

the grant. This is a larger grant than has been given to other western roads, but the importance of this project is such that it is considered worthy of more than the usual amount of assistance.

Though the road has not yet been commenced, the people up on the North Saskatchewan are already figuring upon the point where the proposed road is likely to cross the river. The residents of Fort Saskatchewan and vicinity recently held a meeting and decided to memorialize the company, setting forth the advantages of that place as the most desirable point for crossing the river. They claim that Fort Saskatchewan affords the best crossing of any point on the river, and offer a free town-site to the company as an additional inducement. Already the residents of that place see in their imagination a large city springing up around them.

Though it is uncertain how soon railway communication may be extended northward in Alberta to the Saskatchewan river, yet it is but a matter of time when not only one, but several roads will be built through the district. So valuable a country is not likely to long remain entirely without railway facilities. Quite a settlement is now being formed in the Red Deer country, through which the proposed Alberta and Athabasca road would pass. Farther north in the Edmonton district a settlement was established years ago, and notwithstanding the distance from a railway, this is one of the most important settlements in the Territories. The formation of these settlements at points distant from railways, may be taken as indicating the great value of the country. In addition to the other advantages of the country, coal is found in abundance in this region.

A railway constructed northward to the North Saskatchewan river, would have its northern terminus at the river probably for some years, but in time it would certainly be extended probably many hundreds of miles north of the river. Attention has only recently been drawn to the vast domain away to the north of the Saskatchewan, through the efforts of Governor Schultz, of Manitoba. If this immense territory is to be opened out and its valuable resources utilized, it will be by the construction of railways into the region. These railways will be built in time. At present there are some settlements, mostly of half breeds and Indians, around mission stations in

the portion of Alberta north of the Saskatchewan, but the country will not be developed to any extent until it is opened up by railways.

BINDER TWINE.

The binder twine question is one which has recently attracted a great deal of attention. Some time ago it became known that the price of binder twine would be very high this season, and the idea got abroad that this was brought about by a combination of the manufacturers of twine. Great has therefore been the outcry against the alleged monopolists, on the part of a large section of the press. Monopolies and combinations in general have been loudly denounced, and binder twine monopolies in particular.

The binder twine question is a very important one in Manitoba, and we have therefore taken some pains to investigate the matter. So far as Canada is concerned, it is safe to say that there is no combination existing between manufacturers of binder twine. Notwithstanding this statement, prices of twine are certain to be very high this season. The advance, however, is due to natural causes, namely, a scarcity of the raw material. The best binder twine is made from manilla hemp. Cheaper qualities are mixed with sisal. The qualities of binder twine principally used and manufactured in Canada are manilla twines. There has been a rapid and heavy advance in manilla hemp during the past few months, and though manufacturers have advanced the price of twine, yet they claim that they have not advanced in proportion to the advance in the raw material. In May last manilla hemp was quoted at 29 pounds sterling per ton. From that time forward there was a steady advance in the price up to the end of August last, when the price was £41 per ton. Prices declined a couple of pounds during September, but again advanced rapidly during October, November and December, mounting up to £60 per ton in the latter month. It will be seen from this enormous advance in the raw material, that there is every reason for a heavy legitimate advance in the price of the twine.

Last year binder twine sold retail to farmers in Manitoba at 16 cents per pound. This year prices have not been fully fixed yet, but it is believed that they will rule at 21 to 22 cents per

pound, the lower figure for spot cash, and 22 cents on note. Prices may possibly be one cent lower in Manitoba. This is certainly a steep advance in prices, and it will make the cost of the season's supply of twine amount up to quite an item to many farmers, but evidently there is no help for it. So far as the local dealers in twine are concerned, it is well to say that they are doing the best they can to make the increased cost of the article tell as lightly as possible upon the farmers. At the prices named above, the local dealers are making a very much smaller profit than they did last year. In fact they are handling twine and selling it retail on a margin of less than ten per cent. This is certainly a very low margin to work upon, when it is considered that all expenses incidental to handling the article have to be paid out of this margin. Besides, a great deal of the twine is sold on credit. All things considered, the dealers who handle twine this season will not make anything out of it, as the margin allowed will not more than cover the cost of handling and selling in small quantities. The farmers therefore have no reason to grumble with the local dealers because of the advance in prices. The twine is largely handled by the agricultural implement companies, and as these companies are doing a large business with the farmers in their other implement lines, they have decided to handle the twine for about enough to clear themselves, so that the high prices will not bear so heavily upon the farmers. In the United States prices will be equally as high as here, so far as can be learned, prices to farmers being placed at about 20 to 22 cents per pound. Some twines are offered lower, but these are of inferior quality, containing a large percentage of sisal. Good manilla twines are not offered at lower prices than those likely to rule here.

The cultivation of both manilla hemp and sisal is confined to a limited area, the latter principally in the Bahama Islands. As the consumption of the articles is increasing, high prices are likely to be permanent, unless a substitute can be found. Flax has been tried for binder twine, but it has not been received with favor by the farmers. It is probable, however, with the present high prices, a good deal of flax twine would be used, were the article obtainable at considerably lower prices, but there is not the machinery nor the material in readiness to manufacture any large quantity of flax twine on short notice. Should the price of twine keep up for a few years, it is altogether likely that flax or some other cheaper substitute will be found to answer the purpose. If flax can be made to work, Manitoba should not go abroad for her supply of twine, as this country is admirably adapted to the growth and preparation of this article.