

THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of the West of the Hudson Bay, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

Published Every Saturday.

Subscriptions—Canada and the United States, \$100 per annum in advance, or \$100 when not so paid; other countries \$125 in advance.

Changes for advertisements or stops should be made not later than Thursday morning.

Advertisements purporting to be news matter, or which profess to express the opinion of the journal, will not be inserted.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific coast than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

Office 22 and 27 Merchants Bank Building, Telephone 124.

D. W. BUCHANAN,
Publisher.

WINNIPEG, MARCH 14, 1906.

CONSOLIDATING RURAL SCHOOLS

Will some enterprising municipality in Manitoba try the plan of consolidating rural schools? It would be very interesting to have an experiment of this nature made in the west. This is a matter of such far-reaching importance, that the provincial government would be fully justified in granting liberal aid to any municipality which will undertake a practical test of this plan of carrying on rural schools. Every new departure is to be given an experiment. The plan of consolidating rural schools has been found to work well in the United States where it has been tried. This does not prove that it would be as great a success here. The possibilities of this system, however, are so great that it would be well worth making a trial of it here. The provincial government, we think, should take the matter up with the object of arranging with some municipality to make a test of the system. In assisting a municipality to test the system, the government would not be establishing a precedent, so far as assisting other municipalities is concerned. It would be understood that the assistance granted was for a test case. If the plan proved successful, then provision could be made for future action in such cases.

It is worthy of note that the commission appointed to consider the question of an agricultural college for Manitoba, reported in favor of the consolidation of rural schools. The commission wisely concluded that the education to be given in the proposed agricultural college to be productive of the best results, must be preceded by the best training attainable in the rural schools. The education given in the rural schools will form the basis for the work of the agricultural college. The commission therefore considered how the rural schools might be improved, and in this connection the consolidation of the schools was suggested, as affording the greatest possibilities for improvement.

The Commercial only a few months ago explained the plan of consolidating country schools, and suggested the adoption of the principle of consolidation by the agricultural college commission should now bring the question prominently before the people.

A few years ago the plan of centralizing educational work was tried in a rural district in Ohio. In one township in that state there were nine

small schools, in nine separate localities. These were all amalgamated into one district, and a central school was established. The consolidation is said to have worked admirably. The cost has been reduced, the average attendance of scholars has increased and far better results are obtained from an educational point of view. The scholars are taken to the schools in vans. Five teachers now do the work of nine separate schools, and they can do it to far better advantage to the scholars, as the pupils can be graded according to their standing, and each teacher assigned to a separate department. It is not necessary to do into any lengthy argument to prove that the graded school, in charge of a competent principal and four assistants, would be capable of doing far better work than the nine little separate schools under the old system. Another advantage of the centralization plan is that more comfortable and healthful buildings can be secured. The increase in the attendance under the consolidation plan is a very important feature. Several other townships in the same state have since adopted the plan, and an increased attendance has

could be drawn from the surrounding country. Some of the villages already have sufficient population to support two or three teachers. By making these villages the centre of an enlarged school district, a main and well equipped school building could be erected and a first-class graded school established, which would be equal to any of the city schools for imparting both primary and secondary education.

One of the questions of the day is: How to keep the young people on the farms? The fact that young people have to leave the farms to obtain even secondary education, is one cause of the drain upon the rural population. The plan of consolidating the rural schools would be an important factor toward keeping the young people on the farms.

The farmer should be an educated man. There is great scope for the application of what we call education on the farms. It has been said not without reason, that farming is a profession. The farmer has much greater scope for the application of knowledge than the average business man has. A knowledge of the natural

could and should be done in the public schools in this direction. No time should be lost in acting upon the suggestion of the agricultural college commission regarding the consolidation of rural schools, at least to the extent of trying this plan as an experiment.

ENGAGE INSTRUCTORS.

One of the wisest things the managers of the great British colony could do, would be to engage a few experienced instructors. Men who were familiar with this country and its requirements, would prove of inestimable value in the management of the affairs of this new colony. We refer to the large British colony which will be established in Western Canada this year. Some thousands of persons will soon be on their way to Canada to found this great settlement. Some of the vanguard are already here. We all desire earnestly the success of these people. In a great movement like this there is danger, however, of mismanagement. The success of the new settlement will depend greatly upon the management of the movement at the



MANITOBA FARM HOMES—RESIDENCE OF J. B. GOVENLOCK, NEEPAWA.

followed in every case, and the plan has given satisfactory results generally. The system affords advantages to the more advanced scholars who would otherwise be obliged to go away from home to continue their studies or give up further work after they had got to the top of the ladder in the little rural school. The increase in attendance under the new plan is found to be made up largely of the younger children who are just beginning their studies and of the more advanced scholars. Under the old plan the little ones were often obliged to stay away from school in bad weather, while the advanced scholars had passed beyond the usefulness of the old school.

It can readily be seen what a vast improvement this is over the old plan. It simply means that it brings the graded school of the towns and cities within the reach of the rural population, with all that this implies in better system, better teaching, better appliances, more comfortable and healthful surroundings. This system could undoubtedly be worked to advantage in many districts in Manitoba. The villages in many cases could no doubt be made the central points for the establishment of schools, and the schol-

ar schools would prove particularly useful to the farmer. Under the proposed centralization or consolidation plan some attention could be given to nature study, and possibly also to manual training and domestic science. Domestic science is as necessary for the girls as manual training is for the boys. In fact domestic or household science is simply manual training for girls.

The agricultural college will undoubtedly prove a good thing for Manitoba, but of greater importance is the improvement of our rural schools. At best the college would only be available for the few. We boast of our system of education, but it is only a shadow of what it should be. We have not been practical enough in educational matters. We are beginning to find out that there is vast room for improvement in our educational system. Under the consolidation plan it would be possible to give such instruction in the rural schools as would particularly benefit the young people for farm life, even to the extent of taking up a course in agriculture, horticulture and allied subjects. While the agricultural college is necessary for those who wish to take a full course of such study a great deal

outset. If the management is placed in the hands of persons who are not familiar with the country and its requirements, it may be taken for granted beforehand that many serious blunders will be made. The promoters of the movement, if they have not already done so, should secure experienced assistance. A great deal could be saved in the purchase of supplies through the assistance of experienced persons. Then when it comes to the initial farming operations, skilled instruction would undoubtedly save the new settlers a vast amount of useless labor and dearly bought experience. A few skilled instructors to go about among the new settlers and help them to an understanding of the best way of farming in this country, would be of inestimable service to them. Instances have been known in almost every part of Manitoba, of well-to-do British farmers who have squandered their means in trying to farm here as they had been used to at home. The best way to succeed in the west is to come prepared to give up all ideas learned elsewhere as to how farm work should be done, and try to learn the plan of operating which has been the

(Continued on Page 637).