

the economical or commercial point of view the department store is being vehemently denounced as a fraud and a humbug. That it must be inherently dishonest is demonstrated in a priori style. It has only to be assumed that the average merchandise in which it deals cannot be profitably sold at a cheaper rate than that fixed by the law of competition under the old system, and charged by the regular dealers. The advertising of goods is below this fixed price means selling below cost; hence cheating of some kind or speedy ruin. Either the goods are of inferior quality, or they are manufactured and sold on the sweating system, the necessities of the workmen and women being taken advantage of, and they are compelled to work at starvation wages. Generally both vices are said to be combined. The purchaser is in the first place, himself cheated in his purchases. While thus injuring himself, he at the same time, through his mean and dishonest desire to get something from another less than its value, becomes partaker in the cruel and sinful injustice of wronging the workers and extorting their labor without fairly paying for it. For it is undeniable, and the point demands very serious consideration, that if the proprietor of one of these stores is robbing both his employees and his customers, those who patronize his establishment must be sharers in the guilt. The receiver of stolen or counterfeit goods is rightly held to share in the guilt of the counterfeit or the thief. On this ground, articles written in condemnation of the departmental stores are sometimes headed by the more zealous opponents of the business establishments in question 'Thou shalt not steal,' and go on to show that every one who patronizes these stores violates the highest moral law.

"This is one side of the controversy. What of the other? Says the conscientious patron of the departmental store in effect: This reasoning rests wholly on the assumption that the proprietor of the store in question cannot procure his goods on such terms as may warrant him in selling them materially below the current rate, without either cheating his customers with inferior goods, or grading the faces of his employees. If this assumption can be shown to be incorrect or unprovable, the whole argument based upon it falls to the ground. If it be true, as the proprietor of the department store will maintain, that by purchasing direct from the manufacturer, for cash, in immense quantities, thus saving the costs and profits of middlemen; by saving large sums in rent and taxes, and in the cost of selling and distributing, through having but

one set of machinery instead of several; by selling for cash only in so large amounts that he can grow rich on very narrow profits, and by other economies, then the departmental store simply takes the rank with other labor-saving inventions, which have wrought so radical, in the opinions of most, beneficent changes in all great modern industries.

"The controversy is a large one. We have touched but one or two phases of it, hoping to suggest thereby a line of investigation which may lead the conscientious Christian who earnestly desires to do the right, and who is, at the same time, under obligation to live as economically as possible, within the limits of fair and honest dealing, to a conclusion as to whether, by patronizing one of those obnoxious stores, he or she becomes a partaker with cheats, thieves, and oppressors of their fellows."

### Along the C.P.R. West of Winnipeg

#### FROM BRANDON WESTWARD.

Prosperity marks the business interests of all the towns along the C. P. R. and especially at this season. Nowhere is that prosperity more marked than in the several towns of the province of Manitoba west of the city of Brandon. There was a time when it used to be said that the proximity of these smaller places to Brandon precluded the development of any great stability or solidity of business, much less of any extension. It is different now. Any such statement would be far from the truth. The substantial character of business and residential buildings and public buildings too, the extent to which building has been done, the stocks carried by the merchants, the amount of trade done and the success attained by many of them, all go to show that these towns had a future and that future is expanding year by year.

#### ALEXANDER.

This town, only sixteen miles from Brandon, is a thrifty, busy little place with a good trade. The evidence of neatness and taste in residences and their surroundings, tree-planting and such are making Alexander a pretty little town. This is a very strong wheat market, there having been some eight or nine buyers on this season. There are four elevators with a total capacity of 110,000 bushels. The amount of wheat expected to be marketed this season is about 275,000 bushels, the bulk of which is now in. Last year the total market was 325,000 bushels, but the average yield per acre is lighter this year, not exceeding 12 or 15 bushels, the acreage under crop remaining about the same.

Among the business men of Alexander are W. Dickson, who has been here a number of years. He carries a large stock of general merchandise, filling his large brick store full. It is the only large stock carried here and is fully as good as would be found in a much larger place. J. Creighton, who purchased Birley & Agar's Stock, is also a general merchant. He is selling off his stock to go out of business. There are two good hardware stores, Jas. Forman and D. Mollisquam. Mr. Forman is the lumber merchant of the place and has also recently added a complete stock of furniture. C. S. Touchburn and G. Davis are each engaged in the drug business and their stores are both well appointed and well stocked. W. Goldsmith deals in flour and feed, and coal, and is agent for the McCormick Co. Jos. Birtles is the village butcher, J. T. Blair the baker. Geo. R. Kerr has a good harness shop and a large stock. Alexander is a lively sporting town having a football team of which they are proud. The younger business men have a strong hockey club and all are this year interested in curling, a club having been formed and a two sheet rink having been built by A. McNab in connection with his skating and hockey rink. There is a very respectable planing mill and machine shop at Alexander, built by A. White, a local builder and contractor. J. W. McCord's large and tidy hotel furnishes good accommodation and near it is located A. E. Birch's livery and feed barn. Some of the buildings, residence and otherwise, are built of brick and a few of stone. The public school is a fine large red brick structure built four years ago, and in every way a modern and convenient building. It cost \$4,000. The wheat area surrounding Alexander is known as one of the best and the numerous large and handsome farm houses and buildings show the prosperity of the farmers.

#### GRISWOLD.

This town has also four elevators, all of which have been taxed to the utmost by the rapid wheat deliveries. There have been over 200,000 bushels delivered so far and fully 50,000 will yet be marketed here, the total tributary to the point being reckoned at about 250,000 or 275,000. The merchants and other business men are well satisfied with the condition of trade and one of the leading men stated that it was as near being a "cash town" as any he knew. A. E. Hill has been here a number of years as a general merchant and carries a large stock and does a good trade. He has another store at Hartney. H. A. Scarth is another old established merchant. He has a large store and a good stock, and is reckoned