

no means one of depression in Winnipeg. Quite a large number of mercantile and manufacturing undertakings were set on foot in the city, and the floating population seemed during the summer rather to increase than decrease; so much so, that in the month of July there were over 25,000 persons in the city, and several thousands of these lived in tents during the summer months. The resident population and number of business concerns had increased so rapidly during the fall and winter of 1881, that people were contented, and in many cases thankful, to carry on business and reside in shed-like buildings, many of which could scarcely be rented now for stables. With the opening of spring, 1882, the work of constructing buildings of a more substantial nature commenced in earnest, and they did not require to be built on speculation, as the majority of them were leased by intending tenants before construction had proceeded very far, and sometimes before it had commenced. The real estate boom was thus succeeded by something like a building boom, and there were still many persons living in the city who firmly believed that the collapse of the former was only temporary, and that a return of inflated prices was only a matter of a few months, or a year at most.

The rapid construction both eastward and westward of the Canadian Pacific Railway also brought a large floating, and by no means impecunious, population to the city; so that altogether 1882 was, by no means a dull year in mercantile circles, and, could reliable figures have been reached, it would no doubt have shown an aggregate of business done fully as great as that of 1881. Still, the state of trade was far from being healthy. Inflation permeated its every branch, and the cost of living was so high, that shrewd business men could see plainly what a revolution was necessary before a normal state of affairs could be reached. Hundreds of immigrants were weekly passing through the city to seek homes on the prairie farther west; but its reputation for extortionate charges had been told and magnified to them, and they passed through it as rapidly and with as little delay as if it were a plague-stricken district through they must pass, but in which they need not linger.

The business done in the city in 1882 may be guessed at, if not reached, by the Customs statement of imports and duties collected, which was as follows:

| GOODS IMPORTED. | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Goods imported (dutiable) | \$6,402,158.00 |
| Do (free) | 1,768,820.00 |
| Total imported | \$8,170,978.00 |
| GOODS ENTERED FOR CONSUMPTION. | |
| Goods entered for consumption (dutiable) | \$7,454,221.00 |
| Goods entered for consumption (free) | 1,968,820.00 |
| Total for consumption | \$9,423,041.00 |
| Duty collected | \$1,585,450.96 |
| Goods entered for exportation | \$ 472,021.00 |

Notwithstanding these figures, symptoms of the coming reaction were felt towards the close of the year. A number of the smaller business men of the city found themselves hopelessly tangled with real estate speculations, and when

the opening of 1883 was reached, it was found that the year just passed through, unlike the two immediately preceding it, had an insolvency record, there having been in the city 19 failures, with aggregate liabilities of \$201,000, the figures for the whole Northwest being: Insolventcies, 28; Liabilities, \$290,000.

It would not be out of place to call 1883 the year of crash in Winnipeg's history. As it wore on, the work of separating legitimate trade from speculation progressed, and the process was anything but helpful to the former. The fact forced itself gradually upon the most unwilling minds, that the collapse of real estate speculation was to be permanent, and men who, early in 1882, were ranked as wealthy, entered upon 1883 with bankruptcy staring them in the face.

That contraction should follow inflation is accepted as an axiom of commerce by many, and it was certainly the experience of the city of Winnipeg in 1883; and the city was only an index of the unsafe state of affairs all over the Northwest. When the 1st of April was reached, it was found that there had been 47 failures in the Northwest, and nearly one-half of the number in Winnipeg during the first quarter of the year; and the gross liabilities of the 47 exceeded \$400,000. During the second quarter the depression became deeper, and 45 failures were recorded, with gross liabilities of \$396,000. The month of July was entered upon with a dread of panic hanging over the country, and business men who were weak financially soon found it impossible to stand the pressure. Banks and other financial institutions which had encouraged and fostered the reckless effluence of boom days, were now mercilessly exacting in their demands, and many a man, who in a more confident state of trade could have weathered the pressure with honor, was forced to insolvency. Nevertheless, the number of men who reached failure through purely trade misfortunes was singularly small, over 90 per cent. of the insolvents having succumbed to the pressure of a real estate or other speculative load. There can be no doubt that a tremor ran through the whole fabric of Northwestern trade when the business misfortunes of the third quarter of the year were published, showing 87 failures, with aggregate liabilities of \$1,458,000; and, as before, the city of Winnipeg had its full proportion of this crash. Depression then seemed to have spent its force; and although the last quarter of 1883 was one of great stringency, comparative safety had evidently been reached, and the number of failures dropped to 53, and their aggregate liabilities to \$415,000. The Northwestern failures in 1883 were thus 232 in number, and their aggregate liabilities amounted to \$2,869,000; while the proportion contributed by Winnipeg was 101 failures, with aggregate liabilities of \$1,750,000.

While trade was making this black record, a great revolution had been going on in other affairs in the city. Speculative extortioners had been nearly all swamped in the crash, and rents of business buildings and residences dropped gradually down, until in the opening of 1884 they were at less than half their boom prices. Speculators who had figured upon cornering markets in necessaries of life produced

at home, were sadly disappointed, and the price of almost every commodity included in what is termed living declined rapidly in value, so that 1884 was entered upon with everything connected with trade affairs in a healthy, if not a prosperous, state, and as a natural consequence solid, if not rapid, progress was made during the year, as is shown by the following figures taken from a statistical report of the city's trade as presented to the Winnipeg Board of Trade, at its annual meeting, held on February 3rd, 1885.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Trading institutions of every class | 912 |
| Wholesale mercantile houses | 75 |
| Retail " " | 408 |
| Manufacturing " " | 167 |
| Miscellaneous " " | 262 |

BUSINESS DONE IN 1884.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Wholesale mercantile | \$14,220,098 |
| Retail " " | 6,809,600 |
| Manufacturing, contracting and building 'not included in mercantile' | 2,550,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 500,000 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Total | \$23,079,600 |
| Value of imports | \$2,239,611.00 |
| Customs duties collected | 509,516.80 |

In 1885 business in Winnipeg made considerable progress, although the outbreak of rebellion away in the far Northwest made a bad interruption, and just as the spring was about to open up, and the prospect looked brighter than it had done for four years, military preparations for crushing the rising occupied the attention more than business, and completely staggered many branches of trade. For weeks in March and April the sound of the bugle was more familiar than the clang of the hammer, and by the close of the latter months the city had sent to the front some two thousand men as soldiers, teamsters, transport men and other branches of the service. Such an exodus had a very bad effect upon the retail trade of the city, there being so many less to supply with the necessaries of life, not to mention the comforts and luxuries.

On industrial affairs the effect was also unfavorable, and so many artisans went to the front, that quite a few manufacturing concerns were practically at a standstill for three or four months.

Of the wholesale trade after the first shock was over, the effect was not so unfavorable, although the lines dependant upon building and contracting suffered very severely, as no building was undertaken until after midsummer, and heavy undertakings of every kind were postponed until after the return of the troops from the front.

The recovery in the city's trade since the close of the rebellion has been very marked and rapid, but it would be unwise to calculate all as an index to what we are to expect from this time forward. Into the last four or five months of the year were crowded quite a portion of the business, which should have been done in spring and summer, and the rush thus caused in many branches is too easily mistaken for signs of permanent activity. Still Winnipeg's trade has recovered amazingly during 1885, and the recovery has been more in the direction of safety and confidence, than in magnitude of turn over. The statistical report of the city's trade for the year will be found elsewhere in our columns, and its figures corroborate what we now state.