

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 26, 1894.

## PRODUCTION OF WHEAT.

While it is to be hoped that wheat prices will not permanently remain at the present low basis, there is reason to fear that the day of high prices has gone by. There are a number of reasons which seem to indicate that an era of prices on a permanently lower level has set in. There is of course a possibility of a year or two of short crops over a wide area of wheat producing territory, which might have the effect of advancing prices temporarily, only to relapse quickly to a lower level again. In the first place we have to recognize the fact that nearly all staple commodities have reached a lower plane of values, with the prospect that prices will permanently remain lower than they were a few years ago, though there may be some reaction from the very bottom prices which now prevail. Most other commodities being lower, it is only reasonable to expect that wheat will remain lower, and indeed, the fact that other goods are lower in price, will make possible the profitable production of wheat at lower values than formerly ruled.

The next thing we have to look at is the wide area of territory where wheat can be produced to advantage. Wheat is being harvested somewhere almost every month in the year, and new territories are constantly being opened up by the advance of civilization and progress of the world, which are adopted to the production of wheat. Only the other day, it was announced that a large area of country in Africa, hitherto inaccessible, had been discovered to be well adapted to wheat. The cultivation of wheat has become so general, that a short crop in one country will hardly now affect the supply of the world, and to materially advance prices, there would have to be a crop failure over a very large area. It is even doubtful if a sharp advance in prices by reason of a short crop would be beneficial to wheat growing countries, for it might result in such an expansion of the wheat area generally as would quickly lead to immense over production, to be followed by lower prices than have yet been experienced.

The third factor we will consider as contributing to lower prices for wheat, is the cheapening of transportation. There has been a wonderful decline in the cost of transportation by water during recent years, which has led to increased competition. It was stated that a cargo of California wheat was sold at Liverpool a short time ago at a price which would aggregate less than the freight rate alone would have amounted to twelve years ago. Few people realize what a factor the reduction in the cost of transportation has been in reducing the prices of commodities. Prices have been reduced and equalized in different parts of the world by the cheapening of transportation. Remote regions are now brought into active competition with near by countries in importing markets, with little or no disadvantage in the cost of transportation.

There are other reasons which might be advanced to indicate that wheat prices will not return to former high values, but we will not proceed further on these lines at present. Let us look at the question as it affects ourselves. There is a large area of Western Canada which is admirably adapted to the cultivation of wheat. Wheat seems to be the natural product of the country, and can be grown to better advantage than any other crop, prices being at all equal. The question is, will we be compelled to cease producing wheat, for which the country is peculiarly adapted? We think not. We are at a disadvantage with some competitors on account of our inland position, but we have other advantages which should enable this country to continue to produce wheat in large quantities. While it is evident that our farmers must diversify their operations and go more into stock-raising, dairying, etc., than they have in the past, we must still endeavor to keep in the race in the production of wheat. Instead of giving up wheat, we must study how to make it profitable at the lower prices now ruling, and endeavor to remove every obstacle to profitable production. Already considerable progress has been made in this direction. Through the great cheapening of agricultural implements and other articles necessary to the farmer, which has taken place in Manitoba during recent years, our farmers should be in a position to grow wheat very much more cheaply than they could a few years ago. Further reduction in the cost of growing wheat may be made by improved methods of agriculture. Customs taxation must be reduced. Manitoba, as an agricultural country, is in open competition with the world. Tariffs cannot do anything to protect our farmers and enable them to compete to better advantage with the world, but tariff taxation can do a great deal to handicap our farmers in this competition. Burdens of this nature must be removed. The cost of transportation must be reduced, and we believe will be very materially reduced. We have a northern and an eastern water route, either of which are capable of great things for the country. The eastern water route is now of incalculable service, and is capable of further considerable improvement.

Altogether, we have no reason to despair of being able to produce wheat at a profit, in competition with the world. We have an unequalled system of handling the crop, and with the cost of production further lessened on the lines indicated, we believe wheat can be produced here at a profit in competition with any country. Our farmers are of the class who can direct their efforts intelligently, so as to secure the best results, and intelligence will tell in the competition which is now going on in the production of wheat.

## MARKET INSPECTION NEEDED.

Several complaints have reached THE COMMERCIAL to the effect that decayed goods have been sold on the Winnipeg street market. One party states that three times in succession he bought frozen fish on the market, and found the fish literally rotten when they were thawed out. From what we can learn, it appears that it is by no means an unusual thing to have fish

purchased on the market turn out this way. As the fish are frozen solid, the inexperienced purchaser cannot detect their bad quality until they are thawed out. The reason for so many rotten fish being sold on the market is explained as follows: The fish are taken in gill nets which are set in the lake and the nets are sometimes allowed to remain several days before they are lifted. The fish get caught in the net and die, and those first caught begin to decompose before they are taken out of the water. The reason of the fish being bad is therefore through carelessness in allowing them to remain too long in the nets. A large quantity of fish are exported to the States, and it is stated that those rejected by the shippers are hauled to Winnipeg and sold on the market here. Of course all the fish sold on the market are not bad, but from the frequent complaints heard, a great many seem to be bad.

Complaint has also been heard of tainted poultry being sold on the street market. One party reports to THE COMMERCIAL that twice recently frozen chickens purchased on the market were found to be so bad when thawed out that they were thrown out. There is no redress for the purchasers very often, as the parties selling these decayed articles are not to be found the day following the purchase, while the buyer may not discover that they are bad until several days afterwards. One day this week a box of poultry was noticed on the market, the very appearance of which was disgusting, even in a frozen state. Experienced parties could no doubt detect rotten fish, etc., although in a frozen condition, and something should be done to protect the citizens from loss. If more attention is not paid to the inspection of stuff offered on the market, citizens will be obliged to shun the street market entirely, and make all their purchases from regular dealers, who will be responsible for the quality of goods offered.

## A PAINFUL INCIDENT.

The lamentable downfall of Eliastus Wyman, of New York, has come as a shock to the people of this country. On Thursday telegrams from New York announced that he had been arrested for forgery, and details of the case state that he is charged with forging amounts aggregating over a quarter million of dollars, while connected with the business of R. G. Dan & Co. The fall of a man of such prominence a Mr. Wyman cannot be received otherwise than with sorrow. It is one of those distressing occurrences which is distasteful to think about, and which is calculated to depress the feelings of those who like to look at the best side of frail humanity. It almost leads one to become pessimistic regarding humanity, and to gloomily exclaim: Are there none up-right? One is lead even to mistrust himself. The fact that Mr. Wyman was regarded as a man of high moral standing, only adds to the feeling of despair with which his fall is received. While it is but right that the guilty should be punished, it seems almost regrettable that these woeful occurrences should be made public, from the depressing effect which they must have upon the people.

Mr. Wyman was by many regarded as the foremost Canadian in the United