

THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

Eighteenth Year of Publication
ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY

SUBSCRIPTIONS, CANADA AND UNITED STATES
\$2.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE OR \$3.25 WHEN
NOT SO PAID; OTHER COUNTRIES, \$2.50 PER
ANNUM IN ADVANCE.

Changes for advertisements should be in not later
than Thursday Morning.

Advertisements purporting to be news matter,
or which profess to express the opinions of this
journal, will not be inserted.

Office: 151 McDermot Street.

D. W. BUCHANAN,
Publisher.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, MAR. 3, 1900.

THE DETESTABLE LIAR.

There are various kinds of liars, no doubt, but it is not our intention to enter into a classification of the liar at present. We have all heard of the cheerful liar, as one class—a comparatively harmless specimen of the genus. It has been said that it is impossible to do business without lying at least occasionally. Even the publisher has been accused at times of lying about his circulation. We do not, however, take the pessimistic view of the case that it is impossible to do business without lying.

Business men in every branch of trade are often caused much trouble by a class of liars whom we shall call the detestable liar. We refer to the liar who deliberately tells the dealer that he can buy an article at so much less from a competitor. Some business men have been ruined financially by this stamp of liar. The merchant is told that John Smith, across the way, is selling exactly the same article or commodity at so much less. The customer is so positive about the matter that the fraud is believed, and a slashing of prices begins. Smith fears of the cuts being made by his competitor. He retaliates and both men are perhaps brought to the verge of ruin. The case is not an overdrawn picture. We have actual results of this nature in view at the present time, which have happened in Manitoba during the past year.

One cause of the difficulty is the proneness of merchants to be suspicious of each other. Another is the desire to control too large a share of the trade. In most cases merchants are too prone to believe reports or charges against a competitor. In discussing this same question on a previous occasion. The Commercial

said that in nine cases out of ten the party who said he could buy so much cheaper from a competitor, either lied deliberately, or labored under a misapprehension. While there is undoubtedly much deliberate lying of this nature, with the object of securing an article at a lower price, we are charitable enough to believe that in most cases the customer is mistaken. It is a very easy matter for the consumer, who is usually not an expert judge of the quality of goods, to be deceived by his belief that the articles at each place of business are the same.

But it is not always in buying goods that the detestable liar gets in his work. Frequently it is the party who has something to sell to the business man, who lies about the price he has been offered by another party. He has been offered one cent per dozen more for his eggs, or two cents more per pound for his butter, and so the price is run up away beyond what the trader could reasonably afford to pay. As a general rule, country merchants pay too high prices for farm produce, the price in the country often being in excess of the value of the commodity in the consuming market. Of course the merchant has a margin on the goods which he barter for butter and eggs, but that is not a good reason why he should be deprived of a fair margin on the produce as well. It is just as unbusinesslike to pay more for produce, such as butter and eggs, than it is worth as to cut and slash prices in selling for cash. It would be interesting to know to what extent the detestable liar is responsible for the losses of merchants in handling produce.

There were two conventions of business men in Winnipeg last week. At each of these the detestable liar was discussed, and from the remarks made it would appear that the operations of this individual are quite widespread. In one case it was reported that last season's trade in lumber at a certain Manitoba point, had been ruined as a result of believing the words of the detestable liar. The merchants, when it was too late, found out that they had been duped into cutting each other's throats, or we might say, throwing away their own profits to meet the alleged cuts of a competitor. "The same old story over again," remarked a business man who was present. The liar had successfully performed his nefarious work.

The business man who is deceived by the detestable liar, is a bigger fool than the liar is a knave. A good motto for business men in every branch of trade would be: Mind you own business. Cease worrying over what your competitor is doing, and conduct your own business on business principles.

Then there would be little chance for the detestable liar to do harm. The individual who simply labors under a misapprehension as to the price or quality of goods offered by another merchant, would also not be such a fruitful source of trouble to the merchant as he now is.

OUR VACANT LANDS.

The periodical efforts in the direction of securing the settlement of the vacant lands around Winnipeg are again to be made. A committee of the Winnipeg board of trade has asked the city council to appropriate a sum to assist in continuing the work done last year in advertising the lands. It is not the wish of The Commercial to criticize the efforts of the gentlemen who have given their time free to devise means to secure the settlement of these lands. The advertising of the lands, in fact, is all right enough as far as it goes. At the same time we would like to point out that it will require something more than advertising to secure the settlement of these lands as rapidly as would be desirable. If advertising alone would do it, we would have many settlers where we now have one, in the districts surrounding the city. There are other features which require looking after, in addition to the advertising of the lands.

It is a popular delusion that the holding of the lands at speculative prices is the cause of the small settlement around Winnipeg. Possibly this may have retarded settlement in the early days, but it is many long years since lands were held at high prices in this district, in comparison with their actual value, market facilities and other features considered, the cheapest lands in Canada to-day are probably contained within the territory immediately tributary to Winnipeg. Lands in the vicinity of some of the small provincial towns, readily sell at about double the price asked for farm lands near Winnipeg.

It will not do to say that the speculative value placed on the property is the cause of so much vacant land around Winnipeg. Neither will it do to say that it is lack of knowledge, concerning these lands, nor lack of consideration of the advantages of residing near a large consuming market, where all kinds of farm produce have a ready sale at a higher price than at country points, owing to the fact that the producer near the consuming market saves the cost of freight and shipping expenses. We should face this matter squarely and try to find the real causes which are retarding settlement. In the opinion of The Commercial there are two main causes. One of these is the abominable condition of the country roads in this district. The other is