

NORTHERN ONTARIO AND TORONTO; ITS GATEWAY — IV. —

Englehart, June 7.

Judicious faith is a necessary business factor. Extreme caution is an advantage to the rival. Proper care in dealing with customers is part of the day's work. A Toronto wholesale firm was asked the other day as to its trade in Northern Ontario. The reply was that while much had been obtained in the past, little was being got there at present. "It is a precarious business in the North," said the wholesaler. "We have practically withdrawn; but we did mighty well while we were there." Since his withdrawal, another firm has obtained more business. The trade was there. Someone had to take it. The man of judicious caution is piling freight into the North, while he of little faith is congratulating himself on financial losses which would have been sustained, if—.

One hesitates to offer advice on the situation. When the elderly reformer told the youth to save the many ten cent pieces spent on cigars so that one day he would own that big building over the way," the smoker inquired, "Do you own it?" "No." "Well, I do," said the young man. Well meant advice is sometimes misdirected, in which case we must rely upon facts. There are some tricky phases in the business of Northern Ontario, chiefly found perhaps in the facts that a part of the population is floating and temporary, and that a part comes from foreign lands where ideas of honest business are somewhat elastic. That is why the bank manager shakes his head at certain requests for credit. It accounts for the commercial traveller accepting some orders and forgetting to keep appointments with respect to others. It is the cause of small losses borne by certain old Ontario houses. But the success of the majority is the best advocacy for better methods on the part of the minority. It is not difficult to classify Northern Ontario's customers. Generally speaking they are good. As is the case everywhere else, there are a few exceptions.

How Some are Judging.

The trouble is that some houses are apparently judging northern trade prospects by the sins of the few rather than by the heavy obligations met by the many. The consequence is that Quebec Province is not only obtaining a big share of business in this north country, but is striving strenuously for more trade and getting it. The freight shipped from Quebec points on the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railroad during 1909 and 1910 totalled 21,496 tons. Ontario's figures were naturally greater, being 279,903. Of the total freight, 301,399 tons, in the two years, Quebec Province obtained 7 per cent., a dangerous proportion when one considers that Cochrane is 480 miles from Toronto, 568 miles from Quebec and 613 miles from Montreal. The proximity of Quebec competition is well illustrated at Haileybury, which smiles across a narrow strip of Lake Temiskaming to Quebec towns largely waxing fat on Northern Ontario's trade.

As to Purchasing Power.

While due consideration should be given the fact that mining and railroad construction work is of a temporary nature and its employees of migratory habits, there are other matters requiring just as much and more thought. The mining man is an extravagant spender. His purchasing power is heavy; his payments usually are good. He buys articles of the best quality. The railroad and lumber camps support a considerable population, who are, generally speaking, satisfactory customers. The growing farming population north of Haileybury to Cochrane, while possessing a smaller purchasing power than the mining factor, are clients of stability. Altogether there is a selling field in Northern Ontario worth examination and cultivation.

It is obvious that the continued prosperity of Ontario's Northland must ultimately depend upon agricultural settle-

ment. While this will stand prominent in the provincial government's policy, undoubtedly the government railroad will have that point challenged. For instance, the need of better railway facilities at Elk Lake and Gow Ganda is a matter viewed in two lights. Mining men say that Gow Ganda would prove a big mining camp if better facilities were provided for ore shipments. Many owners have to carry their output over a long stretch of country before they reach the railroad steel.

A Case of the Viewpoint.

On the other hand the chairman of the government road says that he and his commissioners are not on deck to give sympathy. To use the government's funds in building a road into Gow Ganda would not be right, he adds. If agricultural land were around the silver, agricultural wealth would induce the commissioners to lend a more alert ear to the proposal. In other words, a mining camp in Northern Ontario must be thoroughly proved and account for considerable freight in ore and general camp supplies before a branch is run from the main line. New York capitalists are apparently most in need of the Gow Ganda extension. If they will furnish the funds to the Temiskaming Railway Commissioners, a road will be built for the New York men, 65 per cent. of the gross receipts for passenger and freight traffic, telegraph and telephone service will be turned over to them and interest of 4½ per cent. allowed on their investment. That is the Government Railway Commissioners' proposal.

It is hard on those deep in the bush, bagging ore and making a good attempt to enlarge Ontario mining statistics. There is also the transportation viewpoint, for one can easily imagine a network of steel connecting the main line with Elk Lake, Larder Lake, Gow Ganda and a dozen other points—a policy open to some criticism. The fact is that the mining man must give practical demonstration that he can fill freight cars before railroad extensions are transferred from blue prints to the land. Elk Lake and Gow Ganda may yet get railroad facilities, but they, too, have a part to perform. In the meantime, a challenge comes from Elk Lake, where the officers of the mining association say that a Gow Ganda branch would open more and better farm land than the Porcupine branch. They are willing to leave the decision to a committee of three New Ontario farmers. Another suggestion is that the recently acquired Nipissing Central electric road should be extended into the Montreal River country, a proposal which will undoubtedly receive proper consideration.

The more one examines the position in the north the more does one become impressed that the rapid settlement of the agricultural lands is imperative. The railroads are opening the country. The National Transcontinental is completed for 94 miles east of Cochrane and 130 miles west of the town. These lines of communication are helping development. The necessity of roads in the bush cannot be too strongly emphasized. The settler expects to do his share of road cutting, but it is unfair to put him off the railroad track to hew a way into what one day will be his farm.

"This is a Great Country."

There is truth in the words of the optimist, met all along the line, who says with admiration and a wide sweep of his arm, "This is a great country." Northern Ontario is a land scarcely scratched with the pitchfork of development. It offers the settler health, a career and prosperity. As a business area its expansion is rapid. It has the backbone of independence. The parson can be seen carrying his own buckets of water along the main street—a healthy sign, and an indication of labor conditions. One little boy was disappointed because he could not purchase a pair of running shoes anywhere in the town. At Cochrane a sign reads: "We keep coronation flags and bunting." Between these lines of youthful sport and loyalty there rests business. And there is much, and will be more, business in this northland.

F. W. F.