

It is needless to go over the insolvency record of the past three years to show the necessity for such legislation as is here suggested. The instances are numerous and fresh in the memory of many in which dishonest preferred claims have swallowed up the entire estates of insolvent debtors, and left nothing for other and less unscrupulous creditors. In fact the uncertainty which has existed in the minds of creditors who would be both just and generous to a debtor, has often led them to seek reprisals by a system of sharp practice they would otherwise never put in force. Should we have a recurrence of the panicky days of 1883, we might certainly expect, that "Devil take the hindmost" would be the motto of the bulk of creditors in seeking their own from shaky debtors.

Some effort should be made to secure the passing of such an act by our local Parliament during the session now about to open, and as one of our city members is now a member of Mr. Norquay's cabinet it is not too much to expect, that the member for South Winnipeg would give some special attention to a piece of legislation which will specially benefit the commercial classes who form the constituency he represents.

It may be urged by some obstructionists that such a measure as we suggest is incomplete, in so far as it falls far short of the business wants of the country at present. But such an argument is valueless. A measure which accomplishes one half of work actually necessary, is certainly much better, than nothing, and it is questionable if legislation on commercial affairs is not best accomplished when it is overtaken gradually and in stages. We hope some legislation of this kind will be enacted before the close of this session of the House.

### THE REJECTED FLOUR TAX.

As long as any country is burdened with a system of heavy import tariffs, a regular course of legislative tinkering must be pursued each year, and like the Irishman's stockings the heels of which were usually ready for darning by the time the toes were repaired, the tariff web has too frequently to be patched in one place by a piece, which has left a hole at another. This is made painfully apparent in connection with the Canadian duties on wheat and flour. Although Mark Lane London practically fixes the price

of wheat all over this continent, so long as we have a surplus for export, the loyal farmer of Canada has to be deluded into the belief that an import duty on wheat is a protection to him in raising the same, in order to make him a supporter of the National protection policy. If any further argument were necessary to show the absurdity of such a thing, it can be formed in the facilities which United States millers have for grinding Canadian wheat in bond and shipping the same back to a Canadian market, a privilege which we cannot complain of on this side of the boundary, seeing our Government allow millers the same in connection with United States wheat. Our millers naturally complain of a tariff, which places on the wheat necessary to make a barrel of flour a duty, considerably higher than is fixed upon the flour in a manufactured state. With facilities for grinding in bond the United States miller has just this difference in the duty of an advantage over his Canadian competitors, and can, if our flour markets keep as high as those in the United States, make a better profit out of grinding Canadian wheat, than that of his own country. The avowed aim of our national policy is to foster industries at home, but its arrangements in connection with wheat and flour aim to protect an industry, namely wheat raising, which cannot be assisted in any way, so long as Canada is a grain exporting country; and at the same time they place the milling industry of the Dominion at the mercy of competitors on the other side of the boundary. There is certainly just cause for millers to complain of such a state of affairs and the Government professing a protective tariff creed does them a great injustice, and supports a strange anomaly, when it fails or refuses to give them redress.

In proposing to redress the above grievance the extreme protectionists will no doubt advocate an increased duty on flour, but even the present Dominion Government with its ultra-protective tendencies have not the hardihood to impose an increased tax on bread in the present state of stagnant trade and threatened destitution among the laboring classes, and it is probably well, that they have something to deter them from following such a course. Still there is no reason why our millers should suffer longer under the injustice which an anomalous tariff thrusts upon them. The only reasonable

course open in the matter is to reduce the duty on wheat, so that our millers will be at least on an equal footing with competitors in the United States grinding in bond; or, if protection for the manufacturer is intended, reduce it so that our millers will have an advantage. Such a course would no doubt be at variance with the ideas of those who think they can still delude the farmer into the belief that a wheat tariff is a protection to him. But the farmer has long ago seen the folly of such an opinion; and with him there is a growing belief that all tariffs are meant for the profit of others at his expense. In the Northwest the farmer would not suffer one cent's worth of injury if the tariff on wheat were entirely swept away; but the milling industry would be greatly benefited thereby. It may not be generally known, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that not a barrel of Northwestern-manufactured flour from the crop of 1884 has as yet reached the markets of Montreal and other eastern cities, the reason being the inability of our millers to compete there in price with those of the United States under the present anomalous state of the tariff law. We are all anxious to see large exports of wheat from this country to the east; but we are still more anxious to see our wheat exported in a manufactured state, and the cost of its manufacture retained in the country. The profits on its manufacture retained in circulation here would be of much greater benefit to us than we shall ever derive from an import duty on wheat, which has as much effect upon the price of that cereal as an eclipse of the moon has upon the stock markets of London or New York.

There is a taint of dishonesty about every provision of our tariff arrangements which are supposed to be protective of the farmer, which Canadian statesmen should be shrewd enough, if they are not candid enough, to feel ashamed of. As each import duty on manufactured goods is put in force, the people of the Dominion are told, that it is to preserve for our own people home markets which of right belong to them, while the farmer must look to crowded Europe for a market to fix his prices, and where Canadian protection cannot reach. But the anomalous wheat and flour duties go further than this, for they fail to protect the man who manufactures the farmer's grain. It is not to be wondered at therefore if there is among the agricultural classes of the Dominion a growing scepticism about the benefits from protection of any description.