THE TARIFF QUESTION AND THE WEST.

Steel Bounties Opposed by Westerners who Want Lower Tariffs.

ONE of the most important questions confronting the Borden Administration at Ottawa is in connection with the tariff. This is a subject which appeals not only to the business men of the country, but to every laboring man as well. The real fight seems to centre around the question of a renewal of the bounties on steel. The steel manufacturers and "interests" generally did a great deal towards the election of Mr. BORDEN and consequently have a big say in regard to what he shall and shall not do. On the other hand, the rural members have had all they want of bounties and are bitterly opposing any legislation which will grant special privileges to the steel manufacturers. The chief opposition is coming from the West, where high duties and tariffs are becoming more and more unpopular. Recently the Saskatchewan Legislature, by vote of 27 to 11, asked for reciprocity with the United States.

The Western farmers who voted against securing a larger outlet for their crops, are now repenting of their action. The weather, which promised to be so favorable early in the season, turned unfavorable in the fall, with the result that millions of bushels of grain were not threshed. The railways also fell down in their efforts to move the crops, so that altogether the Western farmers, blessed in many cases with an abundant harvest, have been unable, between inclement weather and inadequate railway facilities, to realize on their crops. The result is that they are asking for wider markets and more outlets for their grain. While in this humor they are not likely to entertain any proposal of the Government to increase the bounties and pay out a million dollars or more in good hard cash to a few millionaire steel manufacturers.

The Borden Government has sought to alleviate the distress in the West by asking the United States Interstate Commerce Commission to allow Canadian grain to be carried through to Duluth and Chicago, in order to relieve the congestion prevailing in Canada. This is somewhat ironical in the light of the exhortations made by the Government a few months ago, "to have no truck or trade with the Yankees!" Writing editorially on this, the Victoria *Times* has the following to say :—

"It is a confession that the Government of Canada is completely at the mercy of Washington, to which it must kneel as a suppliant for help in solving a problem which it is otherwise incapable of solving. Though an order has already been passed granting such a privilege to come into effect on March 1—in itself a great concession—that date is too far away to relieve the stress of the situation, and Mr. BORDEN has made another plea for immediate action. The fact that neither railways, millers, nor the wheat pit has made objection to the first order, has shown that what Mr. BORDEN'S henchmen stated on the hustings is untrue. The Canadian must have truck and trade with the Yankee, or double the $25,000,000 loss already suffered by the defeat of reciprocity. It would almost appear as though Dame Nature had taken a turn at the wheel to show Canada the full extent of the folly which manifested itself in the absurd verdict of last September, and it is in harmony with the principles of her usual justice that Hon. Mr. BORDEN is the man who stands in the gap of humiliation. Canada has witnessed no more humbling spectacle than that of her Prime Minister supplicating a much abused neighboring republic for an extraordinary favor. Should the United States grant the favor, it will be another nail in the coffin of the lies fabricated to defeat reciprocity by the loyal guard who claimed to hold the destiny of the empire in their hands.

"As if to make the humiliation and the exposure of fallacy more complete, our prairie stock and cattle men are asking Mr. BORDEN to lift the duty on cattle coming in from the United States, in order that these may eat up the wheat now spoiling on the farms. These cattle, now subject to a duty of 25 per cent., may then be brought in to consume the grain which would otherwise become a total loss.

"What we wish to point out is the singular facility with which people who are struck by a simoon of unfortunate circumstances rush for relief in the first instance to the tariff headquarters. It was so when the Crow's Nest Pass coal strike was on. In order to anticipate a coal famine, the Government was asked to remit the duty on coal brought in from the United States. The dealers and combines desired the handicap of the duties "lifted," so that the poor consumer might not be overtaxed. Now it is the duty which stands between the unfortunate grain grower and the loss of his harvest. In circumstances of distress the abolition of "duties" is the short cut to relief. While people are prosperous it is assumed that they do not mind the money mulcted from them by duties, but when there is a chance that business may be prostrated, the duties must go. The National Policy and an 'empire within ourselves' are thrilling subjects while the 'Interests' are prospering, but when these are threatened, the first blow is struck at the duties. We may then safely and patriotically have both truck and trade with the Yankees. We may even go farther; we may fall at their feet and beseech them to save us from being confined to an empire within ourselves. The very interests, predatory when times are good, see that they cannot continue to prosper unless the markets are opened when nature puts a sprag in the revolving wheels. Duties are good only so long as they make it possible for the corporations to prey upon the public. Threaten the prosperity of the corporations and they are the first to ask that the duties be 'lifted.'

"For ourselves, we are unable to see how, if it is permissible to trade with the Yankees in seasons of distress, it should be disloyalty to trade with them when we are prosperous; especially when, by that means, our prosperity might be increased. It requires more than ordinary human power of self-repression to refrain from vindictive triumph in seeing Mr. BORDEN on his knees at Washington supplicating a favor which gives the lie to the whole campaign of false sentiment upon which he won his way to political victory."

THE MONTREAL COTTONS' REPORT.

THE Montreal Cottons, Limited, formerly known as the Montreal Cotton Company, held their annual meeting on the 27th inst. More than ordinary interest was attached to the meeting owing to the fact that this was the first one held since the company reorganized. The profits for the past year were $291,277, as compared with $295,024 the previous year. The profit and loss "surplus" now stands at $2,002,610, against $1,982,040 a year ago. Cloth sales this year were $3,048,084, as compared with $3,194,220 in 1910. In reply to the question of a dividend on the common stock, it was stated that this would be dealt with as soon as all the old shares had been transferred to the new company. Recently the Montreal Cotton Company cut a "melon" in the shape of doubling the capitalization of the company. It is believed that the earnings are sufficient to justify a small dividend on the common stock.

Mr. S. H. Ewing, president of the company, in the annual report to the shareholders, referred as follows to the reorganization of the company under the Montreal Cottons, Limited :

"Since the last annual meeting your directors, after careful consideration and advice from leading actuaries, decided that the accumulations of surplus should be divided amongst the company's shareholders. To carry this out a new charter was obtained for the company, under the name of the Montreal Cottons, Ltd., with an authorized capital of $10,000,000, divided thus: Preferred for $5,000,000, bearing interest at 7 per cent. per annum, cumulative, and common for the same amount. Of these $3,000,000 each have been issued to the shareholders. Only common stock carries voting powers."

The following directors were elected : S. H. Ewing, president; H. Markland Molson, vice-president; H. S. Holt, A. Hamilton Gault, F. Orr Lewis, Chas. B. Gordon, John P. Black, Wm. C. Finley, Senator R. Dandurand; John Lowe, jr., sec.-treasurer.