

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, APRIL 27, 1896.

BRITISH AGRICULTURE.

The official agriculture returns for Great Britain for the year 1895 give some interesting if not startling figures. The statistics following include England, Scotland and Wales only. The wheat area was 1,117,611 acres, showing a decrease of 510,321 acres as compared with 1891, or equal to 25 1/2 per cent. This steady decrease in the wheat area is one of the marked features of British agriculture during recent years. There was a small increase in oats and barley, sufficient to make up a little over one-fifth of the decrease in wheat. An increase in rotation grasses is about offset by the decrease in the area of permanent pastures.

In live stock butchers' cattle show a decrease of 5.6 per cent., but this is offset by an increase in cows and calves. The total of cattle of all kinds is just about stationary, as compared with 1891, but there is the large decrease in the number of cattle as compared with 1893, of 5.2 per cent. There was a decrease of about one and a half million sheep in 1891, as compared with 1893, and a further small decrease in sheep in 1895. The total number of sheep in 1895 was 25,792,000, and the total of cattle was 6,351,000. The hog appears to have been in general favor, as the number of hogs shows an increase of 20.7 per cent. in 1895, as compared with 1891, while the increase over 1893 is 36.5 per cent.

THE ARGENTINE WHEAT CROP.

The Minneapolis Northwestern Miller has a special representative in South America writing up the grain trade of those countries. The gentleman—Mr. Kingsland Smith—has written some very interesting letters to the Miller, and more are to follow. Mr. Smith has the following timely reference to the Argentine wheat crop:

Under date of March 5th Mr. Smith says: "I have cabled you that there was a fair wheat crop in the province of Buenos Ayres, and that elsewhere it is poor, both in quality and quantity, rains having done much damage. I have not felt like making a guess at the probable exports this year, until I have been over the ground pretty thoroughly, and as I intend to visit portions of Santa Fe and Cordoba still, I prefer to wait till I have done so before making any estimates. The earlier estimates of the crop were that it would exceed that of last. Then when the rains came, in harvest time, they began to cut down the estimates to about half the same as last year, say a million tons. Now, there is a good deal of talk about an export of only half a million tons. From the large number of vessels that were headed this way in anticipation of wheat cargoes and the absence of wheat to ship, rates of freight have fallen very low, and had it not been for the large quantities of maize which to some extent, have supplied cargo for the vessels, their owners would have suffered still more severely. At first it was said that the rains had delayed harvest, and that the wheat would be along a little later, but now people are beginning to think the wheat does not come because it is not there to come." In a private letter of the same date Mr. Smith says: "The crop reports

keep coming worse, and the Santa Fe provincial government is distributing seed wheat to needy farmers."

A great deal of mystery has surrounded the last Argentine wheat crop, and reports more or less contradictory have been received from time to time, since the beginning of harvest in that country last December. The representative of the Northwestern Miller is a trustworthy and capable man, and his report is perhaps the most reliable yet secured from Argentine. It is certainly a very bullish one. The Minneapolis journal certainly deserves credit for its enterprise in this matter.

REFUSING DRAFTS.

A few weeks ago The Commercial published an article from an exchange, devoted to the question of refusing drafts. This article administered a reproof to retail merchants who are in the habit of refusing drafts for trivial reasons. What is peculiar about this circumstance is, that The Commercial was asked by no less than four different wholesale houses to reproduce this article. Wholesale merchants know well the annoyance caused by the custom of refusing drafts. A draft should not be refused except for excellent reasons. Where a slight mistake has been made, it would be more considerate, to say the least, to pay the draft and request redress by letter.

Retail merchants, however, are not alone to blame for this annoying custom of refusing drafts. One would think that wholesale houses, who understand well the annoyance and expense which is caused by this custom of refusing drafts, would not themselves be so ready to indulge in the same ungenerous custom, without good reason. This, however, is not the case, as The Commercial knows by personal experience. The Commercial has had drafts refused by wholesale houses, on the ground that the amount was not due. In one case a draft was made for one quarter's advertisement a couple of weeks before the end of the quarter, but the draft came back refused with costs of course added. This was certainly a very trivial excuse for refusing a small draft. Advertisements are often made payable in advance, but certainly no reasonable objection could be made to a draft near the end of the quarter. Besides, the object in drawing a little before the end of the quarter is to enable firms to give notice to have their advertisements continued or discontinued when the time of contract expires.

The Commercial recognizes fully the force of the arguments used against the mean custom, followed by some business men, of refusing drafts for the most trivial reasons. The retail merchant who indulges in this objectionable custom does not gain anything thereby, and if he overheard the remarks which are made about him when the drafts come back, he would no doubt feel thoroughly ashamed of himself. It is, therefore, surprising that some of those who often have occasion to feel aggrieved at the return of drafts, should themselves have recourse to the same annoying practice.

Henry Smith, late senior partner of Smith & Fudger, Toronto, and latterly in the wholesale fancy goods business by himself, at Toronto, is dead.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

It is reported from Ottawa that the federal elections will be held on June 16. We may look for more or less uncertainty in business affairs until the elections are over.

It is reported that an agreement has been nearly reached with the Manitoba government for the granting of the proposed aid to the lake Dauphin railway. The act passed by the Manitoba legislature a short time ago, empowered the government to make an arrangement with the railway company, granting very liberal aid to the company to construct the road. It is further reliably reported that the contract to build the road has been let to Mann & McKenzie. At any rate an engineer arrived last week to locate the line. J. H. White, of Toronto, has this work in hand. It is hoped the fears of the public regarding the deal between the Manitoba government and this company will not be borne out by the facts. The amount of aid proposed is certainly excessive. With the enormous aid likely to be granted this road it seems quite certain that it will be built this year.

THERE is considerable prejudice in some quarters against our wild prairie hay, though it has been shown that the native prairie hay is more nutritive than cultivated grasses. An analysis was recently made of wild Dakota prairie grass, compared with Wisconsin timothy, clover and millet. The two samples of prairie grass contained 53.16 and 53.19 per cent of digestible substance, as compared with 49.96 for the timothy hay, 48.02 for the clover and 48.53 for the millet. These tests would go to show the superiority of the native over the cultivated grasses for fodder. It will also help to explain why grazing animals will fatten more readily here in the west than in the eastern provinces. It is a frequent comment of visitors that cattle in Manitoba and the western territories appear so fat and healthy. We heard a butcher who has had experience both in eastern and western Canada, state recently that grass fed cattle would not fatten up in the East like they do here. The apparent greater richness of our native western grasses will account for this.

THERE seems to be good prospect that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company will build the proposed line through the Crow's Nest pass this year. At Ottawa on Tuesday notice was given of a resolution to authorize the government to make a loan to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to the amount of \$20,000 per mile, for a railway from Lethbridge or Macleod, Alberta, to Nelson, British Columbia. The loan to bear interest at 3 1/2 per cent., and be payable in July, 1916. This is a road which the company has contemplated for some years, and it is a road which will be a great convenience as furnishing a direct route to the famous Kootenay mining country in British Columbia. The purchase by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company of the "Galt" railway, which runs from Dunmore, on the main line of the C.P.R. to Lethbridge, was the first step towards securing a line of railway through the Crow's Nest pass of the Rocky Mountains. This road will on