

THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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or which profess to express the opinions of this
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Office: 151 McDermot Street.

D. W. BUCHANAN,
Publisher.

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.

WINNIPEG, DECEMBER 31, 1898.

1898-1899.

The regular date of issue for The Commercial for 1898 falls on the last day of the year. The year now within a few hours of its close has been on the whole a very prosperous one for Western Canada. The country has probably made greater and more solid advancement during 1898, than during any previous year since the opening of the country for settlement by the advent of railways. The country, of course, experienced a great "boom" shortly after the Canadian Pacific railway contract was ratified; but while much real advancement was then made, a great deal of the apparent progress and prosperity of that time was of a speculative nature, which in its ultimate collapse brought disaster and loss upon many. The progress of 1898 has been entirely free from any speculative tendencies. It has been legitimate and substantial—such as will last.

During the year our population has undoubtedly increased at a more rapid rate than at any time since the "boom" period, while there is that difference that during the "boom" we gathered in a large floating population, which disappeared when conditions reached a natural or normal basis. Our increase in population this year has been of the producing class. Our farm lands have increased in value and have

been in better demand for actual settlement than ever before. We are now finding it advisable to drain some of our swamp areas in the older settled districts, to provide more land for purposes of cultivation. Our cities and towns have made rapid progress in population and building improvements. A few years ago it was said that Winnipeg could never become a manufacturing city, but we find that as population increases, industries are being established which were never thought of a few years ago. During the year a number of important industries have been established here.

Our farmers, who form the basis for our progress, are becoming independent. The farmers as a body are in a very different position from what they were a few years ago. The great majority of our farmers came here with very limited means, and they were obliged to work hard and economize in order to get a start. Many of them had to go through severe privations, such as must be the experience of all who try to establish themselves upon a farm, with limited means. Nearly all the older settlers have surmounted these difficulties and are now in a prosperous condition. The farm improvements in the way of buildings, carried on this year, indicate the general prosperity among the farmers.

Another important feature of progress for the year 1898 is the railway building which has been going on throughout the country. In Manitoba railway construction has been going on on no less than five different roads. Farther west we have the important Crow's Nest railway and the Boundary Creek district railway in British Columbia, while eastward progress has been made on the Rainy river road, which will form another through line to Lake Superior, in conjunction with the Winnipeg Southwestern. This has certainly been a very active year in railway building in the West. The new roads in Manitoba have made large and rich agricultural districts easily accessible for settlement, while the new roads in British Columbia and the territory between Winnipeg and Lake Superior, will assist in developing these wealthy mineral regions.

The outlook for 1899 is certainly favorable. During 1898 the country has entered the threshold of a new stage of prosperity and development, and we all expect that this progress will be maintained at a more rapid rate during 1899.

We wish our readers a prosperous New Year.

Drying Wheat.

It is pleasing to learn that the machinery recently put in several elevators for the drying of wheat is

working successfully. The drying of damp grain was never tried here before, and the matter was looked upon as an experiment. In fact many were heard to express their doubts as to the outcome of the attempts to dry the grain in this way. We noted in our wheat market report last week that samples of wheat dried at the Port Arthur elevator had been shown here, and the grain appeared to be in perfect condition. Since then we have had further information from Port Arthur of a very satisfactory nature. Mr. King, of this elevator, reports that he is very much pleased and even surprised at the quality of the wheat after it has been dried. Wheat that was very damp and that was expected to show up badly bleached, has dried out with its color almost unimpaired. All this is very encouraging, as it is now known that our damp wheat can be put into marketable condition, at a moderate cost, where otherwise it would be only fit for feeding on the farms.

The cost of the new drying plant put in the Port Arthur elevator will amount to \$25,000. It consists of two large boilers, 18 by 6 feet, which are connected by 6 inch steam pipe with drying plant in the elevator. The heating coils have been placed in a lean-to addition on one side of the elevator. The fans of the drying plant are driven by a fast running 80 horse power engine, made by the Waterous Engine Works Co., of Brantford, which has been put in specially for this purpose. There are four separate drying machines, each capable of handling 350 bushels at a time. The air is heated by passing through very large coils, and if driven through the wheat in the dryers by a large fan, which is kept running at a high speed. The passage of this hot air thaws the wheat and carries off the moisture. The hot air is then shut off and cold air is forced through, which has the effect of removing all sweat and dampness.

The length of time required to dry a quantity of grain equal to the capacity of the machines, varies according to the degree of dampness, but is usually from one to one and a half hours. The shrinkage in the weight of the grain will also vary according to the degree of dampness. About four pounds per bushel has been about the usual loss so far, but very wet grain would lose considerably more weight than this. This shrinkage of weight is not of course a loss to the grower, as it represents excessive moisture taken out of the wheat, which would have lost the same weight if it had been dried in the field. If sufficient moisture is taken out to leave the grain in a normal condition. If over-dried it would be damaged for milling purposes.

Apart from the damage done to Greenshields, Son & Co., and McIntyre, Son & Co., in the recent Montreal fire, the adjoining building, occupied by James Leggatt, was almost completely gutted, the loss being estimated at about \$50,000. In the building on the opposite side of the street, occupied by Mark Fisher & Co., the stock was damaged by fire and smoke to the extent of \$5,000. The city of Montreal, the Street Railway and the Lachine Electric Light company also suffered severely. The total loss is estimated at \$1,16,000, which is covered by insurance to the extent of \$1,009,000.