

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 7, 1884.

FANCY WHEAT GRADES.

It is now understood, that the appointment of a grain inspector at Port Arthur cannot take place, until the Dominion Parliament meets and so amends the inspection act, as to allow of the fixing of hard wheat grades in the province of Ontario, that privilege being possessed as yet by Manitoba alone. The gentleman selected for the position by the C.P.R. General Manager must therefore act until then simply as examiner of grain, with no legal power to fix beyond dispute the grades of grain coming under his inspection. This is greatly to be regretted, and may cause a great amount of inconvenience and annoyance not only to the railway company, but to grain houses in the East and the Northwest. We are decided in our opinion that a legal system of grain inspection is a necessity in Winnipeg, but we are equally decided, that the same is necessary at Port Arthur, and, in fact, the two should work in harmony, if the best interests of all concerned are to be regarded. Even with only the system of grain examination at Port Arthur this is necessary, and if properly carried out, will obviate a great many of the difficulties which the latter place must labor under during this season. Unfortunately the General Manager of the C.P.R. for some unaccountable reason is said to favor a course, which must effectually shut out the possibility of this harmonious working.

A great many people in the Northwest have fallen into the mistaken belief, that grain inspection for this country will have the effect of raising the grade of the bulk of our wheat to No. 1 hard, and the balance to No. 2 hard, and before the present crop is all marketed there will be many dissatisfied men among our farmers. The Examining Board of the Winnipeg Board of Trade in fixing the standards of grades for this city, have carefully weighed this fact. They know that from a state of chaos in our grain handling, to a system of strict and equitable inspection, is a big stride to make in one season. They have therefore, been careful to make the standards equal to those of Minneapolis and Duluth, the only other hard wheat markets on this

continent, but they have had the wisdom not to exact any higher standards for this season at least. The fact that the Examining Board is composed entirely of experienced grain dealers accounts for this wise action, and what they have done will no doubt do much to lessen the annoyance which a grain inspector has to encounter during the first year of an inspection system. When we contrast the action of the Winnipeg Examining Board with that of the General Manager of the C.P.R. in this matter of fixing standards, it is not difficult to see experience in the former, and something very like presumption in the latter. Mr. Van Horne is unquestionably the General Manager of the greatest of Canadian Railways, but he cannot assume the regulating as he sees fit of the whole grain trade of the Northwest. Although the Dominion Inspection Act distinctly places the power of fixing standards of grain grades with the Boards of Trade of certain cities, Mr. Van Horne completely ignores the fact, and with a vividness of imagination parallel to his audacity, he believes himself competent for a whole Board's duties. It is unfortunate, however, that people of experience in grain matters have not such a high opinion of the qualifications of the General Manager as he evidently has of himself, and some go so far as to say, that in his, as in most other such cases, presumption has found an ally in limited knowledge of the whole question under consideration.

Let us see what Mr. Van Horne's standards are. Duluth and Minneapolis inspection places No. 1 hard at 58 lbs. to the bushel minimum weight; and No. 2 hard 56lbs. Mr. Van Horne has fixed No. 1 hard at 60lbs., and No. 2 hard at 58lbs. Duluth and Minneapolis inspection fixes the minimum weight of No. 1 spring at 58lbs to the bushel, No. 2 spring at 56lbs., and No. 3 at 54lbs., while Mr. Van Horne has fixed them at 60lbs. for No. 1, 58 for No. 2, and 55½ for No. 3. As a kind of cupalo to top this whole structure of novelties, Mr. Van Horne has manufactured a new grade to suit his own fancy, for it will certainly be found to suit nothing else connected with the Northwestern grain trade. This he calls Fancy No. 1 hard, and the minimum weight of this he fixes at 62lbs. to the bushel. Of course these are Mr. Van Horne's own grades, and he doubtless intends that they shall

be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Duluth, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago, New York, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and even Liverpool may have been guided hitherto by other standards, but they must change in deference to the opinions of the C.P.R. General Manager. Some of these places are old grain centres, but Mr. Van Horne has decided, that they are not yet too old to learn, and in receiving instructions he has constituted himself the Gamaliel at whose feet they shall sit. A stranger might think he imagined himself as important as the Irishman when he first possessed a watch. Early in the morning this gushing Hibernian stood, glancing alternately at the dial of his time-piece and the eastern horizon, when suddenly he exclaimed "be jabers if the sun doesn't rise over that hill inside uv another minit he'll be behind time this mornin."

All this sense of self-importance might be conceded to Mr. Van Horne, if it did not entail so much injury to the agricultural and other interests of the Northwest. As already stated it will be difficult enough during the first year to enforce an inspection equal to that of other grain centres, but to enforce a system of inspection which would not admit of 100 cars of No. 1 hard out of our five to six million bushels of surplus wheat, shows only how little Mr. Van Horne knows about the grain wants of this country, and how poorly he measures them.

When statistics of a season's shipments are reached, as they will be annually, and it is seen that somewhere about one per cent. of our exported wheat reached the grade of No. 1 hard, while Minnesota and Dakota with grades two pounds lower, will show a much larger proportion, it will be seen how these figures will be made use of by United States Railway Co's and immigration agents, and their effect upon the sale of C.P.R. lands can be imagined if not measured.

Mr. Van Horne evidently calculates that the wheat producing power of the Northwest grows in proportion to his own disposition to blow about it. It is also evident, that there is no act on the Dominion Statute Books, which is capable of being amended to suit the peculiar demands of Mr. Van Horne, and we may expect to have him applying at next session of the Dominion Parliament for a whole and split new act, which will allow of wider scope for his inspection vagaries.