

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 19, 1884.

MANITOBA'S HOPES.

There never was a time in the history of this province when its residents in every calling were so much on tiptoe of expectation regarding the future of the land of their adoption or birth, as the case may be, and never has there been so much reason for this state of excited expectancy. Telegrams from the Dominion Capital are among the most welcome pieces of reading, and the course of events there are watched with eager interest here. The struggle between the two great railway powers of the Dominion on the floor of the House of Commons has no doubt created a great proportion of this keen interest, for much regarding the future of the Northwest depends upon the result of the fight between these two powerful interests. But to Manitobans the answer to our Premier's demands for provincial rights, long withheld, and especially that portion of our rights which would put us in a position to make some effort at securing a railway to the northern seaboard, are by far most important.

The rather mixed up collection of grievances, some real and some imaginary, which were awkwardly piled together at the late Farmer's Convention, and as awkwardly placed before the Dominion Premier by the Convention's delegates, could scarcely be expected to meet with an acquiescence from a minister supported by such a tyrant majority as Sir John has in the Dominion Parliament. The more moderate demands of Mr. Norquay for possession of the public lands of the province, and the extension of our boundaries northward to the 60th parallel of north latitude, forms a much more concise ground on which to reason the rights of the province, and one, the refusal of which would prove beyond a doubt that the present Dominion Government are the enemies of the Northwest.

While people as a rule can form some conception of the advantages to agriculture in the Northwest which would be the natural outcome of the construction of this proposed railway, few stop to consider the commercial advantages it would confer, and if they do their estimate often falls short.

With a Manitoba port on the Hudson's Bay shore, and rail connection with the same and the balance of the province, Atlantic towns would cease to be the gateways for exports from, and imports to this country. The middlemen would lose the toll they charge on our imports and we should have ten direct importers for one we have now. It is a low estimate to say that, not to mention the advantage in freights, our European imports all round would be laid down ten per cent. cheaper by this new route of import by escaping the system of Commercial "Backsheesh" that has hitherto been in force in the east. In like manner our exports would escape similar, though not so exorbitant picking, the lack of exorbitancy being altogether due to the competition of United States routes. In short, our European purchases would be made direct and at lowest figures, and our exports thereto also direct and without passing through the hands of middlemen.

Such a gain to Manitoba means a corresponding loss to the east, and it is only natural that every obstacle should be placed in the way of our securing a northern outlet by parties so interested. It is now being met with at Ottawa in an open and defiant form at times, and at others in subtly devised subterfuges. Progress in the Northwest eastern men desire, but progress only as a tail to the eastern kite, and as a field in which to purchase grain at as low figures as possible, and sell other goods as high as possible. They know well that with an independent seaport of its own Manitoba must soon be commercially of much less value to them than it now is, and their opposition must be expected to be bitter and uncompromising. It remains to be seen if this unjust opposition, or a sense of right, will guide the Dominion Government in dealing with the demands of Manitoba. Should the former prevail Sir John and his colleagues must look for feelings of bitterness from the Northwest, and a state of affairs here which might cost his, or some other Dominion Government, considerable trouble and not a little sacrifice to set right.

Political toadies or subsidised partisans may rail against Mr. Norquay, and his present mission to Ottawa; but he carries with him the best wishes of ninety-five per cent. of the people of the province for his success, and his continued firmness in demanding the rights of the province,

will secure for him a welcome on his return, such as no representative of Manitoba ever received before.

The COMMERCIAL has still faith that Sir John's Government will at least accede to the extension of our boundaries, especially as such a grant would cost Canada literally nothing, while it would put Manitoba in the position of being mistress of her commercial destiny, and free the Dominion Government from a self-assumed responsibility on that head.

NORTHWESTERN GRAIN PROSPECTS.

It must be admitted that the winter of 1883-4 has been one fraught with many disappointments to grain raisers and dealers in the Northwest. A combination of circumstances has tried every weak point in the agricultural as well as the commercial affairs of the country, and all classes are inclined to feel thankful that the effects are now drawing near to a close, and hopes are now placed ahead on the prospects for 1884.

Before counting our unhatched chickens by making any calculations upon the unsown crop of 1884, it might be wise to view the prospect of prices for the remainder of the crop of 1883. The prospect is indeed much lighter than it was three or four months ago. The enormous stocks of grain and flour left over from the crop of 1882 have accomplished nearly all the crash in prices that may be expected, and the surplus grain on the continent gets brighter as 1884 advances. True, European demands are not urgent, but stocks there are not heavy, and calls on America must soon be made. So far as estimates have been made of the probable surplus of 1883 that will have to be carried over next fall, none reach to half of what had to be carried last fall, and with the load so much lightened there is little fear but speculation on this side of the Atlantic will take hold of the market and hold for higher figures. In that case the Northwest must share in the general rise. Then the opening of lake navigation, or its near approach, and consequent reduced freight rates should give another lift to prices. This will be specially felt in the Northwest, where no system of grain storage exists; and where the farmer who wants money during winter must sell his grain at what the market affords him at the time of sale, and on the calculation of exorbitant winter rates to the seaboard.