THE MONETARY TIMES

AND TRADE REVIEW,

With which has been incorporated the INTERCOLONIAL JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, of Montreal, the TRADE REVIEW, of the same city (in 1870), and the TORONTO JOURNAL OF COMMERCE.

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY MORNING.

SUBSCRIPTION—POST PAID.

CANADIAN SUBSCRIBERS,	$2.00 PER YEAR
BRITISH "	10s. 6D. STER. PER YEAR.
AMERICAN "	$2.00 U.S. CURRENCY.
SINGLE COPIES,	10 CENTS.

Represented in Great Britain by Mr. Jas. L. Foulds, 11 Bothwell St., Central Buildings, Glasgow, Scotland.

Book & Job Printing a Specialty.

OFFICE: Nos. 64 & 66 CHURCH ST.

EDWD. TROUT, MANAGER.

TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY, MAR. 19, 1886

THE SITUATION.

That Mr. Gladstone proposes to expropriate the soil of Ireland, and pay the purchase money out of the British treasury, there can no longer be any reasonable doubt. On the cost of the operation opinions differ, estimates varying from £100,000,000 to £200,000,000. The theory is that the present tenants are to acquire the land, by repaying part, perhaps one-half, of the purchase money. If we take the amount of purchase money at £150,000,000 or $750,000,000, the tenants would have to pay $375,000,000 to enable them to become proprietors. As the interest would not be more than half the amount of the present rent, would they be enabled to apply the difference to a sinking fund to pay off the purchase money? Not all of it, for to do so would place as great a burthen upon them as they would have to bear if they always paid their present rents, which they do not do, and say they are unable to do. Would they be inclined to pay rent, under the form of interest and purchase money to the Government? Would not the politicians tell them that they ought not to pay? The only thing certain about this land expropriation scheme is that the British public would have to pay an enormous sum to make the acquisition; every subsequent step is a matter of grave doubt.

In reply to a deputation, the Minister of Public Works has stated that the St. Lawrence canals will be enlarged in a somewhat leisurely way, and that the expenditure cannot be doubled up quite as fast as impatience may desire. The circumstance of the Welland Canal being of greater capacity than the St. Lawrence canals gives an advantage to foreign commerce over our own; a state of things which no one would think of perpetuating. But the necessity of putting a curb on the expenditure on public works is urgent and may soon become paramount in Federal finance. At the same time, no hope is held out that the harbor dues of Montreal will be decreased. There is an obvious limit to what the nation can do in the way of expenditure, and the large deficit admonishes us that that limit is within near sight and may soon be felt as a regulating influence in the national finances.

There is little prospect of the tolls on Canadian canals being abolished. The fear that the abolition would benefit forwarders instead of the public has a historic basis to rest upon; and it is significant that the interest most likely to benefit by it is most clamorous for the public sacrifice. There would be small encouragement to go on enlarging the canals, if, when completed, they were to yield no direct return on the capital expended. Our great water way cannot be compared to the Erie canal; the superior facilities which it affords is worth more than the difference in the tolls. The forwarders too have shown a great lack of enterprise in not providing proper elevating facilities at Kingston. They ask the Government to do everything, while they themselves do as little as possible. Already $42,000,000 has been expended on the canals, and future expenditures must be kept within some rational limit.

There does not seem to have been any good reason why the second enlargement of the Welland canal should have preceded the enlargement of the St. Lawrence canals, but there are many reasons why the converse precedence should have been observed. And, in future, preference, in point of time should be given to the St. Lawrence canals; though, as the great North-West develops, the reasons for it will constantly get less and less. When all the canals are enlarged to a depth of 14 feet, we shall be in a position to command all the export trade which will be campatible with the volume of our imports. But, once more, let us not deceive ourselves: a certain proportion between exports and imports will be maintained in spite of all we can do. When we have completed the enlargement now in progress, the total cost of the canals will not be less than $54,000,000; but even then we shall not be able to divert the great body of western American traffic.

The Minister of Public Works has been once more reminded that the Trent Valley canal may be required to carry the products of the North-West. His mentors may once more be reminded that if the Hudson's Bay route should prove feasible, their canal will not be needed for this purpose. Of course they will not willingly consent to any thing so rational as waiting to see whether the work of which they urge a rapid execution will be wanted or not. The Government, "in for a penny in for a pound," is to put $350,000 in the estimates for this canal. It cannot go faster and does not feel justified in coming to a standstill.

The British Government refuses to appoint a commission to consider the question of relieving the congestion of the home labor market by systematic emigration to the colonies. This may mean that no scheme of emigration will receive state aid, or it may mean that the Government feels in no want of information, but deems itself in possession of all the evidence necessary to enable it to act. That emigration will not be systematically aided is most probable. The Irish land scheme looks to keeping that portion of the population at home; and Mr. Chamberlain would most likely oppose any new device for state-aided emigration.

Mr. Edward Atkinson agrees on the assumption that the extreme silver men propose to cut down the purchasing of the dollar by more than one-fifth; or, in other words, to reduce wages and salaries which now aggregate $5,110,000 a year, to a purchasing power of $400,000,000. It is strange that Mr. Atkinson does not see that the reduction of the purchasing power of the dollar to eighty cents or less would have the effect of making it purchase less labor as well as less of the products of labor. Prices would nominally rise, when the value of the dollar sank: this happened under greenback depreciation, and would happen if an eighty cent silver dollar took the place of the present gold dollar. But before wages rose, there would be some loss to wage-earners; and if Mr. Atkinson be correct in his estimate that the wage-earners of the United States have now $1,000,000,000 on deposit in savings' banks, they would as capitalists lose $200,000,000 if debts were liable to be paid in an eighty cent. dollar.

There will be some difficulty in reconciling the conflicting interests of the different railway companies on the proposed extended esplanade, in the city of Toronto. The bill before the Legislature provides that any new railway, as a condition of access to the new street, must make terms with companies which have partial occupation of the present esplanade. It is of course proper to conserve and protect existing rights; but as the new accommodation will be acquired as much for new railways as for the old, arbitration might be provided as a means of adjusting their differences. This would ensure a settlement which, in the absence of arbitration, there may be no means of enforcing; and the best practicable security for existing interests would be obtained.

The strikes now in progress, in the United States, threaten both production and distribution with increased cost; production in the factory, distribution on the railways. The element of disturbance and uncertainty injuriously affects trade. Profits were never lower, leaving no margin out of which increased wages can come. The alternative, if the strikers succeed, is an increase in prices, which would in some degree neutralize the benefit of increased wages. The result of the strikes is, at present uncertain; but the cost of the venture to the labor organization is considerable, and if protracted will be serious.

At the beginning of the present year the mileage of Railways in the German Railroad Union was 40,066 miles. There has been 944 miles added in 1883, 2,366 miles in 1884, and 790 miles last year.