

GROWTH OF MONTREAL'S TRADE.

In respect of the volume of business passing through the Customs House the year 1898-9 dwarfs all its predecessors. Such are the terms in which the collector of Montreal characterizes the business of that port for the year closed with June. No previous twelve months in the history of the city witnessed so large an aggregate of import and export trade. A comparison will perhaps show the increase of 1898-99 more graphically. Five years ago the total amount collected at that port was \$5,983,340. In the two succeeding years there was some betterment. In 1897-8 there was received the considerable sum of \$7,207,005 in duties, and in the year just closed we have taken in no less than \$8,662,770. This represents a gain of 20 per cent., or \$1,455,700, in a single year, and reflects accurately the expansion the trade of the Dominion has experienced, for at Montreal nearly one-third of the customs revenue of Canada is received, since the sum of \$25,400,000 represents the total taken at the custom houses of the country.

Few perhaps except custom house clerks of importing houses, have an idea of the large amount of detail necessary to be gone through in the collection of such a sum as \$3,662,000. There are ex-ship entries, ex-warehouse entries, export transit entries, removal entries, and "for warehouse" entries. Ten years ago the great total of 100,000 entries was reached at Montreal custom house; this year they number 188,783, or more than 600 entries per working day. In addition to this, and to the enormous amount of clerical work here implied, the receipt of manifests, cancellation of same, tally of packages, notifications. And then, of course, as the business grows, year by year the correspondence with Ottawa and with other ports grows also. Mr. R. S. White is pardonably proud of the growth of the office over which he presides in Montreal. And he adds that while in ten years the number of entries and the volume of actual clerical work has increased by not less than 75 per cent. in the custom house, "this greatly augmented business has been performed without adding one dollar to the cost of the service, a result which seems to me unique in the business world, and to reflect credit on the officers engaged in it."

PROGRESS IN OUR NORTHWEST.

The testimonies of various observers who have recently visited Manitoba and British Columbia are in accord in regard to the activity and progress visible in all parts of those provinces. Among those who have recently returned from the Pacific Coast and the Prairie province is Mr. D. M. Stewart, inspector for the Merchants Bank of Halifax. This gentleman says that the giant strides now being made throughout the Canadian Northwest and British Columbia are a revelation to those who had not seen that section of the Dominion before. "I found every town which I visited in British Columbia in a prosperous condition, but saw no symptoms of undue inflation or boom." Mr. Stewart seems to have been particularly impressed with Grand Forks, which is being connected with Robson by the Columbia & Western, commonly known as the Boundary extension of the Crow's Nest Pass Railway. He thinks Grand Forks is the proper location for the smelter, because there is an abundant water power, and the location is convenient to several large properties on the north fork of the Kettle river.

There are already, as our readers have been informed, two banking establishments in Grand Forks, the Merchants Bank of Halifax being the first to open up, followed by the Eastern Townships Bank, and the enterprise of these institutions is looked upon with favor by the rising towns of British Columbia. Banks in Vancouver and also in Victoria cater for the business of the Chinese residents of those cities, who save up their money till they have amassed \$500 or \$1,000, and then look round among the various banks to get best rates for a draft on Hong Kong. Mr. Stewart adds that British and foreign capital is gradually being attracted to British Columbia. As to real estate values his views are that "the most conservative builders look upon the present price of real estate in Vancouver as a little high, and that a slight reaction is within the realm of possibility."

Another visitor just back from the Northwest and the Golden Coast is Mr. David Burke, manager of the Royal Victoria Life Company, and he has given his impressions in an interview with

The Montreal Gazette. He does not think Vancouver is being overbuilt, though he acknowledges that when the structures now under way in that city are completed, they will have sufficient for all requirements for two or three years to come. He looks upon it that Vancouver is likely to have a population of 100,000 within no very long period. He was much surprised at the fine quality of buildings now being erected in Vancouver for warehouse and office purposes. One of the handsomest of these splendid new structures is the Molsons Bank.

Speaking of gold mining in the Yukon Mr. Burke said that from what he could hear all that is wanted up north is modern machinery. So far as he learned, the methods employed in the Klondike were of the crudest possible kind. As for southern British Columbia, he declares that fifty years of steady work will not suffice to get all the gold out of those wonderfully rich camps.

Both the gentlemen named express in the strongest terms their admiration of Manitoba and Manitoba's capital. "Winnipeg is bound to be the Chicago of Canada," says Mr. Stewart. "The city of Winnipeg has shaken off former depression and is fast assuming metropolitan airs," says Mr. Burke. All the block pavements of Main street and Portage avenue are being replaced by asphalt and granolithic. Great things are expected of the C.P.R. hotel and station. Insurance business is brisk in Manitoba, and the prospects for Canadian companies are good throughout the Pacific province. Mr. Burke speaks in a most hopeful strain regarding the crops and affairs generally in Manitoba. He never saw the fields look better, and the acreage is greater than at any previous season.

OUR "DOWN EAST" COUNTRY."

It must not be supposed that in our reference a fortnight ago to the claims of our Maritime Provinces upon summer travellers we mentioned all the attractive spots therein. Nor did our list exhaust the means of getting to them. We made no mention of the many picturesque places on the Lower St. Lawrence from Cacouna to Gaspé and Dalhousie, the fishing in Cape Breton, the sea-bathing at Cow Bay on Prince Edward Island. If the traveller desires to reach these quickly let him take the fast and comfortable trains of the Intercolonial Railway; if leisurely he may do it by boat. There are interesting spots between Northumberland Strait and the Bay of Fundy, such as Amherst, Truro, Parrsboro, to be reached by the same rail route; and from Moncton the tourist may go westward to St. John or southward to the Cobequid Hills or the haunts of Evangeline around Minas Basin. Thence he may go westward again by rail, say from Kentville through Digby to Yarmouth, and home by the Yarmouth steamers to Portland or Boston, if he should not choose to linger among the harbors of Queen's county or the hospitable beauties of Mahone Bay. It should be borne in mind that the N.S. Provincial Exhibition is to be held in Halifax towards the close of September.

A GROCERY TRADE CHANGE.

For some time past it has been pretty generally understood that efforts were being made to place on a more economical basis the distribution of groceries in a wholesale way. As to the form which this movement would take the originators of it have not yet seen fit to make an announcement to the public. We are in a position to state definitely that official news will be obtainable at the close of the present week. The public and the trade, wholesale and retail, will be benefited by any economies that can be introduced into the wholesale grocery business and we are not disposed to anticipate the official announcement by a premature statement of the situation. So long as reasonable competition is assured, and the conditions of the trade guarantee this in groceries, none will complain of an arrangement among wholesale merchants to reduce working expenses.

An uncomfortable condition of things exists in wholesale grocery circles in Montreal. No fewer than three French houses have withdrawn from the Guild, and all three are cutting prices in sugar—as if the profit on sugar was not slender enough already.