

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.

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CULTIVATING TIMBER.

Experiments in growing forests or timber belts should prove of special interest in the West, as sooner or later we will have to consider more seriously the question of cultivating timber on a large scale. In some parts of the country the natural forests are ample for present requirements; but where such a considerable portion of the country is prairie, it is of the utmost importance that special attention should be given, not only to the preservation of the natural forests, but also to the creation of forest and timber belts. If forests could be created throughout the great treeless plains of the south-central and western portions of the prairie region, it would be a great thing for this western country. The lack of moisture is no doubt the great difficulty in the way of establishing forest belts in the treeless districts, but even in the most arid sections there are probably some valleys or depressions which could be utilized for the cultivation of trees. It is now a well understood fact that the severe winter climate has nothing to do with the absence of trees. If the necessary moisture could be secured and preserved, the question of low winter temperature need not cause serious apprehension.

The first and most important question is the preservation of the existing natural forests. At the present time more good can probably be accomplished by taking measures to preserve the natural forests, than in any other way. We have been very careless in this respect in the past, but at last public opinion seems to be moving in the direction of recognizing the value of our forests, and the duty we owe to posterity in preserving them. There has been an enormous waste in the past in connection with our forests. The province of Manitoba alone, it is said by those who have investigated the matter, has been robbed of half her forest wealth within a few years by fires. The destruction of property to the value of a few thousands, in any of our towns or cities is considered a serious matter, while the destruction annually of millions of dollars worth of timber, has scarcely been commented upon or thought worthy of consideration by the great majority of our people. Of late, however, Dominion and provincial governments have begun to move in the matter of protecting the for-

ests, and all good citizens will be ready to give every encouragement to this work. Particularly throughout the West is it necessary that the forests should be preserved. Forests bordering upon or interspersed throughout the great prairie region, should receive special care. Many of these forest areas should be set aside as perpetual forest reserves, and every effort made to preserve them from destruction by fire.

The question of cultivating or creating forests need not be delayed or held in abeyance while we are devising measures to preserve what we now have left of the natural timber areas. The government should be urged to undertake the cultivation of forests, particularly throughout the treeless districts of the West. Depressions or valleys where the water could be preserved from the annual freshets, afford favorable conditions for undertaking such experiments.

Lastly, but not least important, is individual effort. While we cannot expect the creation of large timber belts by individual effort, a great deal can be accomplished toward beautifying the country by growing trees. Every farmer should be able to add something to the attractiveness of his surroundings by growing a few trees. Besides improving the appearance of his property and adding to the attractiveness of the country, the trees will add value to the property. When grown for appearance or pleasure only, the time spent in cultivating trees is not wasted, for probably in no other way can the farmer add more to the value of his property at less expense than by planting trees.

Most farmers could probably extend their tree-planting operations to the extent of growing trees for economic purposes, to advantage. Lands which are not suitable for general cultivation can be utilized for growing trees. Many farmers on the prairie could in time supply themselves with wood for fuel and other purposes, by utilizing rough or waste land for forest cultivation. In Manitoba, where the land is mostly comparatively level, it is true there is not much waste land, but with the large holdings usually controlled by Manitoba farmers, there are few who could not well spare some of their best land for the growing of trees.

THE STRIKE.

By far the most important industrial development of the month on this continent is the strike in the anthracite coal regions of Pennsylvania. Over 125,000 men have quit work at the command of the United Mine Workers Association and one of the greatest industries on this continent has been practically brought to a standstill. The trouble between the miners and their employees has been brewing for some time and the strike was not unexpected. The main point at issue between the two forces is recognition of the miners' union. The question of compensation is also involved and reforms are asked in regard to certain customs and usages peculiar to coal mining. It is, however, admitted by all parties conversant with the case that the refusal of the operators to recognize the union is the real issue. Most of the demands of the men would be granted if this were out of the way. It was hoped by the officials of both the companies and the union that the strike would be a peaceful one and that the issues would be decided one way or the other without bloodshed, but this was not to be, as already the law officers charged with the duty of protecting those who remained at work and the

property at the mines have seen fit to fire upon a band of strikers, killing one and wounding others. Arms are being freely displayed in some districts and further trouble may ensue. As the strike proceeds hunger and want will begin to make themselves felt among the families of the poorer classes of mine workers and this will have the effect of making the men more desperate. The task of feeding such a vast body of idle and to some extent dependent people will tax the resources of the union to the utmost ever if the strike only lasts a few weeks. If it lasts months, as some predict, there will be nothing left for the poor to do but starve or migrate. Already the storekeepers have announced that they will sell for cash only while the strike lasts. They claim to be men of small capital and cannot afford to carry idle miners. The companies own the houses in which the men live and wholesale evictions may be expected if the strike is prolonged. Some of the companies have shown themselves to be friendly to their employees and have no real dispute with them, but as the question of union recognition has been introduced as the fundamental issue of the strike they have been obliged to see their hands go out with the others as they are not prepared to meet them on this point.

As a result of the strike there has been a tremendously large movement of orders for anthracite coal recently, most of which remain unfilled and will until the strike is over. Dealers everywhere have been clamouring for coal and holders have put up their prices in some places in order to discourage demand. Most of the coal in sight is already contracted for and those who have not secured their supply will likely have some trouble obtaining any quantity. The amount of coal at the western lake ports this year is even smaller than it was a year ago when it was thought there would be a shortage. With the exception of Chicago every United States port reports smaller stocks than usual. Bituminous coal is in good demand since the strike commenced, many seeking to make it a substitute for the hard coal.

In the local market the strike has not yet had any effect on prices. Pennsylvania anthracite is being sold by dealers here at \$10 per ton in a retail way and is worth \$9 per ton in carlots on track. When the cost of delivering—which is 50c per load—and office expenses are taken into consideration it will be seen that there is not much left for profit. Higher prices may be looked for if the strike continues and any advance is made in prices at lake ports from which our supplies are drawn.

CURRENT COMMENT.

The city of Hamilton, Ontario, has under consideration a reform which should go a long way towards eliminating from that city the evils of our modern system of civic government which are due to the practice of having sectional or ward representation. It is proposed to have the aldermen elected by general vote. A petition asking for this reform has been presented by 400 electors. The city solicitors have been instructed to prepare the necessary by-law which will receive the sanction of the present council and be submitted to the ratepayers at the next municipal elections. If approved of by these it will become law. The ward system, which Hamilton seeks to do away with, is one of the weakest

points in our modern system of civic government. It opens the way to all sorts of favoritism and sectionalism and has scarcely any good feature to commend it.

The United States has had good reason for expecting during the years which have elapsed since the famous Venezuelan boundary dispute that its trade with that country, especially its exports, would show some tendency to expand, particularly as the South American Republic is a fairly large purchaser of many lines of goods which are extensively and economically manufactured in the northern republic. It seems, however, that instead of expansion there has been contraction and that to a considerable degree in the exports to Venezuela. In 1870 the United States furnished 37.24 of all the goods imported by Venezuela, while in 1897 the percentage was only 27 and in 1899 the total was the smallest in 10 years, in fact it amounted only to \$2,851,631. Consular agents of the United States are endeavoring to find out the cause and remedy for this falling off, but so far without any tangible results. On the other hand, British trade with Venezuela steadily increases and for the most part at the expense of the United States. Today it is stated, Great Britain is selling 75 per cent. of all printed drills imported by Venezuela, the bulk of which formerly came from the United States. Great Britain is also steadily taking business away from Germany in that country. The British minister to Venezuela says that British manufacturers seem to be easily able to undersell both Germany and the United States in that market. Special efforts are being made by the United States to cultivate this trade, and among other things a warehouse has been established at Caracas for the purpose of keeping on view and encouraging the sale of American products.

The reprehensible practice of allowing drafts for amounts due jobbing houses to go back unpaid is still followed by many country merchants throughout the west to the injury of their own credit, and annoyance of the jobbing houses concerned. When drafts are presented the amounts are generally due and the drawee has known beforehand that the draft was going to be made so that it is seldom that any excuse can be found for non-payment, unless it is lack of funds. In most cases it is merely whim that prompts non-payment. When a retail merchant gets the name of doing this sort of thing it usually has considerable effect upon his standing with the wholesale trade, and he is not able to make such good terms or buy to such good advantage as the man who always pays his drafts promptly.

The examination now being made under oath into the affairs of the Montreal Cold Storage company, which became insolvent through certain of its officials issuing bogus warehouse receipts and raising money on them is developing a very deplorable state of affairs. The president of the company admits that he exercised very little care over its business; the secretary-treasurer, D. J. McGillis, blames the manager and the manager blames the other officers for the crooked work, which led to the collapse of the concern.

Nearly \$8,000,000 worth of new building projects have been put under way in Chicago since the conclusion of the carpenters' strike.