

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MARCH 5, 1894.

A MANITOBA INDUSTRY MENACED.

The Manitoba fishing industry is in a somewhat depressed condition at present. The bulk of the trade is in exporting fish to the United States. Owing to the depression in that country, the demand has greatly fallen off, and the dealers have been left with large stocks of fish on hand. The fishing industry in Manitoba is an important interest. There are two distinct seasons for the taking of fish, namely the summer and the winter seasons, and the trade of each season is quite distinct and carried on in a different way. The summer fishing interest is the more important, and this is confined practically to Lake Winnipeg. Four companies operated on the lake last year, making a catch of about 1,500 tons of fish. A large amount of capital is invested in boats, nets and other plant for taking the fish, as well as in cold storage plant for freezing and storing. The fish caught in the summer season are artificially frozen and stored at convenient points, and shipped out as desired.

In the fall the close season begins, and no more fishing is done until winter sets in, and the lakes are covered with ice. Fishing is then renewed, not by the large companies who operate in the summer, but by individual fishermen who operate on a smaller scale. Quite a number of men are engaged in the winter fishing industry, which is carried on principally on lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba. Gill nets are placed in position by cutting the ice, and in this way the fish are taken. No artificial freezing or cold storage is required, as in our climate nature quickly does the work of freezing, and there is little danger of soft weather during the fishing season to cause any loss. Traders who make a business of it, buy up the fish and ship them away in car lots to the States, while a considerable quantity are taken for the local market.

The depression in the States has affected both the summer and winter fishing interests. A large quantity of the fish caught last summer—as much as one-half it is said—are still in cold storage at the points of accumulation. A considerable quantity of winter caught fish are also on hand, and there is more risk in the latter class, as the season is now getting on to a date that a thaw might set in. The winter fish are not suitable for placing in cold storage to keep any length of time, as they are not cleaned before freezing, while the offal is removed before the fish caught in the summer season are frozen. Prices paid the fishermen also declined to an unprofitable figure. Early in the season 4c per pound was paid for whitefish at the lake for winter fish, but later the price dropped to 2½c, and later again buyers ceased entirely taking the fish.

Another difficulty which threatens the industry has arisen. This is in the new regulations governing the summer fishing, issued a short time ago by the Federal Government. Heretofore fishing has been carried on with gill nets.

The new regulations provide that hereafter only pound nets shall be used. This does not apply to winter fishing, for which gill nets will still be allowed. These new regulations mean that the nets now owned by the large fishing companies will be useless, and that new nets will have to be provided before the season of 1894 opens. Besides this, the fishing companies claim that pound nets cannot be successfully used in Lake Winnipeg, experiments in the past with this class of nets having proved failures. The reason for this is that the companies are prevented from fishing near the mouths of rivers, and are restricted to certain portions of the lake where pound nets cannot be used to advantage. If the restrictions regarding the reserve waters were abolished, the pound nets might prove effective, but under the present restrictions those engaged in the business say they cannot be successfully used. With the falling off in the export trade and the new regulations promulgated, the industry is under a cloud at the moment. We are reliably informed that none of the companies will operate next summer unless the regulations are changed. This will be a serious blow to those depending upon the industry for their livelihood. As regards the supply of fish, there has been no signs whatever of diminution, and those who were the first to engage in fishing on Lake Winnipeg, say that fish are as plentiful now as the first day they went on the lake. A new company was formed a short time ago, so that under favorable circumstances five companies would have been operating next summer. The industry has given profitable employment to a large number of men, and if the companies cannot operate under the new regulations, it will be a serious matter.

So far as the difference in the nets is concerned, it is claimed that there is some loss of fish from the use of gill nets. In bad weather the nets sometimes cannot be lifted for a few days, and the fish which are caught in them die and become spoiled before the nets are lifted. In the case of pound nets, there is of course no such loss, as the fish are not injured, and remain alive until the nets are lifted. The loss from the use of gill nets, in the way stated, however, the fishermen say, is not very great.

THE PATRONS IN ONTARIO.

The Grocer, a Toronto trade journal, says that the Patrons of Industry in that province have made failures wherever they have undertaken to go into the store trade. A number of subordinate associations of the order have been broken up and disbanded as a result of failures of this nature. This is about what might have been expected. The Commercial has always refrained from pitching into the patrons, as perhaps some of our readers might have desired us to do. The farmers have a perfect right to organize, if they so desire. There is even room for good to be accomplished by organization among the farmers, if conducted upon proper and reasonable lines. When they undertake to control the business of retail merchants, they will certainly fail. In disseminating informa-

tion among their members upon public questions, and in guarding the interests of the farmers where assailed by false political policies, they can do good work. The farmers, however, can no more expect to succeed in regulating trade, than an organization of merchants could expect to control the area sown to the various crops each year.

The Patrons in Ontario are also menaced from another quarter. There is a division of opinion among the members regarding the question of complete subjection of the individual to the ruling of the order in political issues. Some of the more independent members rebel at becoming mere clay in the hands of the potters, and sinking their individual opinions in complete deference to the will of the managers or manipulators of the order. Members are pledged individually to support the political nominees of the order, and it is a violation of pledge and constitution for a member to act independently of the order in this matter. This is a restraint upon individual liberty which will prove galling to many members, and may bring trouble upon the order. The question of loyalty to the order as opposed to individual liberty of opinion is one which it will be found difficult to enforce. In fact, it is reported that one association has already protested against this doctrine of individual subjection to the order. One of the associations in North Grey has passed a resolution describing it as "a false and forced interpretation" of the Patrons' obligation, and believe that the attempt to bulldoze the order and deprive them of their liberty to vote as their consciences directs, will inevitably result in the break-up and complete ruin of the organization.

THE PROPOSED SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY.

Since the Red River Valley excitement in 1886-7, there has been no railway project laid before the public which has so concentrated public interest in the city of Winnipeg and a large portion of Manitoba as the proposed Winnipeg and Southeastern railway, which the promoters propose constructing from the city of Winnipeg in a southeasterly direction to the southwestern shore of the Lake of the Woods, a distance of 106 miles.

This project has attracted attention largely because it promises to be a section of another railway outlet from Manitoba to Lake Superior, and thence to the eastern world. In fact some people attribute all the material value of the road to its becoming part of such an outlet, and are too apt to view it solely from that point of view, and overlook all its value in other respects. That another opening to the great chain of lakes is wanted is beyond a doubt, not only as a competitor for the import and export freight of the province, but also as an outlet for the products of the country in the very near future, when the volume of such will undoubtedly reach such proportions that present outlets will be altogether inadequate to the export demands. It would be wise therefore to keep in view the utilizing of this road, if constructed, as part of an export channel, but it would be folly to con-