

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, APRIL 24, 1893.

COMMERCIAL CONVENTION.

A correspondent writes urging that an effort be made to hold another convention of retail dealers in Winnipeg at an early date. If it is the feeling of the trade that such a convention be held, it could no doubt be arranged to take place during exhibition week, in July next. A great many merchants from all parts of the country will be in the city during the exhibition, and a convention of business men should prove an additional attraction. There are many trade topics which could be discussed to advantage. The discussion of questions of interest to the trade of the country should be of great benefit to merchants, even though no definite course of action should be decided upon. Discussion draws out and develops ideas, and those taking part or listening to a discussion of trade questions will get their ideas brightened up, and will be made better business men thereby. The first commercial convention held in Winnipeg some time ago was a success in point of attendance, in the interest displayed in the movement, and also in the very full and instructive discussions which took place upon the leading questions of interest affecting the trade. If this movement had been followed up, it is quite reasonable to believe that the trade of the country would be upon a better footing to-day. If merchants throughout the country would show their desire for a convention, THE COMMERCIAL will do what it can to make it a success. The Winnipeg exhibition takes place from July 17 to 22, and it is not too soon to begin preparations, if there is a desire for a convention in exhibition week.

WHEAT GROWING IN INDIA.

A great deal has been written about the capabilities of India as a wheat country. India has by some been looked upon as the great rival to the wheat growers of North America; while on the other hand other writers have come forward with alleged facts and figures to prove that the wheat growers of America have very little to fear from this great British possession in Asia. Wilder Graham contributes a paper to the *Northwestern Miller*, in which he discusses the facilities for cereal culture possessed by India in an interesting manner. He considers India a formidable competitor in the wheat-growing industry, and a competitor which will become more formidable in the course of time, by the introduction of modern machinery and modern commercial facilities.

The area of the country is large, the regions most suitable for wheat covering an area of over 100,000 square miles. The climate is very favorable. Two grain crops can be grown each year; the first grain season beginning about the middle of June, with the harvest in September and October. Another crop can be immediately sown, which is ready to cut in March and April. The dry season follows the second harvest in March and April, during which garden stuff is grown to some extent.

Implements of cultivation are very inferior. The plow is a primitive wooden affair, which simply roots up the ground, and does not turn the soil. The plow costs about forty cents, and a complete outfit for plowing, including a yoke of cattle, plows and fastenings, is worth about \$3 50 in India. The Indian oxen are said to be about one-third to one-half the size of our cattle. After plowing, a log or slab of wood is dragged sideways across the field to crush the lumps and smooth the surface. Seeding is done by hand, either sprinkled along the rows after the final plowing, or introduced into the furrow through a hollow bamboo rod fastened to the plow. From 100 to 150 lbs. per acre are sown. In some sections the wheat is carefully weeded, and the weeds utilized as food for both the people and cattle. Irrigation has to be resorted to nearly everywhere, three times being, perhaps, the average number of floodings for each crop. The methods employed vary considerably with different localities, but the process is usually accomplished at a cost not exceeding \$2.25 per acre.

About five months from the time of seeding, the grain is ready for the reaper. The reaper is a blade of iron six inches long, one inch wide, and curved like an old-fashioned sickle. The straw is cut handful by handful, and laid aside by the harvester, who sits upon his heels and moves himself forward with a peculiar waddle, quite comical to the observer. About one-twelfth of an acre per day is his stint, for which he receives 5c. without board. A binder follows this primitive reaper and gathers the grain into sheaves, much like our own. These are shocked and are allowed to stand a day or two before they are carted to the threshing floor.

Perhaps, says the writer, at no stage of the entire process is there a greater difference in procedure between the wheat grower of America and India than in the threshing. In the centre of a bit of hard ground a stake is driven, around which is piled the grain. A rope attaches the stake to the horns of the cattle, which are then driven around until the straw is trampled fine, into what is termed "bhooosa," which is the principal food for the cattle. To any other process the natives vigorously object, claiming that the straw must not only be cut, but flattened, just as this method does it (which our machinery will not do), to get the greatest food value from it. There is too much force in this objection to be easily overcome, and it is not probable that threshing machines will be successfully introduced until some such devices as the silo have been firmly and widely established.

After the tramping process is completed the "bhooosa" is winnowed, by allowing it to drop from a sort of basket scoop before the wind. This separates the chaff from the grain. The former is gathered into bins and fed out very carefully; the latter either placed at once upon the market or buried in a hole to await higher prices. Very little of the wheat is eaten by the people themselves, as it is too expensive for ordinary use. The weeds and coarser grains furnish the native with life, leaving it for the wheat to furnish him with money or the necessities that must be purchased.

The cost of raising an acre of wheat is put at the following:—

Rent per acre.....	\$3 60
Cartage of manure....	1 20
150 pounds of seed.....	1 65
Plowing twenty times...	75
Sowing by hand.....	15
Watering three times...	2 25
Reaping and carrying....	60
Threshing.....	35
Winnowing.....	07
Total.....	\$10 62

On good irrigated land the average yield is 17 bushels per acre, and 10 or 11 on dry lands, which, however, may be had for much less rents. The average price is 68c, which brings the return from the acre of wheat to \$11.56 and the straw to \$3, or \$14.56 in all. This leaves a profit of \$3.91 per acre. The expense, however, as estimated, includes the work of the farmer himself.

A large proportion of the wheat raised is thrown upon the foreign markets, where it comes in competition with our own, for the average native is too poor to use it himself, except as an occasional luxury. Not so very long ago, however, he could not afford to send it away, on account of the high freight rates, consequently what little was raised was used for local consumption, or, rather, no more could be raised than could be disposed of locally. At that time an ox cart would haul 2,400 pounds, or 40 bushels, 12 miles, or one day's drive, for 40 cents—1 cent per bushel. From Cawnpore to Calcutta is 684 miles, and the transportation alone made the wheat worth 57 cents per bushel at the latter place.

The introduction of the railway into India has changed all this, and made the price of wheat depend upon the price in foreign markets.

EXPERIMENTAL FARMING AT INDIAN HEAD.

The recent annual report of last year's work, in connection with the Dominion system of experimental farms, contains a report from the farm at Indian Head, Assiniboia Territory. This farm is in charge of A. Mackay, superintendent. It is the only experimental farm in the territories, and the report regarding the work done there will interest a large number of our readers. The season at Indian Head is described as a favorable one, though the spring was backward.

Forty-eight varieties of wheat were sown on the farm last season, besides six varieties of cross-bred wheats, crosses between Ladoga and red and white fife. Tests of early and late sowing were made by sowing plots of wheat every week from April 15 to May 20. The best results were obtained from the plots sown late in April and early in May. This corresponds with the experience of the previous year, the early sown grain having been thinned by late severe frosts. In this test it is worthy of note that the last sowing of Campbell's White Chaff wheat, sown on May 20, was ripe four days earlier than the first plot sown, on April 15. So also in the case of red fife, the plots sown on April 15, April 22 and April 29, were not ripe any sooner than the plots sown on May 20. This result does not correspond with the ex-