

tion, we maintain, that the reform of our city municipalities must take, or the cure may turn out worse than the disease. In short, we ought to deprive our Aldermen and Councilors of all executive functions, no more giving of contracts, offices, or similar jobbing, and confine them to the making of by-laws and over-seeing and examining the public accounts. If once they were debarred from appropriating their constituents' money themselves, they would take care that nobody else should do so. The subject should not be lost sight of, for it is day by day becoming of more and more importance.

#### COMMUNICATION WITH THE NORTH WEST TERRITORY.

IN a recent article, alluding to a proposed line of steamboat and rail communication between the North shore of Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement, we took occasion to glance briefly at the magnificent agricultural and mineral resources of the entire section of the country East of the Rocky Mountains as well as its salubrious climate. And the views we then advanced, though of the most favorable character, are only such as can be borne out by the best authorities on the subject. From personal knowledge Lork Selkirk, who founded the Red River Settlement, claimed that the fertile belt east of the Rocky Mountains was capable of supporting thirty millions of inhabitants. The climate of Red River, says Mr. Dawson, "will compare not unfavorably with that of Kingston, Ontario—and, as a general rule, the season during which agricultural operations can be carried on at Red River is somewhat longer than in Canada east of Kingston." Mr. Lorin Blodgett, the celebrated American climatologist, estimates for the whole Saskatchewan Valley a climate nearly as mild in its annual average as that of St. Paul, the capital of Minnesota,—which would give a winter mean of 15 degrees and an annual mean of 44 degrees,—representing the climate of Wisconsin, Northern Iowa, Michigan, Ontario, Northern New York and Southern New England. Of these Saskatchewan plains and their wood land borders, the valuable surface measures fully five hundred thousand square miles! These great Northern plains present, says Mr. J. W. Taylor, of St. Paul, as nearly as possible the counterpart of the temperate zone of European Russia,—the most populous and flourishing part of that Empire. We have alluded to the existence of coal in this North-West Territory, but what will our readers say when, in stating the extent of this formation, we tell them that one hundred and fifty miles east of the Rocky Mountains this great coal bed commences, and that so far as has been ascertained, it is more than fifty miles in width, and extends continuously over sixteen degrees of latitude to the Arctic Ocean? That is something like a coal bed, and would, we fancy, be hard to beat. Then, copper, iron, gold, bitumen, petroleum, lead, salt, plumbago, and we know what besides, are found in that land of promise.

The inhabitants of that land have been variously estimated. The late Sir George Simpson, who ought to be good authority on the subject, puts down the number of Indians east of the Rocky Mountains at 55,000. This will include all the nomads of this class, we think. The only considerable settlement in the land is that about the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, about a degree beyond the boundary line. Here a flourishing community of some 10,000 souls, Scotch, French, Americans, Norwegians, Indians and half casts, have been for half a century. On the Saskatchewan and Prairie Portage on the Assiniboine, there are three or four settlements of a few hundred inhabitants each. And these make up the total population of Rupert's Land.

The present and prospective means of communication with this territory now remain to be noticed. The Company annually despatch a vessel (with a great part of their outfit for the interior) to York Factory, by way of Hudson's Bay; and the remainder they bring in via New York and St. Paul, Minnesota. The private traders in the settlement (who muster pretty strongly for a number of years to get all their goods by the Hudson Bay route, and sometimes an additional vessel was put on for their accommodation. But as a more slow round about mode of getting supplies could hardly be devised, it is now to a great extent abandoned by the settlers. Let our readers imagine, if they can, the confiding old fashioned style in which business was done when the Arctic route was the only one in use. Every December or January all the traders in the settlement made out a statement of

the goods they required—and this, with a liberal amount of purchase money, was forwarded to England. Perhaps these goods would not arrive out till the following August or September.

At present goods and passengers can reach Red River in this way.—From New York or Canada to Prairie du Chien or Lacrosse, on the Mississippi, by rail, from thence by steamboat to St. Paul. From St. Paul by railroad to St. Cloud, on the Mississippi, 60 miles. From there by private teams or by the mail contractor's four-horse coaches to Fort Abercrombie, about 240 miles, from thence, across the Red River and over the plains, by private conveyance, 250 miles, to Fort Garry, Red River. The quickest time that could be made say from Toronto, would be about ten days, the ordinary time, by the semi-annual caravan which moves slowly, would be some 18 or 20 days. There are three routes open to the traveler heretofore. Two of them are prairie routes and are excellent. The third, via Crow Wing, on the Mississippi, and the Otter Tail Lake,—what is called the Wood Road, is too difficult to be much of a favorite, although the heaviest loads can be brought over it. But there are too many rough forest roads to be travelled—too many rivers and swamps to be forded, and too much of the height of land in the way—to allow of a trip by that way being an easy or pleasant one. Hence the bulk of the travel seeks, and has sought for years, the other two routes, and as these are nearly all the distance across level prairie, we do not at all exaggerate when we style them excellent. They are travelled all the year round, even in the middle of winter, by mail carriers,—who have, until recently, carried U. S. mail bags (containing all the Red River letters and papers) twice a week to the boundary line; by adventurous traders from the settlement, and by soldiers and camp followers to and from the various United States forts scattered through Minnesota and Dakota.

Now, our readers can see how American settlement and enterprise are pushing toward that Hudson Bay Territory. Not only is there a constant and ever increasing trade between the two places, but, as we have noticed, railway facilities are being extended in that direction. The St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (which is to be run to the boundary line as soon as possible) have already 80 miles of their track built and open for traffic; years ago flourishing settlements were growing along the proposed line of railroad, all through the beautiful Sauk Valley, as far as 160 or 200 miles below the State capital. These settlements were, it is true, in great part uprooted by the Sioux during the Minnesota massacre, but the tide of emigration has again set in there, and will soon fill up all gaps.

Is it any wonder, under all these concurrent circumstances, that the good people of Minnesota and Dakota,—from the Governor of the former State downwards,—should regard this North West Territory with peculiar feelings of affection—should look upon it as a land that must yet bring untold riches to their door? Is it any wonder that they have all along persistently upheld its "manifest destiny" to be annexed? We hope, for the honor of the Dominion, that something may soon be done to prevent such consummation.

#### PRESENT PROSPECTS.

WE have not much change to note in the state of business throughout the Dominion, and particularly in the Western and more populous section, from what we expressed in our article of last month. Since that time there has, no doubt, been a large quantity of wheat, oats, barley and other produce brought to market, and in exchange therefor, millers and other buyers have undoubtedly put a large amount of money in circulation; but nevertheless, the prevailing character of trade is quiet. Whatever alteration has taken place, however, has been for the better—the steady winter weather and the excellent sleighing, giving the farmers the best possible facilities for bringing out whatever they had to dispose of.

During the past four weeks, increased opportunity has been given to estimate the quantity of wheat which our last harvest produced. Many in Ontario sought to account for the small deliveries during the fall months, and even in December, by saying that the farmers were holding their grain back in expectation of higher prices. The evidence goes to show that this supposition was incorrect and that the harvest of 1867 was not so abundant as it was at first generally supposed. If large quantities of grain were in the country, and were being kept in the farmers' granaries, the prices had reached a high limit, they would cer-

tainly have been brought in during the past few weeks, during which time the roads have been excellent, and prices have been such as to remind us of those going during the prosperous times of the Crimean War. But during the period in question there have been no unusually large deliveries. Indeed, many millers have had to send to other than their local markets, to get in a sufficient supply to keep them running till the new crop comes in—something which some of them seldom require to do. These facts would go to show that in some districts, at least, the extent of the crop of last fall was exaggerated, and that the several expectations of its extent have not been realised.

From these remarks regarding last harvest, it may not be supposed that there was nothing in grain during the past month. We dare say fully the average quantity has been brought in, but nothing in such quantities as would warrant the belief that farmers had been holding back their produce earlier in the season. Some fears are now being felt as to how millers and other buyers are going to place what they have on hand at a profit. Many of them have bought recently at such rates as render it difficult to do so in the present state of foreign markets, and in the face of contradictory reports from the United States as to the extent of their grain supply, it is difficult to determine in which direction the scale may turn.

The retail trade of Ontario has improved slightly—taking it as a whole—during the past month. The complaints came mainly from the merchants, the grocers appear to have escaped better. In fact, the difficulty with the former class has been not so much that very little trade has been done, as that they had purchased altogether too heavily for the fall and winter, in expectation of an unusually high demand. An intelligent Western merchant informed the writer that he had sold more goods since October than he did last year, but his profits had been lost by over-stocking, and the consequent inducements which had to be offered to customers to effect sales and so meet his engagements. In our January article on this topic, we spoke of the "cheap sales" advertised so extensively, and in some cases even "auction sales" have since been adopted to reduce stocks. These devices have been the means of working off a great many goods during the past few weeks which would otherwise have remained on their owners' shelves. But there is no doubt that some have not been so fortunate as others in this respect, and that very few will escape loss from having to hold over considerable stocks to the next fall.

The woollen business is rather dull at present in all parts of the country. There are very few factories which are not running full time, but it is no secret that it has of late been rather difficult to effect some sales. The cause of this, we believe, arises from recent heavy importations of similar goods from Great Britain, which have served to over-stock the market with that class of merchandise. It is to be hoped that this temporary dullness will pass speedily away, and that this extensive branch of home industry will soon resume its usual flourishing condition.

The general condition of the trade of Canada is healthy and prosperous. The Bank excitement has died away; confidence has been entirely restored in our monetary institutions, money is abundant. The fact that the Dominion Stock has been all taken at par, within a few weeks of its being offered by the Government, affords some testimony on this point. With few exceptions, some of which we have referred to, the retail trade is fairly prosperous. Its winter, which is now drawing towards its close, has been a very favourable one from a business point of view. In one respect, its effect will certainly be felt next year, and that is in the facilities it has afforded for lumbering. Many mills to our own knowledge, never had as many logs laid in before as they have this season, and in the western parts of Ontario however it may prove in other sections of the Dominion, the produce of lumber promises to be greater than for several years past. Although a little quiet then, the state of business is by no means unprosperous.

Another advantage from the steady winter weather we have had, is the preservation of the crops now in the ground. Seldom has our fall wheat been better covered by the snow and prepared from the attack of frost, than this season. The farmers are congratulating themselves on this fact, and although it would be premature to speculate on crop prospects until March is over still it is gratifying to know that when the snow melts the growing wheat will be found in a better state of preservation than for several years past.