

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 9, 1893.

## BARB WIRE FENCES.

Barb wire is the staple fencing material in Western Canada, though at the same time it is a much abused article. But in spite of all that is said and written against this class of fencing material, it is almost universally used on our prairies. Nothing has yet been introduced in the line of fencing material which has succeeded in replacing barb wire to any extent. Several other classes of fencing are used, but all the other kinds of fencing combined do not meet with much demand in comparison with the use of barb wire.

In spite of the constant grumbling against barb wire, there are many things which can be said in its favor. It is the cheapest and most efficient fencing material for farms in the prairie region. Rail or board fences are objectionable on account of their tendency to cause snow to form drifts in the winter season, and they are expensive besides. Plain wire is as good as barb so far as drifting snow is concerned, but plain wire will not take the place of barb for the farm fence. Animals will pay little attention to the plain wire fence, and if they once get into the habit of going through it, nothing will keep them in. A plain wire fence could be made to work all right if several extra strands were used, and the posts were placed very close together, but this makes the fence expensive. Barb wire makes the cheapest fence and the best fence for general farm purposes.

A great deal of the abuse directed against barb wire fencing has arisen from fences improperly constructed, or allowed to get out of repair. Driving about the country the thoughtful person will soon learn why there is so much dislike for barb wire fencing. One sees fences with only two strands of wire, or with posts as much as thirty feet apart, while wires are allowed to become detached from posts and hang on the ground. This faulty construction and neglect to keep in repair is the cause of most of the trouble with barb wire fences. In the first place the posts should not be placed too far apart. For small stock about eight to ten feet is space enough between posts, and not more than fifteen feet apart for large stock. The posts do not require to be so very large. If a large post is used here and there, with smaller ones between, a good fence will be secured. The next thing is to put on a sufficient number of strands of wire. Four wires will make a splendid fence for large stock, when the posts are properly placed, and if it is kept in repair the animals will not trouble it. For sheep six wires will be required to make a secure fence, and an additional wire will have to be strung near the top of the poles to keep off horses and cattle. In the sheep fence, plain wire may be used alternately with the barb, thus making a first-class combined sheep and large stock fence to consist of four barb and three plain strands of wire. For ordinary purposes, however, three strands of bar, with posts placed middling close together,

will make a fairly good fence, while four strands make an excellent fence.

By all means keep the fence in good repair. Do not allow the wires to become detached from the posts, and keep them drawn tight. The most of the trouble from barb wire fences comes from neglect. Staples become accidentally drawn, and the wires are left to trail on the ground. Stock become entangled in the loose wires and get nasty cuts, and cattle get into the habit of passing through the fence, and when once this habit is acquired it is hard to break them of it. Live stock seldom become injured in a barb wire fence, when properly constructed, with a reasonable number of strands of wire and posts, and kept in repair. The writer has twice witnessed horses strange to the farm, run away in a field enclosed with a properly constructed fence, without any injury to the animals, as they kept clear of the fence, though they passed around the field several times. If the posts had been a long distance apart, these horses would certainly have run into the fence, and perhaps have been badly injured. With posts reasonably close together, and not less than four strands of wire, kept up tight, the barb wire makes a good fence for large stock and a cheap fence, and one which the stock will soon learn to respect.

## NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAYS.

The railway map of America affords an interesting study. A few weeks ago THE COMMERCIAL referred editorially to the Canadian Pacific "Soo" connection, then about completed. With many readers this would simply be passed over as an ordinary item of news, but with a few it would perhaps lead to a train of thoughts, especially if viewed in connection with a railway map of the continent. The completion of the "Soo" line means in reality the opening of another through Pacific route—the second Pacific line opened within a year, and each in the same territory almost.

What is remarkable about these transcontinental railways is that so many of them have selected a northern route to reach the Pacific coast. Including the "Soo," Pacific and the new Great Northern, we now have four transcontinental routes occupying what is usually mentioned as the Northwest, in the region of the forty-ninth parallel of latitude. Many people in the east and elsewhere delight to talk about this northern territory as cold and inhospitable. Some even go so far as to assert that it is unfit for settlement. But in spite of all this, the great railway men of the continent select this northern territory in preference to southern routes, and invest vast sums of money in transcontinental railways. It is certainly significant that the region about the forty-ninth parallel is becoming the great highway between the East and the West. Not only the highway between the East and the West when speaking of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America, but also the great highway between the East and the West in a broader sense—between Europe and the Orient. Nothing develops a country like railways; and when we think of the construction of these great transcontinental railways in the Northwest, to say nothing of the rapid construction of numer-

ous branch lines and feeders, what must be the inevitable conclusion? That the rapid development of the immediate future will be in the neighborhood of the forty-ninth parallel—that the centre of population is moving in a northwesterly direction to the forty-ninth parallel. This we think must be the conclusion arrived at.

The Northwest is the hope of America—of the Republic and the Dominion. Railway construction—the forerunner of development, of commerce, industry and wealth—points to this conclusion. There is more good land tributary to these northern roads than exists to feed the southern routes, and the amount of fertile territory increases with each step northward from one route to another. The next through Pacific route will in all human probability occupy the North Saskatchewan country, a region 200 to 300 miles farther north than the most northerly route now in existence, but already reached by two branch lines from the Canadian Pacific. This Saskatchewan valley route of the future will far eclipse all other Pacific railways in the amount of fertile territory tributary to its line. The seat of empire is coming northwestward.

## SPECULATION AND WHEAT PRICES.

It is clamorously affirmed by certain agitators that speculative trading in wheat depresses prices. In the United States there has been a great outcry against speculative trading in farm produce, on the alleged ground that it depresses prices to farmers, and many farmers have actually become imbued with the idea that the gambling in wheat, corn, etc., carried on in Chicago and other centres is done at their expense. That numerous class of agitators who for political or other reasons to meet their own selfish aims, delight to trade upon the gullibility of the farmer, have been loud in their denunciation of speculative trading in farm produce. This agitation has found effect in the bills introduced into congress to suppress trading in options, etc.

An analyses of the situation does not seem to indicate that speculative trading oppresses prices. In fact indications point all the other way, and it appears to be quite clear that option trading has tended to strengthen prices. If prices for wheat have been low of late, it has been in spite of speculation. It seems only necessary to point out one fact to prove this. Chicago is the centre of speculative dealing in wheat, and Chicago prices have for two years been higher proportionately than other markets. Speculation has kept wheat prices at Chicago at a higher range than other markets, and often considerably above export values. This is a strong argument to prove that speculation does not oppress prices. In the face of such an argument, it is difficult to see what ground the agitators have to stand upon, so far as the depression of prices is concerned. If the opposition to speculation were based upon the argument that it enhanced prices to the consumer, there would appear to be more method in the movement.

The natural tendency of speculation is to give tone to the markets, and accelerate business. When speculation is dull prices are de-