

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 27, 1892.

MANITOBA CROP AREA.

Brief reference was made in THE COMMERCIAL last week to the government crop report. The first official bulletin relating to the crops of Manitoba for 1892, was issued just before the last number of THE COMMERCIAL was sent to press, and on that account only a limited space was given to the report. It will be found in a more extended form elsewhere in this issue. The bulletin deals in the first place with the crop area, and in this connection it shows what has all along been expected, namely, a decrease in the area in crop in Manitoba this year, as compared with 1891. The decrease is slight, amounting only to 8,931 acres, or about 6½ per cent., but it is a decrease nevertheless, and as such is worthy of some explanation. The reason for the decrease is well understood here, but abroad it may occasion some surprise, and may even be used to the disadvantage of the province, when really it devotes nothing whatever injurious to the country. It does not denote that the rapid progress of agriculture in Manitoba has received even a temporary check; it does not indicate any stoppage of immigration, or hindrance to advancement in any direction. On the contrary, the country is making more progress this year, than it has done in the two years previous.

We have calculated upon and have actually made a large increase each succeeding year in the area under crop. Last year the crop area of the province was 267,407 acres greater than in 1890, or an increase of over 35 per cent. for the year. In 1890 the increase in the area over 1889 was 20 per cent. So on we have looked for a large increase in the crop area as a matter of course, until the present season, when it was generally believed, before the official information was published, that there would be a very slight if any increase, and possibly a small decrease.

The reason for the decrease as we have already stated, is well understood here. It is due to peculiar harvest conditions last fall, followed up by a late spring this year. The crop of last year was very heavy and also late in ripening. The growth of straw was something enormous, and labor being very scarce, the harvesting of the crop was prolonged for an unusually long time. Farmers were obliged to allow their grain to stand in shock for week after week, because the necessary help to secure the crop could not be obtained. The enormous growth of straw entailed a great amount of extra labor upon farmers. Then wet weather set in and caused still further delay. Combined with the delay to harvest, the weather was unfavorable for fall plowing, and when the farmers finally got their fields cleared of the stocks of grain and were ready to plow, they were delayed by unfavorable weather. The consequence was, that winter set in with fall plowing even more backward than the harvest had been. The bulletin shows that there was a decrease in the amount of fall plowing done last fall of well up

to 40 per cent., as compared with the previous year. Farmers started in this spring therefore with a great deal more work on their hands than usual, and to make this disadvantage more keenly felt, the spring was later than usual, and there was serious delay on account of wet weather. All conditions seem to have combined to shorten the crop area for 1892, and under the circumstances it is a wonder that a greater decrease has not been experienced.

The result of the decrease should not be a disadvantage to the country. It is a generally recognized fact, that many Manitoba farmers are cropping more land than they can properly handle. Those who have studied the conditions of agriculture in this country, have repeatedly urged upon the farmers the necessity of cultivating less land. Wages are high and labor is scarce, and when it comes to the harvest time in a heavy crop year, the farmers are unable to cope with their crop. On this account a great deal of grain is left exposed to the weather until it is reduced in quality and often seriously damaged. The cause of a great deal of the damaged grain is a result of farming on too large a scale. If a number of our farmers last fall had fewer acres in crop, there would be fewer damaged stacks. They were in a hurry to get their grain in stack, on account of the large quantity to handle, and consequently slighted their work, making imperfect stacks, which admitted moisture and damaged or destroyed the grain. One stack of sound grain would be better than any number destroyed, for the latter only represent lost labor and capital. The decrease in the area this year should be considered as a blessing, rather than otherwise, especially as the season so far indicates another very heavy growth of straw, which means more labor in harvesting.

There are of course considerably more farmers in Manitoba this year than there were last, and though the decrease in the total crop area is trifling, the decrease in the average number of acres cultivated per farmer, will be more marked. Last year, with 18,937 farmers in the province, the average number of acres under crop, per capita, was 78.5 acres. The bulletin does not give figures as to the number of persons farming this season, but putting it at 25,000, which is probably under the mark, the average number of acres in crop, per farmer, would be about 53.65 acres. With this decrease in the land under crop per capita, our farmers should be in a position to get through their harvest work in better shape than they have done in past years. They will have less work to do, and will be able to do it more carefully, so that with normal weather, we look for the harvesting and marketing of the crops in better shape than has been the rule in past years. This more careful handling of their crops, is something which needs to be impressed upon our farmers at every opportunity.

The principal decrease in the crop area this year is in wheat, which shows a decrease of 40,674 acres. Wheat is the first crop put in, and as the spring was late and work backward, naturally more space was given to the later crops, consequently the decrease in wheat is largely made up by increased areas of oats and barley. If there were abundance of stock in the country to eat up these coarse grains, the

increased area in oats and barley would be all right. With shipping prices for these grains so low on next crop as they have been this year, however, the value of the increase in oats and barley is not apparent, though unavoidable under the circumstances. Potatoes show some decrease in the area, but in other root crops, the acreage is nearly doubled. This is probably due to larger sowing of turnips, which owing to the late season, were sown after it was considered too late for other crops.

The total crop area of the province is shown to be 1,341,270 acres, as compared with 1,350,201 acres last year, 1,042,794 acres in 1890, 893,429 acres in 1889 and 636,295 acres in 1887. There are no figures available for 1889.

INSPECTING AND GRADING WHEAT.

A great many complaints have been heard of late regarding the inspection and grading of Manitoba wheat. In past years there has been more or less complaint coming from eastern Canada millers and dealers regarding the grading of western grain. A good deal of this has undoubtedly been due to a chronic disposition on the part of our eastern friends to grumble. Manitoba grain shippers have as a rule found their dealings with eastern Canada millers and others of a very unsatisfactory nature. There was almost invariably some complaint as to quality not being up to sample, and usually a demand for shortage. To such an extent has this been the case that some of our shippers avoid doing business in eastern Canada and turn their attention entirely to exporting. Grumbling from the east is therefore looked for as a matter of course, and has on this account not received as much attention perhaps as should have been given to it.

This year there has been much more complaint than usual from the east, and there have also been complaints from New York and other export points as to the grading of Manitoba wheat, some of which have been of a serious nature. On account of the habitual grumbling of eastern people, as noted, the matter did not attract much attention for a time, but it finally became the general belief that where there was so much smoke there must be some fire.

The crop of last year, in the first place, has been an exceedingly difficult one to grade. It is of a very mixed and widely varying qualities and altogether has been the most difficult one to grade for many years. It would be impossible to handle such a crop without considerable dissatisfaction as to grading. At the same time it was recognized by the local grain men that there might be something wrong about our system of handling and inspecting wheat, and the local trade are of course intensely interested in the matter. It is the desire of the grain men of Manitoba, as well as the people of the country generally, to have the grading of our wheat above the possibility of undue manipulation or reproach. The reputation of the country demands this. The interest of our grain growers and grain dealers demands this. Our grain exporters, who ship upon certificates of inspection, have a right to demand that every possible security be placed about our system of inspection, so that there can be no possibility of tampering with the