

NORTHWEST OBSERVATIONS.

OPINIONS OF AN ONTARIO MILLER.

To a miller visiting Winnipeg perhaps the most disagreeable thing which he encounters is the constant complaints which the dealers there insist on loading on him with regard to the shortages in weights of cars sold to Ontario millers. That these complaints are without a shadow of foundation there can be no doubt, as has been proved over and over again, but there must be some reason for these complaints, and we will attempt to solve the mystery. It is well known that the local elevator man or buyer has to make heroic efforts each year to make his grain in the elevator come out even with his buying, and in consequence he has to weigh very closely, in fact, we are inclined to believe, sometimes too closely, and the result is that his principal bills the cars at the figures furnished by the buyer and when the inevitable shortage is reported he of course kicks. In a great many cases there is not the slightest ground for a "kick," as has been proved by actual results obtained from two of the most prominent firms doing business in Manitoba wheat in the city of Toronto—one showing a shortage of less than a hundred and fifty bushels on two hundred and fifty cars, the other reporting shortages on a dozen cars and an average of five out of nearly a thousand cars. If these gentlemen at Winnipeg have any serious grievance in this direction why do they not refer the matter to the Boards of Trade and let them take such action as will put an end to it instead of maligning all those engaged in the milling trade and making things excessively unpleasant for those millers who have the hardhood to visit the Northwest.

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Millers and dealers are alike awaiting with anxiety the advent of the new standards for Manitoba wheat. There is one certainty about the matter, they cannot be worse than they were last year unless they took the old wheat to make them. The leaders of the syndicate have been in a terrible state of indignation for the last four months because the men who buy their wheat had the unparalleled impudence to ask that they have representation on the board who fix the standards. Their agony over the probability of material changes being made with regard to the settling of disputes between the inspector there and any other is simply awful and we are very sure they will have the heartfelt sympathy of all the eastern millers with a hook. They were not content to compel the poor unfortunate Easterner to go to Winnipeg, in case there was a dispute, but before he could get a hearing he was compelled to put up fifty dollars of the Queen's money "as a guarantee of good faith." Of course this latter was not quite in accordance with the law, but a little thing like that does not seem to trouble them, as they are like the heathen whom St. Paul mentions, "They are a law to themselves." The whole inspection needs overhauling is now patent to any honest onlooker. Just a few minutes before the time of writing this we were in a prominent grain dealer's office when the inspection of two cars of wheat was being discussed by several experts and they all came to the conclusion that of two cars inspected by the same man at Winnipeg the one inspected as No. 2 had was very much better than the one which received a No. 1 hard grade and they were inspected within 30 days of each other. Sometimes it makes a difference whose ox it is.

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The manner in which those who wish to build independent elevators in Manitoba are treated by the railway companies is provoking a good deal of hard feeling there. The farmers around Rosebank, on the Northern Pacific, had subscribed sufficient stock to build a very handsome elevator at that point and when they came to make terms with the company they found that the only terms upon which they could obtain a half acre of land worth five dollars and a switch, was by a lease for five years with a cancellation clause which provides that they may at any time on giving thirty days notice demand the land, and if in that time the elevator be not removed it becomes the property of the company. These terms were not accepted by the farmers' company, and the N.P.R.R. are out to the tune of from 125,000 to

150,000 bushels of freight, as the farmers will team it across country to the C.P.R. points where there are farmers elevators. The only apparent reason we can give for this is that the railway company are following this course with a view to helping the well organized rings of grain buyers in Winnipeg. This matter has a very serious aspect for the milling fraternity as it renders it next to impossible for any eastern miller to put a buyer on at such points unless he is willing to accept the grading of a rival concern, a thing which no one who has not taken leave of his senses would consent to do. That such a state of affairs should exist is a standing disgrace to the railway systems of the country and our Boards of Trade and the Dominion Millers' Association should take immediate and vigorous measures to have this matter made right. We are inclined to think that a little pressure in the proper quarter would remedy this evil.

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The farmers of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories are, as a rule, a highly intelligent class of men, but, like the best of us, they sometimes make mistakes that tell against themselves in a way they little expect. This has been very well illustrated by the policy which they have been following this season with regard to their wheat crop. They have persistently boomed the country at their own expense by announcing that their expected out-turn would be much greater than even they themselves had any expectation, and in consequence the markets have opened at so low a figure that they will not be able to pay the cost of preparing the ground, seeding, harvesting and marketing the grain. If, on the other hand, they had announced the truth that the crop was a light one, there is no doubt but they would have benefited largely by the competition for their grain, which would naturally have followed. Reports from all parts of Manitoba go to show that the results as shown by the threshing machines are rather more than disappointing. A big yield, it is true, may serve to temporarily boom the emigration, but if prices continue as they are the advantage gained on the one hand will undoubtedly be lost on the other. However, we cannot say much about the folly of others when we have a class of men in the east who, being chronic "bears," have been just as persistently forcing down the price of grain, presumably in the interest of the millers, forgetting that nearly every merchant mill in the country is loaded up with dear flour, which, if markets are badly broken, will have to be sold at an enormous loss. It is just possible that these "would-be bears" have the idea that they can buy cheaper than any one else, and thus make up for the loss on the stocks in hand, but they forget that experience goes to show that they have never been on the "bull" side long enough to give their customers a chance to make a reasonable profit on their purchases. Hind sight is all very well when we are at the right end of the gun, but we would advise our friends to take a glance at the fore-sight occasionally if they expect to get any gain.

OBSERVER.

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

THE Commercial, of Winnipeg, has the impression that the people of the east entertain altogether too "exalted an idea of Manitoba's crop this year." The writer of "Northwest Observations" deprecates this same practice of "booming" the new crop by sending forth exaggerated reports of its size. In this matter, however, he would not hold the Manitobians themselves altogether guiltless. "The Manitoba crop," says the Commercial, "is not an enormous one. It is a good many bushels per acre short as compared with the very large crop last year, and threshing returns show that the yield of wheat is not up to the official estimate of 22.7, as shown by the August crop bulletin, which estimate, however, is only given as a preliminary one. In some sections the crop is light, but the average for the province is fairly good. Manitoba has not, therefore, produced a remarkably large wheat crop this year, but simply what may be called a good crop on the average. In Assiniboia territory, west of Manitoba, the crop is lighter than the average for Manitoba." Tell the truth and fear the Old Fellow himself may have even a commercial application.

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INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT McLAUGHLIN.

GRAIN AND MILLING IN MANITOBA.

"MY stay in Winnipeg," said Mr. M. McLaughlin, president of the Dominion Millers' Association, to a representative of the CANADIAN MILLER, "though brief, was very enjoyable." This popular Toronto miller had been called west in connection with his duties as member of the board for fixing the standards of Manitoba grain. "The board for the first time," continued Mr. McLaughlin, "comprised representatives of the milling interests, and also two of the most intelligent farmers of Manitoba, representing the agricultural interests. Mr. W. W. Ogilvie and myself were the millers of the board. Fully 250 samples of grain were submitted for our inspection, almost every district of these territories sending samples. I must say that, taken altogether, seldom have I seen a better lot of grain. Some, it is true, was somewhat smutty, and after careful deliberation it was agreed by the board that this be graded as smutty, and a new grade so termed was fixed. Smutty wheat will be known on the market as "smutty" wheat. This conclusion may be taken as an index of the harmony of opinion existing between the farming and milling interests. It was realized by the board, and by its milling and farming representatives in particular, that farmers and millers were alike interested in the growth of a fine quality of wheat; and where extra care was needed to avoid that which would prove derogatory to the quality, as in the case of smut, everyone should be anxious to have this care exercised. The farmers of Manitoba take a large and, I believe, just pride in their country as a wheat-producing country, and they appreciate the fact that every bushel of imperfect grain that goes from Manitoba is a reflection detrimental to Manitoba; and contravise the knowledge that Manitoba grain is in the main possessed of all the best qualities of first-class grain is a compliment that will return to them interest ten fold, yea a hundred-fold, in the future."

"Very little frost has been experienced in Manitoba this season and consequently the percentage of frosted wheat will be less than formerly. The board decided to do away with the term 'regular' as applied to frosted wheat last year. It is misleading, particularly to foreign buyers, and frosted wheat will be graded 'frosted' wheat. Nothing like being honest in these matters." Asked as to the position of Manitoba as a milling country Mr. McLaughlin replied "that outside of Hungary he did not know of any country in the world better fitted by nature to become a great milling centre. There could be no doubt about its capabilities for producing the best milling wheat, and its natural water power, now going to waste, was the finest he had ever seen. He considered Manitoba's future in this respect assured."

"Let me tell you one thing I admired about the people of Manitoba," remarked Mr. McLaughlin in concluding this interview. "The people have unbounded confidence in the possibilities of their country and the future that is before them. They are a live, pushing, keen lot of men, whether business men or farmers. Do you know they have active, working Boards of Trade in nearly every town in the province? Something we cannot claim in this province. You hear no blue ruin or Goldwin Smith pessimism preached in that country. If the people of the Dominion as a whole had the same confidence in their country as Manitobians have in Manitoba a different condition of affairs would exist in the Dominion to-day."

BRITAIN'S COMMERCE.

A SERIOUS commercial depression hangs over Great Britain at the present time. In some respects this is felt chiefly in the agricultural districts where conditions are most discouraging. For over twenty years there has been a steady decrease of wheat acreage largely because of the continued depreciation in prices. In 1868 the wheat crop covered 3,652,000 acres; in 1892 it occupied 2,219,839 acres. Farmers say that with new wheat at 31s. it is labor and capital thrown to the winds to sow wheat. Exports have fallen off during the eight months of this year fifteen and a quarter millions, as against the corresponding months of 1891.

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