

territory entirely, or else charge them an additional license tax to pay for the cost of opening the route to the country. For instance, if we were forced to build a couple of hundred miles of railway in British Columbia, on account of the restrictions imposed by the United States at the mouth of the Stikine river, we might get back the cost of this work by charging foreigners double or treble the price paid by Canadians for miners' licenses.

### THE STIKINE RAILWAY.

The Stikine railway contract is about the most uppermost question in Canadian public affairs at present. The construction of the railway is undoubtedly a case of emergency, and the government seems justified to a considerable extent, at least, in the action that has been taken in this matter. At the same time we believe the moral effect would have been much better if proposals had been publicly invited for the construction of this work. The conclusion of a contract before the public were aware that such a matter was under consideration, has not had an inspiring effect. Urgency there is undoubtedly in the matter; but the government have had since fast fail to consider the question, and this would appear to have allowed of sufficient time to have invited proposals in a public way.

The general provisions for the construction of the road appear to be reasonable. The Commercial has long been steadily opposed to the principle of granting public lands in aid of railways. With the present temper of public feeling in Eastern Canada, a cash grant to a western road would no doubt have aroused more opposition to the road. The eastern people want the cash for their own roads and canals, while western roads can be aided by grants of public lands. Even in this case, however, a reasonable cash subsidy, we believe, would have been preferable to the grant of 25,000 acres of land per mile for the 150 miles of road.

As to the general question of the construction of the road, the work is undoubtedly one of pressing necessity. Even if the cost had been much greater the government could hardly be excused from grappling with the undertaking and putting it through to completion at the earliest possible moment. The exigencies of the case demand that the most readily accessible route to Yukon under Canadian control should be opened at once.

The fact that the opening of the most practical coast route is a necessity, does not detract in the least from what The Commercial said last week in regard to an interior route via the North Saskatchewan. We did not

wish to imply in the article last week that a railway should be built at once right through to Dawson, via the Saskatchewan and Peace River valleys. We do believe, however, that immediate action should be taken to open a permanent, all-Canadian interior route through the fine agricultural and stock raising country north of the Saskatchewan. It might mean the improvement of the natural waterways alone, or the improvements of the waterways, with connecting railway links, or connection with the Stikine-Teslin route, as further investigation may show most practical. It certainly seems of vast importance to the material welfare of Canada, that this great opportunity for the development of our Dominion should not be allowed to pass by. If we rise equal to the occasion we have the opportunity of advancing our national development such as might not come in a score of years under ordinary circumstances.

### PROVINCIAL RAILWAY EXTENSIONS.

It is to be hoped that that there is more than mere rumor in the reports that certain local branch railways in Manitoba are likely to be extended this year. Beyond the Stonewall branch there is a splendid section of country, which has been partially settled since the early days. While settlers have been going away west to look for desirable districts wherein to settle, the beautiful strip of country lying north of Stonewall, and between Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, has been neglected all these years. A number of settlers went into this district in the early years, under the belief that the main line of the Canadian Pacific would pass through that region. The proposed route of the road, however, was changed, and these settlers have been without railway communication all this time. The district is well supplied with fuel and water and is in every sense a superb mixed farming section, but though comparatively close to the largest market in the west, the absence of railway communication has caused new settlers to neglect the district.

The other branch about which there is some talk of an extension is known as the Pipestone branch. It is located in western Manitoba, and the proposed extension would be mainly in the territory of Assiniboia. Beyond the present terminus of the Pipestone branch for a distance of almost 100 miles there is a fine agricultural country, which has been fairly well settled for many years. Like the other district mentioned these settlers expected when they went in that they would not be long without a railway, as one or more roads were projected for this district before the settlers went in to take up the land. It is

to be hoped this their greatest need will not long be denied them. In the excitement over Klondike roads and routes we must not overlook important needs nearer home.

### THE INTERIOR ROUTES.

A good many prospectors appear to be going north via the interior routes. Out of 1,000 licenses so far issued, 100 have been issued at Edmonton. For practical prospectors, the interior routes via Prince Albert and Edmonton offer many advantages. By these routes they pass through hundreds of miles of gold-bearing country, where just as good strikes are likely to be made as have yet been made in the famous Klondike region.

### A TRIP TO SOUTHERN MANITOBA.

BY A COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVE.

#### GRENA.

The border town is a flourishing community, pleasantly situated, with a fringe of large trees not far from it and with many small trees growing where they have been let out through the town. The site is somewhat flat, seeming to be the centre of a perfectly level plain, which is however an extremely fertile plain, cultivated right up to the outskirts of the town. Indeed for miles before reaching Gretna the railway passes through a succession of wheat fields very little virgin prairie being left. While Morden has a large Mennonite trade, its surrounding population is not all of that class, as it is situated on the western side of the reserve. Gretna, however, while not geographically in the centre, may be said to be the economic centre of the Mennonite community. Most of the business men are shrewd, thrifty Germans, some from Ontario, some from the old land, but all alike thorough-going business men, who have contributed in no small measure to the success of the Mennonite settlers whose business has been in their hands. Fairly at the head of the list stands the firm of E. Penner & Co., the head of which, Mr. Penner, is almost in the position of a patriarch to his compatriots. He has a large general store comprising almost every article of ordinary use or consumption about the house or farm. Indeed this seems to be the way trade is done here, for all the general stores are stocked on the same lines. Others with large general stores are J. Loewen, W. Esau & Co., Schultz & Stiefel, and Friesen & Jansen. J. Heiman & Co., Morden, wholesale liquor merchants, have a store here in charge of A. Coblentz, an old-time Winnipeg and Emerson merchant. J. D. Pierson is an implement agent, associated with C. Pieper. Mr. Pieper has built a large new warehouse. J. P. Friesen & Son own and operate the Gretna roller mills, capacity 100 barrels, and also handle lumber and building material. Ritz & Widmeyer are private bankers and financial agents, also handle implements. J. G. Kertcher manufactures tow for upholstering purposes, from flax which is quite extensively grown in the reserve. This industry should grow as it is the first established and the upholstering and finishing of fur-