

ment charges for postage on local letters a rate that will admit of local competition in a city of less than fifty thousand population, it is safe to assume, that such a postal law is no advantageous service to the public, but a burden, and it is equally safe to assume that there is gross mismanagement of the postal affairs of the country somewhere. Such mismanagement, as should on moral or commercial principles allow no monopoly of postal business to the Government, no matter how strong may be their legal claims in question. It is a safe principle to go upon, that a Government monopoly established by law is an injustice, unless where as a *quid pro quo* the public get their business done cheaper than they can do it themselves, and it is evident that the public are not getting that at present in connection with drop letter postage.

For several years the United States postal laws have provided for the carrying of all letters of half an ounce or under, to all parts of that country and Canada for two cents, while Canadians have been paying three cents for the same. The raising of the maximum weight to one ounce, as has been done here, is scarcely worth being called an advantage to the public, as not one letter in fifty posted by the general commercial community will exceed half an ounce in weight. But whatever little advantage is secured by it, is outweighed twenty fold by the doubling of the drop letter rate of postage. The whole postal act therefore, is a retrograde step in legislation, and a movement backward instead of forward as we might naturally expect in a progressive country like Canada.

Should the Minister of Finance decide to prosecute this Hamilton firm for showing more enterprise than our Government is prepared to display, we will very likely hear a repetition of the old stock arguments about the days when private parties conducted the postal affairs of this and other countries, and plundered the public while so doing. The public now a days can look better after their interests, than in those bygone days, and they know that even Government mail carrying does not guarantee immunity from pilfering. These and other stock arguments will weigh but little in the public mind, and in any legal fight between the firm in Hamilton and the Ottawa authorities, popular sympathy will go most decidedly with the former, even if legal decisions go against them.

OUR BUTTER MARKETS.

The past spring was the first for four years which did not 'open up with tons upon tons of butter held over from the preceding year and stowed away in cellars and other out of the way places in Winnipeg; and for a better state of affairs this year we are in the main indebted to the very early opening of spring, and prospect of grass fed butter being available at a much earlier date than ordinarily. This seems to have knocked the bottom out of the former habit of holding until June for high figures, and the most satisfactory feature about the whole business is, that nearly all who this year cleaned out their stocks early, found the change of action more profitable than the holding on of former years.

This spring Manitoba starts out with a healthy butter market, and the wisest action now to pursue is to follow a course which will keep it healthy. This can only be done by marketing our surplus butter in outside markets almost as soon as lots large enough to export can be gathered at central points. The experience of the past few years has clearly demonstrated that there is no profit in storing up medium or lower grade butter either in farmers' cellars or in cities. Time works evil fast with such butter, and now that refrigerator cars can be had through the whole summer to ship either east or west, the most sensible course to follow with such stuff is to market it as soon as possible after it is made and before the deterioration sets in, which its imperfect manufacture will soon bring about.

This province has two export butter markets to which our surplus can be sent. The Pacific coast is one, but all butter sent there must be of good quality. All fine creamery and choice dairy butter finds a ready market at good prices there, but medium or low grades are practically unsaleable. So long as we ship really good butter to British Columbia, we have the inside track in that market, for our supplies can be gathered in, shipped and laid down there newer, fresher and in better condition, than can butter shipped from Montreal and other eastern cities, so that with the home market and British Columbia to supply there is always an open market and fairly good prices for our better class butter.

The great trouble with our butter busi-

ness in this province has been how to advantageously dispose of our lower grades of stuff. When we make allowance for the fact that a great many of our farmers are poor and unable to possess the proper houses and apparatus for making prime butter, we must expect to receive quite a share of poor stuff. Still the proportion of such is much greater than it ought to be, if our butter makers would only take more care and pains than they do, and it is pleasing to note that this year there is a marked improvement in this respect, when compared with former years. Of this stuff the Pacific coast market will take none, and the local market calls for a very limited quantity. The only market for it is in the east, and there it should be hurried as soon as possible after it is made, as only then will it sell freely there. It will not realize a high figure at any time, but it will do its best when new. The difference in price paid for butter fit for shipment to the Pacific coast and butter that must be sent east will be a powerful argument to the butter maker to urge him to improve the quality he makes. The lowest grade saleable in British Columbia will on the average sell in Winnipeg five cents a pound higher than the best that will have to go to the east. It will then remain to be seen how long careless butter makers will continue to lose this five cents a pound.

This subject is one THE COMMERCIAL has carefully inquired into, and we believe the course above advised is the best that can be followed. However, we have persuaded one of the largest commission houses in Winnipeg to furnish this journal with a letter stating their views, and we ask for the same a careful perusal. The letter will be found elsewhere in this issue.

There is probably no improvement which would be of such advantage to this province as one in butter making and handling. The luxuriant natural grasses of our rich prairies produce milk that is the wonder and admiration of every visitor to our province, and this milk ought to produce butter which would be equally admired. That it does not produce it is due entirely to carelessness in manufacture first, and slovenliness in the handling afterwards. Surely these defects could be greatly remedied without much trouble to any one concerned, and we hope some united effort in that direction will be put forth.