

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JANUARY 15, 1884.

THE FARMERS' COMPLAINTS.

It seems almost impossible at present to get through the columns of the Manitoba press a calm unbiassed view of the complaints of a large proportion of the farmers of the Northwest, so eager are journalists to make political capital out of the agitation now going on, and so well are they seconded in their eagerness by the political blowers and strikers of either of the two great political parties of our Dominion politics. The more rabid in one party claim, that a change of railway and tariff policy would be a complete cure for all the evils complained of, while extremists of the opposite stripe will not allow that any change of Government policy is necessary, and some go as far as to assert, that no cause for complaint really exists. Both are extreme stand-points from which to view the question, and neither offer a satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

That the whole people of the Northwest, and not only the farmers, have some real grievances to complain of at present, only the blinded political partizan will refuse to admit. But how many of these grievances are within the power of a Dominion Government to relieve few who complain ever estimate; and how many of the evils now complained of by farmers, are only misfortunes and not grievances, many besides the political wire puller fail to consider. Few people have stopped to consider how a number of unavoidable circumstances have combined this winter to test every weak point in the Northwest. During 1881 the produce markets of the whole American continent were held up in defiance of the law of supply and demand by bullish speculators, and during that year the boom of speculation rose to its greatest height in the Northwest. The local demands for the farmers' produce was far in excess of the local supply, and fancy prices, even when compared with the inflated state of American produce markets generally, prevailed. The year 1882 ushered in a collapse of the real estate boom, but that affected the farmer very little. Produce markets were still held in an inflated state by speculation, and the limited local supply in this country still held prices for

the greater part of the year above shipping margins. Under circumstances like these farmers in this country would be possessed of more than human foresight if they did not become intoxicated with the prospect before them, and fall into the blunder of recklessness, which proved disastrous to so many traders during the year now past. That hundreds, if not thousands of them placed themselves during the early part of 1883 under a burden of indebtedness which they never would have incurred, had their estimate and the results of the crop of 1883 been anything like an approach to each other, is now evident to any person. With this burden of indebtedness and high hopes they struggled along until their crops were harvested; but before they were ready for market a change had come over the spirit of their dreams. The produce markets of this continent had lost their buoyancy. With about one-third of the wheat crop of 1882 either ground or unground still held back the crop of 1883 commenced to come into market. A time of trade depression was beginning to be felt all over America, Banks were curtailing the supplies of speculators, and the latter were no longer able to carry the huge load which they had carried safely for one year, and under which they had tottered for another. The crash came, and grain and other produce fell and remained lower than it has since 1879, and is seemingly as dead as ever. The increase in grain products in the Northwest has raised the supply far beyond the local demand, and to the dead and depressed markets of the east, farmers have to look for prices. Local millers can no longer afford to purchase above a shipping margin, and with this deducted from eastern prices, figures must at present be low. Added to these unfortunate circumstances connected with the produce market, comes the frost of the 7th of September, which caused much damage to grain in this country, and aggravated much the combination of misfortunes from which Northwestern farmers suffer.

When all the above unfortunate circumstances are taken into consideration and the additional fact that they have fallen upon a community with but recently inflated ideas, nine-tenths of the present agricultural depression can be accounted for. The other tenth it might be within the power of a Dominion Government to afford relief from, but that proportion undoubtedly covers the limit of their power

That we will have year after year a succession of such misfortunes it is supreme folly to anticipate, notwithstanding the predictions and omniscient pretensions of political demagogues; and we have a good guarantee that such a combination will not again occur in the fact that a very large proportion of the evils can be prevented by precautions on the part of the farmers themselves. The frozen wheat difficulty can at least be avoided as is witnessed by the results of the Bell farm crop this year, where not a bushel of wheat sown in proper season was in any way injured. That all the frozen wheat of the country however is the result of carelessness it would be unjust as well as foolish to assert. Wheat raising, and farming of every description on a large scale is as yet considerable of an experiment in the Northwest, and farmers like all other people have to learn, and their education has been rather costly during the year now closed.

Out of the babble of complaints which have been heard of late, it is pleasing to notice that some good practical results are likely to come. Men of all shades of politics in this country are satisfied, that while the products of the Northwest have to reach a seaport by a rail route of 2,000 miles agriculture here must carry a heavy burden; and it is not at all unlikely, that the present agitation will lead to the construction of a rail route to the Hudson's Bay, our natural outlet, the distance of which will be not more than one-third of what it is to an Atlantic port. With such a route open the cry of railway monopoly would no longer be heard, and it would become the interests of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to have as many connecting links with the south as possible, not as outlets for our produce, but as inlets for the products of the Northwestern States which would find their way to Europe by the Hudson's Bay route. All other grievances which farmers now complain of, would then be found to rest very lightly upon the Northwest.

THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

The rapid progress made in the construction of this great national highway which is soon to connect with an iron band the tide-washed shores of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, stands without a parallel in the world's history. It is something in which every true Canadian should feel a special pride, and inspire him with