

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, APRIL 29, 1895.

SETTLEMENT OF VACANT LANDS.

The committee appointed to enquire into the subject of the best means of securing settlers for the vacant lands in the organized districts of Manitoba, presented its report at a meeting of the Winnipeg board of trade, held on Monday afternoon. The report said that the committee had addressed a circular letter to the reeves of municipalities in the Red River valley, asking a return of the amount of land held by the municipalities and the terms on which they would be handed over to settlers, and if any encouragement in the way of exemption from taxes for a term, would be offered to actual settlers. Answers from a number of municipalities were received, and from these it will be seen that plenty of land is held for sale by individuals in these municipalities at prices ranging say from \$1 to \$10 per acre; but no very large quantity is yet held by municipalities as the result of tax sales. It further appears that there does not seem to be any desire on the part of municipalities to offer any inducements to settlers in the way of exemption from taxes. The committee waited on the provincial government on several occasions regarding matters in connection with the settlement of the Red River valley lands, with satisfactory results. The government will have a well boring apparatus at work this summer in Eastern Manitoba. A new drainage act has been substituted for the one passed last year. Under this act the government will send out an engineer to examine any lands for which drainage is petitioned and if that officer endorses the request the government will proceed direct with the necessary work, and after the completion of such the municipal officers are compelled to levy for taxes according to the benefit accruing to the lands drained. The government issues drainage debentures after the cost of the work is ascertained and their own officials decide as to the proportion of benefit received by any lands within the drainage area. The committee asked the government to establish an agricultural college near Winnipeg, but received a reply that at present no funds could be set aside for that purpose. The committee also urged that the government exercise a more direct and vigorous enforcement of the act relating to the eradication of noxious weeds. As a result of their labors the committee at its last meeting reached the conclusion contained in the following resolution: "That it is the opinion of the committee that the best means to be adopted to secure the settlement of the vacant lands is through the formation and operation of a joint stock company."

The report was adopted and the same committee was re-appointed to continue the work in the interest of the settlement of our vacant lands.

From this report it will be seen that there is not as much land in the hands of the municipalities as was supposed. It was understood that some of the municipalities held considerable areas of vacant lands, but this does not appear to be the case. If a company is organized to carry on the movement it will, therefore, be necessary to rely upon lands from private parties very largely at the outset, to give the company a basis to work upon. Once organized, however, the company might be able to arrange with the municipalities for the taking over in the future of tax lands, instead of having these lands sold to speculators. It would certainly be much better for the municipalities to turn the lands over to a company formed for the special purpose of bringing in settlers, than to throw the lands into the hands of speculators, where they would be held idle for years. It is to be regretted that the municipalities, in many cases have not sent in very encouraging reports, but this should not prove entirely discouraging, and we still believe that there is an opportunity for doing good work by following this matter up.

THE QUARANTINE REGULATIONS.

It will be seen by the report of the meeting of the Winnipeg board of trade, published in The Commercial this week, that the board has taken up the question of the quarantine regulations, in their operation to keep out settlers from the United States. The board has decided to petition the Dominion Government to make such changes in the quarantine regulations as will remove the great hindrance which they are to immigration.

A few weeks ago The Commercial devoted an article to the quarantine regulations regarding live stock brought into Canada, showing how these regulations operate to prevent settlers from coming into the country from the United States. By far the most hopeful immigration field we have is in the western and northwestern states. This season there is quite an inflow of good settlers from the south of the boundary, but it is nothing like what it would be if these quarantine regulations were out of the way. It requires no study whatever to see what a tremendous barrier these regulations place in the way of immigration from the United States. A quarantine of ninety days at the boundary for the cattle is simply prohibitory in many cases. There are thousands of families in certain districts of the central western states who are anxious to move and will move somewhere. They have several locations in view perhaps, one of these being Canada. They are undecided whether to come to Canada or move to some other state or country. They make inquiries, and when they learn of the quarantine their stock would be subjected to, they at once decide that they cannot come here. That so many settlers are coming here from the states in spite of this barrier, only serves to show what a strong attraction this country is to the western states farmer, for it certainly requires

a very strong incentive to induce them to undertake to come here against such a drawback in the way.

As matters now stand very little good is being served by this quarantine against cattle. The cattle in the northern western states are just as free from disease as those of Manitoba. Canadian cattle enjoy no advantages in export markets over those from the United States, so that there is no reason for keeping up the quarantine in the interest of the export trade. A simple inspection of cattle brought in from the border states by immigrants would seem to be all that is really necessary. The quarantine could still be kept up against the southern ranching states, or any other districts which might be considered as affected by any dangerous cattle disease. In the case of the northwestern states, however, there seems to be no good reason at present for depriving ourselves of the much desired immigration simply to maintain the cattle quarantine.

WEALTH IN THE SOIL.

A good deal of interest is being taken in a plan adopted by the city of Detroit, the chief city of the state of Michigan, to provide for those needing public charity. Vacant land about the city was secured and turned over to poor people to work. Seed was also furnished them. This enabled many families to produce sufficient vegetables to keep them during the winter. It was found that a very small plot of ground was sufficient to produce a supply of vegetables large enough to maintain a family. It was estimated that vegetables to the value of \$10,000 were obtained in this way, at a cost to the city of \$2,500. The experiment made in Detroit last year has resulted so successfully that it will be tried by other cities this year.

We know of no city where vacant land could be more readily or abundantly obtained than in Winnipeg. There is enough unproductive land within the corporation limits, if it were all cultivated, to easily maintain all the poor in the city. To bring the people into contact with the land appears to be the best remedy for poverty yet tried. It would also be less demoralizing to the average individual than the acceptance of charity in the usual way. There is wealth in the soil. With our millions of acres of choice lands lying idle, there should be no excuse for poverty in Manitoba, and happily there is very little here. What little there is could be easily cared for, if those who need charity could be brought into contact with the soil, in the right way. No doubt there is a good deal of vacant land about the city which would be given free for the season for cultivation to poor people, if it were applied for. It certainly would seem worth while attempting some plan of utilizing all the dormant wealth lying about us in the interest of the poor people of the city.

Henri Duverger, wholesale dry goods, Montreal, has assigned at the demand of Banque du Peuple with liabilities of \$69,000. The principle creditors are in Europe, though some of the local banks are hit.