

## Hop Culture.

Year after year we hear of the failure of the hop crop in the eastern provinces and states, and in the latter it is being seriously discussed whether it will ever pay again to raise hops. So numerous and varied are the insect parasites which prey upon the vines, that great trouble and expense are necessary to save even a portion of a crop, and the whole is often lost in spite of the outlay of both.

In Manitoba every year thousands upon thousands of pounds of wild hops go to loss for want of any person to pick them, and the quality of these is as good as can be produced in the best eastern vine-ries. An old Pennsylvanian hop raiser recently called at the office of THE COMMERCIAL and left us some fine samples which he had picked near Portage la Prairie. He remarked "Could we raise full crops of such hops as that in my State, even with the most careful cultivation, we should think we had a gold mine." He informed us also that he could not find a trace of any parasite that affected the hop here. He has since gone east with a strong desire to form a joint stock company for the raising of hops in Manitoba. Some of our Canadian hop farmers might look this matter up, and we might have a branch of husbandry and a valuable industry established in Manitoba.

## Fuel for the North-West.

Industrial undertakings are now increasing so rapidly in the North-West, that a cheaper and greater supply of fuel must soon become an absolute necessity. The timber not suitable for lumbering purposes is but limited, and is all required for household purposes, while coal imported from the United States is rather expensive as yet to enable Manitobans to compete in general manufactures. The new freight rates on the Canadian Pacific Railway from Thunder Bay to the west, while giving a partial relief, do not by any means obviate the difficulty. We are pleased to see that an attempt is soon to be made by Mr. Pocock to open up the coal fields of the Souris Valley, and that this gentleman, who we understand is a practical miner, estimates that coal can soon be laid down in Winnipeg at \$8 a ton. Some scientific experts assert that the coal of this district is only a comparatively worthless lignite containing only 40 to 50 per cent. of carbon. Samples picked out near the surface of the ground have certainly been of this class, but the results of prospecting for coal on this Continent, or at least the portion of it between the Mississippi and Lake Superior on the east and the Rocky Mountains on the west, have proved that where this lignite is found near the surface, seams of bituminous coal containing a much larger percentage of carbon have invariably been met with at a greater depth. Such has been the experience of practical miners, although in several cases geologists and so-called scientific experts have prophesied other results. We have no doubt but the Souris fields will turn out similarly, and that the early opening up of railways into that district will furnish a plentiful supply of good bituminous coal for the manufacturers of Manitoba Cities.

A supply of Anthracite coal other than what comes from the United States seems not far distant, and it is to be hoped that it will soon be within our reach. The completion of a line of railway from Winnipeg to the Hudson's Bay Coast would open up a route for the coal of South Wales, by which vessels could discharge cargoes of the same within less than 700 miles of the Manitoba Capital. But we do not even require to cross the Atlantic for our Anthracite coal. In the North-East Territory, north west of Labrador lie some of the most extensive fields of this coal to be found in the world. Samples secured by prospectors show a quality equal to the finest found in Pennsylvania, while the supply is practically unlimited. The completion of a line to Hudson's Bay would be a big step towards opening up these vast fields, which would give to the North-West an unlimited supply of coal for every purpose, making cheap and abundant fuel without even taking into consideration the timber supply of this country.

## The Hudson's Bay Route.

Every investigation regarding this Northern route between Europe and the American North-West reveals more of its practicability, and lessens the apparent difficulties regarding its establishment and effective working. The ocean portion of the route is gradually losing its terrors, and the great Bay of the North and the straits connecting it with the Atlantic are fast falling into line as a safe navigable inland sea, and a deep and shoalless channel, while their arctic properties are gradually vanishing under the sun of close investigation.

The proportion of the year in which the Hudson's Straits are open to navigation is variously estimated. Some who probably calculate upon the old system of sailing vessels limit it to three months; while others taking into consideration the advantages of improved steam navigation extend the term to six and even seven months. The first figure, doubtless represents the calculations of a day gone by, while the larger of the two latter represents the most sanguine estimate of the advanced party. Strong representations have been made to the Imperial Government of the necessity of a thorough survey of the Hudson's Bay and Straits by a ship of the Survey Department of the Royal Navy, and there is some hope that a ship of that class will spend the coming winter in these regions, which would thoroughly settle the controversy about the time which this route is open. Old residents of the Pacific Slope will remember how much good was accomplished for British Columbia by the surveys of the Straits of Juan de Fuca and other portions of that coast by H. M. Ship Plumper, and a few years of similar work by such a ship in the Hudson's Bay region would accomplish even greater good for the North-West, and would certainly reveal more astounding facts to the outside World.

What interests the people of Manitoba even more than the sea route is that of the construction of a railway from the capital to the Hudson's Bay coast. Two companies are already in the field for this undertaking, and both have their preliminary sur-

veys completed, and are ready to commence the work of construction in the coming spring. One company may be called purely Canadian, and is headed by such Montreal capitalists as Peter Redpath, Geo. A. Drummond, and the Hon. Thos. Ryan, while Mr. D. McArthur of this city is the local director, and Mr. Geo. A. Bayne, C. E., constructing engineer. The other company includes several Scotch capitalists in Glasgow and Dundee, whose aim is to divert the future grain trade of the North-West from Liverpool to the Scotch ports. Mr. A. W. Ross is local director of this company and General T. L. Rosser constructing engineer. The former company have Churchill as their objective point on the Bay, where a fine natural harbor exists, while the latter company have fixed upon Port Nelson as a terminus, where Mr. H. E. Jukes, an experienced engineer, is now at work devising means to overcome the drawback of the want of a natural harbor.

The surveys of both companies traverse the Nelson Valley, the difference of northern terminus being the principal distinctive feature of each project. Either offer a route from the seaboard to Winnipeg of less than 600 miles, and both can utilize Lake Winnipeg navigation, while neither present any great engineering difficulties, but are comparatively easy of construction.

The claims of these rival companies we shall not discuss. Both may go on with their work of construction, or a fusion of interests may take place. One thing is certain and that is that the opening of the route is a thing of the near future, which will give the City of Winnipeg a highway to Liverpool only 450 miles further than from New York across, and over 500 miles shorter than any route possessed by Chicago.

## Civic Rivalry.

Rival cities like all other rivals have their jealousies, and such if they do not go beyond the limit of healthy emulation are productive of more or less good. Winnipeg, however, has other cities jealous of her exceptional prosperity, who allow their spleen to overrule their veracity if not their better judgment. This is particularly noticeable in the Minneapolis and St. Paul press, where a studied system of misrepresentation of the Canadian North-West in general, and Winnipeg in particular, has been carried on for the last year at least. The work is usually done by means of letters from irresponsible and anonymous correspondents, and according to the statements, calculations and predictions of some of these, the Manitoba Capital should have been by this time a desolation as complete as Nehemiah found on his return to Jerusalem.

Unfortunately for these prophets Winnipeg has increased at least 7,000 in population during the present year; the building operations for the year will represent an aggregate value of over \$10,000,000; her places of business have increased 40 per cent; her wholesale houses in the same ratio; and insolvencies have been fewer in proportion to her population than in any other city on this Continent. In 1881 her gross volume of mercantile and manufacturing business represented a value of a little over \$20,000,000, and 1882 promises to reach \$30,000,000.