

freight rates and insufficient shipping accommodation are among the disadvantages, which are happily passing away. A great disadvantage to the producers has been the low prices which have ruled for wheat of late years. The era of low prices set in just about the time Manitoba began to export wheat in considerable quantities. Exorbitant freight charges added to the disadvantage of low prices. The era of monopoly freight rates has now passed away, and it is to be hoped the era of low wheat prices will also give place to a season of better values. The distance which farmers had to haul their grain was also a great drawback, but now the settled portions of Manitoba, with the exception of a few districts, are well supplied, and now railways are rapidly extending through the country. In two or three years during the last decade, crops have been damaged by frost, and this has proved a great hardship to many. Old settlers say that it is only since 1883 that any trouble was experienced from frost. It is therefore quite probable that damage from frost may be a rare occurrence in the future. It will therefore be seen that Manitoba as a wheat country has been

PUT TO A SEVERE TEST

from the very start. The result has been most satisfactory. Our farmers have steadily prospered under these drawbacks. They have abundantly demonstrated that they can grow wheat at the very lowest prices at a profit, and compete with the world. With the lower freight rates and better shipping facilities now secured to them, they are in a very much better position than ever before to grow wheat profitably. Manitoba has stood the very severe test successfully, and the future is assured.

Perhaps the greatest drawback to Manitoba farmers in producing wheat in competition with the world, has been the high freight rates, owing to the monopoly enjoyed by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The C. P. railway was completed through to Lake Superior and opened for traffic in 1883, and the crop of that year was the first to go out by that road. Between the years 1880 and 1883 all the grain shipped out of the country had gone by the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba road, which had been extended northward from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Emerson, Manitoba. The St. Paul road had a monopoly and imposed high rates. The opening of the C. P. R. to Lake Superior did not improve matters, as it was soon found that the two roads had entered into an agreement whereby the St. Paul road allowed the C. P. R. to have a monopoly of the Manitoba traffic, in return for some consideration not yet fully known.

FREIGHT RATES.

On the opening of the C. P. R. to Lake Superior it was expected that the company would give a reasonable freight rate, but the first freight tariff issued placed the rate at 28 cents per 100 pounds from Winnipeg to Port Arthur, on grain, flour, millstuffs, etc. From Brandon, a central point in the province, the rate was 33 cents per 100 pounds. This was a heavy tax upon the farmers, especially considering the low prices prevailing for wheat in recent years. An agitation against railway monopoly and high rates at once commenced, and was continued persistently almost to the present time. At

last relief has apparently arrived. The freight rates are now very much reduced, the rate from Brandon to Lake Superior at present being 24 cents per 100 pounds, or a reduction of 9 cents. The prospect for the future is that rates will be further reduced shortly. After a long fight, Manitoba has succeeded in overcoming railway monopoly. The Northern Pacific railway secured an entrance into the province last fall, and during the coming summer, the company will build railroads through the province. By the time another crop comes in the market railway competition will be extended throughout the country, and the greatest drawback to the prosperity of the country will be removed. The first exports of wheat from Manitoba, made in the year 1877, via the Red River to Fargo, were carried from the latter place by the Northern Pacific to Duluth. This same road is again the first independent line to enter the province. During last fall and the present winter some shipments of Manitoba wheat have been made over the N. P. to Duluth, and some shipments have also been made by the same road, via Chicago, all rail, to Eastern Canada.

THE GRAIN BLOCKADE.

An eventful period in the wheat trade of Manitoba, was the great grain blockade of the winter of 1887-88. The railway and storage facilities of the country were altogether inadequate to the requirements of handling the crop. Cars for shipping could not be obtained in any thing like the quantities required, and elevators and storehouses were all filled with grain. At many of the railway stations throughout the province, thousands of bushels of grain were piled up in bags outside, and remained so for weeks at a time. Steady cold weather prevented damage to the grain so exposed, for had a thaw set in, a great deal of grain would have been destroyed. In some districts the farmers were obliged to stop hauling in grain for quite a length of time. The blockade was a great cause of annoyance and loss to grain dealers, who were unable to ship out their grain and fill orders for export as required. Happily, with the facilities now existing, such a disastrous blockade is not likely to again occur.

Another matter which caused a great deal of contention was the grading of Manitoba wheat. The grain grades are fixed by Dominion legislation, and were not satisfactory to the grain producers or dealers here. The Manitoba grain standards were fixed more in the interest of Eastern Canada grain dealers, than Western wheat growers, but owing to the influence of the Eastern dealers with the Ottawa Government, it was not without considerable agitation that the grades were changed to suit the West. This desirable change, however, was secured with the commencement of the present crop year.

Another important step in the grain trade of the country, was the formation of the

WINNIPEG GRAIN EXCHANGE

in the fall of 1887. A sketch of the exchange will be found elsewhere in this issue of THE COMMERCIAL. The Winnipeg exchange promises to be the most important grain organization in Canada in a very short time, and it may soon be expected to rank in importance

with the great grain centres of the continent.

This brief sketch will serve to show the growth of the grain interest in Western Canada, with a glance at some of the main features connected therewith. It has shown that exports have increased in ten years from 500 bushels to 12,000,000 bushels. Ten years ago there were no railways in the country. Now there are nine railway lines centering at Winnipeg, and extending all over Manitoba. Elevators and grain warehouses have been established all over the country, for handling our grain, ranging in size from 10,000 bushels to 1,250,000 bushels' capacity. The area in wheat in Manitoba alone has increased from a few hundred acres to over half a million acres in 1888, and a very large increase in the acreage is expected for 1889. The progress which this country has made during the brief time which has elapsed since it first commenced to export grain, is certainly remarkable, especially when the great drawbacks under which our producers labored, are taken into consideration. With the better prospects now ahead, the next few years should give even greater results.

Insure Your Property.

THE COMMERCIAL has heretofore advanced arguments similar to the following, from the *Kansas City Bulletin of Commerce*:—A merchant who owes money for merchandise should be fully insured. This is an obligation due to those who furnish him with credit. There are hazards enough in business without undertaking the additional risk of a fire loss. It is a risk there is no necessity for the merchant to assume, as insurance is not costly, and the expense is far more than counterbalanced by the security afforded.

They took their Medicine

They were two drummers in different lines, and they were chummy. They were travelling the same route. They had a long stretch of unfruitful country to drive over, and they had not taken enough grub with them. So when they reached a little tumble-down hostelry on the road they were hungry. There was nothing in the shop of fresh meat to be had, nor eggs, nor anything except hard bread. Finally one of them said:

"Haven't you got anything in the shape of canned meats?"

"The host had. He brought out a tin, and the drummers' mouths watered as they watched him pry it open. He laid it before them. One of them took it in hand, and immediately held it off as far as he could, while he closed his nostrils hard.

"What in thunder is this?" he said.

The other drummer took it and looked at the brand.

"For heaven's sake, don't say anything. We've got to eat it. This is the brand of canned goods I'm selling."

To the drummers' credit, it is said, they both ate it. What happened to them afterward they are silent about.—*Michigan Tradesman*.

A CHICAGO newspaper makes the statement that a railroad train arrives or departs from that city every minute of the day.