have been granted. The fact that the C., B.C. & D.C. T. Co. was issuing debentures & preparing for work was given wide publicity, & yet it does not appear that the Government notified the Co. of its intention to render the charter valueless. This mode of procedure is unworthy of a Government, & is calculated to seriously prejudice Canadian interests in Europe. If capitalists once came to the conclusion that they are not to be treated honestly by the Government, & that after proceeding in good faith to carry out the powers unanimously given them by Parliament, their franchises are to be arbitrarily rendered worthless, they will leave such investments severely alone. The two charters granted last session provided for the rates for messages being subject to the control of the Governor in Council, a sufficient safeguard against excessive charges, & we fail to see any reason, "from the standpoint of the national safety" or otherwise, for the Government's action in this matter. Given a government control of rates, as provided by the statutes, there is every reason to believe that a line from Quesnelle to Dawson could be built & operated more economically & more effectually by a company than by the Government.

—Some extraordinary, & in our opinion unjustifiable, legislation was enacted at the recent session of the British Columbia Legislature, at the instance of the Attorney-General of that Province. The Railway Aid Act of 1890 provided that the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council might grant aid to a line from Ashcroft to Cariboo, to an Okanagan line & to the Farwell branch of the C.P.R. No subsidy had been granted to any of these lines under the authority above mentioned, & an act was passed taking away the power from the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. To us this act seems to have been unnecessary & probably injudicious, as the want of such power by the executive might seriously delay construction,

but there is no other objection to it. But some other clauses of the act are of an altogether different character. By acts passed in 1897 & 1898, aid, not to exceed \$4,000 a mile was granted towards the construction of lines from Penticton to the Boundary Creek district, about 100 miles; from Robson to the Boundary Creek district, about 80 miles; from the Pacific coast, near Point Roberts, to Penticton, about 230 miles; from Bute Inlet to Quesnelle, about 230 miles, & from Teslin Lake to a seaport in B.C., not more than 400 miles. Under the authority of these acts the late Turner government, entered into contracts with Mackenzie, Mann & Co., for the construction of lines from Penticton to Boundary Creek; from Point Roberts to Penticton, & from Teslin Lake to a seaport in B.C. The act recently passed takes away the power to aid the lines subsidized in 1897 & 1898, & cancels the contracts with Mackenzie, Mann & Co. The only excuse the members of the Government & their supporters in the House could offer for the measure was the technical plea that the contracts were not binding, because their carrying out by Mackenzie, Mann & Co. was dependent on that firm's being able to secure Dominion aid also. On the strength of the contracts the contractors went to considerable expense for surveys, &c., & were endeavoring to secure aid from Ottawa. Ex-Attorney-General Eberts, in opposing the cancellation of the contracts, fittingly termed it repudiation, & remarked that capital being timid such action would have the effect of scaring it away from the Province. British Columbia is a magnificent field for investment, & has been brought so prominently before the world during the last few years that capitalists have been turning their attention to it to an extent previously unknown. But they will soon call a halt if they once get the impression that the Legislature is ruled by repudiationists, & that any contract they enter into—to which the Government is a party—is liable to cancellation. Unfortunately for British Columbia, its government at present is dominated by the Attorney-General, a carpet-bagger from Manitoba, who left behind him there a record for just the sort of legislation he has recently forced through the Victoria House. On becoming Attorney-General of Manitoba about 10 years ago, one of his first acts was to secure the passage of a bill cancelling two contracts with the Government, which were held by political opponents; among the clauses of the bill being one which took away the rights of the contractors to appeal to the courts for compensation! This is mentioned merely to show that he is capable of securing any legislation which may suit his purpose, no matter how arbitrary or outrageous it may be, & that no contractor or investor is safe in British Columbia so long as he is a member of its government.

Good Luck for a Good Fellow.—A recent Montreal despatch said: "'Charley' Hosmer has made half a million dollars in London. This statement was on everybody's tongue to-day on the stock exchange & other public resorts, & all appeared to be delighted to learn that the Manager of the C.P.R. Co.'s Telegraph had struck it rich, as mining men would say. It appears that while Hosmer was in London recently he was so successful in a deal that his profits reached the splendid sum of £100,000. From being a poor boy Hosmer has become a millionaire." We do not vouch for the accuracy of all the foregoing, though it is pretty well known that Mr. Hosmer has amassed a large fortune. His good luck is gratifying to everyone who knows him, for there is no better fellow made.

F. D. Anthony, Chief Engineer, Ottawa & New York Ry., has moved his office from Cornwall, Ont., to Ottawa.