

which is ample proof that the whole subject is greatly misunderstood. Is there a farmer anywhere in Western Canada, or for that matter in any part of Canada, who would not gladly spend from fifty cents to a dollar per acre to ensure a fall of rain at such a time and in such quantity as would be most likely to bring perfect results? Yet, in a nutshell, this is what irrigation means. Its association with the idea of desert reclamation has doubtless blinded the public mind to the value of irrigation in districts where reclamation is not necessary.

Irrigation is a means of soil improvement to be employed, like other means of improvement, when the soil needs it. Water is most important to plant growth, not alone because it enters in such volume into its tissues, but because without it in adequate amount the plant cannot use other foods in sufficient quantity. No one questions the wisdom of saving, storing and applying manure. The same is true of soil improvement by means of drain-

age. There should be a similar knowledge in regard to irrigation.

Irrigation, however, is not merely a recourse to insure the safety of a crop. It has been demonstrated beyond question, both by practical experience and by systematic experiment, that growth and production can be profitably pushed by irrigation even when the natural moisture seems ample. In this respect irrigation comes into direct line with fertilization and cultivation, and is a most important factor in intensive culture.

Southern Alberta, where Western Canada's great irrigation projects are mostly situated, is not an arid country in the sense that certain kinds of crops can not be raised every year without irrigation. But it is semi-arid in that the rainfall is not always sufficient during the growing months to ensure a good crop of grains and roots. Irrigation has therefore been adopted as an insurance of a bountiful and diversified crop every year.

Echoes from the West

Crop conditions in the Canadian west on August 6th were more unsatisfactory than they have been at any moment since the crop was put into the ground. Absolutely no progress has been made in the past six days, owing to unfavorable weather, cloudy, cool, with too frequent showers in many sections. On August first it was estimated, that with fine, warm weather, there would be wheat cutting in a few spots on August 25th, but now it is doubtful if an acre will be cut before September first. About 80 per cent. of the crop is still in the blossom stage of development and it needs only ordinary observation to see that it will take at least six weeks of the most favorable weather to bring that wheat to the cutting stage. With the shorter days and cooler nights of August, progress is not so rapid as it is in July. The outlook for the crop of 1907 is therefore not so encouraging as could be wished for, though it is by no means in desperate straits yet.

The crop is healthy and the heads well formed and of good average size, except in a few

sections. The whole difficulty lies in that the crop was late seeded and the weather now is not as favorable as it should be.

BEEF COMBINE.

The commission to inquire into the beef combine has held its Winnipeg and Brandon sittings, but like so much of the startling evidence that was to be produced before the Grain Commission, the beef evidence dwindled down largely to suppositions, rumors and imaginings.

Mr. R. L. Richardson, of The Tribune, who is responsible for stirring up the major portion of the trouble, when put on the witness stand, was obliged to admit that he really knew nothing about it except the high retail price of meat in Winnipeg and the rumors and complaints that reached him from time to time.

Mr. Richard Buck, of Rockwood, who has been raising cattle in that district for 25 years, probably touched the crux of the situation more nearly than any witness that gave evidence when he said:

"I find it best to buy cattle one and two years old and stall feed them. I fed about 100 last year and have shipped fifteen cars to the Winnipeg market since January 1st. I am not tied down to any institution in Winnipeg, but am free to sell to all. Sometimes I make arrangements before shipping, but often do not. I find the price varies considerably and know of no arrangement between buyers to keep prices down, and I have had dealings with all the wholesalers. I consider the seller fixes the price when the buyer must have the goods and the buyer fixes the prices when there is an abundant supply."

When asked if he had any suggestions to make, he said that he thought the idea of a public slaughter house was a good one, but the city and not the Provincial Government should run it. Continuing, Mr. Buck said:

"Conditions were not altogether encouraging for stock raising. A few men who have good cattle always stay with the business—men who understand how to feed stock."

His suggestion would be that farmers should take better care of their stock, as it is the inferior cattle that keep down the prices.

From Winnipeg the Commission went to Brandon, where the evidence was similar to that of Winnipeg. Dauphin also was visited and here the sittings were made more interesting by the evidence of Glen Campbell, M. P., whose speech in the Local House last winter set the ball rolling. Mr. Campbell stoutly maintained that there was a combine, though he produced absolutely no evidence to that effect. His suggestion was that the Commission forcibly examine the books of two, at least of the wholesale butchers for a period of six months and the books of a dozen or so of the retail butchers. In this way he thought the truth could be arrived at.

THE GRAIN COMMISSION.

The Royal Grain Commission will sit in Winnipeg on August 26th to complete their report for the Government. John Millar, the Chairman, passed through Winnipeg on his way west on August 5th, but had nothing special to say of the British trip beyond the fact that every courtesy had been extended to the Commission and he thought the results of their investigations would be valuable to the farmers of the west.