

## Our Vacant Lands.

To the Editor of *The Commercial* :

The policy pursued by the Dominion Government and the C.P.R. corporation as an immigration policy, has hitherto been to promote settlement in Northwestern Canada as near to the foot of the Rockies as possible, no doubt with the feeling that the more eastern portions of the great Northwest (and more particularly the fertile Province of Manitoba), would, without any special effort, command a large immigration and be settled with that rapidity which the unquestionable advantages possessed by this part of the Dominion would naturally warrant. Comparisons are said to be odious, and it is not my desire to uphold one part of the Dominion of Canada at the expense of another part. Every part and portion of this vast country has its peculiar advantages and attractions; but, endeavoring as we are in this Province to induce agriculturists from European countries to settle amongst us, I may state an undeniable truth that for mixed farming, the growing of cereals and roots, with the raising and fattening of stock on the rich and varied native grasses with which the prairies abound, Manitoba stands pre-eminent; and when to this is added that in no country in the world can mixed farming be commenced under so small an outlay than in the Province of Manitoba, its attractions become still more prominent for those Old Country farmers who have not been accustomed to place all their eggs in one basket.

To persons with considerable capital, the ranching grounds of the Northwest, where cattle can winter out on the snow-clad prairies, and yet without an ounce of artificial food, with nothing beyond the succulent grasses which they get by scraping away the thin layer of "the beautiful," and yet be fit for the butcher in the early spring. The far Northwest, now so readily accessible since the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, offers an unexceptionable opening of which many Englishmen have already availed themselves. But it is not to the large capitalist I wish to address myself; it is to farmers of from five to one hundred acres, particularly those of the United Kingdom, who, with cows, sheep, poultry and crops, endeavor to meet heavy charges and support their families in respectability and comfort, in latter years to many a difficult struggle. To them I would say, before purse and strength are worn out, come out to Manitoba with your families, invest the small capital which you can command judiciously; continue to exercise the same thrift and industry practised on your Old Country farms, and instead of having little to show for years of toil and care, each revolving year will see you with increased worldly wealth and the fruits of your labor in tangible evidence around you.

The whole of this large Province is adapted for farming purposes excepting the timber districts, which, however, are not of any very considerable extent; but there are at present thousands of acres of as fertile lands as are to be found in the Dominion in the immediate vicinity of Winnipeg, which, from their geographical position, offer more superior advantages than other parts of the Province can to the intending settler.

Winnipeg, the capital of not only Manitoba, but of the whole Northwest, with its unrivalled position, situated as it is at the confluence of the two great waters of the Assiniboine and Red rivers, close to the American boundary, is certain in the not distant future to be the centre of a net-work of railways ramifying over this great continent, with unlimited water-power and unrivalled facilities for the development of manufactories all now lying comparatively dormant, awaiting the advent of capitalists, when, like the action of Aladdin's lamp, this already considerable city will with kaleidoscope rapidity become the Chicago of the Dominion. At the present time all farmers' produce finds a ready market. The agriculturist saves from three to four cents per bushel on the transit of his grain when delivered at the Winnipeg market, which means, at the minimum sum for a crop of fifty acres, a gain of thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents, for which sum he can purchase a good cow. His eggs, poultry, butter—in fact everything that a farmer desiring to succeed should industriously raise, will find a ready market in the prairie city, while the cost of delivery to those resident within reasonable distances will be practically nil.

It may be asked, and not unreasonably: Why are these lands vacant? The answer is that—persons naturally arguing that the land around a great city would be speedily taken up—swarms of speculators eagerly grabbed all they could lay their hands on and have hitherto held them at prohibitory prices, but thousands of acres of these lands around the city of Winnipeg can now be purchased from two dollars (about eight shillings) to five dollars, or a pound sterling, per acre, with liberal terms as to payments; but my advice to all intending settlers who propose to purchase land is only to purchase what they can pay for. A man and his family who properly farm fifty acres of land on the same principle that farms are worked in the United Kingdom, namely, have a little of everything coming under the domain of the agriculturist's care, can live in comfort and save sufficient money to purchase more land when required.

A large proportion of the failures in this country have been due to persons entering on considerable tracts of land—three hundred and twenty acres and upwards—without any means whatever to render the land profitable. Even thus handicapped many have succeeded beyond their most sanguine anticipations, while others, after struggling on until they got their homestead patent, then went into the clutches of the money-lender and launched out into extravagant building and the purchase of machinery, which their means or extent of cultivated land in no way justified, the extent of land cultivated out of three hundred and twenty acres being generally under thirty, so that the settler had thus actually two hundred and forty acres of wild lands which were liable to municipal taxes. True, these are small, but with interest money payable on the mortgage given on the land, with other calls, every cent mounts up, and with nothing to depend upon but the crop, which in this country, as in all other countries, occasionally fails when this occurs, as "the last straw breaks the camel's back," so the im-

provident settler arrives at the end of his tether, and throwing up his land to the mortgagee, he leaves, blaming the country for what was brought about by his own extravagance and want of forethought.

During my seven years' residence in Manitoba similar circumstances have so often come under my notice that I advocate a man taking up at first only as much land as he and his family can handle, unless he has means to hire help, which is both dear and scarce throughout the Province. The prudent and provident man will have abundant opportunities as time goes on of acquiring more land, and paying for it out of the fruit of his labors. He will be free from the millstone of debt, and each season will see him in an improved position.

That this country has not its drawbacks it would be idle to assert, but compare it with the other colonies of Great Britain. Firstly take the distance and means of communication between the two countries: Ten or twelve days at furthest will transport a man from Winnipeg to London, the journey being performed under the most luxurious surroundings from the time of stepping into the palatial cars of the Canadian Pacific Railway, until the traveller disembarks from the magnificent ocean steamship that has carried him across the Atlantic. The distance between the land of one's birth and the land of one's adoption, and the practicability of seeing relations and friends within so brief a period will influence many in their choice of a future home, and there is every probability that the time in which the journey between England and Manitoba can be accomplished, will be still further lessened. Secondly, the low rate at which the through journey can be made. Thirdly, the very small capital on which a settler can commence and the comparative ease with which the virgin soil can be brought into the highest state of cultivation. Its extreme fertility is too well known to require even a passing allusion. Supposing it to be without other advantages, the Province of Manitoba must commend itself to intending emigrants, particularly those of Great Britain, as offering more solid attractions than other dependencies of the English Crown, and the vicinity of Winnipeg must therefore, for reasons before given, be the most eligible locality to settle in.

The day cannot be far distant when the large tracts of land now available for various agricultural purposes around this city, and at present obtainable at very low figures, will seem with a large and prosperous community, and the investments made under existing circumstances prove of a highly remunerative character. The argument is not that the land is better than in other parts of the Province, but that the facility for the disposal of all farm produce is much greater and the expense of shipment from the port of Winnipeg considerably less than from other points in the Province. There are at the present time thousands of acres of land within a radius of twenty miles of the city of Winnipeg on sale, and besides these there is a large tract of what are called swamp lands, which have been handed over to the Local Government to be disposed of by them. The term swamp must not be received in the ordinary acceptance of the word in England. These