

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 24, 1884.

THE DROP IN BUTTER.

The most surprising occurrence in connection with the mercantile affairs of this city during the present season is the sudden drop in the price of butter which has taken place during the last two weeks. During the greater portion of the month of May prime butter sold in wholesale lots in this city at 27c to 28c a pound. With the opening of June it dropped a cent or two, and during the past two weeks has shrunk in value until prime fresh butter, from local dairies, is found slow sale at 18c, and there is a prospect of lower figures being reached before the fall of the year comes. Butter is now at a lower figure than it has been at during the history of Winnipeg as a city, and it will probably never again reach its former fancy prices, or even sell here at the top notch prices quoted in eastern cities.

Although there have been circumstances which have in a measure hastened this crisis in prices, its coming was inevitable, and the sooner it came the better for Winnipeg and the whole Northwest. It is only two years since oats and potatoes were imported into this city from Ontario and Quebec, and sold at fancy prices, and plenty of men in the produce line calculated then upon a trade of that kind continuing profitable for years to come. The car loads of potatoes that were allowed to rot for want of sale during the summer of 1882 stopped rather suddenly importations of these, and the heavy losses during the same year on imported oats put an end to their importation. In both instances the fact that this country could produce enough of these for its own use, and to spare, had to be forcibly illustrated before people would believe it, and it has now turned out exactly the same with butter. Car load after car load has been imported from the east since the early spring, and now that grazing is good all over the province dealers find the city with a heavy stock laid in, and consignments coming from all parts of the country which are more than enough to supply the city's daily consumption. The fact that this is a country with unsurpassed facilities for producing dairy products is certainly being forcibly illustrated at present, and the lesson taught will doubtless be an expensive one to some people.

The loss, however, will fall on the few, while the gain will be to the many. Oats, oatmeal, potatoes and butter are now commodities for which not one cent of money will in future go out of the country, and even the last-named must soon be numbered among our exports. There are other products which must soon follow, and until the province supplies itself with its every want in the line of farm and dairy products, we cannot hold ourselves free from the charge of shiftlessness, nor will we have secured the proper way to our growth in wealth.

As above stated there have been circumstances which have hurried this increased local production of butter and brought about the present glut. The partial failure of our wheat crop last year has developed the ingenuity of our farmers, and shown them that complete success does not lie in grain production alone but in the producing of everything of which our rich prairie soil is capable. They are satisfied that "Man cannot live by bread alone," and this season they have added butter. Other business will soon be added in similar luxuries. While cattle have recently been imported from Montana and other places, farmers in the Northwestern portion of the province have been complaining that they have lots of fat cattle and can find no buyers for them except the butchers of local towns. It is therefore to be hoped that beef importers will soon begin to depend more upon local supply. In hogs the prospect is even more promising as to numbers, and those who have reason to know, state, that unless some pork packing arrangements be supplied by the coming winter, either in Winnipeg or some other central Manitoba town, fresh pork will be a much too plentiful commodity in the province. It does seem that a little well-fed and home-cured pork would taste quite as sweet as the stuff over which Chicago speculators wrangle. In this product, as in butter, there may be an expensive lesson learned on the power of home production before the spring of 1885.

To come down to the real state of matters, Manitoba and the Northwest have been fed long enough on the refuse of Eastern Canada and the United States, and it will result from want of proper trade organization, if another dollar's worth of food is imported into this country after the coming fall, unless some

trifling articles which can only be produced in a more southern latitude.

THOSE DISCRIMINATING FREIGHT RATES.

As yet no reply has been received from the officers of the C.P.R. to the communication of the Winnipeg Board of Trade asking for relief from the discriminations against the city in freight rates on the Company's line, and among importing houses there is a growing feeling of resentment at the careless manner in which the interests of the mercantile community of this city are treated. It seems to take at least one month for General Manager Van Horne to find an answer to any request made from this province, no matter how trivial the request may be, and in a matter where leading commercial interests are at stake, he seems to make no exception, if we are to judge from the tardiness which he displays in replying to the Board of Trade communication. This may be a phase of his Northwestern railway policy, but assuredly his persisting in such a course is not likely to bring any good results to the interests he represents.

The feeling of resentment above mentioned is fast developing into exasperation, and already several of our leading importers have already signified their determination not to bring one pound of freight from the east over the C.P.R. lake route until the present discrimination ceases. United States railway managers are not without being posted as to the feeling in this city, and the recent reduction in rates, by which freight is now brought here, by all rail route, as cheaply as by lake, proves that they are prepared to grapple with the emergency, and when they do so, they may rest assured that the bulk of the importers here will bring their freight by all rail, if the advantages are equal, and so bitter has the feeling against the C.P.R. grown that many are prepared to make a sacrifice in favor of the southern route, and assert that the quicker transit and better condition in which goods are delivered warrants them in making such. It would not take much to work this anti-C.P.R. feeling into a combination of the leading importers of the city the power and determination of which no railway company would be desirous of opposing. Such a combination can start with the assurance that the U.P.R. managers have done their worst against them, and can do no more. The power of fixing choke-off rates from