

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 24, 1889.

CROP ESTIMATES.

From the opening of May each year, a study of the different estimates of the probable yield of the growing crop of grain, and especially wheat on the continent is one of the most tantalizing pieces of employment that any man can engage in, and frequently it turns out to be employment which brings no reward but disappointment. From the first of May to near the close of June is the time during which prophetic statisticians are allowed full swing, and a generous public seems to allow them unlimited latitude, and even makes use of their vapory figures until something more definite is available, even when their statistical work appears to be as wild and reasonless guessing, as are the weather predictions of the celebrated Mr. Wiggins.

It is a noteworthy fact, that nearly all the crop prophets on this continent start out on the same track each spring, the difference between their estimates or guesses being only in the moderation or extreme of each. Thus when the season starts out with gloomy prospects, estimates and guesses range in hue from a sandstone grey to a coal tar black, and anything showing a ray of brightness would be looked upon as nonsense. In like manner when a start is made on the bright track, they range from ruddy brown to rose tint, and darkness is unknown. It is seldom that any radical change in estimates takes place, until the harvester and threshing machine begin to tell their tale of actual yield, and then they frequently veer around amazingly.

This year the crop estimate prophets seem to have all started in with bright hopes, which were not without foundation six or seven weeks ago. In nearly all the wheat growing districts of this continent the spring opened early, and seeding time was favorable. Subsequent showers gave great promise, and the crop prophets started on the dead-run in the direction of a heavy yield all round, both in winter and spring wheat. Subsequent frosts over a large area did not seem to in any way abate the high hopes, and not until the last ten days or so was there any general acknowledgement that frosts in some districts, and drought in others, particularly in the northwestern States,

had materially darkened the bright prospect. Later, rains in Kansas, that land of promise and very little else except cyclones, are said to be playing havoc with the harvested crop of winter wheat, which according to former estimates was to be more than double that of last year in yield and quantity. Then the crop on the Pacific coast now gathered in, took a tumble in yield and quantity of from twenty-five to thirty per cent., so that altogether the brilliant crop approximation of a month ago, have been dimmed greatly, or to put it in speculative slang have received a bad black eye during the past two weeks, and it is just possible that before spring wheat is ready to cut, and the season for blight is passed through, the other eye may be slightly discolored. Three weeks ago the crop in every spring wheat state but one was estimated at 100 per cent. of an average crop, and to-day there is not one of these states except Wisconsin on which such an estimate can be safely risked. Kansas with its crop of 35,000,000 to 40,000,000 bushels of winter wheat, promises to shade these figures very materially, and thus maintain its reputation for furnishing disappointments, while the Pacific coast crop estimated a month ago at 60,000,000 bushels has now reached a level of not over 45,000,000 bushels, and it is very probable that this estimate is from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 too high.

But to come nearer home, where the disappointment of last year's crop has prevented any too high expectations being built up, except by that class, who actually know nothing of the state of crops, and are ready to swallow any alluring estimate, even here the prospect is far from as bright as could be wished. The drought of the past three weeks has no doubt had quite a bad effect on many sections of the northwest, although there is no reason to believe that any serious damage has as yet been done, and the rains of the past week have no doubt mitigated much of the damage that was being done. Still there is no hope, even under the most favorable circumstances, of the yield of grain being anything like so heavy as was the case with the crop of 1887. The early spring and warmer weather from this date forward will doubtless put all wheat out of the way of danger from frost, so that our grain will come to market in good condition, once it does come. But it is folly to prospect about any average yield for a month to

come, and should the season continue dry, that yield might prove much lighter, than our hopeful friends care to realize. With the crop in Minnesota and the two Dakota's now acknowledged as likely to fall considerably below an average in yield, it does look as if the supply of hard spring wheat for the coming year would be far from too plentiful, and that prices for new crop would range quite a little above the gloomy calculations that have been made of late. Indeed it seems as if eastern millers were beginning to foreshadow this, and to their forecast we may attribute the sharp upward turn in prices which set in last week. There is, therefore, scope for congratulation even where there is disappointment, for if our crop does not turn out as heavy as that of 1887, there is a probability, that it will bring better prices than it did that year.

Seemingly even the estimates of crops coming from the Bureau of Statistics at Washington are not at all reliable in their figures, more than those we get from other sources, and now that the Department of Agriculture for the Province of Manitoba has commenced the issue of crop bulletins for this province, it is pleasing to see, that the first deals only with the acreage of each crop, and does not in any way go into the prophetic business. By thus holding to facts and figures which are obtainable and can be relied upon, a great amount of misunderstanding and dangerous mistakes on the part of those interested can be prevented.

FREE TRADE WITH CANADA.

The *Commercial Bulletin*, of Minneapolis, a journal which may be accepted as an exponent of feeling among the commercial element of the Twin Cities, in its issue of June 15th, deals with the sitting of the Senate Committee on trade relations with Canada in that city, and shows a decided feeling in favor of free trade with the Dominion.

The *Bulletin* instanced the evidence of leading manufacturers and merchants before the committee, all of whom were in favor of free connections in trade with Canada, and especially with Manitoba, and were of opinion, that the injury to the Northwestern States from such a change would be slight compared with the advantages to be gained thereby.

The *Bulletin* refers to the evidence of Mr. C. A. Pillsbury, the leading miller, who favored the repeal of the wheat and flour duties, as it would enlarge the wheat