

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JULY 31, 1893.

MANITOBA CROPS.

The old and foolish practice of "booming" the crops before they are harvested, has again broken out in Manitoba. More ecstatic nonsense and enthusiastic bosh is written and spoken about the crops of Manitoba than is done in any other country in the world, we believe. It is the custom with some here to begin, almost before the seed is in the ground, to talk about glorious crop prospects, and keep it up all through the summer, and up to the time the crop is harvested and turns out poor, as it has done in some years. Some of these people who talk so enthusiastically about the crops, seem to imagine they are doing the country a service, when in reality quite the opposite is the case. The country has been injured by these overdrawn crop reports. The custom of "booming" the growing crops has been carried to such an extent in past years, that Manitoba crop reports are now hardly taken seriously abroad. They are generally treated as a joke when they happen to bob up in British or United States markets. In past years the crop prospects have always been made to appear as magnificent, regardless of what the actual result has been; and in some of the years when the most glowing accounts were sent out, the harvest gave the poorest results.

The people of Manitoba are not alone to blame for this "booming" of the crop prospects. A good deal of it has come from eastern government and other officials, who have perhaps made a brief trip to the West, and who think it part of their official duty to "boom" the country. Some of the most unreliable reports regarding Manitoba crops have in this way emanated from Ottawa shortly after the return of an official person from a western trip. Reports sent direct from Manitoba are usually more reliable, although there has also been a decided tendency here to overdo the prospects, even with the more conservative, while a portion of the press and public have adopted the "boom" style in writing about the crops.

This year there has been less of this "boom" crop literature flying about than in past years, and it is pleasing to note that the custom is gradually dying out, year by year. People are beginning to learn that the country will live and prosper without so much enthusiastic talk about crops, etc. Perhaps we are getting more faith in the country ourselves, and do not need to shout so loud to keep our courage up. At any rate, considering the prospect, there has not been as much crop "booming" this season as might have been looked for. The fairly good outlook, however, has encouraged some to make reports about the crops which are overdrawn. Following is a paragraph of this nature, which has appeared in several influential eastern papers, and also in some United States journals:—

"The reports of crops in Manitoba are all of a most satisfactory character. Seldom in the

experience of the oldest settlers have the prospects been as good as at this season of the year, and the prediction is freely and confidently made that farmers are about to reap the largest crops in the history of the province, the yield promising to rival that of the phenomenal crop of 1887. There is no doubt now of the season's crop. The growth is assured beyond peradventure, and everything promises early and satisfactory maturity. Every day's experience is confirming the high hopes of the farmers and all who desire their prosperity."

There is no doubt of this paragraph being overdrawn. The prospect, while good, is not "phenomenal." While the average condition is good—even very good—it might be better. Some districts have had too much rain, and crops on low lands have suffered. Other sections have not had sufficient moisture, and the straw is light and the yield likely to be rather under than over a fair average. The general outlook, however, as we have stated, is promising, and if the crop maintains its present condition to the finish, their will be every reason to rejoice, and not much room for complaint.

AFFAIRS IN AUSTRALIA.

The establishment of a line of steamships between Canada and Australia has awakened much interest in this country in our inter-colonies of the south seas. All newspaper readers know that Australia is just at present passing through a very severe financial crisis, but probably few people have any clear idea as to the nature and cause of the trouble. With the interest now being taken here in Australian matters, an official opinion as to Australia's difficulties will be worthy of perusal: Sir James Cox Bray, Agent-General for South Australia in London, England, has, on account of the government of that colony, deposited with London bankers, sufficient funds to meet all payments due on the public debt during the present year. Sir J. Cox Bray says that the investors in Australian government loans need have no fear that the principal and interest will be paid as they become due. He says that business generally, though quiet, has not been disturbed by the collapse of the banks, and confidence is returning. The crop prospect is good, owing to the most abundant rainfall in many years.

The colony of Victoria has been a great sufferer from the present crisis. Lieut. General Sir Andrew Clarke, the acting Agent General, admits, in an interview with a representative of *London Commerce*, that the whole misfortune has been brought about through over-speculation in city and suburban lands. Prices of properties were rushed up to bursting point, and money has been borrowed on estates right up to the hilt and beyond it. Undue inflation was thus given to values by speculators, so that when the panic first became felt the speculators at once accelerated the disaster and made things look really worse than ever.

Sir Andrew Clarke says the people belonging to the country are not in pecuniary difficulties, but that the adventurers and the speculators are the sufferers. The people are placing their money in the savings banks and are as sound as ever. Victoria will certainly meet her engagements as regards payment of interest. The success attendant on the reconstruction of some of the banks has caused several other banks

and wholesale houses to seek refuge in the same shelter and by the same process.

He states that railways and harbors, roads, &c., may have been built too quickly, but, at least, the money has not been wasted, and there is something to show for it. The country has gone too fast ahead, but the most difficult part, that of opening a new continent, is finished, and a few years will see Australia as flourishing as ever. Trade at the present moment is naturally affected, but it will not take long to shake off the present depression.

This is the opinion of an Australian resident in London in an official capacity, and officials are often liable to take a more roseate view of matters than circumstances may warrant. Still the energy which the people of Australia have shown in the past, will no doubt serve to quickly pull them through their present troubles and place them upon the road to continuous prosperous development. The Australians have a great country to develop. They have undoubtedly "boomed" their country too much, and pushed development too fast, but they will live down their difficulties and flourish again in due time, though the effect of the collapse of the inflation will undoubtedly be felt longer than the more optimistic will now admit—and most people engaged in developing a new country are optimists.

THE WINNIPEG INDUSTRIAL.

The *Free Press* is we believe decidedly astute in attributing the decrease in exhibits at the recent exhibition to the close financial situation. It is a poor rule, they say, which will not work both ways. Now, the attendance was larger than last year, notwithstanding the falling off in exhibits. If financial closeness were the cause, there would have been a falling off in the attendance as well as in exhibits. The true reason for the poorer display in some departments is as stated in *THE COMMERCIAL* last week, namely, the extension this year of the duration of the exhibition. This extension did not interfere with visitors, who could come and go at pleasure but it was a serious matter to exhibitors, who had to be on hand at the opening, and remain until the close. Hence, while there was an increase in attendance, there was a decrease in exhibits.

The exhibition should be held so that exhibitors could come and go within the week. Three, or four days at the outside, is long enough to serve all purposes. Such an arrangement as to time would draw out a much better exhibit, while we believe the attendance would be just as large, and the running expenses would be materially reduced. The few hundred more visitors who may possibly be secured by spreading the fair over so many days will not begin to pay for the increased expense, while most objectionable of all, the lengthening of the time has been done at the expense of the most important feature of the exhibition—the agricultural display. The daily figures of attendance show the mistake of extending the time. Only 800 persons attended on Saturday, and less than 3,000 in the aggregate for Monday and Tuesday. The attendance was practically on the three days of Wednesday to Friday inclusive.

Any person who visited the grounds on