

favorable arrangement of tariffs than we now have, and free competition in railways to the east, the commerce of the province must remain to a great extent under the manipulation of eastern middlemen, until we have an outlet of our own to the Old World through which our exports and imports can pass without paying commercial "Backsheesh" to eastern men. The construction of a railway to the shores of the Hudson's Bay may be delayed by the shuffling of charter-mongers and scheming of political tricksters, but even Mr. Norquay will in the ordinary calculations of life live to see this same outlet the main gateway between the Northwest and the Old World, and to have our leading seaports within our own boundaries is a necessity, if we as a province are ever to reach that commercial greatness which nature has placed within our reach.

There is one special reason, why Mr. Norquay should urge, and with determination insist upon these concessions in favor of Manitoba's commercial interests, and that is in securing them all other classes in the province would be greatly benefitted, as they conflict with no other interests, and as to the enlargement of our provincial boundaries, in so doing we would be acquiring territory which has hitherto been left in the peaceful possession of the beaver and the otter, so that we would be robbing no party in securing it.

A SCATTERED SEASON.

During the late summer and early fall of the present year THE COMMERCIAL frequently called attention to the scattered characters of the season's business with wholesale merchants in this city. Retailers all over the country refused to stock up in the beginning of the season, and bought for fall and winter trade only when demands upon themselves compelled purchases to be made. This cautious policy was dictated mainly by the bitter experience of last year's overstocking, and was no doubt a commendable policy under the circumstances. Results have since shown, that this action of retailers was only an index to the scattered nature of everything in connection with the present season in the Northwest. There seems to have been a combination of circumstances in trade, farming, and weather which have tended to stretch everything out over months, which in past years was

accomplished in a few weeks, or at least the bulk of it accomplished.

In the first place the weather in this country has been so unusually mild this winter so far, that retail merchants are doing business in December, which they should have been doing early in November, and the probability is that the business of December will stretch away into January, instead of finishing up before Christmas as it has formerly done. This has been the case more or less in all lines of merchandise, while in season goods it has been remarkably so, and at present there is a great amount of grumbling, and not without reason, on the part of many of our retail merchants both in the city and country.

But we find that the scattered characteristics of the season are not confined to trading circles, but are very apparent in connection with the movement of farmers' grain to market, and even the clerk of the weather has shown such a share of lethargy, that our country stands in danger of losing its valuable reputation for cold winters and snow blinding blizzards. Usually during the latter part of November, and all of December, we have steady cold weather and good sleighing all over the Northwest, at least as far west as the Saskatchewan river. This season, however, a night with the thermometer down as low as zero has been somewhat of a novelty, and as for snow we have not had enough for our citizens to indulge in a comfortable cutter ride. The effect of this can be well understood. Hauling of grain to market has been very much retarded. Farmers, who live near a market have been able to bring their grain the requisite short distances, but those who live long distances from railway facilities have as yet marketed but a fraction of their crop, and it so happens that by far the best crops and quality of wheat have been raised in South-western Manitoba and other districts where farmers are, as a rule, long distances from railway towns. Of the crop of wheat variously estimated at from 7,000,000 to 9,000,000 bushels, less than 2,500,000 have yet come to market, so that two-thirds of the crop is yet in the hands of the farmers, and even the promised philanthropy in prices of the great Montreal syndicate are powerless to materially increase wheat receipts until we have some snow to make sleighing. Unfortunately this state of affairs has introduced the scattered characteristics

into financial affairs, and hundreds of thousands of dollars which should have been in circulation among merchants by this time are now represented by wheat held in the farmers' bins. We need not be astonished, therefore, if the circulation of money at present is rather limited, and that cash which the trader should now have in his possession will be received in dribbles during the next two months. On the principle of "All's well that ends well," a scattered season may be all right enough in the end, but it carries a pressure through its middle, the great bulk of which has to be borne by the trader, and during the present one that individual finds very little sympathy and less support from financial institutions which should stand by him during such a time.

PHILANTHROPY FLOWN.

The wheat buying operations of the great Montreal Syndicate are already beginning to show out in their true color, and Northwesterners who were simple enough to be captivated by the hope that their wheat would net them more than its actual market value are beginning to see, if not to feel, the folly of looking for philanthropy where value for value only might be expected. It is probably well that they have learned this lesson so soon, as it will cost less now than it might a few weeks hence. The most rabid farmers' unionist will now admit that wheat at present is lower in price than it has been since the crop of 1884 began to come to market, and in his inner heart he will be prepared to admit that the policy of arraying the farmer against the whole mercantile interest of the country he lives in does not tend towards bettering his marketing facilities.

Many are the devices resorted to by the C.P.R. to secure the carrying of all grain via Port Arthur, and this philanthropic syndicate is one of the most questionable yet adopted. It may serve the company as an advertising dodge, but practical benefit it has failed to bring to our farmers, and eventually must react to the injury of the country. Farmers should remember that men who stake their money in grain elevators, are interested in the agricultural welfare of the country, and are more likely to do justly by them than any syndicate of men belonging to a distant province. All should remember that interests are mutual here, whether farmers, traders or manufacturers, and all things would work smoothly.