

The Commercial

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DAMAGED WHEAT.

Grain buyers have been making many complaints during the past two or three months regarding the damaged state in which a very large proportion of the wheat from the country comes into market. Among the farming community it is a settled fact that this general complaint is to a certain extent unnecessary, and that it is only a hue-and-cry meant to keep down the price of grain generally for the benefit of the shipper or the miller. It requires but a slight investigation of the matter to discover, that there is really great cause for complaint, and that the wheat raising reputation of Manitoba is very likely to be greatly injured thereby.

The reports of crops throughout the North-west as furnished some three months ago by Mr. Harder of the C. P. R., was undoubtedly a reliable estimate as to the average yield, but it furnished no index to the state in which the grain reached the farmer's bin, where the farmer possessed such a receptacle, or the state it was in for bringing to market. The experience of millers and shippers for the last three months furnishes the only reliable index in this case, and on examination this is found to be anything but encouraging. A few weeks ago a few sensible people ridiculed the report of one prominent shipper, to the effect that not a single car they had shipped up to that date had graded No. 1 at Duluth and only a comparatively small proportion had passed inspection there as No. 2. Yet there is every reason now to believe that this report was substantially correct. It is not to be argued, however, that no No. 1 wheat has been raised in the North-west in 1882. On the contrary samples can be seen on the market almost any day, which would take a leading grade in any market in the world. And this is invariably the case where farmers have taken proper pains in the stacking and preservation of their grain, and to such an extent is this evident, that almost any shipper can furnish two samples which were equal in quality and weight when harvested, but would now be as far apart in grade as No. 1 and "unmerchantable."

Old residents of the North-west tell us that last fall was an unusual one owing to the frequency of fall rains, as seldom do such occur in this country. Be that as it may, the rainfall was sufficient to injure one per cent of the crop, had the most ordinary care been taken in stacking lost other means of preservation from injury. As it now stands we are safe in saying that at least one-fourth of the wheat raised in the North-west in 1882 has been more or less injured by rain, and one-half of that proportion to such an extent as to make it fit only for feed for animals and very indifferent feed at that. This may seem a strong and, perhaps, unwarrantable statement; but when one farmer can be found with nearly 3000 bushels of grain in his possession, which he had to chop out with an axe for feed for his stock during the recent cold spell, our statement looks a little more credible.

This state of affairs must and will cause a feeling of hard times before another crop is ready for market: but if the farmers of the country will profit by their experience the lesson may not be too dearly bought after all. There is another point from which to view this matter however, and that is the injury to the grain producing reputation of the country, and consequent hindrance to immigration which the exportation of wheat in this damaged state must cause. There are too many enemies of the North-west waiting for such evidences to pervert them to the injury of the country; and the wet grain of 1882 will certainly be heard from in this connection.

It is not difficult to see what a power an elevator and inspection system at Winnipeg would be in preventing this misrepresentation. Grades fixed by inspectors in this city would be proof positive of the quality of North-western grain, and shipments of No. 1 or lower grades could be accurately recorded as they left the country. Every country must and will have careless farmers and damaged grain, and it is in the interest of the North-west that such should be graded at home, and its proportion measured and accurately known, so that it could be compared with the proportion of first-class grain produced.

A fair judgment can hardly be expected in American markets, where interests antagonistic to North-western settlement are paramount; although contrary to what might have been expected, more just and generous testimony has in many cases

come from such sources, than that from many purely Canadian sources. Still misrepresentation will arise in such quarters, and in this particular of testimony as to the grain producing advantages the reputation of the North-west may be placed practically in the care of Winnipeggers, by having its system of storage and inspection located there.

GRAIN FUTURES.

The question of the legality of futures is evidently far from being settled in the great grain centres of the United States. The following extract from Bradstreet's of January 27th shows how the abuse of the system must lead to endless trouble and prevent any sensible solution of difficulties connected with the question:

"The corn market has excited and has experienced some rather violent fluctuations as the result of the speculations in Chicago, which have taken the shape of a corner in the January option but which received a set-back on Wednesday by the most prominent short-seller, (John B. Lyon), appealing to the courts to save him from the results of his own speculations, by restraining anybody from calling on him for margins, or from buying in the corn on his contracts, and making him pay the difference, as he would be obliged to do under the rules of the Chicago Board of Trade. The question as to whether the injunction of the court will be sustained in law and by higher judicial authorities is one of more importance than the mere settlement of this one speculation. If the power of the Chicago Board of Trade to discipline its members or to expel them for disregard of its rules can be restrained by the courts, the Board of Trade has no functions to perform, and there would be no reason for its existence."

It is much to be regretted that the discipline of the Chicago Board of Trade or any other Board of Trade should be in conflict with the laws of well-governed States. It cannot be expected, however, that an institution like the Chicago Board less than one-third of whose members are legitimate traders in the products handled or supposed to be handled at its daily gatherings, will be guided purely in the interests of the legitimate trade. Decisions of the Supreme Court of Illinois have set forth that the actions of settling committees have not always been in accordance with either commercial law or justice, and a few cases have cropped up, in which the transactions in dispute were as purely gambling, and indictable under the statutes of the State as such. Yet settling committees have tried such cases carefully, and rendered decisions very similar to what would be expected from