

The Commercial

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IRRIGATION.

Irrigation conventions have become popular in the United States, but probably the first convention of this nature ever held in Canada, was that which met at Calgary, Alberta, on March 8 and 9. In the United States irrigation has made great progress in a number of states. There is a vast area of territory both east and west of the Great Divide, which is not adapted to cultivation without irrigation. Large portions of the Pacific coast states require irrigation, the climate becoming arid as progress is made inland from the coast. The inland states of the Pacific slope are practically all in the arid belt. East of the great central chain of mountains there is also a vast area of the bordering states which are arid or partly arid. It will therefore be noted that in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, the two Dakotas, Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma and Texas, there are areas of more or less magnitude which require irrigation. The central ones of this list of states and territories are practically all in the arid belt. The states and territories named comprise over half the total area of the United States, but large portions of some of the states mentioned cannot be classed as arid, such as the territory bordering on the Pacific coast, and the eastern portions of North and South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, etc. With such a vast area of territory requiring irrigation, it is therefore not to be wondered at that the question of irrigation has taken a position of national importance in the neighboring republic. Wonderful results have already been accomplished in that country, in converting arid wastes into fruitful farms, and the desert has in reality been made to bloom as the rose. A great deal more yet remains to be accomplished, and the work of reclaiming the great American desert can only be limited by the quantity of water available for the purpose of irrigation. We noticed a statement in a reliable journal recently, that only about one-tenth of the arid region of the country (the United States) could ever be irrigated, owing to the lack of water or other difficulties. Be this as it may, the arid region is so great that the reclaiming of even one-tenth will add greatly to the agricultural area of the country.

In Canada it is only during the last two or three years that attention has been given to the question of irrigation. In fact, interest in the matter is only now beginning to be awakened. The Commercial has, perhaps, had as much to say upon the question as any other journal in the Dominion, and this journal was one of the first mediums through which attention has been drawn to the subject. Heretofore the need of irrigation has not been greatly felt in Canada. Our arid region is simply a continuation northward of the dry belt of the United States, but the area is much smaller in this country than in the republic. It comprises portions of the provinces of British Columbia and of the territories of Alberta and As-

siniboia. In British Columbia some trifling irrigation work has been done by private parties, but no systematic effort has been made to reclaim the arid regions of the interior valleys, while in the coast districts there is no need of irrigation. In southern Alberta and western Assiniboia, there is a large area of excellent land which will never be valuable for cultivation without irrigation. It is open prairie land, with no obstructions to cultivation, and with a fine soil and climate, but without sufficient rainfall to make agriculture profitable. There is very little waste land, so far as the topography of the country is concerned, except the mountainous portion of Alberta. With a sufficient supply of moisture, this region would support a population of millions, dependent either directly or indirectly upon agriculture; but without water the population will be limited to those dependent upon such interests as stock-raising, mining, etc. Efforts have from time to time been made to interest the federal government in the question of irrigation for this region, but so far such efforts have not been very successful. The recent convention held at Calgary will perhaps result in drawing greater attention to the matter.

The convention resolved that it would be advisable to have a general irrigation act passed, providing for the protection of water rights, and providing a plan whereby bonds could be issued for irrigation purposes. It was also decided that it would be a great advantage to have a government irrigation farm established. This is one point advanced by The Commercial a few years ago.

A much more comprehensive scheme was also presented to the convention and adopted, to the effect that the boundary of the territory of Alberta should be extended eastward to take in the arid portion of Assiniboia territory, the territory thus formed to be erected into the province of Alberta. The advantage of a provincial government would enable the Alberta government to undertake some plan of irrigation. It was resolved that the arid lands, which are now held by the federal government, should be handed over to the proposed provincial government, and thus become an asset of the latter government which would be available in providing funds for irrigation purposes. It was very reasonably pointed out that the lands are of little value now, and that if the proposed province could make them valuable it would be a wise thing to turn over the lands to the provincial government. The streams flowing in a general direction eastward from the mountains, it is claimed, afford means of irrigating the country as far eastward as Swift Current, in Assiniboia territory.

The convention no doubt will have a good effect, and we may look in the future for important irrigation developments in the north-western portion of our territory.

INTEREST AWAKENING IN DAIRYING.

A deputation of Winnipeg business men, composed of members of the Jobbers' Union and others, who realize the importance of the dairy interest, waited upon and had an informal talk with Premier Greenway, minister of agriculture, upon the question of furthering the dairy

interests in Manitoba. Those composing the deputation, some of whom have given special study to the question of dairying, spoke of the great value of the dairy interests to an agricultural country, and showed what a grand thing it would be for Manitoba to have a large dairy interest. It was pointed out that there are a number of points where it is believed creameries or cheese factories could be successfully established, if there were any one to take the lead in the matter, represent the value of dairying to the farmers and assist them in organizing, by giving them such information as would be required in establishing a factory. It was proposed that a man posted in these matters, should be sent out, with instructions to visit points where there were prospects of establishing factories, with the object of interesting the residents and giving them such assistance in the direction of information as would enable them to make a start in dairying.

A small appropriation was made at the last session of the legislature, with the object of sending out a dairy instructor, who would go about the country giving practical instructions in butter making. It is the intention, we understand, to send out a man equipped with a small separator—in fact a sort of travelling dairy establishment—whom will give practical instructions suitable for private dairies. Undoubtedly a great deal of good can be accomplished in this way. In a great many districts there is not sufficient population within a reasonable area to supply a large factory, and dairying should not be abandoned because a factory cannot be established. Private dairying can be made very profitable if carried on properly. While we approve of this proposal to disseminate information for private dairying, we believe something could be done at once to assist in establishing factories at a number of points throughout the province, and this could be followed up by the plan proposed of giving the practical instructions later on.

The first thing necessary would be to get the farmers interested, and this could be done by showing them the value of the dairy interest, after which they would require such information as would enable them to start on a sound basis. In many districts, no doubt, profitable factories could be established, but there is no one to take up the question and make a first move, and there is no local person who is able to give such preliminary information as is required at the outset. Here is where good work might be done by a competent person who could be sent out to assist in organizing factories. The practical instruction is very wise and very necessary both for factories as well as for private dairies, but it appears that some good preliminary work could be done in the way of organizing factories and disseminating information as to the value of the dairy interests.

A large dairy interest is the greatest blessing an agricultural country can have. There is nothing which will give greater stability to a country than a large dairy interest, and there is nothing which will conduce more to a continuous condition of prosperity than the dairy industry. This is very apparent in times of depression, for we find that in countries or dis-