

good thing for the maritime province people who have to buy nearly all their flour. Mr. Greenway did not think we in Manitoba who were always crying out against the tariff could afford to stultify ourselves by demanding that the tariff on flour be increased."

This is very different from the telegraphic account of the interview at Toronto, and is more in keeping with what might be expected from the Manitoba Premier. Mr. Greenway it will be seen from the paragraph above, takes the same view of the matter as was previously pointed out in this journal, namely; that what is of most importance to Manitoba in considering this question is lower freight rates.

A STRAW BINDER.

A year or so ago, in discussing the binding twine question, the remark was made in these columns, that what is really needed is a straw binding reaper. It was predicted that such a machine would probably ultimately be produced and that there would be a fortune in it for the inventor. It seems already that there is a good prospect that such a machine will be speedily obtainable.

The high prices for binding twine last year set many persons to thinking of something which could be used as a substitute. A number of new kinds of binding twine were placed upon the market; but all efforts were not turned in the direction of discovering a cheap twine, for apparently a great deal of study has been given to the idea of inventing a straw binder. The Illinois State Grange last spring offered \$10,000 for a machine or an attachment which would bind successfully with straw. Forty applicants submitted models of inventions for this purpose, several of which were ingenious machines, but only one was considered satisfactory. Of this machine the committee having the matter in hand report as follows:—

"We have seen this machine bind grain, and it does the work much finer and better than can be done by straw bands by hand. It has an extra attachment for short straw or grain that can be set in motion by the foot of the driver. This binder seems perfect in all its parts, more simple and easier to operate than the twine binder."

The Grange offered the \$10,000 for this invention, but it was refused, on the ground that a much better offer had been received. If this machine turns out as represented it will be a matter of vast importance to farmers, and it may be considered one of the most valuable inventions of the times. It will represent a vast saving in cash paid out annually by farmers for binding twine. At the price of binder twine ruling last season, it would save about \$200,000 annually to the handful of farmers in Manitoba, on the present acreage of the province, in a fair crop year. The farmers may therefore be expected to watch with interest for further news concerning this straw binding machine.

THE FUR TRADE.

The present seems to be a somewhat precarious time in the fur trade, and a feeling of uncertainty as to the future of prices is evidently a feature of the situation. At the London sales last spring,

American furs as a rule sold well, and in many kinds there were sharp advances in values. Recent reports from fur centres, however, are disappointing. It is claimed that dealers have been unable to make a profit on American furs this season, and are consequently slow buyers. Large quantities of some furs, it is claimed, are left over. German and Russian buyers are said to be very cautious in their purchases of these furs.

The worst feature, however, so far as American furs is concerned, is that fashion this season has led in favor of foreign sorts. Later reports from foreign fur centres speak of some demand for the cheaper classes of furs, such as red fox, muskrat, etc., but the finer furs are said to be too high in price to meet the views of buyers. It appears that the finer American furs are being neglected, in favor of, sheep, goat, and other foreign kinds. Astrakhan and Persian lamb have had a large sale for the British and European trade, and this is telling against furs from this continent. In American markets, too, fashion has led in favor of Astrakhan and Persians, and advices from New York report large sales of these goods, to the neglect of our finer and more durable native furs. Caps, capes, and other garments in the foreign furs mentioned, have had a very large sale this year, while some American furs which were expected to be popular, have not drawn well. Seal of course holds its own in American and foreign markets and is still a favorite in caps, etc. Beaver, otter, fisher, skunk and mink furs have not it is reported met with a good demand from manufacturers in Europe, which furs they report too expensive for their trade, and where American furs have been taken, they have been for cheaper grades or less valuable sorts. The following from the Leipzig correspondent of the *New York Fur Trade Review* will explain the situation in that market:—

"It is not easy to determine the prospect for American furs. We must earnestly warn American shippers against paying too high prices for skins. Russia, the most important consumer of American furs, is a slow buyer now, and cannot afford to meet any considerable advance in prices next spring. German dealers find the present values too high—both for their domestic and foreign trade. Shippers should take everything into account—the condition of the trade at Leipzig, as well as the state of the home market and the results at London. No one has been able to make a profit on American furs this year—musquash, for instance, which has been a good article in former years, has been sold at cost, merely to move it. Skunk cannot be sold or handled in quantity, and inferior sorts can scarcely be sold at all. Trade in racoon has been very much better in former years. Bear, beaver and otter cannot be handled above present values."

After a strong upward movement in any commodity, there is usually a tendency to pay outside prices. Dealers and traders will, therefore, require, in view of the present situation in furs, to exercise special caution this season, and pay top price only for such skins as are of very choicest quality.

SILVER LEGISLATION DEMANDED.

A notable gathering was held at St. Louis, Missouri, recently, namely; the National Silver Convention of the United States. Governor

F. F. Lewis, who opened the convention, complained that the surplus silver product of the United States was sold to England at its bullion value, and was by the latter country used at its coin value, which is about 33 per cent higher, to purchase wheat and cotton in India. The speaker endeavored to show from this that the depression in the value of silver worked against the United States, and to the disadvantage of the farmers of the country in their competition with India.

The report of the committee on resolutions makes assertions to the effect that the demoralization of silver has reduced prices more than 30 per cent; that it causes contraction of the currency, thereby reducing the value of products; that the certificate of the government, backed dollar for dollar by gold and silver coin, is a safe currency; and that no nation ever had or will have too much gold and silver coin. The following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved, that Congress be requested by this convention to provide at its first session for opening the mints of the United States to the free and unlimited coinage of standard silver dollars of the present weight and fineness, to be legal tender for all debts, public or private, equal with gold, and that until such a provision is made the Secretary of the Treasury be required to coin the maximum, \$4,000,000 worth of silver per month, as now authorized by law.

The present issue of silver certificates in the United States amounts to two millions per month. As the great bulk of these silver dollars remain permanently in the treasury, why would it not do to hold the silver bullion and save the expense of coinage amounting to nearly a million dollars a year? The cost of coinage is said to be about two per cent, which will amount to quite a sum on the vast quantity proposed to be coined. It is stated that there are now in the treasury 283,000,000 of standard silver dollars. The silver question is likely to cause a great deal of discussion at the next meeting of Congress, and action thereon will be watched with interest by those on both sides of the controversy.

ONTARIO CROPS.

The latest official crop reports of the Ontario Government are not very encouraging as regards wheat. The report says concerning the present year's sowing of winter wheat, that a general reduction is apparent through the province in the area of fall wheat sown this year, and there will probably be a total falling off of from 10 to 15 per cent on this year's crop, in spite of the fact that in some instances more than usual has been sown. This falling off in the acreage of winter wheat, the report says is probably due to the condition of the ground being such, owing to the drouth, that it was next to impossible to prepare stubble land for seeding. Again the most unfavorable reports come from the south-western counties, where the land has been exceedingly hard, dry and lumpy, and the acreage is still less than it was last year. It is stated that a considerable proportion of the seed has failed to germinate, owing to a lack of sufficient moisture. A better tone is apparent in the reports from the midland and eastern counties, and there the falling