

RED RIVER IMPROVEMENTS.

The government has finally declared its intention to do nothing in the matter of the Red river improvements. This will be a great disappointment to the people of Manitoba in general and Winnipeg in particular. This is really a very important work, and it has been pressed upon the attention of the government for such a long period, that those interested are becoming disheartened. Several times a show has been made of doing something in the matter, and then again it has dropped. In Parliament last week the minister stated quite plainly that the government had no intention of doing anything in the direction of undertaking the work, either preliminary or actual. In reply to Mr. Martin, in the house last week, Hon. Mr. Oulmet repeated the old statements about the difference in the opinion of the engineers as to the cost of the work, which is made use of as an excuse for inactivity. "When the government was satisfied on this question," he said, "and has available means, the matter will receive serious consideration." This is very small hope for those who hoped for something practical at an early date. The government evidently has no intention of satisfying itself as to the cost of the work, or a thorough survey would have been made long ago. Manitoba will, undoubtedly, have to wait an indefinite time before this important work is undertaken.

Freight Rates and Traffic Matters.

The steamship Phoenix from Messina arrived at Montreal on April 26 with 32,000 boxes of oranges and lemons. She is the first steamer to arrive this season, and is a week earlier than the first last year. She was delayed in the Gulf by floating ice and sustained some damage from coming in contact with it. The steamship Tiber left Montreal on April 25 for St. John, Nfld., being the first vessel to put to sea from this port this season. Six barges of the Montreal Transportation company arrived down from Kingston on April 25 with 120,000 bushels of wheat for W. W. Ogilvie. This is the first consignment of grain to arrive this season.

The Chicago Daily Trade Bulletin of April 23 says: Rail rates are said to be fairly maintained at 20c per 100 pounds for flour and grain to New York, and 30c for provisions. Through rates to Liverpool were slow and easier at 23 to 24.56c per 100 pounds for flour, 11.95c for wheat, and 11½c per bushel for corn, and 41 to 46.88c per 100 pounds for provisions. Through rates via lake and rail to New England points were easier, at 8½c per bushel for corn, and 5½c for oats. Rates to New York were lower at 5½c for corn, and to Philadelphia 5½c. The demand for vessel room for Buffalo was moderate and rates declined ¼ to 1c for corn, and 1½c for wheat. Charters were also made to Port Huron at 1c for corn.

Navigation is open at Duluth. The Duluth Market Report of April 21 says: The Western Transit Line steamship W. H. Gratwick No. 2, arrived in port last evening in a dense fog. Her master reported no trouble with ice on the way up. Early this morning the Cadorous came into port and about noon to-day the Centurion and Gilbert arrived. The first boat to arrive last season was the G. W. Roby, on May 9.

The roads carrying wheat from St. Paul and Minneapolis to Boston have made a reduction in the rates between these points to 30 cents per 100 pounds. This will reduce the all-rail rate from Winnipeg to Boston to 48 cents, instead of 54 cents as formerly.

A bill has been introduced in Parliament by Mr. McLean, of York, to prevent railways

from charging more than two cents per mile for passengers. The proposed act is to apply in the province of Ontario only, east of Port Arthur.

The Montreal Trade Bulletin of April 20 says:—"Grain freights are easy, scarcely half the space that was engaged at this time last year having so far been taken. London is quoted at 1s 0d to 1s 9d; Bristol, 1s 9d to 2s; Liverpool, 1s 6d to 1s 9d; and Glasgow, 1s 6d to 1s 9d. The Continent is quoted at 2s to 2s 3d. In deals we learn of two or three vessels being engaged on the other side at 42s 6d from this port, but shippers here are only bidding 40s to 41s 3d. Most of the regular liners have contracts at 40s. In cattle it is understood that one or two engagements have been made at 45s Liverpool, but rates have not yet been fully established. Hay is quoted at 40s to 42s 6d by regular liners, and an engagement is reported by an outsiders steamer at 37s 6d.

Insurance and Financial Notes.

A feature of the Commercial Bank liquidation at Winnipeg is the following: At the court recently the claims of creditors were proceeded with. In one case a man having \$1,800, which he feared his creditors would get to hear about, deposited the amount in the bank in a fictitious name; he now applies for payment in his own name.

The annual report of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, a summary of which appears in this issue of The Commercial, makes a satisfactory showing, the year being one of the best the company has yet enjoyed. Applications for new insurance were nearly \$1,000,000 greater than the previous year, and the assets of the company appear to be in excellent shape. This company has had a prosperous career, and at the close of another year will have over \$30,000,000 of assurance in force.

The government bill to amend the insurance act was introduced in the senate at Ottawa last week. It limits operations of foreign and assessment insurance companies by providing that no license shall be issued enabling companies to do business on the assessment plan unless it has five hundred applications for insurance to the amount of \$5,000, and stipulates that life insurance shall not be carried on in connection with other insurance business.

The scheme of insurance established through the co-operation of a number of Winnipeg wholesale dealers, which was explained in The Commercial a short time ago, has been dropped. The object was to encourage merchants to carry more insurance by providing a plan of insurance at a low cost for stocks of goods only. It is the intention to endeavor to reorganize on a somewhat different basis. The projectors wish to secure the guarantee of a certain amount of insurance before the company is declared ready for business, while under the old plan policies were accepted at once. A re-arrangement of rates has also been made.

Results of Irrigation.

The following introductory article to a pamphlet recently issued by the Northern Pacific Railway company, descriptive of the Yakima valley, state of Washington, tells of what has been accomplished by means of irrigation:—

The old saw that the desert has been made to blossom as the rose has been so often applied to various parts of the west that it has become trite and hackneyed. It is, nevertheless, a very compact and forcible, as well as truthful, way of expressing a fact that, like history, has repeated itself over and over again throughout the west.

The general—and especially the eastern idea of a stretch of country where the only thing to be seen in the way of trees and shrubbery is the scraggly and neutral tinted sage-brush, is that it is a barren waste, worthless and useless, and that, like the old Hebrew idea of Nazareth,

nothing good can come out of it. As the old feeling about Nazareth was, so the modern notion about sage brush land is—a popular delusion.

The truth is—and mark it well—that the most fertile land in the west is a sage brush patch, and the larger the sage brush the better the land. Such areas lack but one element to transform the unsightly, dreary waste into a fertile plain, a luxuriant field, a flowery vale. That one thing is water, and its effect is magical.

The Mormons were the first in recent times to enter upon this transforming process on a large scale in our own country. In their case it was a matter of life and death, and was forced upon them by their environment. The experiment was next tried in California, and then in Colorado.

This transformation was effected by, and the experiment consisted in, conveying upon these sage brush or sandy lands, as the case might be, in a region where the natural rainfall was sadly deficient, the water from running streams which issued from the canons, or from lakes and natural reservoirs. And this was irrigation.

Long before the Mormons or anyone else thought of or practiced irrigation, it was in use in the far southwest. That ancient race, that in the dim past populated the mesas and sun-scorched valleys of Arizona and contiguous territory, and that has been such a puzzle to archeologists and others as to who they were, from whence they came and whither they went, has left behind it irrigation canals of such magnitude and engineered with such ability that they cannot be improved upon.

Within a decade the irrigation problem has jumped to the front in a manner that knew no bounds, and the general government has expended hundreds of thousands of dollars in a most elaborate and scientific investigation of the many phases of the question.

As was natural, the subject of irrigation, its history and methods, its costs, its results, its general practicability to given localities, was first taken up in earnest in the southwest. Here the summer days were long and hot; the rainfall but a moiety of what was necessary to mature crops; many of the creeks scarce were born ere they dived out of sight in the hot sands to cooler strata below; the evaporation was so great that the usefulness of the few running streams found was greatly lessened.

Was there any way in which irrigation could help them? In default of the smaller water courses, could the few large rivers be used to remedy the condition of affairs and render them to a certain extent independent of other localities and make farming, fruit raising, etc., profitable? It was found that irrigation had an ancient origin. That it was in use long before the Christian era. Egypt, Phoenicia, India, Spain, Rome, China and a long list of other countries have possessed and now possess irrigation works on most extended and costly scales. It was argued that what they could do we could do, and the argument was true.

From that day to this the progress in irrigation, the immense sums expended in canals, dams and reservoirs, the engineering difficulties surmounted, the ways and means successfully devised to meet particular conditions, the great area of fertile and arable lands, otherwise perfectly worthless, that have been reclaimed, and the general advancement in the science in all parts of the arid and semi-arid region has been simply astounding. From Arizona and California to Oregon, Washington and the Dakotas, the good work has gone on.

A new thing in suspenders is the "Chester" and the "Worker" brands. This is an adjustable suspender, on a new principle, which combines flexibility and strength, which are the principal requisites in a comfortable suspender. It can also be sold at a low figure. Jas. Hall & Co., wholesale miters, gloves, etc., Winnipeg, have the control of the new line here.