

COMMERCIAL.

No important change has occurred in the general aspect of business affairs during the past week, but the general volume of trade has on the whole been smaller than was expected. Still, confidence in the future appears to be unshaken.

Toronto has taken the lead in the matter of urging a new Insolvency Act for this Dominion, and the Financial Committee of its Board of Trade is bestowing a great deal of time in framing the draft of one. If it should be too late to have it passed by the Dominion Parliament at the current session, an endeavor will be made, we are assured, to have it at least introduced and to have discussion upon it postponed until the session of 1893. This delay may be serviceable, as it will enable the country to criticize the proposed bill and to propose any alterations that careful study may suggest to be desirable.

The *Merchant*, of Toronto, outlines the bill that is in process of preparation as follows:—

"The proposed new measure deprives the insolvent of the right to assign his estate, except on demand of creditors for \$500, but no such demand being made—based on the failure of the trader to meet his liabilities as they become due—he can assign to the sheriff, who acts as temporary guardian of the estate, and convenes a meeting of creditors, when an assignee is appointed, the guardian being incapable of filling that office. If after five days from service of such demand the debtor has not assigned as mentioned, he is declared (subject to the judge's approval) to have committed an act of bankruptcy, and a creditor for \$200 or more may take out a writ of attachment, under which the guardian attaches his estate. Other acts of bankruptcy—following those laid down in the Act of 1875—are prescribed, the tendency of the Act in this respect being to secure to creditors a direct and quiet means of securing control of a defaulting trader's estate and transferring it to the nominees of creditors for liquidation. To ensure compliance with the law, assignees are required to deposit \$10,000 security with the Government at Ottawa. The assignee's fees are fixed by the creditors, subject to revision by the judge of the county court on application of any creditor.

The position of landlords where a lease has become forfeited under its terms in case of insolvency is altered in an important particular. If the landlord claims the forfeiture he must pay for substantial improvements made by the tenant. The lien of the landlord is restricted to six months' rent.

In dealing with securities held by creditors the old rule of allowing creditors ten per cent. advance on their valuation if the securities are taken over by the estate is done away with. These may now be taken over at the exact valuation put upon them, but that value must be paid to the creditors before any dividends are declared, and not, as under the old Act, when the estate had realized on such securities.

The old rule in regard to wages is abandoned, and the rule contained in the Ontario Act adopted. The clause regulating the sale of book debts under the Act of 1875 is altered, creditors having power to deal in this matter as they wish, without the old restriction, that (save in *en bloc* sales of estates) an effort should be made to collect them before they are sold.

The suggestion that stocks of merchandise be sold by auction in lots not less in value than \$100, or more than \$300, was discussed at length. This question has called for a great deal of discussion in the press for many years. It was urged that sales of bankrupt stocks by speculators destroyed the trade of men who strove to pay their debts in full, and demoralized the retail business; that dividing up stocks in the way indicated would be the least harmful way of disposing of them, the lots being too large for consumers to buy, and within the means of most storekeepers; and that this plan would prevent insolvents who failed to get a settlement with their creditors buying in their stocks in their wife's name.

The proposal mentioned was not on the whole considered proper for adoption, and this vexed question is left unsolved. Very many further alterations of the old law have been made."

WEEKLY FINANCIAL REVIEW OF HENRY CLEWS & Co., New York, April 16, 1892.—"The approach of the Easter holidays has tended to restrict operations during the week both here and in London. So also has the uncertainty respecting Richmond Terminal affairs. As soon as these hindrances are out of the way, we look for an active and improving market; for both natural and speculative forces are arranging themselves towards just such a course.

The market has been subjected to a fair test of its strength during the past few weeks of reaction, the 'bears' having had a free fling at it and the outside public having almost forsaken it; and yet it has throughout showed a force of resistance which demonstrates that it has a solid bottom. This strength is the more remarkable considering the very large amount of securities that has been steadily flowing in upon us from Europe, amounting to probably considerably over one hundred millions in value within the last twelve months; and also considering the disappointment of the common expectation that our large crops would bring us correspondingly large imports of gold. The forces that have been employed to break the market have manifestly exhausted their vitality, and affairs have reached a position in which a recovery in prices seems to be naturally in order.

The defeat of free coinage of silver and the probability that in the future silver will either be protected under an international compact, or will be rendered innocuous by reducing or stopping its coinage in the absence of such an agreement, is becoming more and more regarded as of the first importance as a factor in the future value of investments. It saves the country from the worst form of bad faith that could afflict the credit of a nation, and demonstrates to the world that though our political institutions may admit of temporary crazes of popular opinion, yet we can always

depend safely upon the sober second thought of our people. There can be no doubt that, of the large amount of our securities returned from Europe, a very considerable part was sent as the result of apprehension that they might become payable in depreciated silver and from a fear that the prosperity of the United States might be seriously retarded by the threatened insane policy of unconditional free coinage. Now, that Europe sees a reasonable assurance that this danger has been averted, it is reasonable to expect a return of the demand for our investments which has been withheld for twelve or eighteen months. Since the Baring commotion, the creation of home enterprises in Great Britain and Germany has almost ceased, and it is therefore to be expected that in both countries there will be a disposition to put the current earnings of the people into the issues of other countries. Already such a tendency is very apparent, in the case of England, in her recent steady purchases of stocks and bonds at this centre.

We are now through with the usual transfers of cash for effecting the April settlements, and the money market has settled into a condition of ease that is not likely to be disturbed until next August. Also, there are reasons for supposing that the ease may continue well into or through the fall months; for at all the financial centres of the country, the accumulation of money in the banks is unusually large, while the coinage of silver keeps up a constantly increasing inflation of the currency, and the lowness of prices reduces the requirements for money. At the same time, the railroad interest is getting into a more consolidated and harmonious condition, its weak spots are being repaired—though in some cases with "untempered mortar"—and its revenues are steadily increasing. It is circumstances such as these that encourage the speculative spirit and stimulate the buying of securities for the temporary employment of idle funds; and we look for the effects of these factors from this time forward through the summer months in a rise of prices in good securities generally. It would seem likely that the condition of the European money markets may also foster a renewal of speculation. The amount of specie in the six great national banks averages 8 per cent above the amount held a year ago, and the rate for money in the open market at London is 1 to 1½ per cent, at Berlin and Paris 1½ per cent, and at Frankfurt 1½ per cent. These facts forecast some sort of effort to find employment for money, even though it be nothing more than 'swapping pennies.'

In view of the forementioned considerations, we regard the present situation as favorable to the buying of good active stocks."

DRY GOODS.—Business continues pretty much the same as it was at our last writing—the city trade being moderately active and orders from travellers coming in freely. Reports from the country seem to assure a very good spring trade. Prices are unchanged, but are firm all round. The project of the cotton goods combine to force up figures has so far failed to materialise, probably because the low price of the raw product has put outside competitors in a position to neutralise the proposed extortionate advance. Remittances, we are happy to note, show a decided improvement.

IRON, HARDWARE AND METALS.—The conditions in iron are unchanged, and our remarks last week apply fully to-day. Pig and bar iron are dull and quiet. Tin, terno and Canada plates are essentially the same. A London despatch quotes:—"Tin, spot, at £90 17s. 6d.; three months futures at £91 2s. 6d.; market steady. Copper, spot, at £15 17s. 6d.; futures at £16 10s.; market quiet. Scotch warrants at 40s. 10d. Soft Spanish lead at £10 12s. 6d.; do. English do. £10 17s. 6d. Selected copper £50 10s. Silesian spelter at £22 10s. Hallet's antimony £46; other brands at £45."

BREADSTUFFS.—With no outlet except the small demand on spot, and that solely for immediate consumptive requirements, flour in this market continues dull and heavy. Prices are nominal, but concessions would certainly be made if an order was to the fore. Oatmeal moves in a limited way and is decidedly weak. Feed is brisk compared with other lines, owing to there being some demand for bran and shorts, but prices are the same. Beerbohm's cable reports wheat firmer, held higher; corn steady. In Chicago, owing to favorable reports of continental crops, wheat has ruled weak. Corn followed wheat and was very dull. Oats were dull and easier. In New York wheat re-acted and declined 1½c. to 2½c. At St. Louis wheat was steady but dull. In other American centres the grain trade has ruled quiet.

PROVISIONS.—There has been a better enquiry for provisions, and dealers are somewhat firmer in their ideas, but the movement still continues to be small. In Liverpool the market made a slight advance in pork and lard, but bacon and tallow showed no change. In Chicago pork was weak on account of a sluggish demand, but prices remained nominally without alteration. The hog market was stronger, owing to reduced receipts. The cattle and sheep markets were steady.

BUTTER.—The demand for butter does not move out of its small jobbing dimensions, and the feeling continues heavy. Prices in this market are barely sustained. New butter has not begun to come forward in respectable quantities, and old stock has no attractions for consumers. Some lots from Montreal are being offered, but buyers are indifferent. The railway and coasting schooners bring a little in from eastern points, but it is mostly of mixed qualities and is hard to sell. As a rule butter is 3c. to 4c. lower in this market than it was a week ago. A Montreal report quotes:—"Creamery 20c. to 22c.; townships dairy 18c. to 20c.; Morrisburg and Brockville 18c. to 19c.; western dairy 16c. to 17c." A London correspondent writes:—"Butter has been quiet this week, and a further reduction has been made in some cases, French dropping 4s. on Monday. But it is thought prices will remain about as they are for the present before Easter: and although the hot weather which has set in at time of writing militates against strong demand, the necessities of the time will probably balance things, and give agents a chance with the opening of the month. Colonials have been absent from the arrival list this week, and stock has been sold down to 84s.,