

Winnipeg's Implement Business.

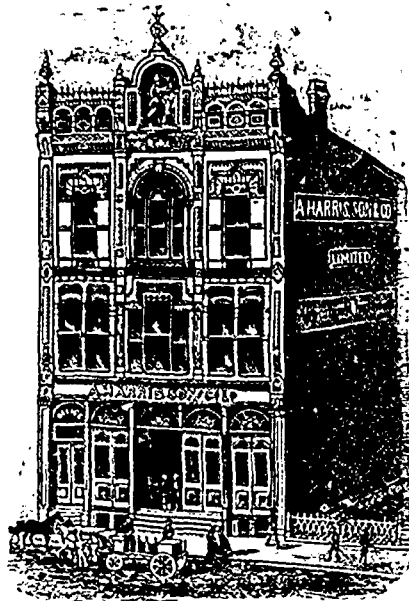
VAST EXPANSION OF THIS TRADE FROM ALMOST NOTHING TO MILLIONS IN A DECADE.

Market Square, in the city of Winnipeg, might well be termed "Farm Implement Square." On Market, Princess, and William streets, facing on the square, are located nearly all the farm implement firms in the city. Some of these firms and companies occupy handsome premises, as may be judged from the cuts given below. The investment of so much capital in the city, in warehouses, offices and show-rooms, indicate that the implement men have faith in the future of the country.

In a country so largely dependent upon agriculture as Manitoba, the trade in implements is a very important item. Winnipeg's business in farm implements, vehicles, etc., is not far from occupying first place in the trade branches of the city. This city is the headquarters of the implement trade for all western Canada, and the trade will grow with the settlement of the country. The total trade of Winnipeg in farm implements and machinery, vehicles, etc., for 1890 amounted to over \$2,700,000. This vast business has been built up within a little more than a decade. This trade extends throughout the region stretching from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, over 1,000 miles from east to west, while sales are also made by Winnipeg houses to a considerable extent, for shipments to the province of British Columbia, beyond the mountains. There are also implement concerns at some outside points, such as Brandon, for instance, which are independent of the Winnipeg house. This city therefore does not control the entire trade of the country in the branches named. When our vast western country is settled up more closely, the implement trade will reach enormous proportions. With the rapidly increasing population, the future for the concerns in these lines seems promising, though over-competition and an extravagant credit system, has somewhat blighted the prospects of some manufacturers in these branches during the last year or two. Very long credit has been the rule in selling goods to farmers. A binder, for instance, is usually sold on one to three years credit. Free credit at the banks has encouraged this system, and as a result several Canadian manufacturing firms have had so much property locked up, that they have become embarrassed. In this prairie country, settlers do not have to wait for years before they can use machinery, in going on to new land. The second year they will require a full line of implements and machinery, including a binder. A good many of the settlers come in with out much capital, and they get their outfits largely on credit. It is also a fact that there has been a tendency among the farmers to overload themselves with implements. It would be better if some of them would go slower for a few years at the outset, and not try to farm on so large a scale in a short time. Then they would be better in some cases to hire their grain cutting for the first year or so instead of purchasing binders. However, the ambition to get ahead and work on a large scale, is one of the features of farming in the west, and to some extent it is laudable.

Though the implement houses do a large credit business, it can be said that they look after their collection department considerably sharper than is the rule in other branches of trade. On this account one hears a good deal of grumbling against the implement men. It is frequently remarked that "the implement houses are getting all the cash," and they are sometimes roundly denounced for their business methods, particularly in their collection departments. This simply means that they have better business methods than many houses in other branches, and instead of being condemned they should be commended for their ability to get the larger share of the money in circulation.

As stated, the implement trade of Winnipeg has developed almost within the past decade. The trade commenced to assume some importance about the year 1880, in which year the first railway was put in operation in Manitoba. Now that there are hundreds of miles of railway, with many towns along the lines where branch agencies have been established. In 1880, Portage la Prairie and Emerson were the principal points where branch agencies were



OFFICE AND SHOW ROOM OF A. HARRIS, SON & CO.

established, outside of Winnipeg. The trade at Winnipeg was largely retail in those days, and in fact the retail trade of the city was larger from 1880 to 1882 than it is now. Settlers coming in, procured their outfits at Winnipeg, before proceeding to their destination. Now that branch retail agencies have been established all over the country, new settlers can procure their outfits at hundreds of points, and they do not stop to stock up here. Winnipeg's retail trade has therefore fallen away, and given place to a large wholesale trade. In the early days the trade was about all of a retail nature, and was practically confined to Winnipeg. To show the extent of the retail trade here, in 1882 the old firm of Westbrook & Fairchild sold 38 wagons and 65 plows in one day, all retail, and as many as a dozen binders have gone off in the same time.

The early Red River settlers did not require much in the implement line. In their isolated condition, they had no export market, and very crude articles answered to cultivate the amount of land necessary to grow what grain they required for their own use. A home-made wooden

plow was used to turn the soil, and the seed was put in with a home-made drag. In place of the binder, a sickle was used to harvest the crops. The plow was the most important article, the cutter and point of iron being made by the local smiths. Later on as settlement extended, implements were brought in from the States, by the long wagon route across the Minnesota prairies. The first implement agencies established in Winnipeg handled United States makes, largely, and for some time after the Canadian makers opened agencies here, competition was keen. Gradually the Canadian makers gained control of the field, though some lines have been brought in from the States right along to the present time. These include wagons, plows and threshers principally. Very few United States binders have been brought in for some years, though this year an effort is being made to revive the trade in imported harvesting machinery. The Canadian makers were at a disadvantage on the start, as they were not up to the business of manufacturing goods specially suited for a prairie country, but they have improved very much with practice.

Prices of some lines have changed very materially since the early days. The first combined binders sold here for \$340 to \$360. Now the improved binders sell for \$160 to \$180, for standard machines, the range in price being for cash to long time. On time, seven per cent. interest is also charged, with 12 per cent. after maturity of paper. Mowers, which formerly sold for \$90 to \$100 now range from \$65 to \$70. United States binders sell this season at \$190 cash, and \$200 and \$210 for one and two years' credit respectively. A Canadian five foot binder is sold for \$150 cash. There has not been much change in the prices of plows and wagons for ten to twelve years. Threshers are dearer now than then, but this is owing to the great improvements made in this machine as compared with those in use earlier. The thrasher of today is a much more elaborate and valuable article than it was ten or fifteen years ago.

For the year 1891 the outlook is good for the trade. The spring business has been unusually good. In some lines the stock of spring goods laid in has been entirely cleared out. Plows, harrows, drills and wagons have had a large run. In one warehouse, at the time of our visit, the stock in a couple of lines was about exhausted, and there was some trouble between buyers as to who should gain possession of the remaining articles, there being more buyers than there were machines. Press drills have not sold as well this spring as last year. Owing to the short season of sleighing last winter, considerable runner stock is held over.

A reference will now be made to the individual firms in the trade in this city, and in order to prevent the article from being tiresome, this reference will be made as brief as possible. Early in the seventies there were two or three firms and individuals handling implements in Winnipeg. These were McMillan & Taylor, West & Tiffney, Harlam & Wilson, Desbrow & Co., Muir, Woods & Waugh and Ed. Kelly. Mr. Muir is still in business here in machinery, but not in farm machinery. The others are all long since out of business.

MASSEY AND COMPANY.

The Massey Manufacturing Company, of Toronto, Ont., opened its first Manitoba agency at Winnipeg, in the spring of 1881. The agency