

The Commercial

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DOES FARMING PAY?

It seems almost absurd to ask the question given above, as to farming operations in Manitoba, yet it is a question which is not infrequently heard propounded. Such a question from a stranger who had only arrived in the country, might not cause very great surprise, but occasionally even residents of the Province are found, who are skeptical upon this point. Such persons, however, must have derived their ideas from one or two individual cases of unsuccessful farming, and they cannot have any general knowledge of the results of farming operations in this country, as a whole. There are certainly some instances of unsuccessful farming in Manitoba, but this proves nothing at all. Many of those who are heard to declare that farming in Manitoba does not pay, are persons who have tried farming themselves and made a failure of it. One may fail where another would succeed under the same conditions. This is true of all pursuits in life. But occasionally persons who start under very favorable auspices, will fail, through unforeseen obstacles, or more correctly, misfortunes.

Time was, and only a few years ago, when the question at the head of this article, as to farming in Manitoba, was frequently considered, and was a matter of doubt to many. The country is yet new, and it has only lately been put to the real test. Whilst settlement was small and immigrants were coming in rapidly, those already in the country were unable to supply the home demand for produce, as the population was increasing more rapidly than the production of produce of the farm. Prices for everything the farmer had to sell were consequently high, and there was no difficulty in making farming pay. Of late years this has been all changed. The Province now produces a surplus of most commodities, and prices have ruled on a lower basis. The adaptability of the country to profitable agriculture has therefore been fully tested, and it may be said with most satisfactory results. Enough has been accomplished to convince those who are familiar with the situation, that the agricultural population of the Province as a whole, has made

great advancement on the road to prosperity within the past few years.

A few who have made a failure of farming will continue to claim that farming is unprofitable, but such statements seem absurd in the face of the existing conditions. Those who have made a trip through the Province, say once a year for several years back, and who have noted the gradual progress of the settlers toward apparently prosperous circumstances, will wonder that there are still unbelievers as to the profitableness of farming in Manitoba. They have seen the gradual extension of the area under cultivation year by year. The cutting off of the old prairie trails by the wire fences of settlers, and the building of roads and bridges to take their place, has been noticeable all over the country. New and more comfortable buildings are everywhere replacing the first habitations of the settlers, and other buildings are being erected for the increasing herds of the farmers, or for the storage of his crops. The slow-going oxen of the early settlers have been replaced by the more active horse, whilst some can afford to keep a carriage horse for driving in addition to their working horses. Farmers who were unable to buy implements when they first commenced operations, are now supplied with everything necessary to carry on the work of their farms, and an interview with the leading implement dealers will only be necessary to learn that these implements are nearly all paid for. During the past season the demand for lumber from farmers all over the Province has been so great that dealers have been unable to supply the demand. Some of this of course was taken by new settlers, but the great bulk was used by old farmers, whose improved circumstances enabled them to erect additional buildings on their farms. Surely in the face of all this progress toward prosperity, it seems ridiculous that there should still be doubters left.

Many of those who are in the best position to know claim that the farmers of Manitoba have progressed toward comfortable circumstances far more rapidly than those who have taken up their abode in the cities and towns. Take for instance our Icelandic citizens. A large number of these people remained in Winnipeg, whilst others settled as farmers in rural districts. A representative Icelandic citizen stated to the writer recently that those of his countrymen who had taken

up agricultural pursuits were now in very much better circumstances than those who had remained in the city. Though unfamiliar with the country and having everything to learn as to the modes of farming in Manitoba, these people who took up agriculture here have done well, and are now invariably in comfortable circumstances.

It must also be remembered that the great majority of our farmers started under unfavorable circumstances, both as regards means and experience. Very few commenced life on the prairies of Manitoba with any considerable amount of cash. Many were obliged to seek other employment during parts of the year, to support themselves until they could get some returns from the farm. The great majority of the most favorably situated had barely enough to procure the most necessary articles with which to commence life. A great many were foreigners, and unacquainted with prairie farming. Others were from cities and had no knowledge of agriculture whatever. At best farming was but an experiment in Manitoba a few years ago, and the most successful modes of agriculture had to be learned here by experience, and experience usually costs something. The accomplishment of so much during the past few years, under such adverse circumstances should therefore be a cause of agreeable surprise, and all doubts as to the profitableness of farming in Manitoba should cease.

A few failures there have been of course, and strange as it may seem, in this connection it may be noted that a good many of the failures have been among persons who commenced with some means. Parties who started with considerable cash, but who were not practical farmers, much less prairie farmers, often squandered their money upon unnecessary articles. As they were not used to living under privations, they would give up the farm when their money was gone. This class is mostly made up of immigrants from Britain. Another class who have failed as farmers in Manitoba are known as remittance men, also usually Englishmen. These parties have sometimes farmed in a half-hearted way, but depended mainly upon remittances from home, and not infrequently the nearest hotel gets the greatest benefit from the remittance. But those who have put up with privations on the start, and who have endeavored earnestly to get ahead,