

THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in West-ern Canada, including that part of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Province of Manitoba and British Columbia, and the Territories.

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Advertisements purporting to be bona fide, or which profess to express the opinion of this journal, will not be inserted.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very large circulation among the business community of the west region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific coast than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also carries the leading wholesale, commission and manufacturing and financial houses of Western Canada.

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ALBERTA OAT PRODUCTION.

Northern Alberta has become famous in recent years for the large yield of oats obtained by the farmers of that region. The quality of Alberta oats is

given it special attention, with the result that oats in Northern Alberta take the same important position that wheat does in Manitoba. Wheat is grown to some extent, but the great crop of the region is oats. A market for the oats in past years has been found in British Columbia, but the quantity now produced is much greater than British Columbia markets require, and the grain is now being shipped eastward through Winnipeg to eastern Canada and export markets. Some large shipments are being made to South Africa, for the Imperial government. Some of these Alberta oats have also been consumed in Winnipeg, though the market in Manitoba is naturally limited, as the province usually has a surplus of oats over home requirements.

The Alberta producers could only hope to find a market for any considerable quantity in Manitoba in case of a crop failure here. The production has now far exceeded the requirements of the British Columbia markets, so that hereafter Alberta oats will have to be mainly shipped east of the lakes. This makes a very long railway haul, and makes the question of freight rates a serious one to the producers of northern Alberta. Fortunately, for Alberta farmers, this season oats have been ruling at very high prices, and the crop has, conse-

quently, been a profitable one to the producers.

The rapid settlement now going on and the large increase in production which will result from this increase of the agricultural population in northern Alberta, should draw attention to the desirability of substituting some other crop to a considerable extent at least for oats. The crop is not a safe one to grow for export on a large scale. So long as the Alberta farmers could secure a market in British Columbia for their surplus, it was perfectly safe to grow oats freely, but now that the supply has rapidly increased far beyond this point, the growing of some other crop or crops on a larger scale, instead of oats, should be seriously considered at once.

The export demand for oats is not so uniform as it is for wheat, for instance. The grain is not as staple or merchantable a commodity as some other crops, one year with another. Oats would not stand the transportation charges from Alberta in years when prices were low. Prices of late have been profitable, but this is owing to abnormally high prices for oats in the world's markets. At

Chicago during December last, cash oats ranged from 42 to 48 cents per bushel. This is a remarkably high range of prices, as will be shown from a glance at average prices in previous years. The following shows the range of cash oats at Chicago during the month of December for a series of years:—

1901 42 to 48 1/2

1900 23 1/2 to 27 1/2

1899 22 1/2 to 23

1898 26 to 27 1/2

1897 21 to 23 1/2

1896 16 1/2 to 18 1/2

The abnormally high prices which have been obtained recently is shown at a glance from this table. Now that the production of oats in Alberta has increased to a point where exportation is necessary, the problem should at once be considered, as to the possible production of oats for export at a profit on the basis of average prices, and not on the basis of fancy prices obtained for the crop of 1901.

The Commercial brings this important question up in the interest of the farmers of Alberta. It is quite possible—indeed probable—that oats will drop back to normal values on the next crop. The necessity of immediately considering the advisability of substituting some other crop or crops for that of oats is, therefore, apparent. The Commercial will in a future num-

ber take up the question of the production of other and more profitable commodities in northern Alberta.

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THE GREAT WEST LIFE.

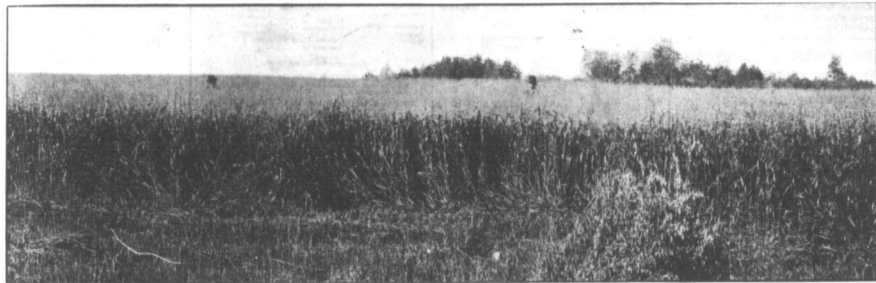
The ninth annual meeting of the Great West Life Assurance Co. was held at the head office of the company in Winnipeg on Thursday of last week. The directors' report showed that during the year, 2,537 applications for insurance, amounting to \$3,482,250.00 were received; policies were issued or revived for \$3,224,595.00 and 100 applications for \$245,000.00 were declined. The insurance in force on the 31st of December, including bonus additions, was \$33,415,569.00, a gain for the year of \$1,570,630.00. The total cash income for the year was \$475,936.31, an increase of \$71,638.71 over the previous year; the premium income was \$421,945.16—an increase of 18 per cent. over the previous year, and the interest income was \$53,971.15—an increase of 28 per cent. over the previous year. Attention was called to the fact that the reserve now exceeds \$1,000,000. The Great West reserves on the stringent basis of 4 per cent. interest and an additional amount is included with

Canada, and while it does a large share of western business in life insurance, the company is meeting with a favorable reception in the East as well. The success of the Great West Life is of course a matter of pride to Winnipeg citizens who naturally take a special interest in our only home life insurance company.

Fur Sales.

Results from the London sales show a line of advances which were very generally discounted here during the preceding months; this is certainly true of mink, raccoon, skunk, red fox, opossum, and a few extremely high-cost skins. The advance on wolf was merited, as the soft, furry Northwestern skins are really available for desirable uses; brax sold well, gray fox shows a slight advance over prices paid here, and spring rats sold favorably; in fall and winter rats, the collection was large, and considerable stocks from former seasons remain, making impossible a strong advance. As stated, the changes in value have been discounted since the opening of the fur season, and consequently great caution should be exercised in quotations for the remainder of the season. It is expected to avoid in March next a repetition of the experience in the sale of that month last year.—New York Fur Trade Review.

OATS IN NORTHERN ALBERTA —100 BUSHELS TO THE ACRE.



also remarkably fine. The crop of last year was an enormous one, and as oat prices have ruled exceptionally high for some time, the crop has proved very profitable to the farmers. In this issue of The Commercial we reproduce a photograph of a Northern Alberta oat field, which is said to have yielded 100 bushels per acre, and we do not think any one who looks at the engraving will doubt the assertion. In fact 100 bushel crops were quite frequently reported last fall.

The section which has become famous for these splendid crops of oats is sometimes called the Edmonton district, after the chief town of the region. Unlike the southern part of the territory of Alberta, irrigation is not at all necessary in the north. No irrigation work has been undertaken in this part of the territory. There is a large area of fine agricultural land in Northern Alberta available for settlement. During the last few years settlers have been coming in fast and in the immediate future the production of the district is expected to be enormously increased.

Oats have been the principal crop in Northern Alberta. The farmers found this crop to do so well, that they have