

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, DECEMBER 29, 1885.

IRON FOR THE NORTHWEST.

While the work of developing the agricultural resources of the Northwest is making steady although not very rapid progress, the mineral resources of the country are lying practically untouched. It is not three years since the first of our coal has been mined and placed in the market, and as yet only one or two of the vast fields have been opened up. What little has been done in this way has only supplied for us a faint glimpse of the unbounded fuel resources of our great land, so that all we have yet done is to prove beyond a doubt our mineral wealth in this particular line, and yet we are burning in our houses and factories one of the best soft coals to be found in the world, the supply of which is simply unlimited.

We have scarcely made search for any useful mineral outside of coal, and yet we have had it demonstrated by both scientists and practical miners that our iron resources are in no way inferior or more limited than our coal beds. In fact there are circumstances in connection with many of our iron ore beds, which make them much nearer to being practically useful than our coal beds. One of these circumstances is the fact that some of these iron beds are easily accessible and near to a means of conveyance to population centres. Around the shores of Lake Winnipeg for instance the fields of very fine ore are to all intents and purposes unlimited. We have been told by practical mineralogists who have tested samples from there that we have some of the finest and richest hematite ore to be found on the American continent, which must yield heavy returns for the trouble and expense of smelting. In many other localities we have equally rich deposits, but perhaps in no other place are they so easy of access.

There are few people here now who doubt the abundance of iron ore in the locality we have mentioned, and yet there has as yet been no definite move towards its development and utilizing. Too many of the parties interested in the country, and possessed of the means to engage in this work of developing our iron resources, have the fixed idea in their minds that outside of agriculture the fields here for

investment are both few and limited, and scarcely any of them have yet looked upon iron mines as one of the profitable ones. Perhaps if they would take the trouble to inquire into the matter there might be some radical change in their opinions upon this subject.

It is not our intention now to go into a tabulation of figures and facts to prove that iron production from our natural resources would be profitable. Nor do we deem ourselves half so competent to do so, as the practical individuals possessed of extensive experience in iron working, whom we are most anxious to make investigations on the subject. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the field for iron mining is steadily spreading Northward and Westward in this continent, until the actual demands of the iron trade are causing the miner's mattock so to speak to tap at our doors. It is in the memory of some of our comparatively young people, when the first attempts were made at working the iron resources of the shores of Lake Superior, and to-day the demand for and production of iron ore from that district have assumed colossal proportions. Recently the *Iron Trade Review* of Cleveland, Ohio, stated that the iron ore taken from the Lake Superior districts during the past year reached an aggregate of nearly 3,000,000 tons, the largest yet reached, and that the demand for the same was steadily on the increase. So much so that in a few years the supply must be altogether inadequate to fill the demand. We think this is a pretty loud knock at the door of our Northwestern iron deposits, and one which it would be well to give head to. If Lake Superior is found too limited in supply, or that supply is beginning to fail, we have another inland sea, Lake Winnipeg, where the growing demands of the iron trade can find an ample supply. In this field the funds of the capitalist can find profitable investment, and the certainty of profit is all the greater, when according to the statement of our Cleveland contemporary these mineral resources must soon be indispensable if the growing demands of the iron trade are to find a supply near home.

To the people of the Northwest it is unnecessary to point out the value of these iron deposits as a power in the development of our own country. The work of railway construction has only commenced in this broad land, which

must in fewer years than we imagine be one huge cultivated field. Thousands upon thousands of miles of railway will be necessary to carry on and complete this great work, and it can be more easily imagined than calculated, what a boon it would be to have in our own midst the power of producing the rails for this iron network, which must in time cover the face of this great fertile land.

FARMERS AS GRAIN DEALERS.

Most sensible people in this city and province were agreeably surprised at the good sense and moderation displayed by the Farmers' Union at its late convention in Winnipeg, and to some people of a mischievous turn of mind the results may be tantalizing. Be that as it may, the farmers of Manitoba in convention in 1885 furnished a marked contrast to the farmers of Manitoba in convention in 1883. What has caused this satisfactory change, is exercising the minds of many, and each attributes it to some cause, real or imaginary, but as a rule to one which suits the tastes or prejudices of the party forming the opinion. Thus those who wish to see the Union out of existence say that the members have enough of quarrels among themselves to keep them from quarreling with outsiders. Others who are well-wishers of the Union say, and not without truth, that the improved financial state of our farmers now, compared with two years ago, leaves them very little room for discontent, and furnishes no incentive for them to run discontent into petulance.

The above reasons, as well as others, may have contributed more or less to bring out the more sensible traits in our farmers, but we believe there is one cause which above all others has contributed to silencing this discontent and petulance and bringing them down to sensible ideas, and that is the utter failure of their trading operations, and the consequent growing belief that, as a body, they are not quite so versatile in their talents as they supposed they were. A year ago they had nothing but abuse for their fellow-citizens in other walks of life, and every trader they had dealings with was rated as a skark who lived by what he plundered from the honest, horny-handed farmer. Of course the miller and the grain dealer came in for the heavy share of their abuse, but they had still considerable to spare for men in other lines of