

## A National Currency.

To the Editor of The Commercial.

SIR,—In the second issue of your admirable paper you have an article headed, "A National Currency," in which you refer to certain statements published in the *Meaford Mirror*. Not having seen the article in the *Mirror* I am not in a position to criticise it one way or the other, but in concluding your own article you say—"There can be no doubt but a national currency will tend to greatly mitigate the evil of a discount on what we accept as money, but before entering upon such a radical course of legislation it would be well to carefully guard against bringing about financial evils equally as great, if not greater than those complained of." Allow me to enquire what greater evil can exist under a currency issued entirely by the Government than exists under the present system of allowing private corporations to contract and issue a large portion of the currency.

The question as to what shall constitute the money of a highly civilized, commercial, and progressive people like the Canadians; what the quantity of that medium or tool of exchange shall be, and how the same shall be regulated, is the greatest question of government that can engage the minds of the people, or of the statesmen who are to frame the laws. It may be truly said, and incontrovertibly proved, that the power of money over the affairs of enterprise and labor is omnipotent; and that they who control the money of a people control their destinies, as surely and irresistibly as the sun controls the movements of the planets. Whoever controls and fixes the character of a people's money has it in his power to fix the price of all kinds of property and labor at any conceivable rate, and has the power to change those rates or prices from time to time, as his own private interests may dictate. No man can resist that power. Before it the monarch must bow as helpless as the peasant. More even than this, whoever controls the money of a nation controls the civilization of that nation, advancing it to a higher or lower plane at will, the only limit to the power being *what degree of burden and outrage the people will peacefully submit to*.

Perhaps the most ridiculous system of issuing a currency is that permitted the chartered banks of Canada by the Government, the only one which can compare with it in absurdity being the system at present in vogue in the United States, and against which such an outcry is being made. A Canadian bank note, issued by a chartered bank, is not a legal tender for debt. The Government deposits a certain amount of gold in a bank, for which the bank pays no interest. On that gold the bank is authorized to issue three times the amount of notes; or in other words, a bank having one million dollars of Government gold can issue three million dollars of paper notes. What are those notes? Simply a bank debt, a bank I O U, a bank promise to pay. But for the privilege of carrying those bank debts about in your pockets the bank charges interest. Bankers grow rich by drawing interest on their debts; other people who contract debts have to pay interest, but not so the bankers.

This is the natural consequence of our present banking system, and with such nice plums constantly falling to their lot, no wonder bankers oppose any change being made. Not only do bankers grow rich by being in debt, but it is to their interest that the quantity of money should be so small that a very great part of the business of the country must be done on credit. Bankers are a source of credit. They make a charge for the use of the credit which flows from and through them; this charge they call interest. It stands to reason the more credit there is in carrying on the business of the country, the more interest will have to be paid for the use of that credit, and the more interest the bankers receive the richer they get. Put the matter in the form of a syllogism, and the utter absurdity of our present bank system is apparent.

Premises. (1) Contracting the volume of currency increases the credit system; (2) the credit system brings large profits to the bankers; therefore contracting the currency is in the interest of bankers. Professor Bonamy Price says that the people of England are compelled to do business on credit because the volume of their money is too small. He adds that England is the paradise of those who make themselves the source of credit; and that while bankers were able to declare large dividends, manufacturers and others are at death's door. If this is true of England, where the volume of money per capita of the population is so much larger than it is in Canada, how much more true is it not of the Dominion? Whenever money placed out at interest brings a better return than it does when invested in trade or manufactures there must be something wrong somewhere. The amount of currency in circulation in Canada per capita of the population is so small that the great bulk of business has to be done on credit, and yet people wonder at commercial panics every seven or ten years.

Let the people control the money of the country through their representatives in Parliament, and abolish the iniquitous system which allows a few favored ones a monopoly of what is created for the use of all. Money can be made a curse or a blessing. It is the power which rules the world, and its issue should be solely in the hands of those who are responsible to the people.

Yours respectfully,

GEO. B. BROOKS.

[Our correspondent evidently follows the advice of the Irishman regarding how to act in a fight, namely, "wherever you see a head hit it." While attacking the Canadian system of issuing a currency through chartered banks, he ridicules the present American system, which is a national currency pure and simple. Not being believers in the near approach of a monetary millennium, we are unable to see how all the evils (real and imaginary) which he has recounted can be averted. With a little less hazy and negative philosophy, and a little more practical reasoning, the ideas of Mr. Brooks would no doubt be more clearly comprehended by ourselves and our readers.

The aim in adopting a currency should be to secure that which will come nearest to bringing

its face value in all places and under all circumstances in the country where it is issued; and on this point our correspondent's letter (while it shows that the writer has given the subject study) throws no light. A very slight acquaintance with the financial history of the Continent we live in will convince any unbiassed person that a national currency is not the best means of securing the end we have stated.

At one time during the civil war in the United States, the bills issued and guaranteed by the Government at Washington were worth less than 40 cents on the dollar, while during the blackest days of Federal reverses the bills of Californian banks brought their face value in gold.]

## Health and Overwork.

Eastern journals frequently comment unfavorably upon the health of the people of Manitoba, and many in this Province are only too apt to join in the chorus, and attribute all the evils, real or imaginary, to the climate or some other irremediable cause, without making enquiry as to whether timely presentations could not have obviated the evils complained of. It is unnecessary to make any enquiry regarding the cases of sickness with which strong men are attacked and laid low in parts of the country yet unsettled or only sparsely so at most. Irregularity in habits, poorly-cooked food, with an utter absence of fresh vegetables or fruits, and insufficient shelter, will account for all such cases, and all these disadvantages have to be borne by those who are eager to acquire wealth by a frontier life.

What we wish to get at is the health of business men engaged in regular commercial pursuits, and this upon enquiry will be found to be as good as in other parts of Canada, where the labor performed is as great. In Eastern cities bankers and their assistants finish their day's toil early in the evening; manufacturers seldom remain at business after six o'clock, and even the retail dealer can spare an hour or two before bed time to spend in the bosom of his family. In the North-West it is totally different, however. The retailer goes from his bed to his store, and from his store back to bed. The manufacturer has to spend many weary hours every week at night work, to keep abreast of his business demands. On the Main Street of Winnipeg lights can be seen, and men are at work in banks at hours which are usually devoted to leisure; and in the wholesale warehouses it is not uncommon to see lights indicating work inside away on to midnight. The mechanics who work for a daily pay are, in fact, the only class who have hours of leisure and even they are not wholly exempt from the pressure of overwork.

It cannot be expected that a community overworked thus can show as good a health record as one where business is down to a regular system, and labour is confined to a limited number of hours during the daytime. Indeed, it seems as if the invigorating climate and pure dry air of the North-West enable men to endure more close application, otherwise broken health would be more general than it is.

That this state of affairs must be borne with