

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, DECEMBER 14, 1896.

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE regular monthly statistical report of wheat stocks is a very bullish one for November this year. In recent previous years there has been a large increase in stocks in the United States and Canada during November, but in November this year there was an actual decrease, though small, in American wheat stocks. In world's stocks the increase in November this year was the same as in November last, namely about 11,000,000 bushels, but the increase was in Europe, while last year the increase was mostly in America. This change in the situation, as compared with last year, is owing to the heavy importations into European importing countries last month. World's stocks of wheat on December 1 this year were 148,000,000 bushels, compared with 164,000,000 bushels a year ago. So called world's stocks include visible supplies at principal points in Europe and America and afloat for Europe. See statistical article in another column.

THE Winnipeg board of trade has decided to call the proposed business men's convention on Thursday, February 4 and following day. Invitations will be sent to business men throughout Manitoba and the Territories, and a gathering fully representative of the West, is expected to meet on the date named. A very large number of questions have been suggested by representative men all over the West, for discussion at the convention. Some of these were mentioned in a previous number of The Commercial. A great many letters have been since received, suggesting additional subjects for discussion. One matter mentioned is the improvement of our waterways, particularly the Saskatchewan river with a view to shipping coal to Manitoba points. The improvement of our waterways is a question which might well be discussed at the convention. It is a matter, the vast importance of which is not recognized as it should be by our business men. We have a grand system of inland navigation in this country, which could be opened up at a very moderate expense, thereby giving transportation facilities for heavy commodities at rates with which the railways could not begin to compete.

THE low price of bran in Manitoba would suggest the idea of some plan of condensing the product into small space to permit of the exportation of the product at a profit. There is a good sale for bran in the United Kingdom but it costs too much to get it there. Owing to its bulky nature, the freight comes high on this commodity. Might it not be possible to press the bran into blocks so that it could be handled more economically for shipment?

THE government which will try to please everybody in regard to the tariff system, will indeed have its hands full. In this tariff question what is one person's food is another person's poison. The aim of the manu-

facturer is to secure protection for his manufactures while getting his raw material free. It is no benefit to the manufacturer to have protection for his wares, if he is compelled to pay a tax on his raw material equal to the protection on his manufactures. Here the difficulty comes in. What is raw material for one industry is the manufactured product of another. Iron, for instance, is a leading commodity of raw material in a large number of factories, and those who use iron want it free; but the iron is the manufactured product of our mines and furnaces. So on all the way through the list. It is a most intricate and perplexing matter, this tariff question, when the question of protection is connected therewith. Tariff for revenue only is a very simple matter; but where a policy of protection has prevailed, as in this country, to change back or reduce the duties is a task which is puzzling in the extreme. There are also strong sectional interests working against each other, which have to be faced. For instance, the Maritime provinces want protection for their coal and iron industries, while Ontario manufacturers want these commodities free, and they claim they will be obliged to close up shop if the duties are reduced on their wares, unless there is a corresponding reduction in the tariff on their raw materials. Again, Manitoba wants free fruit, free coal oil, free implements, etc., while Ontario interests are asking for more protection on some of these lines. Then we in Manitoba want the protection continued on dairy products, flour, meats, etc., while British Columbia consumers want these things free. Verily a tariff reform is anything but a pleasant task for those who undertake it.

ONE of the wants of Manitoba and the territories is cheap fruit. The fruit consumed here is largely imported, and the duty adds materially to the cost of the goods laid down here. We cannot hope to produce our own fruits in this part of the Dominion, outside of a limited class of small fruits, and the duty on fruit is therefore a great hardship to the people of these western prairies. The fruit growers of Ontario have asked for increased taxation on fruits. It is in the interest of the West that requests of this nature should not receive serious consideration. Free fruit is one of the things which the West should press for.

THE most gratifying feature of the export flour trade to Australia, which Manitoba millers have succeeded in working up, is the good prices received for the product. Heretofore the export flour trade has not been a very profitable feature of the milling industry, and this perhaps still applies to exports across the Atlantic. The export flour trade has largely been of an unprofitable nature. In the United States the millers have a large home demand for their high grades, and these grades they have usually been able to sell at home to good advantage. Their surplus grades they have got into the habit of consigning to commission dealers in England and elsewhere, and these consignments are very often sold at an actual loss to the shipper. On this account the export flour trade has for

years been an unprofitable business. The Manitoba flour trade with Australia, we are informed, is a cash business, done on direct sales, and the flour is not going forward merely as consignments. Moreover, the prices received are profitable to the millers. This is perhaps to some extent owing to the fact that it is high grade flour which is going to Australia principally. Owing to the light stocks of wheat in the Pacific coast states, flour is held at comparatively high prices in the markets of those states. This enables Manitoba millers to handle the British Columbia flour trade to better advantage than usual, besides being able to export freely to Australia.

IN MINNESOTA they have a scheme for connecting the Lake of the Woods with the Red river, by a canal. It is claimed that the scheme is perfectly feasible, and moreover, comparatively inexpensive. It is claimed by engineers that a canal could be constructed in Manitoba, to connect the Lake of the Woods with the Red river, at a very moderate cost. If such a canal could be built through the state of Minnesota, it could be built at a very much less cost on this side of the boundary. If the Rosseau river could be used for this purpose, it would leave very little solid excavating to be done. A canal connecting the Red river with the Lake of the Woods would be an immense thing for Manitoba, as it would bring the great lumbering industry to our doors and greatly cheaper the cost of building material in this province. A vast area of low lands in southeastern Manitoba could also be drained and reclaimed by means of a canal. We have it on the authority of a competent engineer, that it is possible to open a continuous waterway from Winnipeg to within forty miles of Lake Superior, for a much less amount than would be required to build a railway through the same territory. If this is true, a canal to the Lake of the Woods would be a link in a much more important system of inland navigation.

IT IS NOT always a wise thing to exclude press reporters from business or other meetings. Incorrect reports are more likely to be published through the exclusion of reporters than by their admission to meetings. A great hubbub has been worked up recently at Toronto over remarks said to have been made by a clergyman in a lecture before the Toronto Ministerial Association. The subject under discussion was "The Pope in Politics," and in the published reports a very offensive remark was attributed to the speaker. It now transpires that the objectionable statement was not made at all, but was added by the secretary of the association in his report to the press. Ministerial associations have a perfect right to exclude reporters if they deem it good policy to do so. Many business organizations follow the same custom. Under some circumstances this is quite proper, but very often it would be good policy to admit reporters. The exclusion of the representatives of the press is taken by the public as sometimes meaning that the association is not working for the general public good, but rather to further the schemes of its members, hence the reason for the privacy enforced.