

observed numerous farms between Richmond Hill and Barrie reports the crops looking well there, but as having frost north of Barrie. In the Niagara district our information is that not more than half last year's crop of cereals is to be expected, while in the County of Brant, which yielded unusually last autumn, probably two-thirds as much may be harvested. From Perth, Oxford, Middlesex and South Wellington, the accounts are somewhat more favorable. Upon the whole, however, the crop of fall wheat in Ontario is likely to prove a light one, even admitting that, as is claimed, a larger area than last year is sown. Some well-informed observers go so far as to predict that one-half, others two-thirds of our average crop will be harvested.

The area sown in spring wheat will be smaller than that of a year ago, but prospects are good for this, as for other Spring grains. Oats and peas promise well. The lands on which wheat was winter killed, have been mostly re-sown in coarse grains. Barley, which is an important crop in the Eastern section of this province, is reported to be doing well. Accounts from the Bay of Quinte district are favorable, and a Cobourg telegram says: "Acreage of barley large and very promising."

The hay crop can scarcely fail to be good. In some parts the grass did not begin its growth early enough to make a rich harvest, but with scarcely an exception, accounts of its promise is favorable. Clover is doing well. The damp and cool weather has been favorable for pasture, which will yield good results in the shape of butter and cheese. It is too early to say much about root crops, but we hear of potato vines being blackened by frost last week in the Counties of Grey and Simcoe. Maize in Essex and Kent has also suffered by the frost.

News from Manitoba with respect to the growing crops is, so far, favorable. We observe that a report has been issued under the authority of the traffic manager of the Canada Pacific Railway, detailing the condition of agricultural matters at various stations on the line of that road. This report states that the area of grain sown has been nearly double that of last year, and appearances indicate a very good yield of cereals and other products. Pasturage, too, has been stimulated by frequent showers.

The Department of Agriculture at Washington estimates the wheat crop of the United States in 1881 at 80 per cent. of an average crop. Accounts from Michigan, Ohio, and Iowa, however, do not justify the expectation that they will yield nearly so much as that; 234 townships in Iowa return 47,388 acres of wheat as winter killed and ploughed up. In the same State 98 coun-

ties give the average condition of spring wheat as 87, where 100 would represent an ordinary crop. The chinch bug is troubling the barley and the spring wheat in Iowa, while four counties in that State report damage to the latter from the hessian fly. Oats promise, there, 93 per cent.

These statistics and opinions warn us, therefore, not to expect a luxuriant wheat harvest on this continent. It is worthy of notice, too, that our present prices of wheat, being relatively higher than those of Great Britain, are not improbably based upon the expectation of a short crop, and the belief that what wheat we grow will be required for home consumption,

### BUSINESS DIFFICULTIES.

The average merchant's life is a hard one, popular belief to the contrary notwithstanding. The fascination which it seems to possess for the unpractised, the growth of commerce, the cheapness of credit in late years, and the openings which seemed to offer in new countries, all helped to increase the proportion of merchants, so called, who see in store-keeping an occupation simple, light and genteel. How grievously many of these have been undeceived as to its simplicity and comfort, the sad array of mercantile wrecks which, in this country as in all others, strews the shores of the stream year by year, too plainly tells. The respectability of the occupation is not denied, unless perhaps by a narrow-minded horn aristocrat. The mistake people make is in fancying that the business of a conscientious mechanic or farmer, that is, of an honest man who makes goods or one who cultivates land, is in itself any the less worthy of respect than that of one who buys and sells merchandise.

Prominent among the causes which tend to make successful merchandising difficult are: diminishing profits; the increase of store-expenses, especially in cities; and the inordinate growth of household disbursements occasioned by the luxurious tendencies of the present time. There is a growing disproportion, in this country at any rate, between the extent of a retail merchant's proper resources and the expenditure he permits himself or his family to indulge in. It cannot be denied that in dress, in house-building or furnishing, in indulging his children, young or old, in fashionable but useless habits and pernicious practices, many a struggling merchant wrecks his chances of success and buries himself and his future under a weight of empty finery and folly. It is painful to see a dealer who, by living over his retail shop, keeping his own books and practising in his household

and in his business the economy plainly the duty of one with small capital and limited income, might make a comfortable living, launch out into theatre-going, club-frequenting, seaside-holidaying, dressing his children like French fashion plates, or sending them to the piano in the parlor instead of to the nursery or the kitchen.

It has attracted the attention of the *New York Times* that the failures for the first three months of the present year were nearly double, in number and amount, what they were in the like period of 1880. In seeking for the causes of failure, that journal concludes that "A principal cause of trouble, especially in retail trade, lies in the enormous rent demanded before a business has attained the volume which properly enables it to be paid. Few tradesmen in New York, comparatively, have to-day much capital to fall back upon; because from 1873 to 1880 they were living upon it, and consequently most have nothing now but such savings as they can effect from day to day, and are, therefore, ill-prepared to meet the heavy increase of rent lately placed upon them." The pressure of rent is not so great in Canada as in the metropolis of the States, but still the proportion which rent bears to the turn-over of his business is a matter which should be carefully considered by any merchant. We have known a retail dealer whose annual sales did not exceed \$10,000 pay \$650 rent, which was equal to nearly half the annual profit he could expect to make. Such an expenditure for rent is ruinous, being out of all proportion to a trader's requirements. There are many shopkeepers in our cities and large towns who pay too much rent for the amount of business they do. When gas-bills, tax-bills, water rates, fuel, light, and clerk hire are added, and the total subtracted from the gross profit, the remainder does not often permit the dealer to indulge in hopes of heavy additions to capital. It is much more likely to make him "wish he were a boy again," behind the counter at six dollars a week.

The next point to be considered is the narrowing margin of profit. Such is the rush to get into business, and the rivalry which a multitude of competitors occasions, that wasteful and absurd methods are practiced by some unthinking dealers to attract trade. Goods which might just as well bring a profit of six to ten per cent. are sold for no profit at all, sometimes at a loss. We were ourselves witnesses the other day of a purchase of granulated sugar for ten cents per pound at retail, when the wholesale quotation of that article was 10½ to 10¾ cents. It will be said "no one expects to make a profit on sugar," but even if that