

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 8, 1896.

ARGENTINE.

Any information regarding Argentine will be of special interest in Manitoba, as that country is regarded by many as the future great wheat producer of the world. A few years ago it was the belief of many that India would be the great producer of wheat, and American farmers (we use the word America in its broad sense) were worked up into a needless state of alarm over the prospect of being driven out of the wheat growing industry by the cheap labor of India. The farmers of that country, it was said, could live and prosper where the average American farmer would starve to death. Americans it was declared, could never hope to compete with the farmers of India, who could live on a few cents per day. We have seen, however, that all these fears have not been realized, and India has ceased to be regarded as a very formidable competitor.

But while the fear of Indian competition has been dying out, a new cause for alarm to the American farmer has arisen, in the southern hemisphere. Argentina has jumped to the front with prodigious rapidity as a producer of wheat. In the year 1889, Argentina exported only 22,806 tons of wheat, but the following year her exports increased to 327,891 tons, and in 1891 to almost 400,000 tons. In 1892 the amount was again increased by 65 tons, and then in 1893 there was a big jump to 1,008,137 tons; with a further enormous increase in 1894 to 1,608,219 tons. This surprising increase in the wheat exports of Argentina were certainly such as to cause alarm in other great wheat-producing countries. This rapid extension of the wheat industry in the southern republic was supplemented by reports telling how cheaply wheat could be produced in that country. It was alleged that wheat could be produced at a cost of 25 cents per bushel, thus enabling the farmer to sell at 50 cents per bushel and make 100 per cent profit.

Last year, owing to great damage to the crop during harvest, from rain and storms, Argentina did not keep up her record, and the wheat crop decreased by about one-third, as compared with the previous year. Whether this is only a temporary check or not, remains to be seen. The country is said to be fast settling up with immigrants from southern Europe, particularly Italians, who are the principal agricultural population. It is therefore quite possible that Argentina may show a further considerable increase in wheat production, should the weather be favorable for the next crop. As far as can be learned, the climate of the country is not very reliable, being subject to drouths, at other times to excessive rains, and the wheat crop has also suffered from frost in some years, notwithstanding that the climate is mild, there being practically no winter season there.

One of the greatest drawbacks to the production of wheat in Argentina is the absence

of an elevator system, which renders it necessary to handle wheat in sacks. This greatly increases the cost of exporting wheat from that country. Here in Manitoba some farmers are inclined to grumble about what they allege to be the evils of the elevator system. A few have gone so far as to declare for the abolition of elevators entirely. If these people had one month's experience in Argentina during the marketing season, they would doubtless forever hold their peace as regards grumbling about the elevators. Manitoba has about the best elevator system in the world, and without it the profits of our farmers would be greatly reduced.

This, however, is digressing from our subject. To return to Argentine and its capabilities of growing wheat, The Commercial wishes to refer to the enterprise of the Northwestern Miller, in sending a representative to investigate its grain and milling trade. The Miller's representative, who is a gentleman of experience in the grain trade, has given a great deal of information about the country. In a recent letter the gentleman—Mr. Kingsland Smith, of Liverpool—sums up his opinion of Argentine's capabilities in the wheat line in the following words: "I do not feel at all sure that Argentina is destined to be the world's great wheat-raiser." On the contrary, I think the chances are that the development will be slow, and, as far as the wheat goes, I have not seen any wheat in the country that I would care to mill, except that grown in the southern part of Buenos Aires. At this time, Rosario is the great center of the grain trade. Vila & Hoenig's mill is the best situated for exporting of any I have seen, as they can load ocean steamers out of the back door. The mill was built by Noye, several years ago, and made lots of money at the start, although Mr. Hoenig says it is pretty close work now, and that he does not make much more than a bare living. He ships largely to Brazil, but not to Europe. They have the soil here to do great things in wheat, but the climate is rather uncertain, and the facilities for handling grain are most primitive, and, unless some entirely new element is infused into the country, development will be slow."

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

NOW is the time to begin the onslaught on noxious weeds, and keep it up throughout the season. The weed commonly known as stink or French weed, is already in bloom, and should be dealt with at once. It is to be feared that weeds will be worse than usual this year, owing to the wet season as well as to the plan which has been adopted of putting in much of the wheat crop this year. A great deal of wheat has been sown on stubble without plowing. This mode of sowing wheat gives good results on well-cultivated, clean land, but where the land is weedy, it gives the weeds a splendid chance to get ahead of the grain crop. In the low sections, a good deal of land will likely be idle this year, owing to the prolonged wet weather. Unless this land is summer-fallowed, it will produce a heavy crop of weeds. The custom of the old native settlers of Manitoba, to allow land to lie idle, without summer-fallowing or seeding to grass, has been a great detriment to the old settled districts, resulting in depreciating the value of land and even driving away some of the best farmers from such

districts. It is therefore hoped that the land not in crop this year will be summer-fallowed in order to prevent the production of a crop of weeds.

In connection with this question of weeds, it may be noted that Dr. James Fletcher, of the Dominion Experimental farm staff, at Ottawa, botanist and entomologist, will visit Manitoba this year. Dr. Fletcher has made a special study of weeds and while here he will deliver a course of lectures on the subject, with a view to spreading information about the noxious weeds and the best way to destroy them.

ONTARIO CROP REPORT.

THE first crop report for the province of Ontario for 1896 has been received. The spring was reported one to three weeks earlier than usual. Cattle were out to grass about May 1, thus greatly relieving the anxiety caused by the scarcity of fodder on account of the drouth of last year. Peaches and plums were in bloom as early as April 22 at Peelo island. Regarding fall wheat the report "has not been so unfavorable for many years" says the bulletin, owing to winter killing. "A large amount will be plowed up or re-sown to spring grain." Live stock were thinner than usual, owing to scarcity of winter fodder, and grain and roots were fed largely on account of the scarcity of hay fodder. Still the report says that live stock were healthy and came through the winter better than could have been expected, considering the shortage of the fodder crop of last year. Large quantities of oats are reported to be held by farmers. There was an excessive supply of farm labor, and wages were low.

WINNIPEG'S STREETS.

In The Commercial of May 18, editorial reference was made to the deplorable condition of the streets of the city. The feeling is growing in business circles especially, that some comprehensive plan of street improvement should be undertaken in Winnipeg at once. The local board of trade has since taken the matter up, and at the last meeting of the council of the board, a strong resolution was passed deploring the bad condition of the streets, and recommending their early improvement. The loss to the city from the bad condition of our streets must certainly be very great. The destruction of conveyances and the wear and tear of horse-flesh is alone a considerable item of loss to the city. The loss on this account has been far greater than people who are not aware of the circumstances, would imagine. Another serious loss has been the stopping of work, thus resulting in loss to wage-earners. During the long period this season that the streets have been practically impassable, building and other works have been stopped because material could not be delivered where required in order to execute the work. The result of this has been loss to workmen and laborers.

An enormous waste of civic labor has been going on for years, on account of the bad condition of the streets, in removing city garbage. Garbage is hauled out of the city over a road which is one of the worst imagin-