

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, SEPTEMBER 2, 1884.

OUR REPRESENTATIVES.

It has often been remarked by people on this Continent, who pay attention to British affairs, that while the House of Commons there represents the best talent and cream of the country's intellect, legislative assemblies on this side of the Atlantic utterly fail to do so. To this rule the province of Manitoba is no exception, for it cannot be said that either in the provincial legislature, or the different municipal governing bodies, can the best talent of the province be found. While the legal, agricultural and other interests have reason for complaint in this respect, they are not by any means so unrepresented as the trading interest. It does seem strange that this province with about two thousand trading institutions within its boundaries, shall have scarcely one that can be considered a representative mercantile man in the Provincial Legislature. It is not so with agriculture, for, while that interest is by no means as fully represented as it ought to be, there are quite a number of M.P.P.'s who are agriculturists in the fullest sense of the term, and good representatives of their class.

In municipal affairs we find commerce is also but poorly represented. For instance, in the City Council of Winnipeg we have a very small proportion of aldermen who can be ranked among the successful and able mercantile men of the city, and it may be only a coincidence, but it is a rather singular one that the number whose actions have brought trouble and disgrace upon the city, are not selected from the mercantile classes, but from that inactive speculative class, who seem to have made a wreck of their own affairs, and are doing their best to accomplish a similar work with those of the city.

In putting forth a claim for better trade representation, we are safe to assume that for tact and ability to manage the affairs of any governing body, the mercantile community can furnish quite as good, and we might say, a little better material than any other. There can be no better proof of a man's ability to manage public affairs than the fact that he is able to manage his own successfully.

There is no school in existence like commerce for fitting men to handle human nature, and handle it with honest intentions and beneficial results. Commerce is based upon principles of honesty and industry, which, if outraged, can, at best, bring only temporary gain, but assuredly punishment in the end. It is a field in which there is no space for crazy experiment or reckless trusting to chance, but demands that every undertaking shall have a definite and honorable end in view. Let us have more mercantile men in our Legislature, City and Town Councils, and we will have fewer representatives of the people, against whom a sheriff's execution is powerless to compel the payment of honest debts, and fewer men qualified to hold elective offices upon property, every dollar of which is sheltered beyond the reach of their creditors under the petticoats of their wives.

If ever convincing proof were wanted of the necessity of having business men to manage the public business, it is furnished at present in the mixture of dishonesty and incompetency now presented by the City Council of Winnipeg. It is to be hoped that our citizens will profit by the lesson, and place in charge of the city's affairs men, who have a business as well as an official reputation at stake. Such men cannot afford to sacrifice the latter for fear of losing the former also. On the other hand the speculative loafer, who has found too much place both in civic and provincial affairs, has little reputation to lose, and, if what he has lost, he would be like the Irish returned convict who lost his character and thought he was less a subject for pity than the poor mortal who would be unfortunate enough to find it.

OUR LABOR SUPPLY.

Although the law of supply and demand is gradually asserting itself in this city and province, and regulating values with an arbitrary hand, there are still many fields in which its work of regulation has wide scope, and in none is it more necessary than our labor affairs.

As in all new countries, we in Manitoba must be compelled to receive many immigrants of the wrong class, and even of classes very necessary, we have often to put up with a much larger number than we require. As a rule the people of whom we are liable to have a surplus belong to the non-producing classes, and it

is wonderful how few of this description a new country can get along and prosper with. A class who are not exactly non-productive, also come here as elsewhere to seek positions in mercantile and clerical lines, and often prove considerable of a load upon the country for a time. But even these, in time, adapt themselves to circumstances and become successful in callings they never dreamt of entering before coming here. Those of them who have actually received a business training before reaching here, seldom fail to eventually reach success, although they may have some difficulties for a time. Such inconveniences we suppose we must bear with for many years to come, and treat the question as philosophically as possible. But in the field of physical labor there seems still to be considerable irregularity and cross working of the law of supply and demand. We find that in the spring of the year men for out-door and other labor can be had in much larger numbers than are required, while at the present time of the year scores of such men are wanted and cannot be had. Even with skilled mechanics this is the case to some extent and, altogether, the labor market works by fits and starts, tantalizing and annoying to men looking employment at one time, and equally so to employers looking men at another. The extremes of weather we have, have no doubt something to do with this undesirable state of affairs, but facts go to show that they are not responsible for all the trouble, as we find that the first two months or so of winter are by no means the dullest of the labor market. In fact the reports of employment agents go to show that March, April and May are about the dullest, while the heavy demand for labor does not set in until July.

It is to be feared that other people than farmers in this province are too slow in getting to work in Spring, and that there is too much crowding of undertakings into the last four or five months of the year, which should extend over three or four months more. The consequences are that works of magnitude cost much more than they should, while the day laborer and mechanic get the credit of receiving extortionate wages, whereas, with the forced idleness of several months to mix up with those of high wages, their aggregate pay the year round is by no means too liberal after all.