

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JANUARY 29, 1894.

## SLANDERING THE COUNTRY.

THE COMMERCIAL has received letters from the East containing clippings from some leading journals in the United States, speaking of great distress in Manitoba. Our correspondents ask us as to the truth of these statements. To reply briefly, we can say that they are entirely false. From the number of items which have appeared in United States journals, it would seem that an organized effort is being made to injure this country. What the object is we can only imagine, but undoubtedly the aim is to check immigration. It is drawing close to the season when the annual movement of immigration begins, and therefore about the time to make a move to check it, if that is the object desired. If these lying reports were circulated earlier in the season, parties abroad who contemplated coming here, would have time to make inquiries and find out how false they are. But when they are sent out shortly before the spring movement begins, they will be more effective in doing their work, as many persons who contemplated coming this spring, will not have time to make thorough inquiries until it is too late to come in time to do anything this year.

It is almost a certainty that the object sought in circulating these false reports is to check the spring movement of immigration to Manitoba and Western Canada in general. A large immigration was expected from the United States this year, and the publication of these falsehoods throughout the United States just at this season, is about the most effective plan which could be adopted to kill this immigration. Efforts have been made in previous years to check immigration to Western Canada in much the same way as is being done now, namely, by circulating false reports to the effect that the settlers in the country were in precarious circumstances, etc. What has been done before is evidently being tried again, with the object of turning intending immigrants from Manitoba toward the western states or keeping them in those states.

Some of the papers which published these reports, would not knowingly, we believe, give currency to a falsehood; but they have been imposed upon by correspondents, or have merely copied from another paper as a matter of news. For instance, such reliable journals as the *Iron Age*, would not speak of "acute distress among the farmers of the Canadian West, owing to failure of the crops," if it were not believed to be true. Other papers have contained news items and telegrams stating that the farmers are starving; that hundreds of starving people are walking the streets of Winnipeg, etc., all of which is entirely false.

As for Winnipeg, the chief of police says that there are few if any more cases in need of charity this winter than in previous winters, and we may add that those in need of aid have received it. Winnipeg, as a city, has always been exceptionally free from poverty. There is no poverty here as it is known in eastern cities.

In every city there will always be occasional cases requiring aid. In every city there are those who, through habitual improvidence, dissipation and other causes, are frequently in want. Winnipeg has a few such, but this is all, so far as the resident population is concerned. The depression in the United States led to some increase in our population last fall of the tramp and vagrant element, and perhaps some others who could not be classed under these heads, but who nevertheless arrived here in a "dead broke" condition. This has necessitated more charitable work than usual; but beyond these people who came in here from the States in the fall or early winter, and who were objects of charity when they arrived, there is only the usual number of persons who in any considerable community will occasionally require aid. It may further be stated that aid has been granted, where needed, and no one has been allowed to suffer. Winnipeg, as a city, has experienced a prosperous year, having made very material advancement in population and building and other improvements, the value of new buildings erected in the city during 1893 being placed at over \$1,500,000. This, for a city with a population of about 30,000, is a good record. In fact, the position of Winnipeg is one of singular prosperity, when compared with the general depression that has prevailed during the past year in so many countries. A return made last fall showed that 500 residences had been erected in the city during the year, of a better class than in former years.

Now, as regards the farming population, these reports are equally false. There is no destitution nor starvation among Manitoba farmers, beyond, perhaps, a few isolated cases which have been relieved by neighbors. In the most prosperous years there will be a few cases in the country, the same as in the city, where owing to special reasons such as sickness, losses by fire, etc., assistance may be required. A good many farmers in Manitoba are hard up for ready money, owing largely to the free credit system which has prevailed in this country and which has led to over-buying on credit; but they are neither destitute nor starving. They have their farms, stock and effects, and are in a good position to begin their season's work. Many of these farmers who are hard up for ready cash, have materially increased their assets during the year. It should be remembered that every year Manitoba receives a considerable immigration, including many persons with limited means. Some of our new settlers have barely sufficient capital to enable them to reach the country and locate upon land, and they have of course to put up with some hardship until they can establish themselves here and improve their surroundings, which as a rule is only a matter of time. These reports of destitution and starvation, however, are utterly false.

THE COMMERCIAL is aware of only one cause which could give a shadow of truth to the reports which have been published abroad regarding destitution in Manitoba. We refer to the Baron Hirsch colony of Russian Jews. These people were not farmers, and appear to be poorly adapted to an agricultural life. They were in destitute circumstances when they ar-

rived here, and in fact were brought here through the agency of a philanthropic movement on the part of certain parties interested in these people. To make their failure more certain, they were placed in a district which is rather too arid for successful grain growing. It is doubtful if these people would make successful farmers under the most favorable circumstances. As it is, what little crop they had last year was a failure, and it has been necessary to give them further aid. This, however, has no bearing upon the population of the country as a whole. It would be as truthful to say that the farmers of the United States were starving, because of a crop failure in a single county in the state of New York, as to make use of this incident to apply it to the farmers of Manitoba. This colony, it may be stated, was not located in Manitoba at all, but in a district of the territories, west of the province.

There has been considerable agitation among the farmers of the country this winter, in opposition to tariff taxation, railway freight rates, and in favor of certain changes in the local laws regarding interest, exemptions, etc. As is usually the case, during the prevalence of a political contest or local agitation, intemperate language has been used, which might be misunderstood and misinterpreted by persons not familiar with the situation. Some of these remarks, almost meaningless when properly understood, have been seized upon and magnified a thousand times by enemies of the country. These reports of destitution and starvation, however, have been manufactured out of whole cloth. It is also worthy of note that they were not sent from here, but were manufactured abroad. While the low price of wheat has reduced the income of the farmers the past year, the settlers as a whole are steadily improving their position, increasing their assets and building up for themselves comfortable homes.

## THE UNITED STATES WHEAT CROP.

The Cincinnati *Price Current*, a recognized authority of high order, treats in detail the indications as to wheat supplies, reaching the conclusion that the wheat crop of the United States for 1893 must be recognized as fully 450,000,000 bushels. The recent estimate of the Government Bureau it considers the most faulty of all the reports coming from that source. The *Price Current* gives evidence concerning production in nine states, which are recognized as representing slightly less than half the crop, which points to an actual output of 52,000,000 in these states in excess of the Government estimate. The final official estimate of the crop, which was published two weeks ago, made the total crop of wheat appear 396,000,000 bushels. The *Price Current* points out the well known fact that the official figures for the three years prior to 1893 were under the mark. It has been well demonstrated says our contemporary, that for the three years 1890, 1891 and 1892 the production of wheat in the United States was underestimated officially about 120,000,000 bushels. This result was not due so much to imperfect methods in the Bureau at Washington as to the persistent determination of its correspondents to understa-