

THE great shortage of cars has not alone been felt in moving the wheat crop. During the recent cold snap there was almost a coal famine at several points along the railway. At Calgary the supply was about exhausted, though there was plenty of coal awaiting shipment at the mines a few miles west of that town, for the movement of which no cars could be obtained. At Brandon the supply of soft coal ran out completely, and the citizens were obliged to fall back on Pennsylvania coal, which could only be obtained at the exorbitant price of \$13 per ton. An empty coal bin at a time when the mercury is trying to escape through the bottom of the thermometer is not a very encouraging feature, but it is something very liable to occur so long as our railroad affairs are in the hands of a monopoly.

An interesting barbed wire case has lately been decided. The proprietor of a concern at Delhi, Ont., has just won a suit in the lower courts against the barbed wire millionaire monopolists, the Washburn & Moen Company. The defendant proved that a mechanic named Alvin Morley was the inventor of his style of fence, and had exhibited it at a fair in Delhi in 1859. Morley has since died in an insane asylum. It will be remembered that the Washburn & Moen Company have been able to obtain a royalty on barbed wire fencing through a claim that they had bought up all existing patents on barbed wire. This defeat, if sustained in the higher courts, may mean the effectual breaking up of the monopoly.

THE new postal convention which has just been concluded with the United States makes the territory from the northern boundary of the British possessions to the northern boundary of Mexico one postal union. Anything can now be sent from the United States to Canada or from Canada to any part of the United States, which can be put into a package that will not weigh more than four pounds and six ounces. The new treaty simply adds to the provisions of the existing conventions the right to send mail matter of the fourth class. Each country makes the regulations for the collection of customs on dutiable articles, but the customs are to be collected in each instance at the post office of address, and the person addressed will be to no inconvenience except to go to the post office and pay the duties as assessed by the customs office. The amount will be stated on a slip attached to the package by the assisting customs officer at the exchange office, from which the package will be forwarded to destination.

THE new Conservative organ at Toronto—*The Empire*—has so far proved itself a valuable addition to the newspaper press of Canada. It is newsy, well printed and well edited, and considering its avowed party proclivities, moderate in tone. If the *Empire* will continue to uphold its party principles in a dignified and logical manner, it will set a worthy example to the party press of Canada. The constant bickering and grovelling abuse descended to by many party paper, has long been disgusting to intelligent readers. The *Empire* certainly has a weakness for discover-

ing tall chimneys and new and growing industries, whose importance are greatly enhanced by a glance through protectionist spectacles, but this may be considered a pardonable fault. It certainly is more excusable to magnify the prosperity of the country than to take the opposite course of belittling everything. After the continuous pessimistic whining of the *Mail* in its doleful forecasts of the future of Canada, it is certainly a relief to turn to the *Empire* and find something in a more cheerful strain, even if tinged with party enthusiasm. It is to be regretted that some of Canada's leading journals have descended to the course of speaking disparagingly of their country, its progress and prospects, merely to make a point against the Government and its trade policy. Such action cannot but retard the development of that national sentiment so much needed in this country. The absence of these pessimistic views from the columns of the *Empire*, will render that paper cheerful reading to Canadians who have a desire for the welfare of their country.

THE press and public of British Columbia and Victoria city especially have been greatly exercised over the withdrawal of the subsidy from the San Francisco steamers. At the time of the union of British Columbia with Canada, the Dominion undertook to grant a subsidy to a line of steamers carrying mails between San Francisco and Victoria. Lately the Postmaster General has announced the withdrawal of this subsidy, hence the trouble. The announcement created surprise amounting to almost consternation at Victoria, and drew forth the strongest condemnation. The Victoria board of trade took up the question and protested vigorously, and the Provincial Government has also entered a protest against the discontinuance of the subsidy. A large carrying trade is now being done between San Francisco and Vancouver, in goods for shipment over the C.P.R., and it is feared at Victoria that the withdrawal of the subsidy will lead the steamship company to run their vessels direct to Vancouver, without calling at Victoria. The Vancouver people are not opposed to the withdrawal of the subsidy, as it will in no wise affect their local interests. On the other hand many Vancouverites would be tickled to have the San Francisco steamers abandon Victoria, as they look upon their growing city as a coming rival of the commercial metropolis of British Columbia. Owing to the large trade which is being done between Victoria and California, it is hardly likely that the steamers would pass Victoria notwithstanding the withdrawal of the subsidy. Still the Provincial Government has good ground for complaint. As the agreement for the subsidy was one between the province and the Dominion, it certainly seems an arbitrary proceeding to summarily withdraw the subsidy without the consent of the provincial authorities.

THE Minneapolis *Northwestern Miller* has come out in opposition to the reduction in the Manitoba wheat grades. The *Miller* should remember, however, that the reduced Manitoba grades are still higher than the highest grades of hard wheat in the United States. The new

Manitoba regulations, (which will not go into force before the commencement of the next crop year) call for three grades of hard wheat of a higher quality than any United States grades. There is first the grade of Manitoba No. 1 hard, which is of a higher standard than the corresponding grade at Duluth. Then there is the grade of Extra Manitoba hard, which calls for almost a pure hard wheat, weighing at least 62 pounds to the bushel, and which is the highest wheat grade in the world. Then there is the grade of No. 1 hard white fyfe, which calls for a very much higher quality of wheat than any Duluth or Minneapolis grade. If the *Miller* will consider these facts, it will certainly see the injustice of its charge, that the Manitoba wheat regulations will encourage the growth of soft wheats. If the Manitoba grades, which are the highest in the world, will encourage the growth of soft wheats, what about the Duluth and Minneapolis grades? From the *Miller's* reference to changing seed, it would be inferred that that journal would like to have Manitoba kept as a preserve to furnish Minnesota and Dakota with a quality of seed wheat which they cannot obtain at home. The following is what the *Miller* says on the subject: "The Canadian Government has made sweeping changes in the Manitoba wheat grades, the effect of which will be to put a premium upon the use of soft wheats for seed in the Northwest. This is a matter in which every miller of hard spring wheat takes a deep interest, whether the farms affected lie above or below the international boundary. When the grain of one section of the hard wheat belt deteriorates, it is necessary to secure fresh seed from some far distant section, a measure which has always proved effective in grading up the crop of the affected section. If the farmers of one section are encouraged in the use of soft wheats, which, although yielding better for a few years, are not hardy and are liable to all sorts of diseases, the benefits heretofore enjoyed by changing seed will be nullified, and great deterioration in quality of grain and grades of flour from the hard wheat belt will speedily become apparent. We have heretofore taken a very decided stand on this question. Instead of official action tending toward the lowering of the value and a deterioration of grades, we have urged the adoption of measures compelling the use of good seed and the inauguration of a system of inspection of seed grain. We hold that the man who offers soft and diseased wheat on the northwestern markets is as much a foe to society as the man who adulterates sugar, or coffee, or the other necessities of life. We have laws against adulteration and we need laws preventing the use of soft and diseased seed grain, not only wheat, but other grains as well. We hope to live long enough to see such laws enacted and enforced, and we again enter our earnest protest against the action of the Canadian Government, as having a most unwholesome and mischievous tendency."

The Government of British Columbia has decided to appeal from the recent decision of the Supreme Court to the Privy Council on the subject of the ownership of the precious metals within the railway belt in that province. By the terms of union between British Columbia