

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, APRIL 18, 1892.

BUTTER.

The butter season is again opening. Manitoba has made marked improvement in the quantity of butter marketed, during the past few years, but there is still great room for improvement. While THE COMMERCIAL has always advocated the factory system of making butter, on account of the more uniform and better quality attained in this way, yet at the same time we believe that a good average quality of butter may be made in private dairies. In many districts, settlement is not large enough to make creameries pay well. It is not practical to have all the butter made in creameries, and this being the case, every effort should be made to improve the quality of dairy butter. The average quality we say has improved very much during recent year. Clean, new packages are now used almost entirely, and more care is evidently taken with the product generally. This is no doubt due to better facilities now enjoyed by those who make butter. But there is still a considerable quantity of inferior butter marketed.

So far as the markets are concerned, it is the same story, of good demand and good prices for class one quality, while medium and poor stuff will be slow sale. A considerable quantity of Manitoba dairy butter was shipped to British Columbia markets last season, and while some of this gave fair satisfaction, there was a good deal of poor stuff, which would not pay the shippers. It should be understood by shippers, that choice qualities of butter only are wanted in the Pacific coast markets.

This season there is likely to be an increase in the number of creameries working in Manitoba, but there will also be a large quantity of dairy butter made. If we can increase the average quality of this to a marked extent, it will be a great gain to the province. THE COMMERCIAL has frequently pointed out, that so long as merchants pay the same price for all qualities of butter, there is not the same encouragement to make a good article. The price is the main thing with the maker, and if a few cents more per pound could be secured, by taking special care to make a fine quality, most butter makers would endeavor to obtain this top price by improving the quality of their product. There is more discrimination now as to the matter of quality than there was a few years ago, but there is not nearly as much discrimination in this respect as there should be. We admit that it is a difficult matter for country merchants to discriminate as to quality in taking in butter. The grain buyers find it hard enough to discriminate as to quality in buying wheat, and they deal with men. But the merchant has to deal with women in buying butter, and if he were to tell Mrs. Smith that he could only pay her seven cents for her butter, while he has just paid Mrs. Jones eleven cents, there would be war to the knife right away. Rather than face the contest, most merchants will not attempt to make any such distinctions.

If some plan could be devised, whereby the merchant would be relieved of the responsibility of grading the butter, and still at the same time be able to pay for it according to quality, the greatest difficulty would be removed. A plan of this nature appears to have been successfully inaugurated in the village of Virden, in this province. It has been in operation during the past two seasons and has given much satisfaction. The plan of handling butter in vogue at Virden was originated and is as follows.

A meeting of the merchants was held, at which a number of farmers were present, and it was decided to adopt a system of inspection for butter. This was agreed to by the farmers present. It was decided that not a pound of butter would be taken by the merchants until it had been inspected. The price of butter, it was decided, would be based upon the value of the article in the Winnipeg market. Butter offered for inspection would be classified into three grades, namely: No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3. The price of No. 1 butter having been determined by the current value of best dairy butter in Winnipeg market, No. 2 butter would be valued at 3 cents per pound less than No. 1, and No. 3 would be valued at 4 cents per pound less than No. 2. Thus, with No. 1 butter worth 14 cents, No. 2 would be worth 11 cents, and No. 3 worth 7 cents per pound. The local storekeepers all agreed to adhere strictly to this plan. Some other details, such as the style of tub, quality of salt, etc., to be used in preparing and packing butter, were also decided upon. An inspector was appointed who was not himself handling butter. When farmers came in with butter, they could not sell until it had been inspected, and after this had been done, any of the merchants would take it at the fixed price according to grade. This plan enables the merchants to buy the butter according to quality, while at the same time it relieves them of the responsibility of fixing the grade. This seems to be a very sensible plan, and which, if followed largely, should result in a marked improvement in the average quality of Manitoba butter. It should also render the butter trade more satisfactory and profitable to the merchants. The inspector, it will be noticed, is not an interested party in any transactions, and he should therefore be able to give a fair decision between buyers and sellers. The plan is fair to those who make good butter, because it will give them full credit for quality, whereas, when one price is paid for all qualities, choice quality would not bring its full value, while poor stuff would bring more than it is worth. Under this plan, those who did not make a choice article, would endeavor to improve their make, while those who were too slovenly to make good butter, would stop making it altogether, thus relieving the trade of handling a lot of rubbish, which is only a disgrace to the country to have sent abroad. Under the plan adopted at Virden, the inspector is allowed a fee of 1/2 cent per pound on all butter examined and graded.

We understand that the plan originated at Virden, is likely to be adopted at some other points in Manitoba this season. It seems practical, and we think is worthy of consideration from merchants generally.

DOING TOO MUCH.

It is generally acknowledged that many Manitoba farmers try to accomplish too much. They carry on their operations on a larger scale than their capital and facilities will allow them to do properly. A great deal of the poor grain marketed is due to this cause. In the spring some of them will put in 400 acres of crop, when they should have stopped at 200 acres. In order to get the 400 acres in, the work is pushed, and is often imperfectly done. Then when it comes to harvest, help is scarce, and the farmer has twice as much work on hand as he can attend to. In order to get through with the work, cutting is sometimes commenced several days before the grain has reached a proper state of maturity. It is allowed to stand in shock weeks and sometimes almost months after it should be stacked, because there is so much more work than there is men to do it. So on all through, the work is done hurriedly and imperfectly, resulting in a poor quality of grain being brought to market. Of course there are times when crops are damaged by unfavorable weather, and no amount of care would have prevented the injury, but at the same time, it is certain that a great deal of the poor quality of grain marketed is due to over-reaching, in endeavoring to cultivate more land than can be properly handled. If a number of our farmers would cultivate one-third to one half less land, we believe they would be better off in many instances.

We believe that quite a number of farmers who have cultivated large areas of land in past years, are this year renting a portion of their cultivated area to new settlers. This will enable them to farm the remaining portion in a better manner. It will also enable the new settlers to get in some crop this year, whereas if they were taking up new land, they would not have any land ready for crop until next spring. The late and wet harvests which have been experienced the last two years, is evidently teaching farmers that it is folly to try and do more than they are able to accomplish in a decent manner.

MANITOBA EXPERIMENTAL FARM.

S. A. Bedford, superintendent of the Dominion Experimental Farm in Manitoba, is just now sending out a large number of small bags of favorite new varieties of grain for testing by farmers in various sections of the country. One variety of barley which is being sent out—the two-rowed Duck Bill—yielded last year on the experimental farm seventy-five bushels and twenty pounds per acre. This is a barley introduced by the farm, and promises to become a favorite variety. It is a little later ripening than six rowed, but earlier than the English two rowed, and should be sown about the first week in May. The seed sent out has been tested as to germinating qualities, and is therefore sure. In wheats the policy is to confine the distribution of this cereal to hard varieties as much as possible. Wheats are distributed in two bushel lots at a slight advance on the willing price. The demand has been very large this season for seed grains, and it has been found impossible to supply the quantities asked for. Seeding was commenced on the Manitoba farm on April 7, but had to be