

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MAY 20, 1895.

THE BUTTER TRADE.

Owing to the low price of butter, it will be necessary for country merchants in Manitoba to exercise greater care than ever before in handling butter. The butter output will soon be at its maximum and the quantity made this year will no doubt be large. In order to save themselves from loss, country merchants will find it necessary to discriminate very closely in buying butter. Only the best quality of butter will be wanted while prices remain so low and stocks so large, and the poor stuff will be almost unsalable, except at the price of grease. In fact, the days have gone by for finding a market for poor or stale butter. People want choice butter, and they want it fresh. With the extensive refrigerator car service on our railways this year, merchants will be able to market their butter in good condition while it is fresh and sweet. Merchants and shippers should take advantage of this refrigerator car service and ship promptly. The Commercial never did advise holding butter, and not withstanding present low prices, we cannot advise holding now. On the contrary we think it more necessary than ever that the butter should be marketed promptly while it is fresh and sweet, for the reason stated that while prices are so low people will not use stale butter. Some may think that because prices are so low now, it would be safe to hold for an advance. This might be a good argument with some commodities, but with an article which deteriorates in quality so fast as butter, it is not safe to hold no matter how low prices go. Very few country merchants have reasonably good accommodation for holding butter for any length of time. Choice butter, marketed while fresh, is the only class of butter which it is desirable to market at all.

Manitoba is beginning to produce a considerable surplus of butter over local requirements and it is time that we should endeavor to gain a reputation abroad for good quality. Sending away poor quality or stale butter will do harm by injuring the reputation of our butter in the markets to which it is sent. Those who cannot or will not make good butter would do the country a service by going out of the business, and merchants who allow the butter to deteriorate by careless handling and holding until it has lost the sweet, fresh flavor, also help to get a bad reputation for our butter, to the injury of the trade.

THE NATIONAL FINANCES.

It is not a matter for surprise that the national finances should show a deficit. The low prices which have ruled on so many lines of goods of late, would be almost certain to produce a large falling off in the customs revenue, even if their had been no curtailment

of imports. When times improve, as they eventually will, the revenue will come up again. In the meantime a half cent per pound duty has been placed on sugar, and an increase has been made in the duty on spirits, etc., to obviate any further deficit for the next financial year. This necessary increase in the customs tax indicates that any considerable decrease in the revenue producing duties could only be brought about at present by great national economy, unless other means were adopted of raising the revenue. Governments as well as individuals should economize during periods of depression, if deficits are to be avoided. Under some circumstances it would be better perhaps to have a deficit than to greatly curtail official expenditure during a time of depression, as the depression would be only the more keenly felt. Canada has been free from deficits for many years, and the present one will not be a serious matter, though there is no doubt plenty of room for economy in the administration of public affairs.

FREIGHT RATES COMMISSION.

The report of the commission appointed by the Dominion government, to take evidence and hear complaints against railway rates in the west, is just about what was expected by a good many business men here who took an interest in the matter. The brief summary of the report, as published in The Commercial last week, completely exonerates the Canadian Pacific Railway from any charges of imposing exorbitant or extortionate rates. One statement made by the commission, however, calls for a direct challenge. They say, according to telegraphic reports, that some of the heaviest shippers in Winnipeg had no complaints to make, and there was an entire absence of complaints from the heavy freight handlers. This statement will bear explanation which will put it in a very different light. Instead of making their complaints individually, which would necessitate a great deal of repetition, the Winnipeg business men resolved to state their case collectively, through the board of trade. This made a great saving of time and labor for the commission. The case presented by the Winnipeg board of trade was in reality the complaint of all the heavy freight handlers of Winnipeg who are members of the board. The statement, therefore, that a great many of the heaviest shippers had no complaint to make, while literally true, considering these men individually, is nevertheless entirely misleading.

The report itself, it is needless to say, will not prove satisfactory to the people of the west. There was a feeling here at the time the commission was first appointed, that a mistake had been made in appointing government officials to compose the commission. If the commission had been composed of men of known commercial ability, who were not under official influence of any kind, the report now made would have carried very much more weight, even if it had been opposed to popular opinion in the matter. As it

is, however, the report coming from officials of the government is not considered a very weighty document.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION FARCE.

About as great a farce as has been perpetrated in Canada for some time is this royal commission for the investigation of the question of prohibition of the liquor traffic. Three massive blue books of about 1,000 pages each have been published, and more are to follow before the report of the commission is complete. The report is utterly worthless. No one will ever take the trouble to make even a superficial examination of the reports. The whole thing is a farce and we might also add—a fraud. The only thing real about it is the cost, which foots up to about \$100,000. This sum has been squandered to secure a lot of worthless opinions about prohibition.

FISH VERSUS BEEF.

It is said that the consumption of fish has increased considerably in the United States owing to the high price of beef. Fish make a wholesome, nourishing and palatable food, and it is a wonder that the consumption of fish, as compared with meats, is not greater, when the low price of the former is considered. The New York Fishing Gazette says:

"Fish were never better, more plentiful, or cheaper than at the present time. The supply is inexhaustible, notwithstanding the complaints of journals devoted to angling that the commercial fisherman are depleting the waters.

"It now looks as if the opportunity of the fish trade had come, and dealers look forward to a greatly increased business, which will bring better times and more money to all who are engaged in the fishing industry."

Freight Rates and Traffic Matters.

The Chicago Trade Bulletin of May 13 says: Rail rates were well maintained last week on the basis of 20c per 100 lbs for flour and grain and 30c for provisions to New York. Through rates were steady, with business light. The rates to Liverpool ranged at 20.62 to 21.3c per 100 pounds for flour, 11½ to 11¾c per bu for grain and 37 to 39.84c per 100 lb for provisions. Rates to Antwerp about 1c over Liverpool. Lake and rail rates to New York are 15c per 100 lb; on flour and 6c per bu on grain, and on grain to New England 8¾c. Vessel room was inquired for freely and offerings of boats have decreased. Charters for grain to Buffalo at 1¾c, and to Kingston at 2¾c.

The Montreal Trade Bulletin of May 10 says: Further engagements of heavy grain have been made at 1s 1½d to Liverpool, London and Glasgow, as low as 1s being accepted for Liverpool, but agents are now trying to get 1s 3d. To the Continent 2s to 2s 3d are the quoted rates. One or two jags have been taken for Bristol at 1s 4½d, but 1s 6d is now asked. Space is offered for sack flour at 8s 9d London, shippers bidding 7s 6d. Glasgow and Liverpool rates are quoted at 7s. Engagements have been made for cheese at 15s Liverpool, 20s London, 22s 6d Bristol and 25s Glasgow. To Liverpool it is said a cut rate of 12s 6d has been accepted by one of the lines. Cattle are quoted at 45s Liverpool and Bristol, and 40s London. Kingston to Montreal the rate is 2½c on wheat, and Chicago to Kingston 2½c.