

ill-will. We trust the mystery will be cleared up; the authorities seem to us to have been grossly negligent in not promptly offering a very large reward for information leading to the discovery of the offender. Indifference to such a crime is one. Revenge is of no party. If the supreme guardians of law and order in this Province take no heed of such an act of violence, they will encourage some wild spirits to assume their functions. If indifference is caused by official dislike of the "Witness," it is a national scandal; wise men would not suffer such a suspicion to arise. At the same time the "Witness" would have had a larger measure of public sympathy by adopting a less violent, exasperating tone in criticising those who differ with its political, religious and dietetic opinions.

NORTH-WEST DRAWBACKS.

In the face of the immigration into the United States having collapsed so seriously as to cause the numbers of those leaving America to exceed those entering—as has been the case for a length of time—it is only natural for the arrivals of settlers for the North-west to be, as they are, below those of previous years. The causes which have checked immigration into the United States are, the revival of trade in England, the quieter, more hopeful condition of Ireland, the severe depression in the Republic and the low prices of farm produce, which have made agriculture a less attractive field for European settlers. So far as our North-west is concerned it is only the latter condition which has checked the outflow of British immigrants.

It is well known that the most successful emigration agents are successful settlers. A letter sent from one who has done well in Canada to English friends is not only passed round amongst their acquaintances and discussed at every farmer's gathering in the district, but is usually published in the country papers, thus reaching the class who make the most desirable immigrants. Unfortunately the letters from settlers in the North-west have been somewhat overcast with doubt and fears. The writers have dwelt more upon the drawbacks, the risks, the hardships of settlement, than upon the compensations which offset these troubles. When wheat was saleable at 60 or 70 cents a bushel there was a margin of profit amply sufficient to make life endurable and hopeful, in spite of loneliness, hard work and the customary disappointments of farm life.

But when wheat dropped to 45 cents, the heart of the North-west settlers dropped to despair. Wheat, says a farmer from that region, now in Montreal, can be grown to yield some small profit at 55 cents a bushel, but any price below that leaves nothing beyond the bare cost of production.

Now, what the North-westerners are incensed at is to find their wheat, the best in the world, sold by them at 40 to 45

cents, resold in Liverpool for double that money. As the cost of transportation to that market is about 25 cents a bushel, it follows that on wheat sold by the grower at, say, 45 cents, the middleman has reaped a profit of over 40 per cent on the original cost. Manifestly this is a very serious drawback. When it is told to the people in Great Britain, to whom, in farm products, the middleman is little known, and when known, is a most offensive personage, no wonder such a fact puts a frost on any desire to emigrate.

Then, another grave injury to the North-west, has been done by the system of selling implements on time. The credit plan has been worked to death. Farmers have been tempted by persistent solicitations to buy costly machinery which they did not need to use more than a day or two in a season, a costly binder for instance for a patch of 50 acres. The terms were, one third in a year, another in two years, and balance at end of third year, with arrears to bear 12 per cent. Now, of course, a machine sold in that way, must be charged enormously over cost to cover risks, yet they have been almost forced on North-west farmers by agents. The result in a large number of cases has been the accumulation of arrears and of interest, until our informant says, he has seen collectors in his house with a sheaf of claims, some of them originally only \$100 that had swollen to \$200, even to \$300 by interest and other incidental charges. This credit system has done incalculable injury to the North-west, it is the real secret of nearly all the failures, as these implement debts and charges have taken the heart out of settlers. Of course they were foolish to incur such liabilities, but we must remember how difficult it is to get labor up there, and how difficult also it is for farmers to co-operate and join in owning costly machines, when they are separated by such distances.

Another grievance is the scanty train accommodation. Through his district there is only one train a day, and it passes many settlements in the dead of the night, he can only arrive at and depart from a station at 3 a.m. He describes the land as richly watered and wooded, unsurpassable in fertility, or the scenery in beauty.

It is especially adapted to cattle raising and dairying. But prices are discouraging as animals only fetch \$20, that some time ago were saleable at \$30. The almost entire absence of money is a very serious drawback. Goods are all sold by barter, in which trading the farmer gets always the worst of the bargain, having to take in exchange things he does not need, at excessively high prices, or keep his produce. The lack of local markets for butter and eggs is much felt.

Manifestly the North-west problem is not yet solved, nor will it be until farmers are brought into closer contact with the English market, so that they may secure a living price for what they raise. These questions demand the earnest attention of the Government, and of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which our informant declares is most unpopular in the

North-west for its high rates and general neglect of the interests of settlers.

THE COLONIAL CONFERENCE.

Until it is known what passed in the secret deliberations of the colonial delegates and our representatives at Ottawa, it is not possible to discuss the business before them save in a general way, which would be very unsatisfactory. The open meeting to receive the delegates was a highly agreeable one, so also was the dinner at the Russell House, Ottawa. On both occasions the speeches were eloquent, but were made up of glittering generalities.

With the glory of the Empire we are quite familiar, what we wish to know is, by what means the trade of this country can be extended with other colonies, or indeed into any other markets. The cultivation of a friendly sentiment between the various parts of the Empire is a highly commendable object, especially so when it leads to a more complete knowledge of the trading needs and capacities of those with whom larger trading may thus be created.

Love and affection are very cloudy terms to use in international or intercolonial relations. If any country will buy our goods, or sell us what we need, on favorable terms, we are quite willing to let sentiment slide. We trust that the conference will formulate some policy calculated to enlarge our markets; if that results from its deliberations we shall have substantial reasons for regarding it as a great success. If no such results follow, we can only regard the gathering as a very pleasant historical incident.

SOME PHASES OF OVER-PRODUCTION.

The "Iron Age" says: "The great increase in U.S. exports of manufactured goods during the current year causes much favorable comment. It is, indeed, a pleasant feature of our foreign trade. The more goods exported the less gold must be shipped out to cover balances. Probably little or no profit is realized on a considerable part of the merchandise thus disposed of, the home market is certainly relieved to the same extent, and it is to be hoped that the foreign trade in American goods may continue to make great gains. It is amusing, however, to see the importance attached to this subject by some of our contemporaries. They invariably use a magnifying glass when they search into the influences radiating from exports. They tell us that if our manufacturers will only cultivate foreign trade they will never again suffer from so severe a depression as they recently were forced to endure and for which their confinement to the home market was responsible. Do the sanguine writers ever stop to consider the magnitude of our manufactures and the very great