

THE SHIP-CANAL FEVER.

AN epidemic taking the form of a ship-canal fever has lately broken out violently over a large portion of the world. These projects, if carried out, are calculated largely to divert or perhaps extinguish some of the prevailing channels of commerce and the course of the carrying trade, and are therefore worthy the attention of the business community. It should be mentioned, however, that some of these proposed ship-canal are designed as warlike aids, naval and military, making their utility for peaceful purposes quite an ulterior consideration. In addition to the now famous Suez Ship-Canal, and the Manchester project temporarily occupying only secondary public attention, and that of Panama of which for the moment we hear so little, the French authorities have under consideration the proposed construction of a ship canal from Bordeaux to Toulouse and Narbonne, by which a waterway would be gained from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, thus securing a great saving of distance as compared with the Gibraltar route. The length as far as Toulouse is about 270 miles, and the highest point 500 feet above the sea level. The supporters of the project contend that vineyards may be established with advantage all along the waterway, while naval men support it as substantially neutralising the value of the famous rock of Gibraltar, which closes the gate of the Mediterranean. It is thought that, however valuable this work would be both for military purposes and those of peace, the cost would be too much even for French resources. Again, the German Government, sensible of its insignificance as a naval power, in spite of its considerable fleets and armaments while virtually shut up in the Baltic, is proposing the construction of a canal connecting the North Sea and the Baltic. According to the original plan, as drawn up by the Government engineer, LENTZE, in 1865, the canal was to run from St. Margarethen, on the Lower Elbe, to Eckernförde, on the Baltic, and the cost was estimated at over \$20,000,000. It was afterward decided that, in order to make the canal more valuable from a strategical point of view, it should debouch in the bay of Kiel, and the extra expense of doing this was estimated by LENTZE at \$7,500,000. This was ultimately dropped. Other proposals were that the canal should proceed from Brunsbüttel to Holtensau, in the Baltic, and estimating its cost at \$23,000,000. Such are the German schemes, but in time of war the British fleet could with ease block up both mouths so that neither would be of any real use for strategic purposes. The Greeks, too, talk of cutting through the Isthmus of Corinth—a project also talked of, by the way, a score of centuries ago, and possibly as near to execution then as now. Coming nearer home, some American papers think that the question of a "free Erie canal" in New York must broaden into that of a ship canal, and that this is perfectly feasible, not only

by way of the Erie, but also by way of Lake Champlain from Lake Ontario to the Hudson River. The resources of the Federal Government are to be called on in aid, and with good prospects of a favorable response. We say nothing of the proposed second Suez canal, for though it would probably find abundance of employment the talk of its construction seems intended rather to convey a threat than to denote a serious purpose. We have said enough, however, to show that the world of enterprise is moving and that, too, in the direction of facilitating trade and commerce and cheapening freight and passage.

THE NORTH-WEST CROPS, 1882.

A FEW years ago, when the news began to spread that a North-West territory of the rarest quality had been opened for settlement by the Government of Canada, the people of older colonies were induced to turn their attention to it, and, after them, those of Scotland and other parts of the British empire. About the years 1872-'73 it became known that north-west of the Red River there existed land of unsurpassed agricultural resources. Ten years have rolled away and the narratives of big crops of the highest quality have been supplemented by each succeeding year's reports until the new settlers wonder how it is that a land so fertile should have remained unpeopled so long. The latest reports continue to surprise and baffle all but those who have lived on the spot and witnessed the remarkable yields of produce. Nearly one hundred reports have been received from the Hudson Bay Company's agents, post-masters, railroad agents, and others, which show the crops of the present year to be in no degree inferior to any preceding one, while the areas under cultivation have immensely increased and the aggregate fruits of the kindly soil also. The yields of wheat have been from 25 to 60 bushels to the acre, the average crop being 32 bushels. In one case 104 bushels were cropped from two acres, and in another 60 bushels were taken from a single acre. This crop is remarkable for its fine quality of grain; the berries are large and plump, and weigh from 65 to 67 lbs. to the bushel. Such weights may well make farmers smile, and millers glad, when we reflect that the average weight of the grain is 60 lbs., and that 63 and 64 lbs. are considered very unusual weights. Such is the wheat crops of the great North-West. Oats are no less favorable, but excel the renown Irish and Scotch-grown grain. From 38 to 72 bushels an acre have been harvested of this important cereal, and an average of no less than 44 bushels an acre. The weight of this yield is just as wonderful as that of wheat, and is as much superior to the Irish or Scotch article as the quantity per acre. From 42 to 48 lbs. per bushel have been registered, a weight exceeding by fully 5 lbs. anything which is obtained in the old country. Barley and peas show

well both in yields per acre and in the specific gravity of the grains themselves. Potatoes show to greater advantage there than in any other part of the world. Considering that labor is dear and the crop needs a certain amount of cultivation even under the best circumstances, the yields of 200 to 400 bushels is little short of a miracle. The average produce of this crop is 274 bushels per acre, while many have reached 300 and 350, and in more than one instance 400 bushels were obtained. The price of wheat at the farm in most parts of Manitoba is 80 to 85 cts. per bushel. Now with 32 bushels per acre at 80 cts. per bushel we get a return of \$25.60. The cost of cultivating varies according to circumstances from \$8 to \$11. Taking \$10 as the average the profit of the wheat-grower is at once seen to be \$15. Farmers having one hundred acres of wheat make the very respectable income of \$1,500 on that crop alone. To men who are lucky enough to hold a half-section of 320 acres, and have capital enough to work it, \$5,000 net profit would be an easier result. Potatoes are still more profitable, as the demand for seed and the consumption of food in the North-West is such that every bushel grown is needed there for food. Potatoes are worth 60 cts. per bushel, and the average crop is 274 bushels per acre or eight tons and a quarter. Now it is very doubtful whether any one in Manitoba spends more than \$20 per acre on this crop; but supposing it is no less than that, and that the potato yield was five tons per acre, or 170 bushels, which is more than double the Irish average, we get a return of \$102 per acre, from which we deduct working expenses and then net the magnificent sum of \$80 per acre. For every ten acres we get \$800. With a horse and cart and plough any man could cultivate, with the assistance of a laborer, ten acres of potatoes and ten of wheat and five of oats. On good average land this would give him at least 200 bushels per acre of potatoes, or six tons, which at \$20 per ton would yield \$1,200 on ten acres, or \$1,000 net. Cabbages, tomatoes, cucumbers, and wild fruits abound, and tell the same story of excellence. The grand collection of the agricultural products of the North-West made by Mr. ALEXANDER BEGG, the agent of the Canada Pacific Railway Company, for the purpose of exhibiting in the English metropolis, is the best testimony that can be offered of the great value of the country for raising food. Already much of the beef and mutton consumed in Manitoba and the North-West is raised from native soil. The incompleteness of the statistics prevents us giving any details of yields in animal food. The high character of the natural grasses of the country has long been known and its ability to feed millions of beeves and sheep. The high prices of meat since last spring give encouragement of great progress in the feeding of live stock. The excellent condition of the cattle when brought to market is a subject of comment the world over. That