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FOREIGN GRAIN MARKETS.

The cereal supply is a question which never fails to interest the agricultural, as well as a large part of the mercantile, community, on both sides of the Atlantic, governing, as it largely does, the matters of price and outlets for surplus crops. The varying requirements of continental Europe constitute an element of uncertainty; but statistical inquiry is bringing it within more manageable limits. Among the new enterprises to facilitate this inquiry, is the International Seed and Corn Market of Vienna, which was opened some six weeks ago. Herr Devez, head of one of the bureaus of the Ministry of Commerce, appeared on behalf of the minister, and in an interesting speech cordially gave the endorsement of the Imperial Government to the movement. A statistical report which was read, estimated the wheat crop of Hungary at 800,000 hectolitres (2,270,000 bushels) below average, while the Austrian crop was expected to show a surplus of 1,418,910 bushels, leaving a net deficiency for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy of 851,346 bushels. Herr Wyngart read a report on

foreign wheat crops, estimating a considerable deficiency in England, and a moderate in France and Germany (excepting Bavaria and Saxony); a full average in Roumania, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Northern Italy; a crop above average in Bavaria, Saxony, Austria and Russia. Estimates were presented on this occasion before an assembly of five thousand farmers and grain dealers, representative statisticians of different countries. Europe is naturally grouped into two classes of countries—producing and consuming—according as they present a surplus or deficiency in their productions to meet their home demand. Of the former, Russia, with a fine crop in her southern provinces, was enabled to report a full average in spite of a deficit of 70 per cent. in the small crop of her northern provinces. Austro-Hungary was rated between a full average and 2 per cent. below. Roumania was estimated at 25 per cent. below average, which does not agree with the official estimate of Herr Wyngart, given above. Of the consuming countries, England was estimated at 5 per cent. below average, whereas recent developments leave room for conjecture that the deficiency will not be less than 10 per cent. In Germany, Bavaria and Saxony had a good average harvest, but Mecklenburg is 20 per cent. below, Prussia, 18 per cent., Baden 10 per cent., and Wurttemberg, 5 per cent. The southern parts of France show a yield about 24 per cent. below average, but the other portions of the country show a full average. Switzerland is 10 per cent., Sweden, Norway and Denmark 15 per cent., and the Netherlands 30 per cent. below average.

It may now be regarded as certain that Britain will this winter be dependent upon the principal grain-growing countries to supplement her own deficiencies. It appears from latest advices that there is a decrease of more than 20 per cent. in the acreage under the cultivation of wheat. It is calculated that 10½ millions of quarters will represent the produce of the extent of land cultivated, and England must look for about 13 million quarters of foreign grain to meet the year's requirements of her population, while it is mainly from American Atlantic ports, California and Russia, she can expect the deficiency to be met. Much interest, therefore, centres on the American crop. The latter does not appear to be turning out an average, and, as a similar state of affairs prevails very generally in Europe, it seems reasonable to expect the price of wheat to advance in England, which must stimulate the export trade from United States' and Canadian ports.

REGULATION OF WEIGH-SCALES.

The unwisdom of allowing people who have no thorough practical knowledge of business to enact laws for the regulation of mercantile affairs, without, at least, first holding consultation with those most interested and experienced, is also seen to some extent in the operation of that part of the "Act respecting Weights and Measures" which provides for the stamping and regulation of weigh-scales. The evil of the empirical school of legislators is that they never look beyond proximate causes and immediate effects, habitually regarding each act as involving but one antecedent and one consequent. In their well-meaning efforts to cure specific evils they but too often cause collateral evils they never dreamt of. Thus even in such a country as England the old excise on soap had the effect of encouraging the use of caustic washing-powders, thereby entailing an immense destruction of clothes.

A pupil of this school must have had something to do with the framing of the Weights and Measures Act. The object sought to be acquired by the compulsory stamping of weigh-scales in this country is to prevent fraud. This is very desirable; but compelling manufacturers and dealers to have each scale examined and tested, and each weight officially stamped before being sold—and actually forbidding any such unexamined and unstamped scales to be kept in warehouse, is not, we fancy, the most practical way to accomplish the desired end. It is well known to manufacturers that the nice degree of accuracy with which any scales operate depends much on the manner in which they are "set up." So much is this the case that makers of reputation never allow the larger class of scales to be set up by any but men experienced in the business. Perpendicularity among other things is absolutely necessary, as anybody who has ever used the old-fashioned steel-yard can testify. In this respect the adoption of the spirit-level or plumb attached to the pillar of ordinary platform scales is commendable. We fancy, however, that by a slight displacement of the screws fastening the double, rectangular level, this regulation may be set at naught. But how, it may be asked, can these levels be attached to the larger class of scales which have no pillar? All such scales should we imagine be set up first in the place where they are to be used, and then stamped, as the expense, in any case, will have to be borne by the consumer, if we may apply the term; and in order to guarantee such test by the government inspector, every dealer should send immediate information of all scales