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COLLAPSE OF THE LATEST WHEAT CORNER.

The latest wheat corner, engineered by Chicago gamblers, and said to have been assisted by New York capital, has met the fate it deserved. The collapse created a *furor* of excitement. A corner in wheat, especially in the autumn, has so many odds against it, that the wonder is that even desperate gamblers, who can command the use of large sums of money, should go into it. The operators are in the position of gamblers playing against the "bank." The utmost they can do is to control the wheat supplies that find their way to a single city. The quantity is large, but it does not tell much against the world's supply. Even the countries which require to import the largest quantities, like England, are not destitute of domestic resources just after harvest. England could live without foreign wheat for a great many weeks, at this time of the year. If American wheat were withheld from foreign markets for some weeks, and prices went up temporarily, the surplus supply of the wheat-growing countries of Europe would be hastened to market till the equilibrium was restored. When the American supplies began to go forward, prices would almost certainly fall, and the gamblers who had got up the "corner" would come to grief.

These "corners" may possibly be engaged in under the impression that local prices can be made abnormally high, while the ultimate market, the real regulator of prices, fails to respond to the manipulation. But it is hardly given to a single city to do this. If the Eastern States cannot feed themselves, they are not entirely at the mercy of a Chicago ring. There are conceivable circumstances in which a "corner" in wheat might succeed. If the home supply fell short, just before harvest, from over-importation, or any other cause, it might be possible to monopolize such proportion of the supplies as would have the effect of sending up prices. Accordingly the wheat corners formerly

occurred just before harvest. Even then they often failed, and the gamblers life ended in suicide.

When there is a large overplus of wheat, it is scarcely possible to create monopoly prices; but it would be easier to affect the local market of the United States than the European. England draws her supplies from every country that has wheat to spare; the United States has not the same resources. Canada is the only country from which she could suddenly draw a supply; but even hence she could get nothing without paying a duty, thanks to that law by which she vainly imagines she can protect the farmer. A Chicago wheat "corner" might, perhaps, under more than one set of circumstances, inflict an injury on the Eastern States; it could only make itself felt in the ultimate markets of Europe in case of a general scarcity.

The stupidity of indulging in the game with all these odds against the players, is the most noticeable feature of the move. But desperate gamblers are very likely to miscalculate their chances, when they make any calculation at all. It is not surprising that gamblers should be found to engage in any enterprise, no matter how unpromising when viewed in cold blood; the delusive hope of gain spurs them on; but it is surprising that men who have money to risk should entrust it to these gamblers for such a purpose. Some temporary successes are of course gained, from day to day, in the city which is the scene of the operations; but on the whole venture, from first to last, there must be loss.

This tendency to gamble for a monopoly is to the last degree anti-commercial. The function of the merchant is that of an intermediary, whose business is to facilitate exchanges and distribute to consumers what they severally require. A "corner" in wheat is made to arrest the normal circulation of that cereal; and if carried out to the fullest conceivable extent, it would produce famine, local and general, in the midst of plenty. If the cornerers do not succeed in making a temporary famine, it is not because they do not make the attempt. It is easy enough to see in them the enemies of mankind; but it is another thing to disarm them of their sting. If the nuisance be often repeated, some means of abating it must be found. Some of the American courts have pronounced "corners" to be illegal, as against public policy, and it is possible that this view will come generally to prevail. But even so, the application of the law would be attended with no little difficulty. The most obvious remedy seems to be to refuse the gamblers the means of carrying on their operations. But this will be

done only if those who hold the strings of the money power become convinced that the risk is too great to be taken. The throwing open of the ports free to foreign wheat would diminish the chances of a "corner" succeeding; but we doubt if even this will be done in the present state of opinion in the United States on the subject of protection.

Injurious "corners" are by no means confined to wheat. Nor are they confined to any country. The Liverpool "cotton corner" has been unusually persistent, and has inflicted a great deal of injury upon the consumers of that staple. Of course, as always happens, in similar cases, the operators were the first to feel the pressure. The men engaged in the corner care not how much suffering they cause, provided they can make money. A corner in jute would probably have taken place, if the abundance of the growing crop of jute did not make the operation too hazardous. Society must protect itself against these conspiracies to arrest the normal circulation of produce as a means of getting up prices to monopoly figures. Whatever the remedy may be, we may be sure a remedy will be found.

CANADIAN LOAN COMPANIES.

A return has issued from the Finance department, Ottawa, of the condition of affairs of loan companies and building societies in Canada, for the year 1880, compiled from statements furnished by the companies to the Government. The return gives the figures of 75 companies, 58 in Ontario and 17 in Quebec; but circulars had been sent to 97 companies, some of which were in other provinces. The names of companies respecting which the return does not give information are these:

ONTARIO.

*Home Savings & Loan Co (limited) Toronto.
Toronto House Building Association "
Ontario Industrial Loan & Investment Co., (limited) "
Canada Mortgage Agency "
Scottish, Ontario & Manitoba Land Co. (limited) "
*Financial Association of Ontario...London.
English Loan Company "
*Ontario Investment Association ... "

QUEBEC.

French Canadian Building Society, Montreal
Imperial Mutual " " "
Provident Mutual " " "
Montreal Building Association

OTHER PROVINCES.

*Manitoba Investment Ass'nWinnipeg
Dundee Mortgage, Trust & Investment Co "
*St. John Building Society ...St. John, N.B.
Provincial " " "
*Nova Scotia Permanent Benefit Bldg. Socy. & Sav. Fund, Halifax, N.S.