

A QUESTION OF BUSINESS.

If the farmers of the West could realize the immense loss that they are sustaining every year by failing to have better roads, not to speak of the inconvenience and hardship which they are accustomed to look upon as the greatest evils of the present roadways, the movement for highway improvement would soon be irresistible.

As a matter of fact, the disadvantage of not having at all times firm, smooth roads, along which to speed a promising trotter, or drive into town for an afternoon's pleasure, is the very least consideration in favor of good roads. In the light that is now being thrown upon the subject the question appears as a simple business proposition. There is nothing about it to suggest a luxury or something that may be postponed till a more favorable time. Good roads are as imperative a necessity to the farmer as improved machinery is to the miller or the best rolling stock and road bed to a railroad company. They are an investment which cold, hard facts prove would be worth more in dollars and cents than any single improvement that could be given Missouri and Kansas today.

The farmer hauls his wheat to market, waiting to do so until the roads are passably good. If wheat has reached a high figure while the roads were impassable, as they not infrequently are in this locality six months of the twelve, and the price is falling, he must grin and bear it; blame it on luck, perhaps. But there is loss, and the loss of the

best market price on his wheat, or any other product, is the same as if he had raised less or of a poorer quality. Then there is the inherent loss of hauling anything over a bad road. Some one has figured that the freight which a farmer levies upon himself to haul wheat six or eight miles to market over a moderately good road would transport the same wheat hundreds of miles by rail on its way to the seaport or milling center. It is true. Every day of the year, and in countless ways, the farmers are losing money and prosperity by clinging to the country dirt road.

But it is not the farmers alone who would be benefited by better roads, nor is it just that they should bear all the work of road-making. In fact the difficulty seems to be quite as much the townsman's failure to throw himself into the crusade against bad roads, as the farmer's seeming negligence of his own interest, in so far as he has been willing to put up with the old order of things. The benefits from first-class country roads would be felt by the tradesmen and professional men dependent upon the prosperity of the country almost as soon as by the farmers themselves, and it is proper and would accomplish the desired result much sooner if all would join to secure this much-needed public improvement.