

The Commercial

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EVILS OF A BIG CROP.

The above heading may cause a sentiment of astonishment to some, but nevertheless there are many in Manitoba who will comprehend the full meaning of the words. The enormous grain crops of Manitoba last year were not an unmixed good. In fact to many of our farmers it meant loss and disappointment. Peculiar statements these, but nevertheless true, and this fact has become more apparent within the last two months.

The growth of straw last year was something remarkable. This was a disadvantage from several points of view. The heavier growth of straw meant delay in the ripening of the grain; it increased the quantity and cost of binder twine per acre; it increased enormously the cost of harvesting the crop, making perhaps an average of one-third more labor to handle the crop. Where two horses would be sufficient to work a binder in a moderate crop, four were required last year, and then sometimes only a narrow swath could be cut.

These disadvantages arising from the enormous growth of straw would of course have been compensated for in the large yield of grain, had other circumstances been favorable. But they were not altogether so—with many quite the reverse. In the first place, the harvest was somewhat late to start with, and the supply of labor was not equal to the demand. Hundreds of farmers were altogether unable to cope with the task before them of gathering in such an enormous harvest. The result was, that long after the grain should have been saved, there were thousands of acres all over the country still in stook. To make matters worse, wet weather set in, while the work of harvesting was going on. Some, in their anxiety to get through with the huge task before them, stacked their crops before the sheaves were sufficiently dried out, and the grain became heated in stack. Many others, in their hurry to save their entire crop, did not take sufficient care with their stacks, and the grain became damaged or destroyed by rain and snow after it was stacked. Many farmers would have been in a better position now, if they had allowed part of their crop to stand in the field, and had harvested the balance in a careful manner. By trying to save all by hurrying and slighting the work, they in some cases lost large portions of their crop which they had gone to the expense of harvesting and had paid high wages for help. On account of the length to which harvesting was prolonged, it was late before threshing was started, and before much threshing had been done, the winter set in early and exceptionally severe and blasty. Some tried threshing in the winter, but the frequent snow storms kept the stacks in bad condition, and considerable grain was ruined or damaged by becoming mixed with snow in threshing. Others who allowed their stacks to stand until spring, found their grain in many cases badly damaged through wet

having got into the stacks, while some stacks were completely destroyed. Altogether there was a great loss to farmers from one cause or another, and although the returns show that an enormous quantity of grain has been marketed, yet a considerable portion of it was sold at a low price, in account of being out of condition.

Altogether, therefore, the wonderfully heavy crop of last year did not bring that return to the farmers which was expected from it. A moderate crop, saved under favorable conditions, would have given better results. When we consider the great cost of harvesting such a heavy crop, help being very scarce and wages high, and think of the severe loss after the expense of placing the grain in stack had been borne, we can see one unsatisfactory feature of the case.

Such an enormous crop as was produced in Manitoba last year, unless accompanied by exceptionally favorable weather conditions, is not an unmixed good. Our farmers have too much land under cultivation, to be in a position to cope with such a remarkable growth, and unless under very favorable conditions, the increased yield does not pay for the extra risk and expense of saving the crop. Of course if we could have the making of the weather to suit ourselves, the extraordinarily large crop would have been all right, but coming in a year which proved exceptionally unfavorable for harvesting and threshing, it was a loss rather than a benefit to many. One large farmer was heard to say, that if he had burnt one-half his crop on the ground, and given his entire attention to saving the balance, instead of trying to save it all, he would have come out better in the end, and would still have had sufficient grain to have made up a fairly good yield for his total acreage.

With the usual fine harvest weather which we have in Manitoba; with a more plentiful supply of help, and with our farmers cultivating a more restricted area, and trying to do that well, such a crop as that produced last year would be all right. The lesson of the season seems to say: Do not cultivate more land than can be properly handled under even rather adverse conditions. Herein we think is where many of our farmers fail, by imposing more labor upon themselves than they are able to bear.

RECIPROCIETY WITH THE UNITED STATES.

The Chamber of Commerce of the city of Grand Forks, North Dakota, has with commendable enterprise worked up a movement in favor of a convention to be held at that place, to discuss reciprocity with Canada. The convention is expected to be convened on December 1st next, and commercial bodies in the border states and in Canada, will be invited to send delegates. The question of lake navigation, with special reference to the securing of a deeper channel from the head of the lakes to the ocean, will also form an important matter for discussion.

So far as the question of reciprocity is concerned, it seems to have been the idea of the Grand Forks people to agitate in favor of reciprocity between the north-west states and

Western Canada. This is nonsensical. It would be reasonable to discuss the question of reciprocity between the two countries as a whole, but it seems foolish to hold a convention to discuss reciprocity between portions of the United States and portions of Canada. Such a proposition is impractical to start with, and if the question is to be taken up on these limited lines, it will only be a waste of time talking about it. The federal governments of neither the United States nor Canada would consent to such a proposition, no matter how strongly the people on each side of the border, here in the west, might favor it. The convention, however, may do some good by calling public attention to the general question of reciprocity, and it may help in educating people on the other side of the boundary in favor of a more liberal trade policy between the two countries.

So far as reciprocity is concerned, it is time the people south of the boundary were making some move in the matter, if they desire greater freedom in their trade intercourse with Canada. They have a deal of work to do at home in making their own politicians understand that they want greater freedom of trade with this country. Furthermore, they must make their politicians understand that they must submit to reasonable terms for the extension of trade between the two countries. Canada has sent delegates to Washington several times, for the purpose of negotiating, if possible, a fair treaty of reciprocity, but each time our representatives have returned from a fool's errand. On the last visit of our delegates to Washington, they were given plainly to understand that the present government of the republic will not consider the question of the extension of trade freedom between the two countries in a fair and reasonable spirit.

This being the case, it is foolish for Canadians to keep up any agitation in favor of greater freedom in trade matters with the United States. Canada has sent delegates to Washington often enough. When the United States is ready to consider the question of greater freedom in trade between the two countries, in a fair and reasonable spirit, they should come to us.

There should be no objection against commercial bodies in Canada sending delegates to the Grand Forks convention. The friendly discussion of the question will not do any harm, if it will not do any good. Canadians, however, should point out, that it is not our fault that so much restriction has been placed upon trade between the two countries. Both political parties in Canada have shown themselves ready and willing to make concessions in favor of greater trade freedom. Our overtures have been received at Washington with indifference, or with altogether unreasonable proposals. Much unfriendly legislation affecting this country has proceeded from the present administration in power at Washington. At present a savage bull-dog measure is before congress, aimed at this country, and that altogether without reason. The Grand Forks people have therefore a big work before them at home, if they have to bring about reciprocity with Canada. We wish them success, and assure them that when their country is ready to talk sense on this question, Canada will be found