

# The Commercial

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## THE WHEAT GRADES

As the season comes around each year for the fixing of the grain standards, there is the usual amount of discussion over the matter. Ever since the grading of Manitoba wheat began there has constantly been more or less controversy about the grades and the fixing of the standards. At first the standards were selected in the East, at Toronto, and this gave rise to a great deal of opposition from the West, western people very properly claiming that the standards should be selected at Winnipeg, by western people. It should be understood here that the grading of grain is governed by an act of the Dominion parliament, and comes directly under the charge of the inland revenue department. The act specifies or outlines what the different grades shall be, as for instance the act says that "No. 1 Manitoba hard wheat shall be sound and well cleaned, weighing not less than 60 pounds to the bushel, and shall be composed of at least two-thirds of hard red fife wheat, grown in Manitoba or the Northwest territories of Canada." Thus it will be seen that the general nature of the grades is fixed by act of parliament. Once a year as soon after the new crop is harvested as possible, the board of grain examiners meet and fix standards for grading the crop, and the composition of this board has been the subject of much controversy. The western people finally succeeded in inducing the government to have the standards selected at Winnipeg, and the standards board is now composed of a majority of western men. Still there is more or less controversy about the matter each year, notwithstanding that the composition of the board has been changed several times. Eastern millers, for instance, claim that they should have a larger representation on the board, as they purchase a quantity of Manitoba wheat. Some western shippers claim that as the great bulk of the crop is exported direct, the matter of fixing the standards should be in the hands entirely of the shippers. Again the farmers come in with the argument that as they are the producers of the wheat, the matter of grading and selecting the standards should be in their hands. The present board recognizes all these claims, and is composed of representatives of the various interests.

The question may be asked, what is the use of the standards board at all? As the nature of the different grades is governed by an act of parliament, and as inspectors, licensed under the regulations of a Dominion act, are appointed to grade the grain in conformity with the act, some people fail to comprehend the sphere and usefulness of the standards board. The act of parliament which signifies the general nature of the different grades, however, allows a certain latitude, under which the quality of a given

grade may be made to vary considerably in different years. The inspectors, in grading wheat, have the act to go by; but they also have the samples or standards fixed by the board of grain examiners. Here is where the variation comes in. There is room for considerable variation in the quality of the grain, within the scope of the act, and the standards board, in selecting the standards or samples for the use of the inspectors in grading each crop, say what this variation shall be. The condition of the crop varies materially in different years, and this is one reason for the variation in the standard samples, though the different views of the persons composing the board of examiners, also accounts for the variation to some extent. Some parties, particularly the millers, seem to want the grades fixed as high as possible, while the producers are always grumbling about the grades being too high. The producers have the idea that if the grades are made low, more wheat will go into the high grades and they will get a higher price for much of their wheat. They should consider, however, that the grade is simply the name, and that the name of the grade does not change the quality of the wheat. If the grades are reduced in quality, the price of the grade will also be reduced, so that so far as the price to the producer is concerned, the matter about balances itself.

There are a number of arguments which can be advanced on both sides, as to the advisability of varying the standards in different years. The varying condition of the crop may necessitate some variation in the standards in different years, but The Commercial has always urged that there should be as little variation as possible in the same grade of wheat in different years. Now that a large export trade has been worked up in Manitoba wheat we believe it is even more necessary to keep the grade as uniform as possible. Foreign buyers, for instance, have become acquainted with the quality of the grades of last year's crop, and any material change this year will unsettle them. If the grade is lowered this year, foreign buyers will be dissatisfied, and will be inclined to regard our grades as unreliable. The way the quality of the grades has been changed in some past years, buyers who handled the wheat one year would find the same grades the next year represented quite a different wheat. The Commercial believes now, as it has done in the past, that it will be to the advantage of producers and shippers alike to keep the quality of the various grades as uniform as possible. The crop can be made to suit the grades more than it has been in some past years, instead of changing the grades so much to suit the crop.

As for the composition of the board of grain examiners, and the plan followed in fixing the standards, no doubt the mode of procedure could be considerably simplified, in the direction of appointing a permanent board, composed of a fewer number of persons, as for instance, leaving the fixing of the standards in the hands of the regularly authorized inspectors. The plan now followed of appointing a new board each year, representing various in-

terests, has not unfrequently resulted in the appointment of some persons to the board who have little knowledge of wheat, either as regards quality, or commercial conditions of handling the crop. Changing the board each year will also have a tendency to lead to changes in the quality of the grades, according to the varying views of the members of the board.

## IRRIGATION IN THE WEST.

The Canadian Pacific railway company has had an examination made by experts of the country between Medicine Hat and Gleichen, in the territories of Assiniboia and Alberta, with a view to determining the feasibility of irrigating about 1,000,000 acres in this district. The report of the engineers has not been made public, but it is supposed that the district can be irrigated by water taken from the Bow river. It will be remembered that at the last session of Parliament an act was passed to allow the Canadian Pacific railway company to select the balance of its land grant in a solid block in this district, instead of taking every other section, as under the old plan, the object being to give the company a fair opportunity to undertake an extensive system of irrigation. It is to be hoped the company will find its plans of irrigation to be feasible, and that the work will go on at an early date. The district is well adapted to general farming, so far as the quality of the soil and the climate is concerned, with the exception of lack of average rainfall to ensure successful agriculture, one year with another. There are millions of acres of land in southern Alberta and eastern Assiniboia which can be made most productive if irrigation is feasible. No doubt the streams flowing in an easterly direction from the mountains, afford the means of irrigating a large portion of this sub-arid region. Once a system of irrigation for a considerable district, such as that proposed to be irrigated by the Canadian Pacific railway company, is put successfully into operation, it will serve as an object lesson for the rest of the country, and will greatly encourage similar efforts in the direction of irrigating other districts. Once irrigation works have been put in successful operation throughout the western portion of the territories, a new era of prosperity will have dawned upon the country, which will be felt in the quickened development of the entire prairie region of Western Canada. It is, therefore, very desirable that the present undertaking of the Canadian Pacific railway company should be successfully carried out.

## TRANSMISSION OF ELECTRIC ENERGY.

It is said that the problem of the transmission of electric power for long distances has not yet been solved, the loss in transmission being very heavy. The Cataract Construction company, composed of New York capitalists, has spent millions of dollars in developing the water power at Niagara Falls, with the object of transmitting the power to Buffalo and Rochester. As the former city is only sixteen miles distant, it is believed the power can be successfully transmitted; but in the