

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JANUARY 12, 1886.

COMMERCIAL COHESION.

We have come to place beyond question the short and pity canon of "Unity is strength." and we might safely extend the principle and say that cohesion is the climax of common sense. By it scattered and even discordant elements may be made into a mutual whole, and while it reigns, influences which might be used to produce discordant mischief, are elements of mutual advantage.

It is singular how difficult it is to secure cohesion in the different interests of trade, compared with other spheres. Competition, and not cohesion, is recognized as the life of trade, and yet the former is often very injurious, when carried to extremes, and if based upon anything but sound principles, cannot result in anything but injury to legitimate trade. Competition to the exclusion of cohesion is like the jar of oxygen without the necessary admixture of nitrogen, in which life is, while it lasts, the very essence of liveliness, but its collapse must come soon and sudden.

Many influences have been at work to stimulate competition to that pitch at which cohesion ceases, and the one most powerful of all has been the national system of bolstering and protecting home trade. Although at first sight this influence seems intended to limit competition to home producers, its aim in the end is to build up a fresh competing power, and the first step in so doing is to crush cohesion of the elements home and foreign trade, and isolate the former as much as possible.

But without touching the question of international trade, we have powerful influences at work side by side in this and other countries, where cohesion is most necessary, which are powerful barriers against it. Trade jealousy, local prejudice and many other influences can be named, and last but not least, the desire to push trade beyond the natural limits of supply and demand, all have their share in preventing trade cohesion, and all are grouped, though badly misplaced under the heading of trade competition.

It is astonishing how men in other walks of life can maintain some system of cohesion which links more or less the interests of all concerned. Professional

men have their faculties and other organizations which set their power sternly against unhealthy competition. Even the farmer, who gets so little credit for wisdom in his business management, never allows competition to interfere with his interests, but is always ready to take advantage of it among traders, and is equally anxious for his neighbors to do so, without in any way feeling jealous in the matter. Truly there is some attempt at cohesion with every class except traders.

During the past two or three years the trading community of this province have been outraged by legislation both in Ottawa and this city. From the former we have been loaded with cumbrous and unjust tariffs, which discriminate against the traders of Manitoba. By our own local Legislature they have been robbed of what was due them, by the passing of an exemption law, cunningly devised by the insolvent and dishonest members to shelter themselves and their class from payment of what they owe to the honest and industrious. Yet let a Dominion or Provincial election take place this year, and we will find the entire trading community, of Manitoba split, rent and squabbling over political divisions known as party ties, over prejudices of race and even religion, but entirely without cohesion upon matters which should most of all concern them. Commercial cohesion is no doubt a very desirable thing to secure, but so far as this province is concerned, it is one of the blessings of the distant future.

C.P.R. GRAIN RATES.

In its issue of the first inst. the *Monetary Times* of Toronto has an editorial upon the above subject, in which the controversy between the Farmer's Union and Mr. Van Horne, the drawback of having grain stored at Port Arthur during the winter, instead of being sent on east by rail, and the possibility of a Hudson's Bay Railway paying, are all curiously jumbled together, and from the mixture the moral is drawn that the secretary of the Farmer's Union was not only wrong but very naughty in writing as he did to the general manager of the C.P.R.

Like the Irishman who wanted to lift the mud turtle, we are puzzled which end to take hold of, when we try to handle this literary potpourri which the *Monetary Times* has supplied. But we shall confine ourselves to its remarks re-

garding the cost of carrying grain from this province east. In criticising the method of making an estimate adopted by the secretary of the Union the *Times* has the following:

"But what about wear and tear, and the numerous other items that go to make up the cost of carriage? Labor and fuel form but a small part of the whole cost, and yet they are the only items which Mr. Purvis's estimate takes into account."

It was an unpardonable neglect on the part of the secretary to forget that "wear and tear." But it is well that the editor of the *Monetary Times* perceived it and had the good sense to supply it. But for this piece of commendable smartness the outside ignorant world would probably never had the slightest comprehension of the question under discussion. Still we regret that our contemporary after faithfully admonishing the secretary for not supplying a complete and reliable estimate, makes no effort at doing so himself, but in his fence straddling bewilderment closes his article with the following:

The company, which says it is carrying Manitoba grain at a loss, was stigmatized as pursuing "systematic robbery." All this shows great need for coming to an agreement as to the facts; for if the company's statement be correct, the parties robbed are its own shareholders. Where does the truth lie?

We have no desire to interfere in the quarrel between the secretary of the Farmer's Union and Mr. Van Horne and should be very sorry to let ourselves down to such a level. But if the *Monetary Times* wishes a correct estimate of the figures at which it will pay railway companies to carry grain from this province to the Atlantic, we can supply one based upon the very best authority, namely the figures at which they have offered to carry it, before the C.P.R. and St. P.M.&M. concluded the pool, by which traffic to and from the Northwest is gagged and dragged over the former, and to the profit of the latter. A year or so ago in the dead of winter the latter company offered to carry sound grain in connection with other United States roads to the Atlantic ports for 40c, or ten cents less than Mr. Van Horne gives as a special rate for this season. The managers of the St. P.M.&M. claimed then, that such figures would pay this road, but we have no doubt, but they find it paying better to share in the C.P.R. earnings on the north shore, without doing any work for it. If a profit has to be made for both roads