

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, SEPTEMBER 20, 1885.

FROM THE RED TO THE BOW RIVER.

Coming back from where the C.P.R. crosses the western boundary of Manitoba, to pick up some dropped stitches in our report as ladies might say, we have two stretches of country following westward parallel with the country tributary to that line. We have the northern stretching from the Red River, and with the town of Selkirk as its starting point. This town, although it has not realized all the hopes of it, which existed when it was expected to be the crossing point of the C.P.R., is nevertheless one of the best business points of its size in the province, and it has prospects such as few other towns have. It is the receiving and distributing point for all the trade on Lake Winnipeg the resources of which lake are practically untouched yet so far as development is concerned. Its fisheries are richer than those of any similar area of fresh water in the world, and from north to south it has a stretch of some 300 miles of water navigable for craft of deep draft. Its timber resources are still but little touched, although extensive and valuable, and its mineral resources are in value scarcely credible. Once the Hudson's Bay is made an outlet for the products of the northern portion of this continent it must naturally become a great highway of commerce between the old and the new world. When that takes place, and the day is not far distant, Selkirk will be to the Province of Manitoba much the same as Greenock is to Scotland, namely its leading seaport. At present it has some twenty-eight places of business, including two lumber mills and several other smaller industrial institutions. Its merchants are all solid men financially, and amid all the crash of collapsed speculation which followed the boom of 1881, it held its reputation of a safe place to do business in.

Westward from the Red River we pass through a partially timbered country, admirably suited for stock farming, but still sparsely settled. Stonewall is the only town of any consequence in the path, which possesses over twenty places of business, and is located in the heart of a fine agricultural country. As we move westward the brush country appearances disappear, and as the neck of country

between the Assiniboine River and Lake Manitoba is passed the prairie again opens up, and our track follows the valleys of the White Mud and Little Saskatchewan rivers. The town of Gladstone the key to this country lies in the centre of a country which for agricultural wealth is equal to any other portion of the Northwest. The town itself has some twenty-two places of business, and has a large stretch of fairly settled country tributary to it in a trade way. It has undoubtedly suffered much from the booming of speculators, and but for their evil influences would have been to-day a town of much greater importance than it is. It is gradually recovering from the shock of exploded inflation, and has a goodly number of solid business men, who still have faith in its future, and will no doubt build it up in time to the position it should occupy.

From Gladstone we go westward along the line of the Manitoba and Northwestern railway until the thriving town of Nepawa is reached, and again is a town in the centre of a garden country which is well named the "Beautiful Plain". The town has a population of over 200, and about sixteen places of business, and is a thriving country town in every respect.

From Neepawa westward seventeen miles takes us to Minnedosa the present terminus of the M. & N.W. railway, and here we have reached a country peculiarly suited for mixed farming. The rolling country with its wooded valleys for stock ranging, and upland prairies for grain raising, its lakelets and streams, all go to make up a country where any branch of farming can be successfully carried on. The town of Minnedosa itself is one of the prettiest in the Northwest, and contains a much greater number of solid brick buildings and other imposing structures than a visitor would expect to find in it. It has a population of close upon one thousand, and over forty places of business, some of which are of a magnitude not to be expected in a town of its size. It is destined to be a sort of metropolis of the Little Saskatchewan Valley, and has the right kind of business men to build up its trade.

At Minnedosa we reach the present terminus of railway communication through the northern stretch of Manitoba, but by the close of the year the Manitoba and Northwestern will be extended fifty miles further, and will open up the country around the town of Birtle, while the con-

struction of the Northwest Central from Brandon to Rapid City, and further westward will probably be carried out next summer. This latter town has nearly thirty places of business, and although sixteen miles from the nearest railway point, is quite an important trading place.

Birtle, near to which the M. & N.W. will be extended before the close of this year, is a town of over two hundred population, and with some twenty-two places of business. It has like Rapid City been for some time an important trading point, and is located in a beautiful and fairly well settled country, and here we may say ends the towns of Manitoba along its northern stretches, although westward from the provincial boundary away into the beautiful valley of the Qu'Appelle settlement is much more general than might be expected, considering the lack of railway facilities.

In our next we shall take up the southern stretch of Manitoba from the Red River to the western boundary.

RAILWAY RIGHTS.

The action of the Winnipeg Board of Trade at its last meeting, in petitioning the Dominion Government, through the Minister of Interior, for the concession of Manitoba's right to charter and construct railways anywhere within the limits of the province, has met with considerable criticism: during the past week, criticism which has not been correct even in some instances where it was favorable, and by no means just or fair where it is has been unfavorable. In the first place some of the extreme opponents of the present Dominion Government have been too ready to interpret the petition as a condemnation of the whole railway policy of the Government, and a demand for the total abolition of the fifteen mile limit, no matter what obligations may have to be violated in so doing. In the second place there are those who would make the petition appear in the light of a threatening protest, and eulogise it as such.

Among those who have criticised the petition adversely are some who are ready to rise in wrath at any insinuation that the Government of Sir John A. MacDonald could err, or that such errors should be opposed. But there others who, by a curious kind of reasoning, intimate that the Board has plunged itself into a political question, and in so doing has slipped beyond its sphere.