

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 18, 1884.

MR. VAN HORNE AS A PROPHET.

The general manager of the C. P. R. is a many sided individual, and with a kaleidiscopic versability he endeavors "to dazzle but not to illumine mankind" on various subjects from time to time. Two years ago he delighted his admirers with pictures of the locomotive screaming through the grim Rocky Mountains, around the frowning north shore of Lake Superior, and over the golden sands of the Pacific, with broad cultivated plains, busy towns and villages appearing as if by magic in its wake. A few weeks ago he astounded and doubtless delighted the people of British Columbia with a picture of huge ocean steamships crossing and re-crossing the Pacific Ocean, carrying within their black hulls the products of active revolutionary Europe, and sluggish, over-browed Asia, and boding ruin to all other lines of traffic between these two continents of the Old World. Truly, his pictures of the future and its channels of traffic are alluring if not life-like, and might well serve as food for hungry imaginations.

But Mr. Van Horne can get down to every day matters at times, and we have found him as a farmer's adviser, a grain dealer's instructor, and in fact in almost every capacity where he could reach the negro's ambition of "bossing the job." He does not confine himself to conjuring up centres of industry on our western prairie, like the generous fairie with her silver wand, or floating craft like the phantom ship of Van Derdecken on the smooth Pacific, but can regulate in his own mind anything from the blast of a fanning mill or even a pair of bellows to a system for circumnavigating the globe.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Van Horne, even in his most commonplace utterances, has such a proneness to prophesy, as otherwise his utterances might be considered of much more value than they are now taken for. The latest break he has made has been in the grain trade, and having once entered this field his prophetic propensities have naturally led him to "dealing in futures." He is credited with having stated in an interview at Toronto, that in the coming spring grain would undoubtedly be much higher in

price than it now was, and those farmers who held on to their grain until then would make a great deal of money by so doing. Mr. Van Horne reasons that when grain is very low in price in the fall it is almost sure to be correspondingly high in the spring. He cites his prophetic advice of last year, when he told north-western farmers that by holding their grain until spring they would get the ever satisfactory dollar a bushel, and serenely adds that his expectations have been realized.

It is truly refreshing to have an assured prophet, whether in sporting or business circles, refer to the accuracy of his predictions, and Mr. Van Horne seems to be possessed of as much assumption as any one who ever peddled around "a straight tip." It is unfortunate, however, that facts do not bear out Mr. Van Horne's assumptions. The statistics of wheat prices in Chicago and other grain centers for a number of years back do not prove that low prices in the fall must be succeeded by high ones in the spring, nor will these statistics even support this theory as a often broken rule. His assertions about the price of wheat in the Northwest are also unsupported by facts, as in the City of Winnipeg the wheat crop of 1883 never brought a dollar a bushel, except for a week or two after it was cut and while local millers were hungry for a supply of new grain. After that its course was steadily downward, and even when another famine at the mills took place during the harvest of 1884, the highest figure offered for No. 1 hard was \$7½c.

Mr. Van Horne's prophesyings having missed the bull's eye in the past, there is no reason to believe that he will come any near to the mark in the future. That grain prices are likely to advance we have a firm belief, but the advance is most likely to take place once the Presidential election excitement is over and hoarded up funds are once more let loose to find their way in many instances into grain speculation. Grain at present has every speculative prop from under it and low prices are to be looked for. If, however, it does not advance until next spring, when funds now lying idle will be wanted for the thousand and one undertakings which require none during winter, then its chances of doing so are very slim. Basing our calculations upon the law of supply and demand there is prac-

tically no chance for grain advancing, and the only movement in that direction which we can look for must be the result of revived speculation, and during the coming winter, when abundant funds are unemployed, is the only time we may look for that.

But Mr. Van Horne's prophesies on grain prices, besides being mere bald dash, are calculated to injure the whole Northwest if any attention is paid to them. He sees winter coming and grain going east by other routes than the C. P. R. owing to closed lake navigation, and by this prophetic subterfuge he tries to persuade our struggling farmers to store their grain at home until he is in a position to send it over the company's line to the seaboard. The movement of grain here may be checked and the whole business affairs of the Northwest brought to a standstill for aught Mr. Van Horne cares, provided it is only held in the country for the C. P. R. to carry out when navigation opens. Whether prices will be higher next spring than now he probably does not care, and we are certain he does not know. The question in his mind is who shall carry the grain out of the Northwest. The source of his prophetic inspiration is not hard to find out for its selfishness is too apparent to be concealed.

THE COMMERCIAL has had reason to tell Mr. Van Horne before that he is not the embodiment of omniscience on grain matters, and it must add that he has not given any fresh proofs of his superior knowledge when he entered the realm of prophesy.

ABUSING CREDIT.

Much as has been written about the desirability of doing business upon a cash basis only, the fact stands out clear that it is simply impossible to separate credit and commerce without stunting and dwarfing the latter to a degree altogether out of keeping with the modern necessities of trade. We may as well therefore, accept as a business axiom a necessity for credit while commerce continues. It does not follow, however, that credit should be abused, and when it has resulted from such abuse, that it should be condemned in toto in consequence. On the contrary, credit should be prized as a valuable institution in trade which links commercial life closely together, and while held with