

PRODUCTS OF EMPIRE

Wheat is White Man's Primary Cereal—Canada's Output—Improved Transportation Facilities

Wheat is the white man's primary cereal and its production has always had a peculiar fascination and interest. Its maintenance and extension is one of the most fundamental issues of our time. Like most vital problems it is highly complex; it touches many interests, and raises questions, both political and economic, of supreme importance. Agricultural science which, for research and experiment, has hitherto only received indifferent and local support, finds awaiting it many unsolved difficulties upon the settlement of which even the destinies of nations may depend. The political controversies of the past few years have had at least one beneficial effect; they have directed public attention to the urgency and the momentousness of the problem of food supplies under modern conditions, and awakened general interest in the Imperial necessity of maintaining their security.

The importance of wheat, viewed from its double aspect as the chief agent in supporting the dense populations of the older countries and as the pioneer crop in the vast regions of the New World, depends, of course, on its primary characteristics. It is easily grown, yields specially heavy crops on previously unbroken grounds, and demands comparatively little capital; moreover its cultivation serves admirably to get soil into condition for any subsequent scheme of husbandry that economic considerations may show to be desirable.

Specially Adapted by Nature.

It is thus specially adapted by Nature to meet the present circumstances and the future anticipations of the constant stream of emigrants from countries of denser populations and fewer opportunities. The repeated waves of expansion in the New World have affected reflexively the agricultural dispositions of the Old; the increasing world supplies and lowness of prices have for the past twenty or thirty years (until quite recently) tended to convert wheat into a by-product rather than the premier object of the farming industry in the Old World, and at home have involved many farmers in difficulties and financial loss.

The general rise in prices during the past few years has, however, done something to redeem the situation at home, and to the overseas dominions has brought considerable profit, and afforded encouragement and support for still greater expansion, writes Mr. J. Watson Grice, in United Empire, the journal of the Royal Colonial Institute. For the purpose of a consideration of wheat supplies, both present and future, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, India, and New Zealand may be taken as representing the British Empire.

At present the yield of Canada's wheat region is roughly five bushels per acre greater than that of any other American competitor. In 1883 it was nearly 14 bushels per acre, in 1903-1907 the average was nearly 20. The figures for her southerly neighbor for the same dates were 12 and 14 bushels. The more northerly extension will still further enhance Canada's advantage in the production of the finest high-grade wheats. Scientific application and the intensive cultivation which is gradually proceeding in the eastern provinces would seem to foreshadow a nearer approach in time to the 32 bushels per acre of the mother country.

Improvement of Facilities.

The improvement of facilities for handling grain in bulk and for transportation has been, of course, an absolute necessity for the opening up of the vast prairie regions of the North-West. By 1910 there were in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia nearly two thousand elevators and elevator warehouses with capacities varying from 500,000 bushels (at St. Boniface) to the much smaller ones which are the principal objects at many of the prairie stations on the Canadian Pacific. The average capacity is about 30,000 bushels. The gradual spread of good roads in the more settled districts, and even more, the rapid multiplication of trunk-lines and branches and freight wagons have made possible the transportation of the grain with dispatch to the local and primary markets and to the seaboard. Primary markets such as the railway with elevators at Port Arthur and Fort William are production centres and foci of districts of enormous wheat production and quickly growing industrial importance. Winnipeg, the natural market-place of the north-west, now handles some 200,000,000 bushels annually.

To her magnificent waterways, by lake, river, and canal, Canada has owed much of her prosperity: more recent enterprise has been concentrated on the extension and equipment for transport purposes of the principal railway systems which bring the products of the prairies to the seaboard. In 1901, 18,140 miles of railway were in operation, ten years later there were over 25,000 miles, and the Canadian Pacific is for the present year contemplating a further laying down of upwards

of 1,000 miles of track. The programmes of the three trans-continental lines include, in extension and double tracking, over 2,700 miles for 1914.

A complete network of the eight great railways carrying wheat produce will soon connect all parts of Canada with the Pacific as well as the Atlantic. The Canadian Pacific, the Grand Trunk, and the Canadian Northern have during the past three years handled with more expedition than ever before large proportions of the bumper crops of 150,000,000 bushels in 1910, 215,000,000 in 1911, and 206,000,000 in 1912. Enlarged rolling stock and better organization have recently done much to relieve the congestion of traffic between the threshing season and the close of navigation: for instance, last season at the close of navigation on December 15, more than 83,000,000 bushels had been shipped outward from Port Arthur and Fort William, as compared with 43,000,000 bushels for the previous year. The Canadian Northern expects to have a through line to the Pacific before the end of 1914, and there is every reason to anticipate that during the following year the Grand Trunk will be in operation from ocean to ocean.

By co-operation with the facilities afforded by the opening of the Panama Canal a great effect on the production and exportation of wheat from the North-West and British Columbia may be anticipated. Experiments are also at present being conducted under the auspices of the Dominion Government with a view to reducing somewhat the period during which the great waterway of the St. Lawrence is closed to ocean traffic. The opening up of the Hudson Bay route and the construction of the Georgian Bay Canal will in time remove the grievance of the farmers who have found the railways unable adequately to cope with the immense crops ready for transport in the short interval between harvest and the winter season. Canada recognizes her needs, and is making gigantic efforts to remove these obstacles to her continued prosperity.

The most rosy outlook for Canadian wheat production is that of Dr. William Saunders, an agricultural expert of great authority, who in 1904 prophesied 800,000,000 bushels as a possible crop on one-quarter of the land said to be capable of cultivation; this would feed, at the present rate of consumption of 7½ bushels per head, a Canadian population of 30,000,000 and allow a surplus for export of 600,000,000 bushels.

Position and Outlook are Favorable.

There is no need, however, to indulge in these speculations. The present position and immediate outlook are favorable enough. In 1912 the total crop reached 206,000,000 of bushels as against 215,000,000 in the previous year, and only 85,000,000 so recently as 1901: during the past decade her average crop has more than doubled. For the same period her exports of grain and flour to the mother country have risen from 12,000,000 bushels in 1901 to over 50,000,000 bushels in 1909. Even reasonable forecasts would seem to show that after allowing for the gradual diversion of wheat lands to other crops (which is gradually now going on and is being constantly urged as desirable), and making deductions for enlarged domestic needs for food and seed, Canada will probably be able to provide an annual surplus for export of over 100,000,000 bushels during the next five years.

During the years 1909-11 Canada sent to the United Kingdom an average 4,500,000 quarters, representing 21 per cent. of her crop; India sent 9 per cent., or 4,000,000 quarters; Australia's contribution of 3,000,000 quarters was no less than 28 per cent. of her wheat crops on the average of those years. New Zealand, though supplying a comparatively small quantity, dispatched to the Mother Country about 15 per cent. of her total harvest.

RAILROAD EARNINGS

The following are the railroad earnings for the week ended April 30th:—

| | 1913. | 1912. | Increase or decrease. |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Can. Pac. | \$3,513,000 | \$3,387,000 | + \$126,000 |
| Grand Trunk | 1,523,144 | 1,318,817 | + 204,327 |
| Can. Northern | 565,000 | 495,500 | + 69,500 |
| T. & N. O. | 40,382 | 40,813 | — 429 |

The following are the railroad earnings for the week ended May 7th:—

| | 1913. | 1912. | Increase or decrease. |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Can. Pac. | \$2,572,000 | \$2,439,000 | + \$133,000 |
| Grand Trunk | 1,060,639 | 909,651 | + 150,988 |
| Can. Northern | 472,400 | 391,200 | + 81,200 |
| T. & N. O. | 35,569 | 30,113 | + 5,455 |

The head office of the Dominion Casket Company, Limited, has been changed from Toronto to Guelph.