

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 10, 1886.

BARLEY RAISING.

This is the first winter in which Manitoba has had an export surplus of barley so large that shipments to eastern markets became imperative, and it is to be feared that the results of shipments made will not be such as to encourage the raising of that grain for export in future. People are too apt to draw conclusions from the results of first attempts, although these attempts may be very imperfectly made, and we have no reason to believe that in barley raising there will be an exception.

In another part of our columns will be found a letter from Mr. Robert Kerr, traffic manager of the C. P. R., which indicates that there are markets for other grain than wheat raised in the Northwest, and that there is every encouragement held out to farmers here to make an effort to raise prime barley as well as wheat. The letter is well worthy of perusal by those who are directly interested, and can bring influence to bear upon our agriculturists.

It is now admitted by every one that with proper care and cultivation this country can raise heavy crops of the best wheat produced in the world. Yet we have a large proportion of our people who cannot be brought to look upon barley raising as a success either in the quality or financially. This mistaken opinion is based solely upon the experience of old settlers who have given the matter a trial, but in nine out of ten cases such a trial as would insure failure in any country besides this. Hitherto barley sowing has been something like a pastime engaged in by our farmers after every other class of spring work had been completed. Barley was the grain sowed when it was too late to put in either wheat or oats, and was depended upon merely as an item of animal feed, no calculations being made upon raising anything good enough for malting purposes. It is safe to say that ninety per cent. of the barley sown in this country up to the present time was not in the ground before the last week in May, and more than half of it not till after the first of June. Then in harvesting the arrangements have been equally careless and slipshod. When cut barley in days gone by was usually raked into a heap

until it was wanted for threshing, and even of late, when self-binders have put it into sheaves, the work of shocking and stacking was frequently never done, and if done, only when the finish up of every other part of harvest work allowed leisure. In spite of all this carelessness last fall barley was brought to the thresher in fairly good condition, and it seemed as if for once the goodness of providence had triumphed over the farmer's stupidity and obstinacy. But the thresher took sides with the farmer, and the brutal manner in which the work of threshing was done has made the bulk of the brightest barley raised last year unfit for malting purposes, so badly has it been shelled or hulled in the operation. Can anyone wonder that barley shipped east this year brings anything but a high figure in eastern markets?

Now notwithstanding all that old settlers say, we affirm that this is a barley country. We do not say that it can be raised every year in the heavy black soil of the lower Red River valley. But we have millions of acres of loamy lands where a heavy crop can be secured every year, and the quality will depend mainly upon the care taken in its cultivation, harvesting and threshing. But then it must be remembered that barley must be sown almost as early as wheat; must be cut as soon as ready, and must receive special care in shocking, stacking and threshing. The cool summers, long days during the time of ripening and short nights which do not allow of dew-soaking are all climatic advantages in the raising of this grain, and if farmers will only take as much pains with it as they do with wheat they will have no reason to complain about its not being a successful or remunerative crop.

But let us look at the question of profit and a ready market. At present all kinds of grain are low in price. Our No. 1 hard wheat will sell in Montreal at present at or under \$1, and No. 2 at or under 95c. No. 1 Barley will sell in the same market within a few cents of \$1, and No. 2 over 90c. Now the difference in the freight of a bushel of barley and a bushel of wheat from this city to Montreal is fully equal to the difference in the price of the two commodities there, so that No. 1 barley is as valuable in this city for shipping purposes as No. 1 hard wheat. The relative prices are not always as they are now, but it is on the average worth ninety per cent. of prime wheat for

shipping purposes in Winnipeg. Now the farmer who raises No. 1 hard wheat year after year can raise No. 1 barley if he will take as much care and pains, and where he raises thirty bushels of the former he can raise fifty of the latter. With a price per bushel only ten per cent. less, and his yield so much larger his cash returns will be just fifty per cent. more from barley than from wheat. It might be worth a trial by some of our farmers to raise some good barley during the coming season, and if they do so they will repeat the trial or we are far mistaken.

The calculations we have made are based upon a market only in eastern Canada for our barley, but with competition from the United States and reasonable freights to the south the chances of barley raising being profitable are greatly increased.

HUDSON'S BAY RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION.

There is a strong probability that the construction of the railway from Manitoba to the Hudson's Bay will be commenced during the coming spring, and that the work will be prosecuted with vigor, and without let up until completed, unless when severity of weather will compel a cessation of work.

It is a matter decided that the work of construction will commence from the head of Lake Winnipeg and be pushed onward in a northerly direction until tide-water navigation on the Nelson river is reached. There may be those who will object to this point of commencing construction, and who think that it should commence from the terminus in this province and move by stages northward. That selfishness might suggest such a course there is no doubt, and the people of Winnipeg more than those of any other place can produce selfish arguments in its favor. But after all we believe the projectors of the road are adopting the wise and sensible course, and even those who see immediate gain in another will eventually be most benefitted by that about to be pursued.

The commencement of construction at the head of Lake Winnipeg is a wise move, because by the construction of less than half of the whole road a summer outlet can be secured, which will furnish a source of earning to the company in a very short time, and commence the practical test of the value of the outlet for commercial purposes.