

Crop prospects in Eastern Canada were not particularly bright up to the latest reports. The Ontario bureau for May says that the fall wheat crop is not nearly up to expectations. This crop went into the winter in good shape, but after conditions were not so favorable, and the crop is now far from fulfilling the promise it gave earlier. Spring wheat was said to look good, but was commencing to suffer from drought. Rain was needed badly in some districts, and if the drought is not soon broken, serious injury will result. A private letter from Western Ontario confirms the statement of the bureau that a feeling of uneasiness was being produced by the dry weather.

THE plan adopted by some Manitoba and Territorial municipalities of paying two or three cents each for gophers' tails, in order to rid the country of these troublesome little rodents, has proved quite costly to some corporations. For instance the municipality of Indian Head has already this spring paid out \$2,500 for gophers' tails. At three cents each this sum represents nearly 85,000 gophers which have been destroyed, or at all events have been deprived of their caudal appendages. The Indians have been furnished with employment, through the adoption of this plan to exterminate the gophers, very congenial to the noble red man. With true Indian cunning and with an eye to future business, it is said these unsophisticated children of nature have been detected in the little game of removing the tail of the gopher and allowing the animal to escape. However, this matter was easily remedied by demanding the head of the little burrower in place of the tail.

NOTWITHSTANDING the great damage which was caused by prairie fires last fall, farmers seem to have failed to take warning by these disasters to protect themselves from suffering loss. The fires were renewed again this spring, and quite a number of farmers have lost their buildings, implements, and in some instances even live stock. A week or so ago almost every provincial paper had one or more such incidents to report. With all the warnings which settlers have had of late to guard against prairie fires, very little sympathy can be expressed for some of those who have lost their buildings and effects. In many cases a very little precaution would have prevented the disasters, and if settlers fail to take these they are not to be pitied. In some instances, especially in mixed prairie and bush districts, it may have been beyond the power of individual settlers to adequately protect themselves, but on the open prairie every farmer has it within his power to securely protect himself against loss, and that with little trouble or expense. A great many of these disasters must therefore be set down to gross carelessness. Municipalities should undertake a general system of protection against the spreading of prairie fires, and individual settlers should be compelled to make such provisions as will insure their own safety as well as that of their neighbors. Another fruitful cause of destruction of property by fires arises from the unwise practice of placing barns and outbuildings in close proximity to dwellings. In dry weather sparks are carried from chimneys by the wind to the barns, where the conditions are

generally favorable to producing a conflagration. A great many of the fires which have occurred this spring in the rural districts, could have been avoided by the use of a little foresight in placing barns, hay and straw stacks, etc., at a safe distance from dwellings.

QUITE a number of the provincial towns have been moving of late in the matter of providing protection against fire. This is commendable. No merchant should be without insurance, but when the insurance is provided, the desire to be protected against fire should not cease. Insurance rates are often so high in some of the smaller towns that it becomes a heavy tax upon merchants to carry a full insurance, whereas some adequate measures of protection against fire would allow of a reduction in insurance rates. There is usually a great laxity of providing protection against fires in small towns, as compared with cities. Statistics show that both the percentage of the number of fires and the proportion of loss is greater according to population in small towns than in cities. No matter how small the place, some effort should be made in the direction of protection against fires. It costs very little to organize a volunteer brigade, and it should be equipped with the best apparatus the town could afford. No matter how poorly equipped, it is better to organize beforehand, than wait for a fire and then endeavor to fight at hap hazard. Often in the latter case a great deal of valuable time and force is lost through lack of proper direction; and at a fire time is everything. Every place worthy the name of a village should be able to support a volunteer fire company and some sort of apparatus, if only a hand pump.

The Toronto board of trade has lately had a stormy time in discussing the reciprocity question. According to the published accounts a great deal of confusion and uproar was manifested, owing to the opposition entertained by many to prolong the consideration of the question. The following resolution was passed by a large majority: "That the true policy of enlightened nations in their commercial intercourse is the maintenance of a friendly and generous spirit, avoiding all causes of disquietude by discouraging the enactment of irritating conditions and seeking in a spirit of frankness and fairness where such conditions exist to have them removed; that this board is of opinion that neither in its trade or other relations should any cause of strife exist between Canada and the great nation with which geographically and commercially it is so closely connected; that it believes that a commercial treaty creditable and advantageous alike to both parties can be framed in such a spirit of fairness as will afford the best guarantee for its perpetuity; that this board is in favor of the employment of all laudable means to secure the end so much to be desired, but that in consideration of such subject it disapproves of any proposal to discriminate against Great Britain, whose protection we enjoy and under whose watchful and fostering care we have grown to be the people we are and occupy the proud and enviable position which we do among the nations of the earth." The above resolution of course does not admit of entertaining the idea of commercial union between Can-

ada and the United States, as the very basis of such an arrangement would mean that Canada should raise her tariff to correspond with that of the United States. Under the proposed commercial union arrangement United States manufactures would be admitted free of duty, whilst all other countries including Great Britain would be discriminated against by a 60 per cent. tariff.

THE Canadian Club of New York city, of which Mr. Erastus Wyman is president, is trying to work up a boom in that metropolis in favor of commercial union between this country and the United States. The club recently secured the great apostle of commercial union, Hon. Benjamin Butterworth, a member of Congress from Cincinnati, to deliver a lecture before the club. It will be remembered that Mr. Butterworth introduced a bill into the last Congress, providing for commercial union, but which was not reached during the session. The New York board of trade were invited by the club to attend the lecture. Mr. Butterworth declares himself a protectionist but he took the ground that protection relates to and deals with unequal conditions, and has no just mission other than to equalize them. He contended that there were no such unequal conditions existing between Canada and the United States, and therefore protection is not necessary, and wholly defenceless. The system of protection in the United States against the old world was in his judgment easily defended, because the conditions were unequal, but between Canada and the United States where the conditions are the same the system is wholly defenceless. Mr. Butterworth remarked that he had little sympathy with the Canadian who insists that his countrymen lack the ability or enterprise to enable them to hold their own against competition in the United States.

THE average political journalist generally makes a bad mess of any industrial or commercial question which he may undertake to discuss. It is very seldom that articles upon such topics, occasionally appearing in the columns of party papers, can be at all relied upon for accuracy or sound theory. Writers for political journals are so used to distorting facts, "cooking" reports and endeavoring to make capital for their party out of every occurrence that it is almost impossible for them to come down to hard-pan common sense in dealing with any subject. There are several important questions agitating the people of Manitoba at the present time. Some of these questions are of such a nature that no two opinions could be expressed upon them, yet how seldom are they discussed in the press free from party bias and without misrepresentations in some direction. Some of these questions are even made the butt of carrying on senseless and wordy controversies between politically opposed papers, and notwithstanding the frequent remarks of disapproval coming from the intelligent reader, they are continued, *ad nauseam*. A leading wholesale merchant of this city was heard to remark a few days ago that he had completely given up reading the editorial columns of the two party papers published here, owing to the continuous controversy going on between the two journals. Even arti