

How Wheat Grades and the Tariff Affect the Manitoba and Northwest Farmers.

The present low prices for farm produce in this country have led a great many farmers to look a little more closely than usual into the conditions governing the basis of prices of wheat especially, and also in general the other commodities bought and sold by the farmers in the Northwest. So far as I have been able to judge from the tone of the letters bearing on the subject, as contributed to the provincial press, most of the writers seem disposed to lay the blame on the rather exorbitant prices charged for agricultural implements. Every one seems to take it for granted that the low price of grain of all kinds is altogether caused by reasons other than purely local. Some, however, seem to have an idea that the grading system has something to do with the low price, and advocate a large number of grades. We have in Manitoba at present no less than ten grades—one hard, two hard, three hard, one northern, two northern, three northern, one frosted, two frosted, one rejected, and two rejected, while in Minnesota and Dakota there are practically only four grades—one hard, one northern, two northern and three northern. I propose to show that it cannot be the grades that are to blame, as the price in Minnesota and Dakota has been higher, apart from the difference in freights, than the price in Manitoba. In fact, instead of increasing the number of grades to give us a better price, we would, if we had adopted the Minnesota system, have obtained better prices. The grade of one northern is the standard grade in Minnesota, that is, it is the grade which governs the price of the others, lower grades having their value fixed at so many cents each under the price of one northern. Now one northern over the line takes in a much wider range of qualities of wheat than our two hard, though the milling value is supposed to be the same. There is no hard and fast standard fixed as with us, but the average of the whole crop, which if put all together would make that grade, is taken; thus an inspector grading at Duluth into one of the large terminal elevators there might grade a large number of cars as one northern, which if they had to be sold separately might be worth two cents less than others of the same grade, because he knows that when the average of all cars going into that elevator is taken, the whole will run to the standard that has a world-wide reputation as Duluth one northern. In Manitoba if a car does not come just up to the line fixed as the standard of the grade, the car must be graded down and the value taken as perhaps five cents less, though the actual value of the wheat may be not more than a cent less per bushel than the standard. The chances are in our system that a buyer will get perhaps a better average than the standard in shipments out of an elevator like Fort William, because no cars have gone in that are under the standard, while a great many may have gone in that are over. In practice this season, all the wheat that grades two hard, one northern and two northern, and a large proportion of three hard, would on an average have gone into the Duluth one northern grade.

To increase the number of grades in this country would be to establish a purely sample market. This is impossible here, so long as wheat has to be exported and sold in markets thousands of miles distant; no one could do business with export traders in Montreal, New York or England, if a separate sample of every lot of wheat had to be sent there before they could buy. A sample market is only possible in a large milling centre, like Minneapolis, where there is milling capacity of thirty-five thousand barrels per day; and Minneapolis is, in consequence, one of the largest markets in the country. All wheat going there is first graded, that is, cars grading one northern have the certificate as evidence that the milling quality of the wheat is in that high class, but at the same time the wheat is afterwards sold by sample on the Minneapolis Exchange, so that if a car should happen to be a good full plump berry, or a rather thin one, it might do on the actual grade; but taking the result all through the season, the result to the country as a whole is practically the same. A farmer may get two cents more on part of his crop and two cents less for the other part in Minneapolis, while at Duluth he might get the same price all round. A less number of grades, therefore, in my opinion, would simplify matters to the dealers, and give better results to the farmers as a whole.

But I contend that the matter of grading is a very small matter to be considered, when there are other things that bear very much more heavily on the price of wheat in this country. To begin with, the rate of freight to Duluth and Minneapolis as compared with the rate to Fort William is eighteen cents per hundred as compared with twenty-one cents with us—a difference of nearly two cents per bushel. Again, the export of hard wheat from Dakota and Minnesota is falling off every year, owing to the larger milling capacity in the States; as an instance of this, there is at Duluth and West Superior a milling capacity of about twenty-five thousand barrels a day, where four years ago there was not over a capacity of two thousand barrels a day. The mills at Minneapolis can grind thirty-five thousand barrels a day, running full time. The United States is still one of the largest exporting wheat countries in the world, but it is surprising how little of the quality of wheat raised in the north-western states is exported as wheat: this

wheat goes out as flour, and the offal, bran and shorts, finds a market in the ever-increasing market in the great republic. As a rule, our two hard has sold at two or three cents less than one northern when sold for export; this year it sells for the same, but when it is remembered that what grades two hard this year is the pick of the wheat that would grade one northern, our wheat is still at a discount. Anyone can prove this who will take a sample of the same wheat to a Minneapolis miller and to a Montreal or New York exporter, and he will find that he would get at least two cents more for milling use than for export. We have had an example of this in our own Province this season; the Lake of the Woods Milling Company claim that they have not as much wheat as they want, and they have been lately, since the bulk of the wheat has been sold by the farmers, taking what was offered at three cents over the export value. If we had sufficient mills in Canada to grind up all the wheat grown in the Northwest, we would be in as good a position as the farmers in the states adjoining; but there are not mills enough, and if there were they would not have the market for their off-products, bran and shorts, or even for their finer brands of flour. The finest brands of flour in Minneapolis are sold in the States; it is the medium grades that are exported.

The United States is therefore the best market for our best wheat. It is also the best market for our poorest wheat. Take a year when we have a crop like that of 1891, when so much wheat was unsaleable on account of dampness; dealers could not buy it, because they dare not take risks of carrying it to Europe; it was too far even to send it to Ontario. How many farmers know this to their cost is shown in the thousands of bushels that have been pitched out as useless on the prairie. Had we had the American market, this damp wheat could have been taken to mills within 500 miles of where it was grown and used up before it spoiled, or the very worst of it sold for feed in the immense market to the south of us. A visitor to Minneapolis market any time during the past year could have seen thousands of bushels finding a ready market at from thirty to fifty cents, that a dealer who had to export the wheat could not have looked at. But it is when we come to coarse grains that we can see the injustice that is done to this country in being shut out from its natural market more glaringly than in any thing else. Oats and barley, that have this past season been sold at fifteen and sixteen cents per bushel, could have been sold at five to ten cents per bushel more if allowed to go to American markets. Brewing barley has sold in Winnipeg for twenty-five to thirty cents, while in Minneapolis the same would sell from forty-five to fifty. The rate of freight from Brandon to Winnipeg is sixteen cents per hundred pounds, the rate to Minneapolis is twenty-two; a glass of beer sells in Minneapolis at five cents, in Winnipeg at ten. Minneapolis and Milwaukee beer sells at the same price in Winnipeg as the home product, after paying thirty-five per cent. duty and freight added. Comment is needless.

It is to be remembered besides that in oats the bushel here is thirty-four pounds, across the line it is two pounds less—this is besides the difference in price per bushel. So much for what our farmers sell; for what they buy there is now a pretty well-defined idea that they could do better, were the tariff between Canada and the States removed. The old argument that the tariff is higher in the States than with us is about played out. Let any farmer go from Emerson to Pembina and see whether he could not buy his goods of all kinds to better advantage. The fact is that while the United States is nominally a protective country, it is really the greatest free trade country in the world. There is a system of perfect free trade between sixty-five millions of people—those people are the wealthiest people in the world, when the wealth per head of population is taken; and they are the greatest trading people in the world. I mean that on an average an American will do ten times the amount of trade in a year that is done by the average European, thus making their population for trading purposes equal to ten times the number compared with the European standard. That there are farmers in the Northwestern States no better off than farmers here is no reason why we should not improve our advantages by getting their market. No doubt the reckless credit system which we copied from the States has much to do with individual hardship over there, but we are rapidly getting into the same trouble, and the fact that we are handicapped both in our buying and selling will only make things worse here by-and-by. One of the worst handicaps that the farmer is under here is in the price of lumber. Most of the lumber used in Manitoba comes from the Lake of the Woods, a distance from Winnipeg of 145 miles; the same quality of lumber can be brought from Duluth, 470 miles, and pay twenty-five per cent. duty, and be laid down in Winnipeg at the same price. What does the farmer on the prairie want more than cheap lumber? And this is how he gets it under the National Policy.

Let anyone take a map of North America and try if he can see any reason why Canada should be cut off from the southern half of the continent. Look at the Northwest cut off from the east by a barren stretch of rock and great sheet of water, at the State of Maine running away in into what should be Canada and nearly severing the eastern extremity from the Province of Ontario. The whole of the Dominion stretched to a thin line—thin almost to breaking point, across the

continent, and the great solid mass of territory to the south of us. Let us examine ourselves and say honestly, Are we honest when we say that we do not want anything to do with these scheming Yankees; that we want to keep Canada to ourselves? Was there no selfish reason that dictated the so-called National Policy? And now has it been a success? Let the Maritime Provinces answer, mouldering in a dry rot amid unsurpassable riches of mineral wealth; Quebec under the heel of a middle age ecclesiasticism, and her children fleeing in thousands to the south; Ontario with her barley and horses, that used to be a fruitful source of income to her industrious farmers, now unsaleable at home for want of the southern market, and her annexation clubs now forming all over the country; Manitoba and British Columbia, almost too young to know good from evil, and already writhing under the prick of an indefinable something, they know not almost what—let the whole Dominion speak, with its burden of debt mounting up by the hundred thousands, nay, almost by the hundred millions, the population unable, even with the aid of immigration, to hold its natural increase in the past ten years, all answer that the National policy has failed. Those in high places speak to us of relief to be obtained from a federation of the British Empire; free trade with England at the expense of other parts of the world. Why we have free trade with England now; our farm products and manufactured goods enter her ports free. Everything is talked of but admission to the only natural market we have, and one has only to look at the map to be convinced that man is trying to keep asunder what was never intended by nature to be separate. Let the farmers of Manitoba look to this; it will bear enquiry, and it is my opinion that when once they see the truth in its proper light, that it will not be a mere sentiment that will keep them from insisting on getting what is their natural right.

Building with Concrete—Errata.

To the Editor of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE.

In "Building Concrete" your compositor has made a mistake, which I hasten to correct, as it is a very material one. My formula is, one-tenth lime, fresh slacked, to nine-tenths gravel, not one-quarter to three-quarters, or, as I put it, one shovel of lime to ten of gravel.

Yours truly,
G. A. LACEY.

Questions Asked and Answered.

I wish to inform "Thorah Farmer" that the two-horse tread-power is sufficient to drive the ensilage cutter with twenty-four feet carrier, and also drive a provender grinder. The price of all here is about \$255, each article guaranteed and of the latest and best make. As for wind-mills, I have no faith in them for above purposes.

J. B. ABBOTT, Ottawa, Ont.

In reply to Thorah Farmer's enquiry regarding tread-powers and wind-mills, Mr. A. R. Yuill, of Carleton Place, Ont., writes us as follows:—"We have a sixteen-foot wheel, and it chops all the grain and cuts the feed and bedding for 75 head of cattle and eight horses, but we could do the work easier if our wheel was at least two feet larger. The size of the wheel will depend upon the number of cattle kept." Mr. Yuill prefers the Halliday Standard Windmill, for the reason that it is the only one which gives satisfaction in his neighborhood.

RECOMMENDS TREAD-POWER THRESHING MACHINES.

In answer to a Manitoba farmer, I would say I purchased a two-horse tread-power threshing outfit last June, and find it a profitable investment. I have threshed over 3,000 bushels of wheat up to date. Its capacity when properly run is about 250 bushels wheat or 500 bushels of oats; it will thresh all kinds of grain. To run it to its full capacity requires three men and two boys and two team of horses, to thresh from the stook—one man to pitch on, and one to fork to the machine, and one to feed; one boy to take the straw away with the aid of a hay rake, the other to put grain in bags. My experience is that threshing can be done in about the same time it would require to stack with the same help, at a total cost in cash of not more than \$15 per thousand bushels. The two teams should be low, blocky type, and trained to work on power; change off every two and a-half hours. Use the basket racks that require no loading, and two wagons. If "A Farmer" will communicate with me, I will give him all the information he will require.

Yours truly,
N. W. DAWSON, Whitewater, Man.

AN ENQUIRY ABOUT BLUESTONE.

A subscriber, "Sandy," writing from Suthwyn, enquires if bluestone wheat would be safe feed for cattle or hogs; if it is dangerous, and if salt pickle would not answer the purpose as well.

[Bluestone (sulphate of copper) is sometimes used as a medicine in small quantities, acting as a tonic and astringent, but is a deadly poison in large doses, and great care should be taken that wheat which has been treated with bluestone is not allowed to be eaten by any animal. Salt brine is a preventive for smut in wheat, but as the seed requires to be soaked for some time in the solution and then dried before it can be sown with a drill, it entails much more labor than treating wheat with bluestone, which only requires thorough sprinkling and is ready for sowing almost immediately, and is generally considered a more certain preventive.]

EDITOR.]