

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, AUGUST 13, 1894.

## WHEAT IS CHEAP.

Wheat is about the cheapest grain obtainable at the present time. This is a peculiarity of the commercial situation which is incomprehensible to many. Wheat has always been considered a finer and intrinsically a more valuable product than other grains. While the coarser and cheaper grains were good enough for beasts, wheat was reserved for man alone. In fact we may say only the more advanced peoples were permitted to use wheat as an ordinary article of food. In some countries, where the population is dense and the masses of the people very poor, wheat has been considered too costly a commodity to be used as food even for man. India, though a considerable producer of wheat, has not been a consumer of the product to any extent, the grain there having been considered too costly to be used as food for the great mass of the population. Thus the Indian farmer always sold his wheat for export and used cheaper products for food. Even in some countries of Europe, wheat bread has been considered a luxury beyond the reach of the common people. With these ideas regarding the value of wheat, it is therefore difficult for people to realize that wheat is really a cheaper commodity than the so-called coarse grains.

The low value of wheat during the last two years should lead to a much wider consumption of the commodity. Those people who have been selling their wheat and consuming cheaper and coarser cereals, should we fancy now be induced to consume more wheat. If the millions in Europe who use only the less palatable and less wholesome rye bread, could be educated into the use of wheat flours, the demand for the latter cereal would be vastly improved. The time would also seem opportune for a persistent effort to introduce wheat flour into some of the Oriental countries where it is not now known. If even the higher classes of China, Japan and some other nations could be educated to consume wheat as an ordinary article of food, it would vastly increase the consumption of the cereal.

Heretofore, we have said, wheat has been considered too costly a grain to be used as food for beasts. Besides the cost, it has been popularly supposed that wheat, though the finest of cereal foods for man, was not suitable for the lower animals. The cheapness of wheat of late has led to many experiments in feeding stock with this grain, with most gratifying results, and many of the notions that wheat is too strong or otherwise not suited to use as a food for stock, are being dispelled. It has been found that for feeding hogs especially, wheat is a very valuable grain. Sheep and cattle have also been fed to advantage with wheat. The Commercial has several times during the last year or two published the results of experiments in feeding wheat to stock, so that many of our readers are already familiar with this phase of the wheat question. As recently as in our issue of

July 23, The Commercial gave a report of the result of experiments carried out at the South Dakota experimental station, in which wheat proved a very valuable feed for hogs, making pork of a high quality. It has been frequently shown by experiments made in Canada and the United States, that wheat can be marketed in the form of beef and pork at a much better price than the grain is now worth in the markets. It seems probable that a great deal of wheat will be consumed as feed for live stock in Canada and the United States during the next year, owing to the short crop of oats and corn and the comparatively high prices of the two latter grains. In fact it is to the consumption of wheat for feeding stock that we look most hopefully for a reduction of the large available supplies of the cereal. The poor outlook for corn especially will tend to induce farmers to try feeding wheat, and if wheat is used as largely for feed as now seems probable, it will prove an important factor in affecting prices. If the present large supply of wheat could be reduced to former proportions, through the use of wheat for feeding stock, it would put the wheat market in better shape than it has been for two years.

Another peculiar feature arising from the cheapness of wheat, is the use of wheat and wheat flour as an adulterant in commodities which were formerly cheaper than wheat products. It has recently been stated that large quantities of wheat are being used as an adulterant by manufacturers of oatmeal and other food products. Wheat is also being used extensively as a mixture in ground feeds in order to produce a cheaper commodity than can be made from the coarse grains usually used for such purposes.

## THE PRICE OF BUTTER.

It is said that the farmers at some country points are complaining of the price paid them for butter by the local merchants. They sometimes hear of prices paid by consumers in Winnipeg, and think the local merchants should be able to pay them nearly the same price as is quoted retail in Winnipeg. The Saltcoats paper says that a farmer there complained that a friend of his near Winnipeg was getting 25 cents per pound for his butter in Winnipeg, and he thought the Saltcoats merchants should be able to pay better prices than they offered. These fancy retail prices at Winnipeg are of course misleading. Early in the season farmers who had a reputation for making a superior quality of butter, could get 25 cents per pound for it in Winnipeg, from private families, and even 30 and 35 cents is paid for fancy new made butter in the winter and early spring, in special instances by consumers. These prices, however, do not show the market value for quantities, handled by jobbers. At present farmers who make the finest quality of butter, and who undertake to supply their customers with a fresh article in small quantities, at frequent intervals, are getting 20 cents per pound from private parties in the city. This is the best price. Others are getting a cent or two less from private families, for butter supplied in the same way. The very highest price that jobbers can get, however, is 15

cents for selected butter, and very good butter is even being sold retail at 16 cents. The average quality of butter, of course, will not bring anything like 15 cents, 12 cents being nearer the average price. Country merchants, in buying, have to allow something for freight and cost of handling, so that they are obliged to buy at a margin under Winnipeg jobbing prices. Farmers who live near the city, of course, have an advantage in selling butter and other commodities, as compared with farmers at more distant points. The farmer near the city can sell direct to the consumer or retail dealer. He thus saves freight, cost of handling and jobbers' margin, and when he sells to the consumer he saves the retailers' profit also. In addition to this, there are always a number of consumers in a city who are willing to pay something more than the regular market value, for an extra good article of butter, delivered to them fresh as they want it, and those farmers near the city who make such a quality of butter, can therefore get a premium on their product. There is perhaps no article of table use which many people are so particular about as butter, and the farmer who can supply an extra fine quality, at frequent intervals, fresh for the table, will get a considerable premium over the regular market price, if he is fortunate enough to obtain a number of this class of customers. The country merchant of course cannot make such a distinction. He is obliged to sell his butter in round lots, at an average price, on the basis of regular jobbing prices. Farmers at country points cannot therefore expect to be paid a price for their butter in proportion to these special prices paid by consumers in the city, unless they could deliver the butter once a week or thereabouts to their customers here. This is of course impractical. Butter marketed at country points must be packed in tubs, and it reaches the city in round lots, composed of tubs of varying quality. It must be disposed of at the regular jobbing price according to average quality, which price is now about 12 cents per pound. These higher prices paid in certain cases by consumers in Winnipeg for butter and other products is simply an advantage which farmers who live near the city enjoy over farmers at more distant points.

## PURE WATER IN MANITOBA.

In the early days of immigration to Manitoba, that is a dozen years or so back, we used to hear a great deal about the bad quality of the water obtainable in the country. New-comers were cautioned not to drink the water at all, or at least to use it only as a dilutant for whiskey or some other liquid which was probably a great deal more injurious to the average individual than the water. Of late years we have not heard so much about bad water, outside of Winnipeg at least, where the city water supply is of a very wretched character. The fact is a great deal of the talk about bad water in Manitoba is entirely wrong. A change of water will prove an inconvenience to a great many people, though the water itself may be healthful for those who are used to it. Hence the advice is frequently tendered to