

The Commercial

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COMMERCIAL VS AGRICULTURAL ISSUES.

So many ridiculous assertions have been made, supposedly in the interest of the farmers, in the various agitations which have been carried on here in relation to grain matters, that it is pleasing to The Commercial to observe some sensible remarks upon the subject. A country paper, the Souris Plaindealer, in discussing the grain standards says:

"Generally speaking, we think the farmer need bother himself very little about this question. It affects him some, just as every other question of wise or unwise trade arrangement does. He should use his influence to have this matter as wisely arranged as possible, but he need not look for any very great increase in the price of his product no matter what standards are selected. Farmers can influence the price to any considerable extent in one way only, and that way is by refusing to sell when the price does not suit them, and by getting out of the habit of dumping the whole crop upon the market in one great rush during about two months of the year."

We have hardly ever been without some agitation in Manitoba in connection with the grain trade. According to the agitators, the farmers are always being swindled by some trick of the trade. One Winnipeg paper has discovered about half a dozen ways in each one of which the farmer is being "swindled" out of from three to five cents per bushel on every bushel of wheat he sells. This paper has, of course, overdone the thing and made itself ridiculous, for if its discoveries were true, the total amount the farmer is cheated out of would aggregate 20 to 30 cents per bushel on each bushel of grain sold, and this, of course, is absurd. So far as the farmer is concerned, however, these agitations are an exaggeration all the way through, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that some amusing blunders should be made.

One time it is the mixing of wheat which is depressing prices. Next the farmers are being robbed by a manipulation of the grades. Again, it is the standards which are too high, or too low, and are worked to cheat the producer. Another time, we have the alleged elevator monopoly presented as the means through which the "swindling" is done. There is always something for the agitators to work upon and keep stirring up strife. The fact of the matter is, however, that while some of these questions are of importance commercially, they have little or no bearing upon the price paid to the farmer for wheat. All the hubbub so far as the farmer is concerned is over nothing, and he has neither gained nor lost anything by it. The only effect of the agitation is to cause a feeling of ill will, and make the farmers feel bad by leading them to believe that they are being cheated. The agitations, by causing a feeling of dissatisfaction, are really an injury to the farmer, as the tendency is to make him less contented and happy than he otherwise would be.

The farmer has his part of the work in producing the wheat. If he will attend to this to the best of his ability, and leave the commercial aspect of the wheat question to men who understand it, he will come out ahead in the end. The farmer can influence prices to the best advantage to himself by striving to produce the best quality of wheat and marketing it in the best condition. That is his part of the business. He will get paid for his wheat in proportion to its value, no matter what agitators may prate about mixing, standards or other questions. When the farmer goes into these matters he generally takes up something he does not understand, and which it is not necessary for him to understand. When he listens to the agitators he becomes imbued with vague ideas about being cheated by the buyers, and has his happiness disturbed by being made dissatisfied.

As the Souris Plaindealer says, the wise farmer need bother himself very little about these questions, and he need not look for any increase in the price of wheat as a result of any changes of standards or other commercial regulations relating to the wheat trade. He has not been robbed or cheated by any of these features of the trade, the agitators to the contrary notwithstanding. If he will refuse to listen to those whose chief aim is to secure notoriety or further personal ends by playing upon his credulity, and will cultivate a feeling of greater confidence in human nature, he will at least be a happier man; and if he will devote the time to studying practical agricultural questions, which is given to listening to agitators, or thinking about how he is being cheated, he will be a more prosperous man. Business men are not all rogues. They are probably just about as honest and straightforward as the farmers, even including the much abused grain men among the business class. If the farmer will therefore just turn the cold shoulder to the agitators and false advisers, he will be more contented and we wager he will get just as full value for the products he has to sell. Commercial conditions over which he has no control, will regulate the price of the latter, agitation or no agitation.

VALUE OF FROSTED WHEAT.

Land Commissioner Hamilton of the Canadian Pacific Railway has made a suggestion regarding frosted wheat which is worthy of being acted upon. He suggests that a test should be made by the government as to the milling value of the different grades of frosted wheat. He thinks that a practical milling and baking test of every grade of wheat from No. 1 hard down, should be made, and in this way the actual milling value of frosted wheat would be arrived at. The Commercial seconds the motion. There has been more or less agitation about the value of frosted wheat. Some claim that the farmers do not receive full value for this class of wheat. It has been freely asserted that the grain men take advantage of the appearance of frost to beat down the price. Some even go so far as to claim that frosted wheat is very little damaged for milling purposes. The general feeling among the farmers is, that they do not get full proportionate value for this class

of wheat. On the other hand the millers, who are the only people who can speak with authority on this question, claim that even slightly frosted wheat is seriously reduced in quality for milling purposes, and some of them show their earnestness in this belief by refusing to buy wheat that is at all badly damaged. The evidence of the miller must prevail in this matter, unless very strong evidence is given to the contrary. An official test, properly and impartially carried through, would practically settle the question between the miller and the farmer as to the value of this class of wheat, and it seems desirable that it should be made. So far as the export trade is concerned, practical experience has shown that more than value has been paid for frosted wheat in years past. While the farmers, or at least those who shout for the farmer, have been declaring that the farmer was being cheated in the sale of his damaged wheat, the exporters have, on the other hand, invariably lost money in handling this class of grain. A vast sum of money has been sunk in the exportation of frosted wheat from Manitoba in past years, and altogether the handling of this class of grain has been disastrous to the grain trade. No matter how much noise the agitators may make about the farmers being cheated on their frosted wheat, the fact remains that exporters have, as a general rule, lost money on this class of grain. Perhaps, however, foreign and home millers are all unnecessarily prejudiced against frosted wheat, and a thorough test of its milling value by the government might throw some light upon the subject. If there is any unreasonable prejudice against the wheat on the part of the millers, it would be well to have it known with a view to dispelling this prejudice. On the other hand, if the millers are proved to be right, it would stop some useless agitation. It would be well to have a test made soon, if it is contemplated to have one at all, so as to help the sale of damaged stuff this year, in case the result should prove favorable.

FEED THE POTATOES.

We hear it reported that some farmers are leaving their potatoes in the ground, as the price is so low that they say it is not worth while digging them. The Commercial is inclined to doubt the reliability of such statements, though it may possibly be true in a very few isolated cases. At the same time there should be no loss on account of potatoes being cheap. The large crop has made them very cheap in the markets, but the farmer should really be the gainer by this large crop. He can feed his potatoes to his live stock and get good value for them in this way. Roots are very little grown for feed for live stock in Manitoba. Not as much as they should be. Potatoes are said to be a very healthy and valuable feed for animals in the winter season, when they are on dry feed. Hogs will do far better with some mixture of this kind, than when fed grain alone. Heavy feeding with grain alone has been known to bring on disease amongst hogs. Potatoes are particularly recommended by competent authorities for fattening hogs, instead of a straight grain diet. The quality of the bacon is also said to be greatly improved by a mixed diet of this kind. Cattle and horses are greatly