

## THE BUREAU OF ROAD IMPROVEMENT.

In making of itself a bureau of road improvement, and starting out to collect valuable information concerning the methods and cost of building good roads, the agricultural department is taking a step of vastly greater importance to the farmers of the country than any yet attempted by that vigorous branch of the executive government.

Good roads, as THE TIMES has insisted time and again, are a consideration more worthy of the farmer's attention than the introduction to his place of an improved breed of live stock or the latest labor-saving machinery. Without them the increased price that he may secure from the best farm products may be lost through inability to market them at the right time, while the time and money saved by using the most modern machinery are more than offset by the delay and vexation caused by muddy and impassable highways, broken vehicles, and the inevitable loss of temper that is sure to follow.

There has always been debate concerning the functions of government in this particular, some maintaining that the Federal power should direct and levy for inter-State highways, and others championing the cause of State, county and private supervision. It seems probable, as Governor Flower of New York says, that if any authority other than

the concerted action of the people is to be appealed to, the county commissioners offer the best and least objectional channel through which special tax levies can be made and substantial roads built. But while the county will be the generally accepted means of actually conducting road improvement enterprises, the higher governing powers may still help by compiling statistics and formulating plans based upon the experience of competent civil engineers and other road builders.

This is what the Department of Agriculture has started out to do, and in view of Secretary Morton's well-known ability of making a success of what he undertakes, little doubt is left that the new road improvement bureau of his department will serve as a great power for crystallizing public sentiment and inciting public endeavor toward better roads.