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RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION IN CANADA. RAILROAD construction in the United States, during 1908, was the smallest in ten years. According to the president of the New York Central, that of 1909 promises to be no greater. And despite some increase this month in orders for rails and structural steel, the forecast is not likely to prove very far out. In Canada, conditions are in marked contrast. During the calendar year, 1908, there were some 1,250 miles of railway lines added to those in operation throughout the country—the year-end mileage, according to the Minister of Railways and Canals, being 23,750. New mileage was over 20 per cent. greater than that opened up in 1907—though the United States construction showing for 1908 was well on to 40 per cent. less than for 1907.

At the present time there are actually under way well on to 4,500 miles of railway in Canada, calling for a construction expenditure (aside from terminals and equipment) of over \$100,000,000—a very large part of which will be actually expended during 1909.

The bounden effect of all this upon general trade conditions is one of the encouraging features in Canada's outlook over coming months.

LOOKING FOR A SIGN. WITH no activity in railroad construction corresponding relatively to that in Canada, many of our neighbours to the South are as these still looking for a sign, in the matter of business recovery. To be sure, convalescence keeps progressing, if slowly. And the too-long delayed surgery of price-cutting and consequent wage-adjustment bids fair to help matters somewhat. But the specialists in finance are being impatiently asked, how soon conditions will be normal.

The expert who is wise—looks wise! But like the doctor quizzed by Salsrey Gamp, of "scented" memory, he is "dispedged to shake his head."

But surely, have said the impatient, the upward trend will set in once the presidential election is over. Well, with the turn of the year! Certainly, with the change of administration! No, it will follow tariff readjustment!—such is now the popular forecast. Indeed, it may be some months before

people generally will allow themselves to realize how exceedingly gradual must be the return of general industrial activity. That the harvest results of next autumn will be an important factor is undoubted. Final recovery from the depression of the "nineties" had as its immediate occasion, bumper crops.

LOGIC IN RAILROAD BUILDING.

DIDN'T formal, old-time Logic (Peace to its ashes!) have somewhat to say about the "fallacy of an ambiguous middle"? One has an indistinct recollection of those arguments of straw which, in grim school-masterly humour, used to be manufactured for class-room consumption only.

As who might blandly say:—"He who contends that you are an animal speaks truly." Who would deny it? Further:—"He who calls you an ass says that you are an animal." To which there might be assent—but like to be less enthusiastic.

"Ergo, youth, he who calls you an ass speaks truly." And the "ayes had it," judging from the school-room laugh that followed.

Likewise, there is no gainsaying that they who contend Canada needs more railroad facilities speak truly. Nor can it be denied that those who seek a charter for the E. Z. or O. P. Q. Ry. say that Canada needs more railroads. But, neither legislators nor investors should thereupon rush to the conclusion that said charter-seekers necessarily "speak truly." Sometimes they may, in their enthusiasm let us say, over-shoot the mark of sober judgment. And it is no bad rule to follow, that lines projected by strong, well-established companies with experienced management are those most likely to make good. With Canadian Pacific, Grand Trunk, Canadian Northern and Great Northern interests eagerly racing to cover the newer West, it is hard to see how all the proposed "little fellows" in the field are to succeed.

Law-makers should scrutinise the average charter project with a more critical care—bond-holders with a more than critical care. The crises of 1847 in England and of 1873 in America—caused largely by over-eagerness in railroad construction and speculation—show results of false logic in railway building.