

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 27, 1885.

## EPIDEMICS AND COMMERCE

Our own continent like Europe has at times scourges in the way of disease, but like that continent they are as a rule confined to its Southern portions, and seldom make much havoc in Northern latitudes. Cholera has time and again swept the Mediterranean shores of Europe, as has yellow fever the portion of this continent swept by the breezes from the Gulf of Mexico, but the deadly effects of both seem to be mitigated as they travel Northward, until they finally disappear in the frosts of more Northerly temperatures. There seems to be one disease, however, which no temperature will guarantee immunity from, namely small pox, and which the keen breath of winter seems only to fan into greater force. At present Montreal is suffering from such a visitation, the terrors of which, like most others, are no doubt magnified by distance and seem greater in other places than to the residents of that unfortunate city.

Our duty is to look to the effects of such scourges upon commerce, and these are under the most favorable circumstances very depressing. Only those who have undergone a quarantine after a sea passage from some infected country can fully comprehend how epidemics paralyze trade between maritime nations, and those of us who have come North from some Southern State where yellow fever existed, will remember during life the tantalizing delays, and suffocating disinfecting process we were subjected to before being allowed to go at liberty in a Northern town or city. All these are no doubt very necessary precautions, and the burden they are upon personal travel furnishes an index to how trade must be affected by a similar cause.

Travellers from Montreal are now having their full share of these very necessary annoyances, and yet the trade of that city is suffering far more from other circumstances, which seem as unnecessary and as unfounded as can well be imagined. For instance the scare about goods shipped from that city have reached a point where even the ludicrous is overstretched. We understand that throughout Ontario the sale of Montreal furs, clothing, boots and shoes and such like has for a time

almost ceased. Competitors from Toronto and other cities are taking pains to fan the small pox scare into as big a flame as possible for their own selfish ends, and have succeeded so well, that it is now not uncommon to find a country dealer in hardware and metal goods, who assures his customers of immunity from small pox by placarding in his store "No Montreal goods sold here." The absurdity of such a state of affairs may well draw the smile from those, who are able to measure the small pox infection which a hay fork or a bar of iron can carry around with it.

Medical men are probably the greatest alarmists about disease contagion, as many people have experienced. In the office of THE COMMERCIAL some two years ago an employee afflicted with prairie itch was declared to have small pox by two medical men of standing, and on the strength of their diagnosis, every one in the establishment from the publisher down to the devil had to be vaccinated. No doubt but professional gentlemen have contributed much towards the Montreal small pox scare, but we have yet to hear of medical men telling the world that contagion can be carried in pig lead, iron frying pans, coal oil lamps or crockery and glassware, and many of them have declared that there is scarcely a line of new goods by which it can be carried from one place to another. That their statements are not credited and acted upon is no doubt due to the fact that commercial travellers are as a rule more persuasive individuals than doctors.

Some people may infer that we advocate the doing away with all precautions for the prevention of the spread of small pox into other places than Montreal. On the contrary we advocate the adoption of the most stringent measures, but we also advocate their taking a sensible form. While people are afraid of Montreal goods bringing small pox with them they are daily meeting in other cities men who have come direct from that place, and who are capable of carrying with them more contagion than ten car loads of general merchandise, and all the protection the people have from the possibility, and even the probability of contagion with such men is a scab on each of their arms and a certificate of vaccination in each of their pockets, which may be more or less of a protection to the party in possession of them, but none whatever to those who come in contact with them.

Does it ever occur to the people who are so unnecessarily scared that the scab on a Montreal frying pan, or a certificate of vaccination on a web of Montreal fustian would be as effectual a preventative as when attached to individuals, which means simply that they are no preventative at all. But if we are to measure the accepted ideas about small pox contagion by the actions of the many, the medical men of Montreal can apply their vaccination tactics to merchandise, and besides making a profitable addition to their practice they will save the commerce of the city. If they will not protect distant purchasers from contagion they will at least ponder to their nonsensical fears.

As has already been hinted by a Winnipeg daily journal, with the opening of the all-rail route from Montreal here, there is great danger of small pox appearing among us, but there is not the slightest danger of its being brought here in consignments of merchandise. It has a thousand times more chance to be brought here by individuals with vaccination certificates in their pockets and scabs on their arms, and in our efforts to check its spread this should be kept steadily in mind. There is no necessity for our inflicting un-called-for injury on commerce, and when by encouraging a foolish and groundless fear we paralyze the trade of Montreal, we strike a heavy blow at the commerce of Canada.

## DAILY BOARD OF TRADE MEETING.

As will be seen in the report of the Winnipeg Board of Trade in another part of our columns, there is a movement on foot to establish daily meetings of the Board for the conduct of grain, provision and other transactions, and there is every reason to believe, that the movement will soon take practical shape.

Within the past few years the sphere of usefulness of our city Board of Trade has been gradually widening, until the institution can no longer be looked upon as an association of men, who meet together, to look after their own interests and those of their fellow townsmen in trade affairs, but as an institution entrusted with the organizing of commercial affairs in such a way, as to benefit the whole province of Manitoba. The city is the commercial head as well as the leading railway competing point in the province, and naturally the greatest efforts at provincial trade organisation