

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MAY 9, 1892.

LOW FREIGHT RATES.

One cent per bushel is a very low rate of freight on grain from Chicago to Buffalo, but this is the rate at which wheat was contracted for recently. This is of course by the lake route, and is a very low figure even for the water route. It is said that grain has been taken recently through to New York, from Chicago, via the lake and rail route, for 5 cents per bushel. These rates show the immense advantage to the producers of the west, of the water route to the east. The regular all-rail rate on grain from Chicago to New York, during the past closed season of navigation, has been 25 cents per 100 pounds, or equal to 15 cents per bushel. But as soon as navigation opens, the lake rate has been cut to 5 and even to 5 cents per bushel. Without this lake route, the trunk line railways would have matters in their own hands all the year around, and western producers would have to pay much higher rates than they are now taxed. The winter rate of the railways is no doubt lower than it would be if there were no summer water route, for the cutting down of rates in the summer, will influence winter rates also. It would be easier to maintain high rates, if there were no influences to cut them down during a portion of each year, than it now is to advance them after the close of navigation each year. Besides this, if the winter rates were advanced to very high figures, there would be more inclination to hold products over winter, for the opening of navigation in the spring. Thus it is seen that the lake route is an inestimable boon to the producers and consumers of the west, in the low summer freight rates which it offers, as well as in its tendency to keep down all-rail rates in the winter.

What we wish to show in referring to these low rates, is the immense importance of the lake route. The people of Manitoba and western Canada generally, do not seem to appreciate the full value of this water route to the east. The mere mention of a railway to Hudson bay, is sufficient to stir up the people of Manitoba to a state of unbounded enthusiasm; but here we have something in our lake route which is of more importance at the moment than a railway to Hudson bay. We do not wish to detract anything from the importance of the northern route. That route will undoubtedly be opened in time, and we believe will prove a practical route for shipment of our surplus products to Great Britain and Europe. When opened and tested thoroughly, we believe the Hudson bay route will prove a great boon to western Canada, especially to the more northerly and westerly portions of the country.

Manitoba is considered an inland region, far from the seaboard, and one of the objections urged against the country, is the cost of transporting products to the seaboard. But we have two water routes, stretching away into the centre of the continent, and offering two competing modes of transporting products at a very low cost. We refer to the lake route to the east and the Hudson bay to the

north. What is needed is the developing of each of these routes to the best advantage. The rate quoted of one cent per bushel on wheat from Chicago to Buffalo, shows what the lake route is capable of doing for the producers and consumers of Manitoba, if it were developed as it can be. What has been done between Chicago and Buffalo can be done between Fort William and Montreal, proportionate to distance of course. Fancy Manitoba wheat being carried from Fort William to Montreal at 2 to 3 cents per bushel. In comparison with the rate from Chicago to Buffalo, this is possible, but not in the present partially developed state of the lake route through to Montreal. The route must be improved, to permit of the passage of large steamers from our Lake Superior ports to Montreal. The carrying out of these improvements, is the one thing above all others which is needed in the interest of Western Canada. The enlargement of our canals, to permit of the passage of large steamers through to the ocean steamship port of Montreal, is the great hope of the grain trade of western Canada.

Leaving out of the question in the meantime the possibilities of the northern outlet via Hudson Bay, and considering only what may (and we may say can) be accomplished by the improvement of the lake route, it can be shown that the inland position of the prairie region of western Canada, is not a tremendous disadvantage in the matter of freight rates. With the improvement of our water outlets, which is bound to come in time, and the improved facilities for handling grain by rail and water, very low freight rates may be looked for in the future. The present duty of the people of the west is to contend earnestly, and on every opportunity, for the full development of the lake route. Fancy in the not very distant future, the following rate on a bushel of wheat from Winnipeg to Liverpool:

Winnipeg by rail to Lake Superior	9 cents.
Lake Superior to Montreal	3 "
Montreal to Liverpool	3 "
Interest, insurance and elevator expenses	3 "

Total afloat Liverpool

Who will say these rates may not be possible in time, though they may seem impracticable in the light of present conditions.

Now consider present cost of getting a bushel of wheat to Liverpool, via the lake route during navigation season, the winter rate being much higher:—

Winnipeg to Lake Superior	12 3 5 cents
Elevator charges Lake Superior	1 1 "
Lake Superior to Montreal	9 "
Elevating Montreal	3 "
Montreal to Liverpool	7 1 "
Insurance, commissions, exchange, etc., say	5 "

Total afloat Liverpool say

Terminal charges Liverpool

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Leaving off terminal charges at Liverpool, the cost of taking a bushel of wheat to the British port, it will be seen, is about double our estimate of a rate which may be possible in the future. We know shippers will smile when they see these figures, but when we consider the great reductions which have been made in the past few decades, in the expense of moving traffic, the possibility of taking Manitoba wheat to Liverpool at a cost of 18 to 20 cents per bushel should not seem entirely ridiculous. Wheat already has been carried across

the Atlantic at 3 cents per bushel, 9 to 10 cents per bushel freight from Winnipeg to Lake Superior, we do not consider improbable for the future, and with the improvement of the St. Lawrence canals, a rate of 3 to 5 cents, Fort William to Montreal, would not be an unreasonable expectation. The ocean rate of course, varies materially at different seasons of the year, being higher in the fall and winter. However, we will leave the figures with our readers to think over.

WHEAT SEEDING.

Reports coming in the first of the week indicated that wheat seeding was well advanced over a large section of the province, previous to the storm of Wednesday, April 27. This storm put a stop to work for the balance of that week, and on heavy land it would delay work even longer. Indeed, reports from the country up to the middle of last week, indicate that seeding operations were still delayed on account of the storm of the previous week. A letter from Brandon on Saturday, April 30, stated that wheat seeding had been finished on the experimental farm there. Advices from Virden, Carberry, Brandon, and other districts, reported many farmers through with wheat seeding, and it is evident that the bulk of the wheat was in the ground previous to the storm. The general report as to the storm is, that it would be decidedly beneficial, as it gave the ground a good soaking, and would pack the earth about the sown grain, thus improving the seedbed and removing the danger of the earth being blown about by strong winds. The only murmur comes from flat districts, where the soil is heavy, and where seeding has been delayed on account of wet land. Such districts, however, form a small portion of the whole, and the benefit to crops sown on light soil will more than compensate in the aggregate, for the delay caused by an over supply of moisture in some sections.

Notwithstanding the backward state of plowing last fall, on account of the late harvest and unfavorable weather, and the rather late spring this year, it is believed that the wheat area will show a fair increase this season. The large number of new settlers who have come into the country this spring, has been the means of affording a good supply of farm help. Many of the new settlers have rented land, which they will crop this season, and there will be fewer improved farms vacant this season than for many years. Some farmers who were cropping a large acreage, have divided their holdings with new settlers. In this way a full area of crop will be made up, notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions which existed at the beginning of the season.

The wheat area has also been made up in another way, which is not as desirable as that of dividing farms with new settlers. We refer to sowing wheat on stubble land without plowing, an undesirable (and we may say slovenly) custom which has been growing in Manitoba of late years. The tendency of this slipshod way of cultivation is to make weedy land. A series of tests which are quite important to Manitoba farmers, was made at the Manitoba ex-