

opposite system of cutting prices is demoralizing and destructive to legitimate trade, under whatever circumstances indulged in.

THE RAIN BELT EXTENDING.

A Kansas correspondent of a New York paper declares that the area of what is popularly known as the Great American Desert, is becoming rapidly lessened. The writer declares that the rain belt is steadily moving westward as civilization approaches, all along the line from the bad lands of Texas to the alkali districts of Dakota. Over this vast region generally known as arid lands it is said the rain fall is steadily increasing, and that during the last three years the productive belt has been pushed nearly 300 miles westward. In this way it is claimed full 25,000,000 acres of land have been added to the great central wheat field of North America. This land, which has so long resisted settlement, is, according to the correspondent, being rapidly settled up. During the past year about 200,000 people settled in that portion of the arid belt lying in the State of Kansas alone. For many years settlers have gone into this region with the intention of carrying on agricultural operations, but after breaking the prairie sod and repeatedly sowing the grain, they never had occasion to use the reapers. But notwithstanding the many failures, others were found ready to take the place of those who had become discouraged and left. Scientific men declared that the lands could never become productive. The physical conditions of the country lying west of the arid region could not be changed, and as this western country controlled the climate of the dry zone, it was but a waste of time and capital to attempt to bring the parched and dusty soil under cultivation. But it is now declared that the climatic conditions of the country are actually and rapidly changing, and that the discouraged settlers are now being rewarded for years of unproductive toil. For the past three years the rain fall has been sufficient to produce good crops of wheat, with a fourth now in sight. Over the eastern portion of the arid belt the rain fall has been so heavy as to render the country unfit for a winter range for cattle, owing to the fact that the rains wash the nutriment out of the grass.

The great change in the climatic conditions of the country has been the cause of much speculation, and various theories

have been advanced to account for the phenomenon. The wind blows from the same direction, namely the west, but instead of being dry, it now brings with it copious showers. The theory most generally believed is, that the change is due to the extensive system of irrigation now carried on along the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains. The great rivers of that region, which take their rise in the perpetual snows of the mountains, have been drained of their waters, for the purposes of irrigating the plains. The water instead of running wastefully to the Gulf of Mexico has been turned into thousands of irrigating ditches, and is now soaked up by the thirsty soil and the arid atmosphere. So extensively is the system of irrigation carried on that even the waters of some of the larger rivers are entirely consumed in this way on the plains of Eastern Colorado and Western Kansas. In a short time, with the extension of agricultural operations, there will be very little surplus water to escape from the region. The spreading out of the water in the shallow irrigating ditches, allows of a great portion of its becoming absorbed by the dry atmosphere, and is carried by the west winds and precipitated in the shape of rain on the plains to the east.

The Kansas writer considers that with the extension of irrigation both east and west of the mountains, in a short time the Great American Desert will practically disappear. If this theory be correct, it is undoubtedly of vast importance to the Canadian Northwest. It is generally supposed that the arid region extends some distance into Canadian territory, along the boundary of Montana, and a heavier and more certain rain fall over that district would be of great value to the country. In time no doubt irrigation will be practiced to some extent in portions of the Canadian Northwest, in the plains regions to the east of the Rocky Mountains. If the waters of the many rivers flowing eastward from the mountains were used to a considerable extent in irrigating those great plains, the effect would undoubtedly soon be felt in an increased rain fall over the central portion of the Territories.

Another system of irrigation which has been proposed, and which would probably be found practical in some portions of the Territories, is by means of wells and wind-mills. In portions of the country where there are no available streams, apparently inexhaustible wells may be obtained by digging or boring. About Regina, for instance, there is usually no difficulty in obtaining an abundant supply of water at a depth of about eighty feet. One of these wells has supplied that town for four years, without any signs of giving out. Every settler could have a well on his own farm, and if irrigation were neces-

sary, it is argued that this could be provided from the wells by means of wind-mills. A wind-mill is almost a necessity on a farm where stock are kept, and the irrigating it is claimed could be done without extra expense, by simply arranging the land in plowing so as to leave the furrows through which the water could run.

RAILWAY RUMBLINGS.

Up to the time of writing the provincial railway situation had not materially changed, and in the matter of disallowance nothing more definite was known than had previously been reported. The rumor that the Grand Trunk Railway Co. was negotiating for the purchase of the Manitoba Northwestern, has now become generally discredited. In connection with the Northwestern Railway, however, it is understood that the latter road will be extended from Portage la Prairie to Winnipeg during the coming summer, where connection will be made at the latter place with a proposed road to be built to the United States boundary. Attention has been principally directed during the week to what might be termed the dispute between rival parties who wish to build from Winnipeg to the boundary. Those interested in the company holding the charter granted under the General Railway Act, to build a road to the boundary, declare their ability to build the road at once, but more than this they have not made public. It is understood that the promoters of the Manitoba Central Railway will apply for a re-enactment of the charter granted at the last session of the Legislature, but which was disallowed by the Dominion Government. The promoters of this last-mentioned railway declare that they have made arrangements with one of the principal trunk lines of the United States for a connection at the international boundary, providing they can obtain a charter which shall not be disallowed. They consider that a charter granted under the General Act would be defective, and will ask the Legislature for a special charter. If this be granted, and be not subsequently disallowed by the Federal Government, the road will be built from Winnipeg to the United States boundary by the first of August next, by which time the American road with which a connection is to be formed, will also be completed to the boundary. The agreement between the two companies hinges upon the condition, that the promoters of the Manitoba Central can, by the first of June, show the American company that they hold a legal charter to make connection at the international boundary. To comply with these terms, a charter will have to be secured from the Legislature and receive the approval of the Dominion Government before the first of June next. The action which the Government intends to take in regard to disallowance will therefore very soon be definitely known.