

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, SEPTEMBER 3, 1888.

THE RAILWAY DEAL.

Even dissatisfied parties are to some extent thankful, that the railway question is now settled, and the vote of Friday morning, especially as it was a foregone conclusion that the Government would carry the N. P. contract, was a relief all round.

The new or amended contract, which has been ratified, differs from the original one mainly in its being a clear, intelligible document, which the original was not. Its details are changed on a few points of importance, the company being bound to complete certain works this fall, such as the location of the Winnipeg Station, the reaching of Portage la Prairie by November and other important items of detail. The great improvement however is in the banishment of ambiguity, the amended contract being a piece of clear and explicit English, easily understood by men of ordinary business capacity. The aid to be given by the Government differs very little from that proposed in the first published contract, and the work to be done by the company is in the main the same as first outlined.

Just as the Legislature opened the Government had an offer from the Vice-President of the St. P. M. & M. road, in which the principle of the Government still retaining the roads projected and being constructed, as public highways, open to all competitors, was embodied, and in almost every other way the offer of the N. P. & Manitoba Co. was paralleled, while a kind of vague guarantee regarding maximum freight rates was also included.

The wisdom of the Government in refusing to consider the offers has been widely questioned, and the action does seem a little arbitrary. The probability is however, that they were in a tight corner. If the M. & M. road secured running powers over the R. R. V. and its feeders, the N. P. people would refuse to come into the country, and to get the M. & M. road in here alone would be no relief from monopoly as every Manitoban knows. Besides this road has no line to the Pacific coast, and a direct line thereto is just as necessary for the trade prosperity of this province as openings to the U. S. lake ports.

The seemingly generous offer of the

St. P. M. & M. Vice-President to let the actual possession of the projected roads remain in the hands of the Government amounts to nothing when looked into. The possession of a railway bonded to its full cost instead of being of value might be an actual burden, for railway companies often compromise bonds they cannot pay, but which a Government would be expected to honor.

In short, only on one point is the offer of Vice-President Clough an improvement upon the contract now ratified, and that is the point of a free road open to all. This the Government have sacrificed, and let us hope they have received value in maximum rate guarantees for this concession. The Railway Commissioner assures us, that he has guarantees on this head, which will satisfy the most scrupulous, and it is to be hoped he has. The late Premier once sold to the people a "pig in a bag" regarding the "Better terms," and when the porcine was let out, it was a sorry scrub. We will hope for better in the Attorney-General's hidden pig. Should it also prove a scrub, it will be difficult to persuade any one outside the Government and their immediate friends, that the province has profited much by the deal.

We are now at the end of the first chapter in the acts of Mr. Greenway's Government. Only the bigoted partizan will accuse them of anything but the best of intentions throughout their negotiations, and they have shown a readiness to keep the people posted on legislative details hitherto hidden from view. Still the Government is not to be commended either for energy or business tact in their railway operations. A summer has been frittered away without a good month's work being done in railway construction, and now in the teeth of winter, all is hurry and bustle. So much for their energy, and the first contract laid before the public, with its incomprehensible tangle of muddled English would indicate that tact and business ability are not too liberally bestowed upon the parties who represented the province in connection therewith.

RETALIATION THREATENED.

The question of the week has been the message recently sent to Congress by President Cleveland, in which he asks for power to suspend the regulations permitting the transportation of goods to and from Canada, through the United States.

He also asks for legislation concerning the privileges extended to Canadian shipping in using United States canals. In his message the President gives a lengthy review of the fishery question. He declares that the treaty thrown out by the Senate, provided an honorable and satisfactory means of settling the fishery difficulty, but intimates that the proposed treaty, not proving acceptable to the Senate, it will be necessary to resort to retaliatory measures against Canada. This seems a very inconsistent course on the part of the President. If the treaty was all that could be desired, as the President maintains, where is the ground for retaliation against Canada? This country promptly ratified the treaty, and is therefore in no sense to blame for the refusal of the Senate to do likewise. Canada and Great Britain offer what the President declares to be a satisfactory agreement for the settlement of the difficulties, but because the Senate refuses the offer, the President declares that a system of retaliation must be inaugurated against the country which holds out the olive branch.

The retaliation proposed is that shipping in bond through the United States be prohibited. The President has asked for this authority, and in accordance with his wish, a bill has been introduced which provides that "it shall be lawful for the President in his discretion by proclamation to that effect to suspend in whole or in part the transportation of goods, wares or merchandize, imported or exported, from any foreign country except Canada, in bond across the territory of the United States." The object of this bill is to hamper the trade of this country, but apparently it would do almost as much injury to the United States. The bill would prevent the importation of goods into Canada, from foreign countries, via the United States. Thus goods now landed at New York, Portland and other ports in the United States, for shipment to Canada, would be driven to Canadian ports. This would be a considerable inconvenience to Canadian importers, especially in the winter season, as our imports would have to come by Halifax. Our exports which now go by United States ports, would also be stopped. The bill as introduced does not appear to affect the shipment of goods from one part of Canada to another through the United States, and thus it would not bear upon traffic between Manitoba and Eastern Canada, over U. S. railways. It is quite probable