

# THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific coast than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 9, 1901.

## ANNUAL BOARD OF TRADE MEETING.

The annual meeting of the Winnipeg board of trade, which was held on Tuesday afternoon, was one of the most interesting gatherings that body has ever held. It was well attended and the proceedings were marked by thorough familiarity with commercial conditions in the west. The address of retiring President Elliott, which is given elsewhere in this issue, together with a report of the other proceedings of the meeting, is full of information concerning western business affairs. His review of the business situation is accurate and thorough. The report of the council gives information as to the proceedings of the board for the year. The selection of officers resulted in the selection of Wm. Georgeson for president and John Russell for vice-president. It is not too much to say that two more popular nominations could not have been made. Both these gentlemen have been eminently fitted by a long and thorough course of business experience in Winnipeg for the offices to which they have been appointed and will no doubt discharge their duties with distinction. Mr. Georgeson has made a particularly close study of some of the commercial matters with which the board will be called upon to deal this year. It was generally regretted that John Galt, the vice-president of last year, was not able to accept when he was put in nomination for the office of president, as in the natural course of events he should have succeeded to the office and would have filled it with honor to both himself and the board, but he felt constrained to withdraw, and Mr. Georgeson became then the unanimous choice for the office. Secretary Bell was also unanimously re-elected to his office and the board manifested its appreciation of his work by an increase in salary. Strang was also re-appointed treasurer in addition to these executive officers strong committees have been named to carry out the various divisions of the board's work. It may safely be said that the Winnipeg board of trade is now one of the two or three most important commercial bodies in Canada and its work and influence are constantly increasing as the population of this country grows. During the years in which it has served the business community of the city

and Western Canada generally in the past it has been able to do a great deal towards improving the machinery of trade and the lot of the trader and settler in the west, all of which service has cost many of its members much valuable time and not a little money in some cases. In no case yet where public interests were concerned has it spared either time or money to accomplish the purpose in hand and we feel sure that what has been done in the past in this respect will be done again and in even larger measure in the future.

## The Dominion Parliament.

The Dominion house of parliament was formally opened on Thursday. The speech from the throne was mainly composed of references to Imperial affairs—a significant feature by the way. Reference was made to further proposed improvements in the St. Lawrence route. A law for the better supervision of the export trade in food products was foreshadowed. The Pacific cable scheme will also come before the house.

## The Bridge of the Three Americas.

Spanning the neck which separates the Park Line from the North Bay in Delaware Park is the bridge of the

## Insurance Notes.

A. Montgomery has accepted the position of local agent at Manitou for the Federal Life Insurance Company.

The North British and Mercantile Insurance Co. is applying to parliament for power to transact accident, employers' liability, burglary and marine insurance.

There is some talk of a local mutual fire insurance concern being formed by the retail merchants of Montreal for the purpose of competing with the regular companies which have recently advanced rates.

The annual general meeting of the shareholders of the North-West Fire Insurance Company is called for Thursday, the 11th inst., at the head office, 373 Main street, Winnipeg, at 3.30 o'clock p. m.

T. R. Earl, superintendent of agencies of the Mutual Life of Canada, who has been in Winnipeg for a few days, left on Thursday on a trip of inspection through the Northwest Territories and British Columbia.

The Neepawa Agricultural society held a meeting on Thursday last for the purpose of discussing the hail insurance question. The speakers expressed themselves as having no confidence in the mutual plan of hail insurance and it was decided to ask the provincial government to provide for compulsory insurance and taxation of land to raise the necessary revenues. A resolution was passed calling on the government to deal with the question and the secretary of the society was

## The Sisal Industry in the Bahamas.

A recent colonial office report (Miscellaneous Series, No. 1) contains some interesting notes on the planting of the Pita plant, or Agave Sisalana, in the Bahamas Islands and the extraction and preparation of the fibre. This plant is not identical with the Agave Ixtil, or Henequen, of Yucatan, but appears to be a closely allied species. It is superior to the Yucatan plant, and in the hands of the Bahamas planters gives a fibre of superior quality and greater marketable value. After describing the propagation of the plant and field cultivation and leaf cutting, the report deals with the extraction of the fibre. The factory contains the fibre-extracting machine, driven by an oil or gas engine, and the press for baling. The machine is placed at one of the extremities of the building, with free communication to the outside, where there is a mound or raised stand from which the operator feeds the machine, a continuous thin stream of water being conducted to and flowing into the machine so that the fibre is washed clean during the process of extraction. The leaves are carried by strong 'grip' chains to large scutching wheels, which have brass knives fastened across the periphery, and these knives scrape the vegetable matter from the fibre against brass or wood curves. At the other end of the machine, and inside the factory, an operator is seated to receive the fibre as it emerges white and clean; and



NEW BRIDGE ON THE APPROACH  
PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION  
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Three Americas, a beautiful, substantial and serviceable structure, which will be much admired by the Exposition visitors.

It is built of white granite and is in the form of three arches, each representing one of the Americas. The keystone of each arch is covered with a characteristic Indian head, males and females being represented. The arches are surmounted by a balustrade of turned granite balusters and heavy granite coping. Over the central arch are four pedestals—one at each corner—upon which it is proposed to place bronze urns or lamps. On the land abutments are long pedestals suitable for handsome groups of statuary. It is suggested that a group by Karl Bitter be placed upon one of them temporarily, during the Pan-American Exposition next summer.

The total length of the bridge is 138 feet. Its width over all is 85 feet. The roadway is 53 feet wide and the footpaths—one on either side—11 feet wide.

The structure has rusticated joints and is in every other way characteristic of good bridge construction. This work is being done by the City of Buffalo, in anticipation of the visit of millions of people to the Pan-American Exposition.

In the current number of the Canadian Gazette there appears notices of applications to be made to incorporate 22 railway companies and a dozen commercial or financial corporations, including two banks.

instructed to forward copies to the secretaries of other agricultural societies and ask their co-operation.

Dominion incorporation will be applied for this session by a mutual accident and sick benefit society under the name of the Canadian Mutual Aid Society. The intended objects are to establish and maintain by means of assessments on its members a benefit fund for the relief of its members in sickness, disability and accident and to establish a guarantee fund for the security of its members.

A report has been in circulation in the city this week to the effect that fire insurance rates are to be raised on all western business. The agents of the various companies deny having any knowledge of such intention on the part of their companies. An advance would first come before the board of underwriters. It is doubtful whether the insuring classes here would accept a general advance in insurance rates without making vigorous efforts to secure their insurance at the old rates. It is true that the fire insurance business has not been a very profitable one in recent years, taking the whole field of operation on this continent into consideration, but it is generally felt that so far as western Canadian business is concerned there is no cause for complaint and for that reason insurers would not receive an advance in a very friendly spirit.

The annual meeting of the Bank of Nova Scotia has been called for Feb. 20th.

from thence it is carried by other working hands to the outside, and is there hung out to dry in the sun across posts and rails erected for the purpose. When thoroughly dried, the fibre is brought back to the factory, and packed in bales by means of a press exactly similar to a wool press, care being taken to turn in the ends of the fibre so as to give a smooth exterior surface to the bale when it is turned out of the press. Uniformity in weight is not attempted; they vary from 350 pounds to 500 pounds. The maximum capacity of the best machine is about one ton of fibre per day. The following is a list of the fibre-extracting machines which are or have been in general use. Prieto—(A machine made in Barcelona and in use in Yucatan); Todd—(An American patent. Several of these machines are in use in the Bahamas; it may be considered fairly satisfactory, but not so good as the Villamor, of which patent there is one in use in the Island of New Providence); Villamor—(A better machine than the Todd in the amount of work done, and is not being made at present. It has hitherto been used a great deal in Yucatan); Torrella—(A machine made by the same American firm that brought out the Villamor. The Torrella is now replacing the Villamor machine in Yucatan, and is very highly esteemed there); Stephens or Theband—(This is a large and expensive American machine). It is reported that a new machine is coming out on a new principle, and probably cheaper.