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Mission City, B. C.

Correspondence of THE COMMERCIAL.

Barker & Boucher, contractors, of Vancouver, have purchased the double corner on Glasgow & Horne Avenues, and will erect a three story hotel building at once.

The Dominion Real Estate & Loan Agency have established a land office at this point.

Trade is good at this point. The hardware stores especially are doing a fine business.

F. C. Tupper has just finished a very pretty residence on Winnipeg street.

There is a movement on hand to erect a fruit cannery and evaporator, which is much needed as the large quantities of fruit has heretofore been shipped to Vancouver for canning purposes.

C. A. Franklin, a Chicago capitalist, is here, and is negotiating for a water frontage with a view for a manufacturing site.

The town site syndicate has introduced a novel method by naming the streets after the principal cities in Canada, from Vancouver eastward.

A rancher just in from Stave Lake valley reports a very successful season and the emigration to that point large.—MATSQUI.

Wheat-Raising Russia.

There has been no lack of books during the past few years about Russia, and its political, social and geographical features have all been frequently and well described. Yet a large proportion of our own population know it chiefly as an active competitor with ourselves in supplying the great grain markets of the world; and knowing this do not further trouble themselves to learn to what extent available lands are being utilized or under what conditions the agricultural population of Russia are laboring; whether the produc-

tion of wheat in Russia may be considered to have reached its limit, or whether under altered circumstances it could not be enormously increased they know nothing about. Beyond a knowledge of the parts of Russia from which wheat exports are greatest and which are the chief shipping ports, we have found a decided lack of information in the grain trade of this city, and this we presume may be taken as fairly representative. Under these circumstances a comprehensive report on "Russian Agriculture and Cereal Trade," by Consul-General Way, of St. Peterburg, is of peculiar value.

From this report we learn that the grain producing lands of Russia are in two divisions or zones. The black land zone, the garden spot of Russia, extends right across the Kingdom from Poland far into the province of Siberia. They are lands fertile as the delta of the Nile or the bends of the Mississippi, absolutely devoid of stone and needing no manure nor fertilizer of any description. Year after year enormous crops are raised, yet only one-tenth is cultivated. The other division, the arable steppes zone, conforms in its general direction to the black lands; but here fertilizers or manures have beneficial results. It resembles our Western prairies, having no forests. The black land cover some 190,000 and the arable steppes 260,000 square miles, giving a grain-producing territory of some 450,000 square miles. From the products of these lands there were exported in 1886 41,945,000 bushels; in 1887, 62,475,000 bushels, and 1888, 70,525,000 bushels of wheat; and yet in one division almost nine-tenths of the soil lay untilled and unproductive. With such figures as these before us, it becomes of the utmost importance to discover the cause of the restricted cultivation, and if remediable, how long it may be before such steps are taken as will bring out fuller results.

One great drawback at present is the want of means of transportation. Russia has no railroad system in the true meaning of the word. Railroads there are constructed almost entirely for military purposes. If their directions fall in with commercial requirements, well and good; if not, so much the worse for the communities to whom they are not available. That such a condition of things can exist much longer is well nigh impossible. The imperative needs of imperial Russia itself must force on some comprehensive scheme for developing national wealth, and an extended railway system, if not possible from inward resources, will assuredly be permitted to foreign capital. It may be objected that there are no signs of this, and that if such imperative need existed it would have forced such results before now. To argue this way is to ignore all Russia has done within a comparatively recent period, from its emancipation of the serf down to the present time; to ignore also the course of events, which must within the next two or three years force the question of "rural economics" of the country upon the Government, whether it is prepared to treat them or not.

These "economics," when examined, disclose other reasons for so large a proportion of the land lying idle. With the most fertile soil and cheapest labor, grain raising in Russia is not profitable to the peasant proprietor, who is the great producer of the country. A statement issued by the Statistical Department of

the Ministry of Domains (Russia) in April is the first official recognition of the condition of the agricultural population. The following details are taken from it: The peasant proprietor has his land purchased from the Bank Foncier, the representative of the Government, on a system of yearly payments. He has then to make, firstly, his annual payment for his land; secondly, his municipal and imperial taxes, yearly growing more burdensome, have to be paid; and, thirdly, he has to borrow money in most instances to buy seed, farming implements and food for his family until his crop matures—this to be repaid with from 20 to 50 per cent. interest added. The harvest ended, the peasant desires to take his grain to market, but can not travel without an official permit. This is delayed week after week by the local police acting "in collusion with the factor. As a result, local stations or markets are glutted with wheat; then the factor steps in and offers to buy all the grain in sight for about 25 per cent. below its market value. The poor farmer, despairing of reaching the larger market he was aiming at, is compelled to assent. Coming on top of the heavy expenses in raising the wheat, this loss usually makes him bankrupt. But he has no other resource than agriculture, and, with yearly growing difficulties, must tread the same path again on the smallest scale, or as hired laborer. This system prevails over the whole country, and in the opinion of our Consul, would, but for the abnormal demand for Russian wheat and exceptionally good prices prevailing during the past two years (caused almost entirely by the action of American speculators putting up wheat here to a prohibitive export limit) have brought matters to a crisis before now. Under any circumstances short of drastic reform he does not see how it can be long averted.

The position is full of interest to us. Under the depressing artificial conditions shown above, Russia has proved capable of making good what we withheld from our usual foreign markets. What will she be capable of doing when events force her, as they must soon do, to bend her energies to cultivate idle lands and set her agricultural population free from those who prey so heavily upon it? Our Consul says that under favorable conditions Russia could supply the whole world with wheat. It is enough for us, that a very slight change for the better might cause such an increased production as would materially affect the prospects of our own agricultural interests.—New York Commercial Bulletin.

This seems to be an era for establishing what we may call a national press. Canada has long been well supplied with newspapers, professional, religious, trade, mechanical, and agricultural journals, etc. But it is only of late that a press of a distinctively national type has appeared. Another such journal is now added to the list. Volume one, No. 1 of *Canada*, "a journal of religion, patriotism, science and literature," reached our table last week. It is published at Benton, N.B., at the rate of 50 cents per year. The literary matter of the number as before is of a high order. With its motto "For God and Canada," the new journal should be able to do effective work. There is yet one thing which Canada is in need of in the line of national literature. This is a good magazine.