

## "WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH HANNAH?"

(Continued from page 894.)

is not more than 17½ cents. Sugar shows a very high percentage, because it is a cheap and heavy article. Teas pay about 2 cents a lb to lay down at, say, Boissevain. This would make the freight on a dollar's worth of the kind which I found most used, 6 cents. Canned goods pay 2½ cents a tin to McGregor and points on the branch lines equally distant from Winnipeg.

Summing up my investigation, I can reach only the following conclusions, namely: that so far as freight rates from the east to the country districts, towns and cities outside of Winnipeg are concerned, there is practically no complaint heard from the trading community therein. On the other hand, the complaint is quite common, and in some cases loud against the local rates from Winnipeg to points in the province, so that the cry of discrimination against the shippers of this city is not a cry of the jobbers alone, but finds a distinct echo from the country.

On one item, not directly connected with general merchandise, I made numerous enquiries, namely lumber, and the freight rates thereon from the Lake of the Woods mills. With one exception the rates were condemned as excessive, and the exception was a dealer who was selling out his business and did not, I suppose, want his purchaser and successor to obtain any unfavorable view of the business situation in which he would be placed.

Comment on the above report is unnecessary, so far as the question of inbound freight rates being burdensome to either retailer or consumer in the country districts is concerned. Only the freight rates from Winnipeg to western points are complained of, and as competition will regulate this so far as the country merchant is concerned, Winnipeg wholesalers having to meet the prices of eastern competitors, the retailers and consumers are not the sufferers, but the Winnipeg jobbers, who have to fight loaded with this discrimination. On the lumber question comment will be made in a future issue.

It is beyond question, therefore, that this ailment of "Hannah's" has no trail leading to excessive inbound freight rates as a cause. In the next issue search will be made for it elsewhere.

## COMMERCIAL CONVENTION.

The question of calling a convention of merchants to meet in Winnipeg during the week of the Industrial Exhibition, is now under discussion. A very low railway rate has been announced for visitors to the exhibition, and a large number of merchants are sure to be in the city that week. We certainly believe it would be a great benefit to the merchants to come together for an afternoon and evening in convention, and the presence of so many in the city as are sure to be here during exhibition week, should be taken advantage of to accomplish this very desirable purpose. Merchants from all parts of the country, many of whom seldom have an opportunity of discussing questions of common interest to the trade, will be in the city. Much information can always be gained from a discussion of questions of general interest, leading to an interchange of ideas. Even if there were no specially important questions which call for discussion, there are topics in connection with trade generally which could be talked about to the advantage

of all. Discussion leads to thought, and the advancement of an idea by one person, leads to the development of ideas by others. Thus information is diffused and people have their ideas brightened up. If a commercial convention of this nature could be made an annual affair, we believe it would tell in time to the advantage of trade in this country by leading to the introduction of a better and more uniform system of doing business.

In a new country like this there are special reasons why a convention of this kind should do good. It is very necessary that the business system of the country should be established on a solid and businesslike basis, and now is the time to lay the foundation right. Recent developments have shown that some changes are necessary in our business fabric. Conditions have changed some in this country, and legal changes have been made which require careful consideration, the discussion of which cannot fail to do good. There are questions such as insurance, handling produce, credit basis of business, freights, etc., all of which are of special interest to merchants throughout the country, and which can be talked over to advantage. The exact date and place of holding the convention will be announced later in *The Commercial*, as it is quite probable arrangements will be made to this end.

## Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition.

The prize list of the Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition Association is now being distributed. It also contains the programme of the sports, amusements and attractions which will take place during the exhibition week. The exhibition opens on July 23 and continues to July 28. The large sum of \$15,000 is offered in prizes. Exhibits will be carried by the railways free of all charges, from all points in Manitoba and the territories. Exhibits from the East will be charged ordinary rates to the exhibition, but will be returned free. Very low passenger rates have also been announced, the return rate being less than single fare one way, in many cases. With these very favorable terms, the exhibition is certain to be a great success, both in the number of exhibits and in the attendance of visitors. Entries for exhibits should be made before July 12 next. Printed forms for entries will be supplied on application to the secretary. Live stock should be in the grounds by 10 o'clock on Tuesday, July 24, and other articles on Monday, and may be removed on Saturday, thus giving four full days for the exhibition to last. This is an improvement from last year, as exhibitors from a distance will not be compelled to remain so long in the city. A splendid list of sports and attractions has been provided, extending over the four days of the exhibition proper, from July 24 to 28 inclusive. A number of large special prizes are offered, amounting in some cases to over \$100. Prize lists can be had from the secretary.

## Australia's Great Staple.

The wool clip of Australia for 1893-94 is estimated at 1,860,000 bales, or 52,000 bales in excess of that of the previous clip, being the largest ever recorded. The London selling value, however, appears to be smaller than for some years past.

## Why Cheap Lumber?

The Mississippi Valley Lumberman, of Minneapolis favors higher prices for lumber in the following article:—

"What sense is there in the present low price at which white pine lumber is selling all over the country, is a question that is being asked on every side." It is a question that appeals strongly to the good sense as well as the pocket book of every manufacturer of lumber, and we all know that when the pocket book is touched it becomes a matter of importance. It is the general belief that the bottom has been reached and that lumber will stay at the present notch until there is an advance, perhaps in the early fall, and then it will go up a peg. Yet others argue that the bottom has not yet been reached and that some seven or eight years ago lumber was selling cheaper than it is to-day, and that about as many years previous to that it was still down lower. In fact that low prices of lumber come in intervals of seven or eight years and that seven or eight years from now lumber can be expected to be cheaper than it is to-day.

"It is contrary to good sense to believe an argument of this sort. When it is considered that each year sees more and more of the white pine timber of the northwest cut away, until now the best and choicest timber is far harder to get at than it was ten years ago, one can't figure out why lumber should be cheaper than it is to-day nor why any one should expect it to be cheaper ten years hence. It is contrary to the natural order of things. Stumpage is costing more each year, the best timber is being rapidly cut away, and while there is no immediate fear of the timber supply giving out, at the same time there are many reasons why lumber should have been cheaper in 1896 than it is in 1894 or can possibly ever be.

"There seems to be a desire throughout the country to dispose of lumber at figures at which there is scarcely any profit this year. When one stops and reflects, there really can be found no reason for this, except that each manufacturer in order to compete with his neighbor has got to make a low price, and as the demand is light, the result is to force lumber on to the market it has to be sacrificed. It is true that the law of supply and demand governs prices, and now, when the demand is light and the supply adequate, prices suffer. That is why it is done. Yet if lumber manufacturers were able and so disposed to hold their lumber until a demand was created, as there surely will be in time, there is no doubt but what they could realize much more on their output. One great point in favor of a firmer lumber market is the fact that stocks are not excessive anywhere in the country in manufacturers or first hands, and in second hands they are unusually light. There is not a retail lumber dealer in the northwest whose stock is anywhere near as large as it was a year ago this time and who could fill a very large order without first ordering stock from first hands. Even in the south reports from the yellow pine district are to the effect that there is not a surplus of stock on hand. So the competition with yellow pine in common territory is not so sharp as to cause prices to remain at the present figures.

"Retailers do not fear steady prices for lumber. In fact it is to their advantage that prices be firm. A prominent retailer writes *The Lumberman* this week that he would rather see prices stiffer. The only thing in which he is concerned is that his competitor does not get lumber cheaper than he does. The lumber trade is holding up well under the general business depression. It does not seem possible that prices could go lower nor just to manufacturers that they should. An effort to hold them up all around will surely do no harm. Sash and door men have realized that demoralization in prices does not pay, and have made two advances within the past two weeks in prices and are getting ready to make a third. Lumber men might profit by their example."