

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 28, 1892.

## SELLING GRAIN.

THE COMMERCIAL has placed the responsibility for the low price of wheat largely upon the farmers. Such a large portion of the crop marketed so early in the year has never before been known. This cannot altogether be owing to pressure to sell, in order to secure cash to liquidate indebtedness, for the farmers should not be under greater pressure on this account than in former years. Still there is no doubt but that farmers have been forced to sell in many instances in order to obtain the wherewith to meet demands from their creditors. This is true in Manitoba, as well as in the great wheat states, south of the boundary. Undoubtedly many farmers would have held for higher prices if they had not been pressed for cash. Their creditors look for their money as soon after harvest as the grain can be marketed, and it is but natural that they should be impatient to receive their own, when they know the farmer has the grain all ready to sell. The farmers as a rule buy on credit during a large portion of the year, always on the understanding that payment is to be made after harvest. One principal item which amounts to a very large sum in the aggregate, is for implements and farm machinery. There are very few farmers in Manitoba who have not heavy bills to meet for implements every year, and this is about the first item which has to be paid. The implement men as a rule are sharper collectors than the merchants or other creditors of the farmer. The latter can frequently stand off his store bills for an indefinite time, but he usually has sufficient pressure brought to bear upon him to make him pay for his implements as early as convenient. Besides, the rate of interest on overdue notes, for implements, is a strong incentive to induce the farmer to sell his grain to pay off such claims, even although the price may be lower than he considers profitable to sell at. THE COMMERCIAL has on past occasions expressed the opinion that the expenditure for implements and farm machinery in Manitoba is much larger than it should be. We have known farmers who had only a small area of land under cultivation, to procure a full outfit of expensive machinery. That seems unbusinesslike, as the expenditure was out of all proportion to the probable return from the crop. Farmers of course cannot farm without their implements, and they should know their own business as to their requirements; but it really does seem that the vast annual expenditure for implements might be cut down, to the great advantage of the farmer.

The easy credit system is certainly responsible for a considerable portion of the aggregate indebtedness of the farmers. This applies in a general sense to other lines as well as in machinery. There are no doubt many farmers who would not have sold their wheat at the present low prices, were it not that they were pressed for the money to meet their obligations to creditors. At the same time it is also undoubtedly true, that many farmers would not

have been obliged to sell their wheat to pay obligations due, were it not for the freedom of credit in this country, for the reason that they would have done without some things if they had followed a closer cash system. They are encouraged and urged to buy on credit; but the time to pay comes around just the same, and they must sell their grain in order to meet liabilities, even though the prices obtainable is not a fairly profitable one.

## IRRIGATION FOR THE WEST.

THE COMMERCIAL has on several occasions during recent years called attention to the matter of irrigation for the drier portions of our western plains. This journal has more than once urged that the government should interest itself in the matter, with a view to discovering what can be done in the direction of irrigation in such districts. It is true that there are vast areas of rich lands in western Canada still unoccupied, which are not in need of irrigation to render them fruitful. We have millions of acres of unoccupied lands which require no artificial system of watering, the average precipitation being quite sufficient for agricultural purposes. There is land enough of this class at the present rate of settlement, to supply the demand for many years to come. The argument may therefore be used, that it is unnecessary to undertake to establish a system of irrigation in the dry regions, while there is abundance of land which does not require irrigation to render it fruitful. We do not believe that such an argument is a good one. There are large areas of land in the far west, particularly in southern Alberta, south western Assiniboia, and interior parts of British Columbia, which require irrigation to render them safely adapted to general cultivation. The soil is excellent, the land easy of cultivation, and the climate very favorable for settlement, but the average rainfall is insufficient. If it were known that these lands could be irrigated at a reasonable cost, the value of the country as a whole would be immeasurably increased. This alone is one good argument why we should not wait until other regions are occupied, before endeavoring to adapt these dry sections to cultivation.

But there is another and stronger argument against delay. The more land there is open for settlement, the more rapidly will the country fill up. Some of these dry sections are so situated geographically, that they are at once available for settlement, and would soon fill up with farmers, if they were adapted to cultivation. They already have railway facilities sufficient to accommodate a large population. They are in the natural line of settlement, and would certainly soon have a considerable population of agriculturalists, in addition to those now engaged in raising stock, mining, etc., if the conditions existed to render agriculture a success. There can be no doubt but that the country as a whole would be populated more rapidly, if the dry sections were made suitable for cultivation. This can only be done by a comprehensive system of irrigation.

The board of trade of the town of Lethbridge, Alberta, which is directly interested in the question of irrigation, has recently taken

the matter up, and will represent its views to the government. The busy mining town of Lethbridge is surrounded by a country which but for the want of sufficient average precipitation, would be one of the finest agricultural sections of this continent. The same applies to a considerable portion of southern Alberta. The Dominion government, it is to be hoped, will consider the matter carefully, and at least take preliminary steps to investigate the matter. It is not expected that the government should at once launch out into some expensive works, with a view of providing means of irrigating the country. An official investigation and report upon the possibilities of irrigation, however, is what is needed at once, followed, if necessary, by more practical encouragement in the actual work of irrigating the land.

## THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

The majority of those who heard Mr. Parkin's address in the Winnipeg board of trade rooms last week were surprised. In fact this is the general remark which was heard, in speaking about the address afterwards. Perhaps almost a majority of those present attended out of curiosity. At least, they did not expect to hear any very convincing arguments in favor of the federation of the empire. This great question is one upon which even the majority of our well-informed business and professional men (such as composed Mr. Parkin's listeners) are but ill informed. While it has not been studied deeply, the subject is viewed as a rule as one beyond the range of practical questions—a sentimental, visionary matter which it is not worth while giving careful thought to. Hence we have the word "fad" and other similar expressions frequently applied to the question of British federation. But "surprised" is even a mild term to apply to those who heard Mr. Parkin's address. His arguments were simply unanswerable. A more practical address from the time the gentleman rose to speak, until he again resumed his seat, we have never heard anywhere. It was nothing but argument throughout, and that of the most convincing sort. Those who expected to hear a sentimental talk, as perhaps the majority did, were disappointed to that extent. It was an address delivered in a most earnest manner, and bristling with arguments in every sentence. Those present, regardless of any previous thought given to the question, were simply convinced of the entirely unanswerable nature of the arguments advanced.

No one in the room would have attempted to controvert Mr. Parkin's arguments in any particular, at the close of his address. We do not say that every one present would favor the federation of the empire. There may have been some present who would prefer to see the disruption of the empire, and who therefore, though believing in the necessity of the federation of the empire, as shown by Mr. Parkin, would be prepared to oppose such federation. Only those who are opposed to the continuance of the empire, could hope for the suppression of such work as that being done by Mr. Parkin. There are few of this class in Winnipeg, and few we believe in Canada. There are many, however, who, while fully agreeing