

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 22, 1896.

THE WHEAT OUTLOOK.

The Argentine crop is the principal feature in the wheat outlook at the present time. If any serious damage should overtake the Argentine crop, which will be harvested next month, we see nothing to prevent prices going considerably higher on this crop than they have yet been. On the other hand, if the Argentine crop comes through all right, as previously stated in *The Commercial*, we do not believe it will seriously depress prices. However, with a good crop safely harvested in Argentine we do not count with great certainty upon the very high prices which some appear so confidently to expect. It must be remembered that this crop of wheat has sold at much higher prices than previous recent crops, and we have every reason to be satisfied with prices as they are, or have been on this crop. The available supplies of wheat in the world this year certainly warrant higher prices than have ruled in recent years, but these higher prices have already been attained. So far as is apparent now, there is enough wheat to supply the world's demands. If prices are to go much higher on a non-speculative basis, it will be owing to reductions of crops to be harvested in the future.

THE INTERIORSHIP.

Mr. Sifton, Attorney general of Manitoba, was sworn at Ottawa on Tuesday as a member of the Laurier government, taking the portfolio of the interior, which department has been held vacant since the formation of the new Liberal government. This department had been held by a representative of Manitoba in the late Conservative government, and when the Liberals were returned to power it was expected that Hon. Jos. Martin would get the interiorship. Throughout the West Mr. Martin was generally regarded as the most likely man for the position, and his selection would certainly have given great satisfaction here in the West. However, matters have not materialized in this way, and though a strong effort was made here in favor of Mr. Martin, he was not offered the position by Mr. Laurier, for what reason we are not at the moment aware.

Mr. Sifton has for some time been regarded as the man chosen for the interiorship, and his final appointment is taken as an indication of the settlement of the Manitoba school question, though no complete official announcement has as yet been made concerning this matter. It was understood that while the question remained unsettled no appointment of a Manitoban to a position in the federal cabinet would be made. Now that Mr. Sifton has been installed, it is to be hoped he will get down to business at once and speedily develop a vigorous and progressive policy in the interests of Western Canada. Matters concerning the interests of the West come largely under the control of the department of the interior, and Mr.

Sifton is certainly possessed of that special knowledge of Western interests which should enable him to handle such matters to the best advantage.

Mr. Sifton is yet a comparatively young man, and as attorney general of Manitoba he was regarded as one of the strong men of the Greenway government and one of the ablest men in provincial politics. He has the ability to creditably represent the West at Ottawa, and we believe he also has the ability to take an equally prominent position in the larger field of Dominion politics as he has done in the past in local affairs. Mr. Sifton will seek election in the Brandon division, rendered vacant by the resignation of Dalton McCarthy, and without doubt he will be elected by a large majority, if not by acclamation. J. D. Cameron, provincial secretary, succeeds Mr. Sifton as attorney general in the provincial government, but a successor to Mr. Cameron has not yet been announced.

WINNIPEG'S WATER SUPPLY.

A report on the Assiniboine river and artesian wells, as a source of supply of water for the city of Winnipeg, has been prepared by H. N. Ruttan, city engineer, and the report has been published in pamphlet form. Analyses of the waters by several experts are given; and a special report on the condition of the Assiniboine river by Dr. Patterson and H. N. Ruttan, C. E., is also given in the pamphlet. The report upon the artesian wells would indicate that there is an abundant supply of water which could be made available through sinking wells. The engineer estimates the cost of a collecting system to supply the city from wells at \$25,000. This would supply a yield of 8,000,000 gallons per day. The supply is considered amply sufficient and permanent. Some of the artesian wells about the city supply 20,000 to 30,000 gallons per day by natural flow, without pumping. The quality of the well water is not considered objectionable from a sanitary standpoint. Both waters are very hard, particularly the well water. The greatest objection to the river water is the great amount of earthy sediment contained in the water during the spring and summer. To remove this would require a very extensive and expensive settling and filtering plant. The excessive hardness of the water could be overcome by a softening plant, to cost about \$50,000. The Assiniboine water contains vegetable contamination which renders it unsuitable for drinking purposes in its natural state. The excessive hardness of the artesian well water is not considered injurious to the system, and it is also the opinion of one expert that the large amount of mineral matter in the water would only be productive of temporary inconvenience to persons unaccustomed to its use. Sulphate of magnesia (epsom salts) is one of the principal mineral ingredients. Still the excessive hardness and large amount of mineral matter in the well water are considered objectionable. In the case of the Assiniboine the vegetable contamination and muddy nature of the water are the most objectionable features. The preference is decidedly for the artesian well water, taken all around. The

estimated cost of a new artesian well system of water-works throughout, for a population of 40,000, including supply for fire purposes and softening works, is placed at \$650,000. Engineer Ruttan thinks it would be desirable to distribute the work of constructing the proposed new system of water-works over three seasons, so that if a commencement were made now the system would only be ready for operation by the time the franchise of the Winnipeg Water-Works Company expires. It would no doubt be in the interest of the labor population of the city to have the work spread over two or three years, and it could also be done with greater economy than if it were rushed through in a single season. It is evident from this that it is not too soon for the city to move in the matter, so as to have a new system ready for operation by the time the present monopoly expires. At any rate, it would certainly seem advisable that water mains should be put down at once on all streets which it is proposed to pave, and in order to do this, some general system should be outlined and adopted, so that the streets upon which water mains are first laid would fit in with the system as a whole. The information in the hands of the city engineering department, we find, is much more extensive than we had supposed. In fact the knowledge possessed as to the artesian well supply is quite complete.

IMPORTING WHEAT INTO INDIA.

A good deal of misunderstanding evidently exists in regard to the position of India in the matter of wheat importation. It is true a few boat loads of wheat have been purchased in California for India, but this is not owing to any actual scarcity of wheat in India at the moment. The fear of a great scarcity of wheat in that country is prospective rather than actual. Owing to drouth the crop outlook in India is very unsatisfactory, and should a great improvement not take place, the crop to be harvested early next year will undoubtedly be far short of home requirements. There is still considerable wheat held in India from the crop harvested last spring, besides surplus supplies from previous years. In India some people have a custom of burying wheat in pits in the ground, and it is not known how much may be held in this way. It is estimated that about 75,000,000 bushels of wheat from last crop are still held in India. The importation of wheat from California was due to the speculative advance in wheat prices in India, on account of the threatened destruction of the growing crop. It is also thought that the California wheat may have been brought in to demonstrate to holders in India that they must not advance prices too far on account of the prospective shortage.

Two crops are grown each year in India, one of which would be wheat. The wheat is the winter crop. The present distress is caused by the failure of the rice and other summer crops in some districts, while the continued drouth has rendered the prospect for the present winter crop very poor. If the winter crop does not improve there will certainly be much greater distress than has so far been felt.

It is a pity that a portion of the big corn crop of the central western states were not on the