

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 12, 1893.

## SCATTERED SETTLEMENT.

The Canadian North-west is at present in the peculiar position of having railway communication far ahead of actual settlement, a state of affairs which is seldom the case in new countries. Usually settlers in the west have farms opened up and homes made, and waiting often long and patiently for the advent of the iron horse to connect them with older centres of civilization. There are some districts of the North-west still in this latter state, notably Southern Manitoba and the Prince Albert and Edmonton districts in the far North. But rapid as the flow of immigration into the country has been during the past two years, the construction of the main line of the C.P.R. has kept steadily westward of settlement. This rapid railway extension while it is the backbone of North-western progress, is productive of a system of scattered settlement, which is by no means beneficial to the trade interests of the country at large. Towns of greater pretensions than the country will for years support, will naturally spring up in far western districts, and in these disappointed merchants must struggle along for years, until the tide of settlement thickens the producing population around them. The natural drift in such circumstances would lead to very undesirable, although unavoidable results, but the evil is liable to be aggravated by the fact, that it is the interests of numerous wealthy corporations possessing great power in the country, to direct the tide of settlement as far westward as possible. It is certainly the interests of the Canadian Pacific Railway to follow out such a policy, as the further westward production commences and progresses, the heavier will be their freight returns for placing the same in eastern markets. The Company's land grant is also an incentive to the same course, as the quicker they can sell their lands in the far west, the sooner will they realize the cash returns from the same, and these form quite a heavy item in the resources of the C.P.R. syndicate.

The Hudson's Bay Company have disposed of the bulk of their lands for several hundred miles west of the Red River and contiguous to the main line of the C.P.R., and it is, therefore, their interests

to encourage also the westward flow of immigration, in order to make further sales. To these two corporations must be added the North-west Land Co., and a score or so of minor land jobbing organizations, all of which have their agents in the east and in Europe using every endeavor to carry immigration westward into new and unsettled districts. The fact that almost the only agents, who have been working for immigration to the North-west during the past year, were those of corporations such as above named, will account in a great measure for immigrants passing unheeded the older towns of this province, and hurrying onward to their far western homes, much to the disappointment of hotel-keepers and retail traders, who have during the past winter been making calculations upon a lively business out of immigrants.

A stranger, after scouring the country around Winnipeg and other towns in the vicinity of the Red River, would be at a loss to comprehend the present westward rush of immigration, when but a small proportion of the lands around these older settlements is yet under cultivation, and he would only be able to comprehend it, after he had made a thorough investigation as to how these uncultivated lands had fallen into the hands of speculators, whose aims were gain even at the risk of obstructing settlement. It is unnecessary to go over the history of the system of unscrupulous land-grabbing which has been carried on in the old province of Manitoba during the last ten years. Old settlers can tell of hundreds of half-breed claims, that were sold by their original owners for a pair of blankets, for the simple reason that these primitive land-owners knew nothing of the value of their lands. The whole system has culminated in hundreds of thousands of acres of rich lands now being in the possession of speculators, few of whom have ever made any effort at cultivation, or the encouragement of it.

No city in the North-west has suffered so much from the evil above complained of as Winnipeg. In close proximity to the city can be found section after section of rich prairie land unbroken by the plow, where hundreds of industrious farmers might be settled, and contributing to the wealth of the country. As a natural consequence Winnipeg has no retail mercantile trade from the surrounding country worthy of mention, and storekeepers have,

outside of those who reside in the city, very few but transient customers to depend upon, and these latter, being composed at present principally of immigrants rushing to their western homes, are of very little value to the trading community of the city. These land speculators are therefore not only obstructions to actual settlement, but are a burden and drawback to the legitimate trade of the city of Winnipeg. The real interests of legitimate traders and actual settlers, in this as in all other matters must be identical, and greedy speculation is the natural enemy of both.

There exists no legislative cure for the evils above named, as the property rights, even of the most unscrupulous speculator, must be respected in Canada, and the country is too broad, wide and unsettled to furnish any plea for land bills of a confiscatory character. Yet there is at present some hope of relief from the evil, and the promise of relief comes from an unlooked for direction, namely the owners of the lands in question. Some of these are owners of city property also, and late though it be, they are opening their eyes to the injury they are doing to themselves by their obstructive policy. There is now a movement on foot to form an association of owners of lands around Winnipeg, the aim of which will be to secure control of as much of these idle lands as possible, and place them on the market for actual settlers only at moderate prices and on long terms of payment, so as to encourage the growth of a local rural population. The movement is a laudable one, and will receive the commendation of every one interested in progress. We will not say that it is the outcome of "rogues falling out, and honest men getting their own." The motives that prompt it we shall not question, but give the whole movement our hearty commendation, as one that will contribute much to the progress of the country, and greatly benefit the trade of Winnipeg.

## CONSERVATISM IN BUSINESS.

The COMMERCIAL has many a time pointed out that the only safeguard in business was by doing it in a conservative manner. That we were right has been amply demonstrated by the history of the past few months in this country. There have been a larger per centage of bankruptcies than should have occurred, and this is all traceable to one origin, viz., that of giving unlimited credit, or rather