

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JUNE 15, 1896.

THE FREE COINAGE CRAZE.

Owing to the close commercial and social relations between Canada and her big republican neighbor to the south, affairs in this country are quickly affected by conditions in the United States. Severe commercial depression there will lead to an unsatisfactory business situation here, and prosperous times there will help greatly to make good times in this country. The political situation here is also influenced to some extent by conditions in the United States, while it is well known that striking social movements usually have their day in each country. We may therefore expect that the free coinage craze, which is the popular fad in the United States at the present time, will extend its influence to some extent at least to this country. Some years ago when the "flat money" craze was at its height in the republic, the agitation spread to Canada. The cry was taken up here by several of our politicians and others, and "rag babyism" had quite a following in Canada, while meetings were held throughout the country to work up popular interest in favor of the movement.

So far we have heard very little of the free coinage craze in Canada, though the movement has taken a very strong grip on the people in the United States at the present time, particularly in the south and west. The fact that we have a general election on hand here may have tended to draw attention from the free silver movement, and perhaps the Venezuela incident has made us for a time inclined to disregard events in the republic. At any rate, we have so far been tolerably free from the free coinage agitation, and it is to be hoped that conditions will remain so.

The agitation for free coinage seems to have gained ground very fast in the United States during the past two or three years, and at the present time it looks as though the silver men will control the Democratic party at the coming Chicago convention. In fact it is admitted by some who are opposed to the movement, that the silver men have a good prospect of controlling the convention. The silver men are not as strong in the Republican party, but they have quite a following there also. It has been rumored that if the silver men succeed in controlling the Chicago convention, that some of the leading "sound money" men may go over to the Republican party in a body, in case the Republicans take a firm stand in favor of sound money. The monetary question is really the great issue in the United States at the moment, overshadowing for the time being even the tariff question. Financial heresy seems to have run mad, and it may take the combined strength of all advocates of a sound currency, in both the great political parties, to stem the tide of the present "cheap" money movement. Undoubtedly the present agitation is the cause

to a large extent of the present commercial and financial contraction in the United States, and an important factor in securing the low prices ruling for many staples.

STREET DRAINAGE NEEDED.

A short bulletin on road-making has been issued from the Ontario department of agriculture by the provincial instructor in road-making. This pamphlet lays great stress on drainage as the first requisite in making good roads. The pamphlet says, "Perfect drainage, first, of the foundation of the road-bed, and secondly, of the road surface, are the points in road-making on which too much stress cannot be laid." At the present time there is an agitation in Winnipeg for better streets. Perhaps it would be well to start by first securing better drainage. To say that Winnipeg's streets are badly drained is to pass over the matter very lightly. Pools of water standing in the ditches, without any outlet, are common even in the closely-built-up portions of the city, while in the western portions of the city in wet weather, the streets appear simply as streaks of mud, strung out between pools of water. Drainage is certainly very badly needed all around the limits of the city, to carry off these great pools of stagnant water, which stand for weeks festering in the sun after every spring freshet or heavy rain. Even in the central parts of the city, as we have stated, pools of filthy, slimy water are sometimes met with, where they lie for weeks, until gradually dried up by the sun or absorbed by the earth, leaving beds of sour, oozing mud, which give forth foul gasses for several days after the water has disappeared from the surface. Just a step off Princess street, and between that street and the central fire hall, right in the heart of the city, one of these foul pools of water, gave forth its offensive odors all last week to passers by. There does not appear to be a sufficient number of catch-basins to carry off the surface water even in the portions of the city where sewers have been built, or these ponds of filthy water would not be standing about in this way.

If good drainage is the first requisite for good streets, and the statement seems to appeal to common sense, then we might as well abandon the idea of having good streets until better drainage is secured for the city.

JUG-HANDLED TRADE SITUATION.

France has decided to drop her so-called protectorate over Madagascar and fully annex that large island, making it a French colony. This is owing to the difficulty which has arisen between France on the one hand and Great Britain and other countries on the other, regarding treaties which the latter countries had with Madagascar. Great Britain refused to submit to the abrogation of her treaty with Madagascar, as desired by France, but now that the island has been proclaimed a French colony, Great Britain and other countries will have to submit to the abrogation of their treaties with Madagascar. The same difficulty exists between Great Britain and France in north-western Africa. France has extended her in-

fluence over the territory lying east of her colony of Algeria. These countries are nominally subject to Turkey. Great Britain has a treaty with Tunis, which France wishes to have revoked, since she has occupied the country, but as these countries are nominal dependencies of Turkey, they cannot be fully annexed by France.

European influence has been extended rapidly over Africa during recent years. Great Britain, France and Germany obtaining the larger portions. Commerce is the principle incentive to these acquisitions of territory. What is particularly worthy of note is the different policy pursued by Great Britain, as compared with other nations, in extending her territory. The British acquisitions are at once thrown open to the world, and British commerce has no special privileges nor protection therein. On the other hand, the French and German policy has been to force trade into their own hands by arbitrary laws and high tariffs. This policy is the most interesting feature of the great colonial extensions of European powers in Africa and elsewhere, of late years.

No doubt the plan followed by European countries in regard to commerce in their colonies, will have an influence on the debates at the great trade conference of the British Empire, in session at London at the time of writing. The question will be asked: Why should Great Britain throw her possessions open to those countries which systematically pursue the policy of driving all foreign commerce from their colonies? Considerable muttering has already been heard on account of this one-sided situation, and it will be interesting to learn just what view the great British trade conference will take of the matter.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

LARGE settlements of Drunkards are being formed in North Dakota and other north-western states. These people are not so named from any over indulgence in alcoholic stimulants, as some might suppose the name implied, through an error in orthography. On the other hand they are said to be a very intelligent and thrifty agricultural people. The name distinguishes them according to their religious and social customs. They are as a community, greatly attached to agricultural pursuits, and are spoken of as being industrious, intelligent and progressive. They will undoubtedly form a very desirable addition to the population of the north-western states. Possibly some of these people might be induced to settle in western Canada, if an effort were made to attract them here. They are already, we are told, migrating in a large volume to the country immediately south of the boundary, which in a general sense, is in this direction, and it might not be difficult to induce some of them to locate on this side of the line.

LAST week an item was published in The Commercial regarding the disposal of elevator seeds. It was stated that the provincial department of agriculture had been made aware of the fact that elevator men and others were disposing of cleanings from grain, which is composed principally of the