

HUDSON'S BAY.

Half-yearly Meeting of the Company—Important Negotiations going on for the Transfer of their Territory.

THE half-yearly meeting of the Hudson's Bay Company was held on Tuesday; the Earl of Kimberley in the chair.

The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the report, expressed regret at the loss of their late Governor Sir E. Head, and bore testimony to his very high merits. He had the disadvantage of addressing the meeting for the first time with a reduced dividend. The fur trade was a very fluctuating one, in addition to which they had met with certain losses, which had been fairly and fully written off. One question was how far the expectations held out to them on the formation of the present company had been fulfilled? He understood they were promised an average dividend of 4 per cent. In the first year they had 4½ per cent, in the second 4½ per cent, in the third 5½ per cent, in the fourth 4½ per cent, and now they had 3 per cent. They must look at the average (cries of "No, no!") and if they did they would find the average dividend exceeded 4 per cent. There were important negotiations going on as to the company's territorial rights, in respect of which he had to speak with some reserve. He had a very strong belief in favor of their claims, and hoped they would be fairly and fully supported by the Government in the matter. He would devote himself to their interests and the committee would do everything in their power to maintain the company's rights.

Sir C. M. Simpson, seconded the motion for the adoption of the report.

Mr. Thorpe complained of the manner in which the affairs of the company had been managed, and hoped the proprietors would support him in a resolution to the effect that the territorial rights of the company be not parted with for less than £1,300,000.

Sir C. M. Simpson stated that the average income of the company mentioned in the prospectus was £81,000, but they had obtained an average of £92,000, and had divided £435,000, which admitted of an average dividend of 4½ per cent. The proprietors had subscribed £2,000,000 of capital, and they had to pay the dividend out of the profits of trade, goods, and stock, for which the company had paid £1,000,000 of their capital; they had given the other £1,000,000 for the estate and territorial rights, which had produced them very little.

After some observations by Mr. Newmarch, Mr. C. Ely, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Quilter, one of the auditors, and other proprietors, the report was adopted and the dividend of 4s per share was declared.

At the request of Mr. Potter, a director, and several shareholders, Mr. Thorpe withdrew his proposed resolution, and the proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman and directors.

EAST TO WEST.

(From the Hamilton Spectator.)

DURING the next twelve months it is certain that a remarkable revolution will take place in the commercial world, and that the Western hemisphere will have begun to compete with Europe, for the possession of the trade of China and the East, with far greater effect than ever before. The two oceans will be united by the iron links of railway communication, and a great portion of the trade between Europe and Asia will most certainly be conveyed across this continent between New York and San Francisco, in addition to the large commerce which already has sprung up between New York and Boston, and China and Japan. As an instance of the saving to be effected in time and space by the new route, it is worthy of notice that the distance by sea from Canada to the principal tea markets is upwards of 14,000 miles, while by the new route across the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco, thence by railway to New York and so to Canada, the distance is only 8,250 miles, a saving of nearly 6,000 miles being thus effected. In spite of the objection which many people have to sending teas, &c., by railway, it is obvious that when so large a saving in time and distance is effected, this route is sure to commend itself to public favour.

It does not appear as if British statesmen had yet come to understand that the Americans are thus stealing a march upon the British people nor have they yet become alive to the fact that Britain's commercial supremacy, which, so far as India and China are concerned, has hitherto been undisputed, is very seriously menaced. Possibly it will not be until the Pacific railway is opened and in running order that the politicians and capitalists of the mother country will rouse themselves from the lethargy into which long continued success and prosperity have lulled them, and look around for some means of competing with our enterprising neighbours for the carrying trade of Asia. If they rely upon the objection which merchants have to transshipment and to sending freight by railroad, they will find themselves deceived. The number of miles, and what is still more important, the number of days which will be saved by the inter-oceanic route, are too great to render the success of the Pacific railroad doubtful, and unless the capitalists and merchants of England bestir themselves, they will find themselves compelled to play a second part to the Americans, and be dependent upon the good will and pleasure of the United States Government for the privilege of using the nearest and quickest line of communication between Great Britain and Eastern Asia.

Fortunately for us, and still more fortunately for the merchants of Britain, it happens that at this time every branch of American industry is severely taxed, and ship-building is rendered almost impossible by the cost of material and of workmanship, so that in spite of the great advantage which the opening of the

Pacific railroad will afford to the Americans, they will not be able to take the leading place in the commercial race just yet. But it does not follow that American energy and perseverance will always be cramped and clogged in the same manner. On the contrary, when wiser men assume the reins of power, when the expenses of Government are reduced, and the South is no longer held in the Union by force, the enterprise of the great Yankee nation will develop itself with greater vigor and force than ever, and then Great Britain will find out what she has lost and what the United States have gained.

It is gratifying to know, however, that there is a chance of contending successfully with the United States, not only for the trade of the East, but for the best, and most popular road across the continent. From Halifax to Vancouver's Island the distance by the route proposed would be several hundred miles shorter than the American road, and it lies through a far less difficult and far more fruitful country. Instead of passing through dreary wastes and arid deserts, as the Pacific Railroad does for a considerable portion of the way, the Canadian Inter-Oceanic Railroad would traverse a country almost the whole of which is by climate and soil exactly fitted for settlement. Another point which deserves consideration is, that the Canadian line would not have to pass through a country peopled with hostile tribes of Indians as the American line does, and would not, therefore, be compelled to maintain a small army of regular soldiers for the purpose of defending the trains from being pillaged, and the passengers from being scalped. The people of Great Britain may depend upon it that the only way of maintaining their hold upon Eastern trade and preventing the Americans from taking the first place, is to go to work immediately and build a railway from the Western boundary of Canada to the Red River settlement, and so on to British Columbia. Railway works far more extensive and upon a larger scale have been undertaken in India for the purpose of developing the resources of that country. And in order to preserve the full command of the trade of India, as well as to strengthen and render more permanent Britain's hold upon that "brightest Jewel in the crown of Britain," it will be found necessary, sooner or later, to adopt the course which we have pointed out. The day for the commencement of the undertaking may be deferred, but every hour it is deferred is a loss to the Empire and commerce of Britain. Great Britain cannot afford to trust to the good will of any foreign Power for the key to the highway to India. She must have a road of her own through her own possessions, and it is now high time that the people at home understood this. The necessity is so obvious, and the road through this country so evidently the only reliable one to be adopted, that it is unnecessary to mention as an additional argument, the fact that the building of an Inter-Oceanic Railroad through British America would lead to the settlement of the whole country for many miles on either side of the line. British capitalists may not be able to see the importance of this, but the necessity of having and owning the shortest road to India and China, they can scarcely fail to understand.

FOREIGN SPECULATION.

(From the U. S. Economist.)

THE general dullness of trade in Europe has caused a flow of money to the financial centres of Europe almost beyond precedent, and the consequent low rates of interest are producing a very active speculation in securities. In London, the lessons of the panic of 1866 are not yet forgotten, and consequently speculation there is conducted with much caution and conservatism. But even there very large amounts have been and are now being invested in new enterprises. Heavy loans have been made to India for railroad and other purposes, and a large amount has been employed on home railroad debentures, notwithstanding the depressed condition of that interest. The foreign loans offered there have also been on an extensive scale. At the date of our latest mail advices, there were proposals on the London market for nearly 20,000,000 sterling of loans on foreign and colonial account, of which the following are the details:—

Russian Railway Loan, £20,000, at 5 per cent offered at 7½ per cent, amply guaranteed.

Egyptian Loan, £8,800,000, to run thirty years, 7 per cent, interest subscription price, 7½ per cent.; secured by the Alexandria customs duties, and salt revenues.

Honduras Railway Loan, £1,600,000.

Suez Canal Loan, £4,000,000

Swedish Government Loan, £1,500,000, 5 per cent.; price, 88½ per cent.

Bonds of the West Wisconsin Railway Company, £800,000, seven per cent., run fifteen years, offered at seventy.

Canadian International Railway Loan, £3,000,000 of bonds.

In Germany, however, speculation has been subjected to no such check as occurred in London two years ago. On the contrary, the financing establishments, after the character of the French Credit Mobilier, have given full swing to their speculative instincts and have fostered an extent of speculative operations perhaps never before equalled. In allusion to this condition of things, the London Daily News remarks:—

"For the time being a speculative mania existed in Austria and South Germany, which in a minor degree recalls the madness in this country of 1815 and 1846—railway, omnibus, and all sorts of companies are brought forward in quick succession—subscribed two or three times over, and are quoted on the Vienna Bourse and elsewhere at high premiums. The end of all this is very clear, and a mere question of time, reaction, and ruinous collapse, such as we suffered in 1847 and 1848. These German markets during such a

mania may probably disregard all prudential considerations, and blindly rush into foreign loans without exacting the conditions which can alone render them safe securities in periods of war or adversity."

It is of direct importance to Americans that they should duly estimate this condition of things. It is doubtless very much owing to this state of affairs that Germany has taken such an enormous amount of our bonds, and that we are still sending them there, about \$10,000,000 having been shipped during the past month.

It is of much interest to us to consider what may be the effect of the reaction from this speculative furor. Will all our Bonds then be wanted? Germany has probably \$600,000,000 of our bonds, taken within the last few years under the circumstances of a general commercial inactivity. In the event of a revival of business, calling for capital for industrial enterprises, will the Germans remain satisfied to carry their present large amount of our bonds? In the event of a collapse of speculation, with failures among operators carrying our bonds, or rather having them carried by bankers, what would be the effect upon the value of gold and bonds on this side? We do not pretend to intimate that there is any immediate danger, nor do we know that the danger is not immediate; but it is very clear that our foreign bankers interested in these speculations stand upon the crust of a volcano, and that we are constantly liable to the wildest disturbance in gold and bonds from an explosion of these dangerous elements. The danger is all the greater from the fact that our exports of specie this year have been double the average ratio, and that the supply in the Treasury is reduced to a point which forbids the Treasury coming to the help of the market in the event of a drain from this cause. Our importers are deeply concerned in this condition of affairs, and they would act prudently in especially protecting their interests.

SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE BOSTON BOOT AND SHOE MARKET.

(From the Hide and Leather Reporter.)

CONFIDENCE in the future was not one of the conditions with which the Boston boot and shoe manufacturers and dealers commenced the year 1868. Everywhere, in commercial circles, an atmosphere of distrust and uncertainty prevailed, to a degree which rendered even the most moderate business calculations but little better than a chance speculation, and it is not strange, therefore, that the production for the past half year has been kept well within the demand.

The stock of goods on hand on the 1st of January was quite limited, and was principally made up of heavy work. Prices were, generally, a little below those ruling for the same class of work at the corresponding period of the previous year, and it was believed that this difference in favor of buyers would prevail throughout the season. Before the 1st of February, however, the trade, which had been gradually increasing, had so broken the assortments in market that there was an advance on desirable qualities, and no disposition to take extensive orders for future delivery at the then prevailing prices. The activity with which the business had opened in several of the large Eastern shoe towns also contributed to give firmness to the market, and the constantly increasing trade, as the spring advanced, sustained the upward tendency.

A decided preference has been manifested during the past season for machine-sewed goods, in comparison with pegged work, as the former has been, generally, of better style and finish, beside wearing equally well, and with more comfort for the feet. Ladies' cheap heeled kid slippers, buskins, and the lighter kinds of mock welt leather boots, as well as lasting goods, were also in fair request the greater part of the season, while ordinary pegged work was neglected. In styles there has been nothing particularly new, slight variations in the cut of uppers and trimmings constituting the only noticeable change. "Box toes" have been largely made, but the medium round style has had the preference. Narrow square toes were sold, at one time, to some extent, but the demand was not general, and the city dealers entered into an agreement together to discourage the idea of bringing so unnatural a shaped boot or shoe into fashion, and it is now but seldom seen.

The labor question, which has constituted so important a portion of the problem of successful business experience thus far during the year, has been met, in the shoe trade generally, in the most commendable spirit, and with the best results. There have been a few "strikes," it is true, but, compared with the great number of hands employed, disturbances of this nature have, happily, been rare. The employers have, in nearly every instance, anticipated the reasonable demands of their workmen, and thereby made such arrangements as secured the uninterrupted prosecution of their work, the additional cost thus paid for labor having been added to the price of the goods.

We cannot, in closing this brief review of the trade for the first six months of the year 1868, too earnestly commend the careful management and conservative spirit which have marked the operations of both manufacturers and dealers during that period. It was only by such a course that a profitable business could be transacted, and the happy means seems to have been reached. The stock has at no time been excessive, the production has been large, from the constant employment of modern improved facilities, and the result has been that, notwithstanding the steadily advancing prices of goods, the shipments of boots and shoes from the Boston market, for the first six months of 1868, by rail and sea, as shown by our tables, give an excess of more than sixty thousand cases over those of any similar period in former years. We think that, considering the general dullness which has prevailed in nearly every other branch of business, this result is highly creditable to the trade.