

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, SEPTEMBER 19, 1892.

## WHEN TO SELL WHEAT.

It is surprising what a number of items are going the rounds of the papers, containing advice to farmers to sell their wheat early. Statistical articles have appeared recently in Winnipeg and other Manitoba papers, showing that, taking one year with another, the farmer who sells his wheat early in the season makes the most money. This is certainly all right in principle. THE COMMERCIAL has frequently urged that as a general rule it is the best plan to sell wheat as soon after threshing as possible.

There are two ways of looking at the question, one of which is generally overlooked by the farmer who holds his wheat. The man who holds his wheat only looks at the matter from the standpoint of an expected advance in prices. He holds because he expects to get a higher price later on. He should also take into consideration the possibility of a decline in prices. Admitting that the probability of an advance is equal to the possibility of a decline in values, the advantage is in favor of selling early. It costs money as well as includes risk of loss from fire, etc., and shrinkage, to carry wheat. These facts turn the scales decidedly in favor of selling early. The farmer who sells early, foregoes the possibility of an advance, but more than this, he is relieved from the possibility of a decline, and is further relieved from the expense, shrinkage and other risks of carrying the grain. He simply transfers the risk and expense to the purchaser of his wheat.

But while THE COMMERCIAL has always advised the early selling of wheat as a general principle, there are peculiarities about the present season which are worth while taking note of. We referred in the outset of this article to the fact that the newspaper press of the country has recently contained frequent articles encouraging the idea that farmers should sell their wheat early. The peculiarity in this connection is, that a year ago these same papers were constantly publishing articles which encouraged the farmers to hold their wheat. It was hard to find anything but "bull" articles upon wheat last year, and the overwhelming tenor of newspaper articles was to the effect that wheat would certainly advance to a very high price before the winter and spring were over.

A year ago all these predictions that wheat would have a very strong and advancing tendency during the year, were based upon the belief that the world's supply of breadstuffs was short. The world's wheat crop this year is not any larger than it was a year ago. A number of authorities make in something less than a year ago. Now, if the crop of last year meant very high prices, why does a crop of about the same size this year indicate nothing but low values?

A year ago THE COMMERCIAL took a conservative view of the situation. We depreciated the strong bull feeling which ruled at that

time, predicted that there would be no lack of wheat supplies, and endeavored to encourage the farmers to sell at the very fair prices offered early in the season. At the present time THE COMMERCIAL is again out of sympathy with the prevailing sentiment regarding wheat. We take a more hopeful view of the future of wheat prices than appears to be the generally accepted idea. At the time of writing prices are in the neighborhood of 25 cents per bushel lower than a year ago. On account of wheat values being so low now, it is more reasonable to expect an advance, other things being about equal, than if prices were already at a fair range of values. So far as the wheat crop of this year is concerned, conditions are about equal to a year ago. The principal cause of weakness is the flattening out of the excessive bull and buying features of last crop year. This depression should gradually pass away, and be replaced by a feeling of more confidence and firmer prices.

While THE COMMERCIAL will not urgently advise farmers to hold their wheat for an advance, at the same time we cannot advise them to sell at the present very low range of values. We consider the prospects for an advance much better now than they were a year ago, at which time bull sentiment was overwhelming. We do not look for any sharp advance in prices at once, but there should be some appreciation in value as the season advances, and the surplus stocks of old wheat are used up.

## PROSPEROUS FARMERS.

Talk about Manitoba farmers not being prosperous. The quantity of merchandise purchased by them indicates that they must be getting ahead fast. The Brandon *Mail* recently published figures showing the business done by the agricultural implement dealers of that place, which tell a tale of anything but impecuniosity on the part of the farmers of that district at least. The list includes no less than 400 carriages and buckboards sold at Brandon during the present season. Carriages are not a necessary article in the cultivation of a farm. They are a very useful thing to have, but they may be termed one of the luxuries of the farm, and can be got along very well without, until the farmer is in a position to enjoy the luxury. The large sales of carriages indicate that the farmers of Manitoba are rapidly getting into a position in which they are able to treat themselves to luxuries.

In other articles the list published by the *Mail* speaks louder than words of the progress of Manitoba farmers. No less than 437 binders are included in the list of sales at Brandon for the season. What a tale this tells of progress and prosperity. Ten years ago the town of Brandon was just coming into existence, and the stream of settlement was just beginning to pour into the surrounding country. Now 437 binders are sold to the farmers of the district in a single year. In other necessary implements of the farm, the sales this season have been wonderfully large. Of mowers, 188 were sold. In plows sales were no less than 442, including gang and other classes of plows. So on all through the list, including rakes, harrows, drills, threshers, etc., the figures

speak louder than words of the wonderful development of a district that ten years or a little more ago was an uninhabited country. The 300,000 pounds of binder twine sold during the season by Brandon dealers, tells of the breaking up of the prairie soil, and subjecting it to the cultivation of grain crops. Ten years ago all the twine required to harvest the crops in the district now tributary to Brandon, would be a very small item indeed.

These sales of implements at Brandon are made direct to farmers. They are not made up of sales of a jobbing character, for shipment to dealers at other points. It is all retail trade direct to the farmers, and what is being done at Brandon is being done at hundreds of points all over the country, in proportion of course to the extent of settlement and importance of the general business of the different points. Not many years ago Brandon had no existence, and all the implement dealers in Manitoba could be counted on the fingers of one hand. At a later date all the implements sold in the province would not begin to equal the sales made this season at Brandon alone. This is the progress of a little more than a decade, and it is wonderful to relate.

## EXPERIMENTAL AGRICULTURE.

At the last meeting of the Manitoba legislature, a first appropriation was made with the object of establishing an agricultural college in Manitoba. It was proposed with this appropriation of \$10,000 to secure a site for a farm for experimental purposes, which would be a necessary accompaniment to the college, and perhaps do other preliminary work. The government has not yet selected a site, and recently a deputation from the Winnipeg board of trade waited on the premier to urge the establishment of the proposed college in this district. A number of claims were put forward in favor of the Winnipeg district, such as the centering of railways here, thus affording greater convenience for reaching the city from all parts of the country, than can be had at any other point in Manitoba.

Perhaps the best argument in favor of establishing the farm in the Winnipeg district was, that there are already two experimental farms (the Dominion Government farms at Brandon and Indian Head) in the west. These two farms are doing good work in carrying on experiments on the lighter and higher lands of the west. The rich, heavy lands peculiar to eastern Manitoba present conditions quite different to the west, and while the Dominion farms are doing an excellent work, they do not altogether meet the requirements of the eastern portion of the province. This being the case, it was very reasonably urged, that the west being already well supplied, any additional experimental station established should be in the east. This strong argument used by the deputation in favor of the Winnipeg district, would also apply to other parts of eastern Manitoba, where the soil is generally similar to this district.

The heavy soils of eastern Manitoba and the Red river country have this year shown what they can do, by producing a grain crop equal in quantity and quality to the most favored sections, while the harvest has been earlier perhaps than any other part of the province.