

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, SEPTEMBER 23, 1891.

THE FARMER A MANUFACTURER.

We hear very little about the farmer as a manufacturer. In fact he is not taken into consideration in this light at all. But all the same farming is the most important manufacturing industry which we have in this Dominion of Canada. In some of our large factories a quantity of wood and iron is procured, and by the process of labor and skill a valuable machine is produced. The farmer takes a bushel of wheat, and by his labor and skill he produces fifteen or twenty bushel of wheat. The farmer from a few bushels of grain produces a large quantity of grain, and from this again he produces a fine fat porker, or a choice beef animal. What is this but a double process of manufacture? Of course we know there is a technical difference between the production of a roll of cloth from cotton or wool, and the production of a fat steer from grain. But in the broad commercial sense the farmer is a manufacturer.

The trade policy of this country for the past decade or more, has been devoted to the building up of manufactures. There has been much talk about the tall chimneys, and big buildings, and in all the attention given to this line of industries, the farmer as a manufacturer, has been almost lost sight of.

What this country requires is, that more attention be given to the farming industry. In our policy to encourage manufactures, the farmer manufacturer should not be lost sight of. In fact he should be the central figure in our policy of encouragement to home industries. The importance of the farming interest greatly exceeds that of any other industry. The country would survive the destruction of many of our industries which we consider among the most important, but the destruction of the agricultural interest would lead to general desolation. Agriculture is the foundation upon which all our commercial interests are based. This is the point which should be kept steadily in view. In framing a policy for the encouragement of our natural industries, let the agricultural interest therefore occupy first place, as upon its prosperity depend all other interests. The farmer, of course cannot be made prosperous by act of parliament, but he can be made less prosperous by act of parliament, and in many ways his interest can be either furthered or injured.

If we can build up a great and prosperous agricultural community in this Dominion, we will achieve greatness in other respects, for these will of necessity follow. The first thing necessary is land. The greatest freedom of individual ownership, and the prevention of landed monopolies, should therefore be provided for. With a view to the encouragement of this agricultural industry, our public domain should have been carefully reserved for the farmer, instead of allowing such a large portion of it to have been monopolized in various ways. The land policy is a pressing one, and needs

immediate attention, in the interest of the future prosperity of the nation. A wide market and the limiting of taxation are other important features. The farmer should be allowed the widest market to buy and sell in, which it is possible to secure. The trade policies of some foreign countries, as well as that of our own, unhappily interfere with the natural movements of commerce, and therefore result injuriously to the farmer. To remove these as far as possible, would be to improve the prospects of our agricultural outlook.

WHEAT IN BRITAIN.

The last issue of *The Miller*, of London, England, gives a dismal account of August weather in Britain. It is described as extremely unsettled chilly, and with rain coming in gusts and squalls. This was at the commencement of the month. From the fourth to the seventh it was a continuation of heavy rain storms and low temperature. A few fine days followed, and then rain and shine followed each other in rapid succession, with a warm temperature, suited to cause rust and mildew in the uncut, and sprouting in the cut grain. Frequent showers continued to the end of the month, but later in the month the temperature was much lower. A little grain was cut as early as August 12, but it could not be secured from the fields on account of the rains. At the close of August, the outlook was very discouraging. The uncut grain, especially barley, was badly lodged, and great loss had been experienced from shelling by the storms.

On September 7th *The Miller* estimated the total wheat crop of the United Kingdom at an average of 29 10 bushels per acre, on 2,307,277 acres, or a total yield of 69,288,456 bushels.

The Miller places the mean price of English wheats for the cereal year just closed, at 35s., 5d. per quarter, as compared with 31s., 2d. the previous year, 30s. 8d. in 1888-89; 31s. 1d. in 1887-88, and 33s. 6d. in the crop year 1886-87. The highest prices reached during the last crop year were 40s. 5d. in May and 40s. 1d. in August. The lowest price was 31s. in October.

Following were the prices for leading wheats at the commencement of the present crop year, on September 1st last: American red winter, 42s.; California, 43s. 6d.; Australian, 45s.; No. 1 Bombay, 41s. 9d.; No. 2 Calcutta, 39s. 6d.; Odessa Ghirka, 39s. 6d.; English, wheats, average 40s. 11d. Summing up the situation the first of September, *The Miller* says:

"The wheat crop as we estimated it five weeks ago promised 29 54 bushels to the acre as it stood, with possibilities of pulling in another bushel with a really fine August. The promise to-day is not so good as it was a month ago, and it is still only a promise. Extremely little wheat is in stack, not much is in sheaf or shock. The markets have advanced about 2s. per qr. on the month, and the new cereal year starts with values averaging 5s. higher than they did a year ago. September will draw on old resources more than on new supplies. There will be very little new English wheat sold this side of Michaelmas. Foreign wheat is not expected to arrive in any extraordinary quantity, and value may not be so high as it was a month ago. We are, however, in the hands of French and Belgian traders for the nonce, as they can throw what proportion they please of the 2,400,000 qrs. of wheat on passage to the continent, on the open market, buying

freshly, if they like, of America, which with over 20,000,000 qrs. surplus to move, is not likely to hearken to farmers' alliances, advise them "a holding of the harvest" never so wisely. Left to ourselves, prices during the next few weeks would improve, but America and the continent have it in their power to effectually "beat" the market, should such a policy commend itself to them. Last week it rather looked as if such an enterprise might be on foot, but speculation is proverbially "shifty," and the wants of the continent itself are genuinely and indisputably large.

A REFORM NEEDED.

With the advancement which international commerce has made of late years, it seems strange that some effort has not been made to provide a uniform system of weights and measures. Even at home we are without a uniform system of calculating commodities. In the United States, in some markets, grain and other commodities are sold and the price quoted by the hundred weight, while in other markets quotations are given by the bushel. The same thing is true in Canada, different systems prevailing in different markets. In Manitoba, for instance, we buy and sell grain by the bushel, while in British Columbia, following the custom in the Pacific coast states, grain is sold and quoted by the hundred weight, or ton. This lack of uniformity creates endless confusion and annoyance. Across the Atlantic, the same difficulties are met with. In London, per quarter is the common way of reckoning grain, while at Liverpool it is often quoted per cental. Those who are not posted in the local peculiarities of the different markets, are therefore unable to understand the quotations sent out. It should certainly not be a very difficult thing to arrange a uniform system of handling commodities, which would have effect in all the principal countries, if the move were inaugurated in the right quarter. Per cental seems to be the common sense way of buying and quoting grain, and in fact nearly all commodities and articles. The system of buying by the bushel is awkward and unbusinesslike. If the per cental system could be inaugurated generally throughout Canada and the United States, it would be an immense convenience, and the extension of this system to Europe would further enhance its value.

A PECULIAR SEASON.

The present season will be remembered as one of remarkable climatic peculiarities. Spring opened rather earlier than usual. We do not know what the records may say of past years, but speaking from personal experience we would say that the month of April this year was the warmest one in the modern history of Manitoba. Some extremely warm weather was experienced during this month—weather which would have been considered "hot" even in midsummer. May brought a change. May frosts in Manitoba are not looked upon as unusual, but they were exceedingly severe this year and the month averaged cold and backward. Vegetation which was abnormally advanced by the excessively warm weather of April, was nipped back by the May frosts. June was a normal month, with abundance of rain and moderately warm, though the first