

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MAY 31, 1887.

STEPHEN'S BLUSTER.

Since the first outbreak on the part of the knight who stands at the head of the C.P.R. Co., and which found vent in the threatening telegram sent to Premier Norquay, the statements then made have been repeated in various forms. In an interview with a *Mail* correspondent, Sir George Stephen said that the company will certainly carry out the intentions expressed in the message of moving the shops from Winnipeg to Fort William. Several other intimations have also been made by C.P.R. officials, some of which have a strange inconsistency about them. In one instance Sir George is reported to have spoken as follows:—

"As far as the C.P.R. is concerned, we do not really care very much what the Manitoba people do now. They have caused so much damage already that they can't make things much worse. We may build the line as originally contemplated by Hon. Mr. Mackenzie, that is, from Selkirk to Portage la Prairie, leaving Winnipeg 22 miles south and reached by a branch. This course has been thrust upon us by a lot of shysters and irresponsible speculators who are intent upon making money at the expense of the country generally."

On another occasion he intimated that the company might "abandon their line west of Sudbury and forward their western freight by the cheapest route from Sault Ste. Marie." In case of the latter move, where will be the utility of moving the shops to Fort William, or adopting the Selkirk route for the main line? Manifestly these threats cannot be carried out without interfering with each other.

There are three principal threats which have been made by the company, in case the Manitoba Government carries out its project to build the road to the Boundary. First, that the shops will be removed from Winnipeg to Lake Superior; second, that the main line will be run through Selkirk twenty miles north of Winnipeg, leaving this city to be reached by a branch; and third, that the company will cease to operate the line west of Sudbury. To carry out the first threat the company would be obliged to break a solemn obligation with the people of this city. In consideration of a bonus of \$200,000 granted by the city to the company, the latter agreed to maintain its principal shops for the main line of the railway within the province, and the branches radiating from the city, in Winnipeg. In addition to this bonus

the city has incurred other expenditures in connection with the C.P.R., such as building the bridge across the Red River, donating property for building purposes to the company, etc., in all adding an amount in round numbers to the city's debt of nearly half a million dollars. To this expenditure on capital account can be added the exemption from taxation of the company's property within the corporation. In return for this expenditure, the city has been discriminated against by the C.P.R. Co., its merchants have been hampered and placed at a disadvantage in competition with eastern cities, and in every way the company has sought to make this city subservient to its own and eastern interests. When a move is made to emancipate the city from its awkward position, the company at once resorts to the despicable plan of endeavoring to stir up the residents of provincial towns and rural districts against the city. The officials of the company were no doubt aware of the sectional feeling which prevails to too great an extent in some parts of this province, and they hoped to take advantage of this sentiment to counteract the influence of Winnipeg in demanding a cessation of the disallowance policy pursued by the Dominion Government, in the interest of the company. Unable to accomplish anything by this contemptible mode of operating, the company resort to threats of dire vengeance to be perpetrated upon the city. If as Sir George says, they (the company) "do not care very much what the people of Manitoba do," then why all this expenditure of baffled rage? The mean insinuation applied to the staunchest business men of the city and province, who are called "shysters and irresponsible speculators" by the monopoly's president, can well afford to be passed over with contempt. Those who know the leaders in the agitation against monopoly, and who know them to be the solid business men of the province and the true friends of the country, will only smile at the ruffianism of the noble knight.

The second threat that the main line of the railway will be extended from Selkirk to Portage la Prairie, leaving Winnipeg twenty miles to the south, to be served by a branch, is one at which the people of this city can well afford to smile. If the C.P.R. Co. proposes to go through the undignified operation of biting off its nose to spite its face, the people of Winnipeg have no right to object. By carrying out this

threat the company would only be placed at a greater disadvantage in competing for the carrying trade of the city when the monopoly is broken. The great bulk of the traffic reaching this province over the C.P.R. would have to come or pass through this city, even with the main line continued west from Selkirk. At any rate the passage of through freight a few miles to the north instead of directly through the city is a matter of no importance. The shunting of a few cars of through freight within the corporation limits is of no material advantage to the city.

The third and last principal threat is also one of little bearing upon this city. If the operation of the line west of Sudbury is to be discontinued, there will be no object in building the main line west from Selkirk. By closing the line west of Sudbury, C.P.R. freight would reach the city from the south, and to carry through freight to Selkirk and then on west would give a longer haul of twenty miles. Likewise with the line west of Sudbury closed, the location of the shops at Lake Superior or any other point east of Winnipeg would be out of the question. But what about the agreement with the Government under which the company undertook to operate the line forever? If a portion of the main line were abandoned, would not the company forfeit its entire line, as well as its land grant?

It has long been contended by many that the C.P.R. would not continue to operate the line north of Lake Superior, at least as a main line, any longer than a connection could be formed to the south of the lake. With the completion of the Algoma branch, from Sudbury on the main line to Sault Ste. Marie, the company would have a through route to Winnipeg over their auxiliaries, the Minneapolis & Sault Ste. Marie and the St. Paul Minneapolis & Manitoba. The thousand miles of railway between Winnipeg and Sudbury furnishes scarcely any local freight, and if the agreement would permit, this part of the road could be abandoned in favor of the Sault route without loss to the company. Indeed, it would be a direct saving to the company in the operation of a long stretch of unprofitable road. Perhaps the road might be operated at a greatly reduced cost as a local and enable the company to secure branch terms with the Government. At any rate this is the first intimation from the com-