

The Commercial

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THE RAILWAY OUTLOOK.

It is always unsafe to prognosticate any time ahead in regard to expected railway construction. A great many railway schemes are brought forward, and the public are "assured" by the originators that the wherewithal to build the road is at hand, and the road will certainly be built, but in a great many instances the enterprise drops with the securing of the charter. If half the railways that have received charters were built, Western Canada would be well supplied with railways. One trouble has been that a great many charters have been secured for the purpose of charter-mongering and without any intention of building the proposed road.

The winter time is the season when the assurances of railway construction are usually made to the public, and the scheme gradually flattens out as the time for beginning construction draws near. The present is also the time of year when a large number of new railway schemes are brought forward, "with every assurance of the early construction of the road," but as soon as the charter has been secured from Parliament or the local legislatures, the public hear little more of the great majority of these enterprises.

In view, therefore, of past experiences in the West, in the matter of railway construction, it will be necessary to use great caution in considering the outlook for railway construction during 1889. But making every allowance for the failure of a number of railway schemes, there is still good reason to believe that the present year will be one of more than usual activity in railway construction in Western Canada. In fact, 1889 promises to be the most active in this respect of any year since 1882, in which year the C.P.R. Co. pushed the main line of the great road so rapidly across the western plains.

In considering the probable railway construction for 1889, only those roads which are almost certain to be pushed ahead, will be taken into account. In Manitoba we have first the new Manitoba and Northern Pacific Company, which is certain to greatly extend its system during the coming season. The Portage extension of this road, now graded, will certainly be completed at an early date,

thus adding over 50 miles to the railway mileage of the province, and opening a competing line to the important town of Portage la Prairie, as well as affording an independent outlet to the Manitoba Northwestern Railway. The Brandon Branch of the N. P. & M. system, now under construction, is almost certain to be built during the coming season. This line will add 150 miles to the railway mileage of Manitoba, and will greatly increase railway facilities to a great many farmers in Manitoba, besides opening up new districts for more convenient settlement. It will add greatly to the wealth of the province, by increasing the value of farming land, and giving better shipping facilities to a large section of country. With the Brandon branch of the M. & N. P. Ry. completed, all that portion of Manitoba south of the main line of the C.P.R., with the exception of the extreme southwestern corner, will have excellent railway facilities. It is also quite probable that the Brandon branch of the M. & N. P. Ry. may be extended from one to two hundred miles westward from the point where it turns north to Brandon, into the Souris River country. It is to be hoped that this proposed extension may be made. The road would penetrate a rich farming and coal district, already well settled and now entirely without railway facilities.

What the C.P.Ry. Co. may do in Manitoba next season, is yet to be known, as no announcements have been made to the public. The only railway construction in the province which is likely to be done by this company would be the extension westward of either the Glenboro or Deloraine branches, or perhaps both. The time allowed for the extension of these branches, according to the charter, has expired, but charter restrictions are of no moment so far as the C. P. R. is concerned, for it only requires to make a demand upon the Dominion Government to have its charters renewed. That these two branches were not extended westward years ago, is a disgrace to the Ottawa Government, which has allowed the O. P. R. Co. to shuffle along from year to year, and put off the building of the roads from one season to another, while the settlers, who were promised the road in 1882, have been obliged to suffer all kinds of privations, owing to the lack of railway facilities. It is quite probable, however, that now the Northern Pacific is about to invade the region, the O. P. R. will spur up and extend its southwestern branches,

The next Manitoba road which may be considered is the Northwest Central. This road has hung fire for a long time, and it is difficult to imagine what the company may do next season. The company now has about 50 miles graded, extending northwestward from Brandon. It is tolerably safe to count on the completion and opening of this 50 miles, and that is all. Rumors are current that the road will be pushed vigorously next summer, but so many statements in connection with this scheme have gone for nothing, that little reliance can be placed upon them. However, if the 50 miles now graded are completed and operated, it will be a great benefit to the province.

Regarding the Hudson's Bay railway, it is quite uncertain whether or not anything may be done this year in the direction of continuing construction. Statements have been made of late that the road will be pushed ahead next summer, but nothing said about this road will be believed until it has been accomplished. An attempt will probably be made at the approaching session of Parliament to secure additional aid for the road, and upon the result of this will largely depend the movements made this year in the direction of construction. As the Territories would receive greater proportionate benefit from the opening of the Hudson's Bay road than would Manitoba, the Dominion Government is under more obligation to assist the road than is the Province of Manitoba.

Another railway which is looked forward to by Manitobans is the Duluth and Winnipeg. Reports have come from Duluth and St. Paul, to the effect that the road will be pushed vigorously next summer. However, as the proposed lines of this road are principally in the State of Minnesota, and as the company building the road is not a Canadian corporation, nothing authentic concerning the intentions of the company is known here. The road may reach Winnipeg in the near future, but as it has hung fire for many years, it may yet be years before it reaches Winnipeg. But nothing is more certain than is the statement, that in time Winnipeg is bound to be connected with Duluth by a short and direct line of railway. The geography of the country warrants the statement.

In the territory east of Manitoba and west of Lake Superior, there is a possibility of some railway construction being done during 1889. The only road likely