



.. THE ..

Journal of Agriculture and Horticulture

Notes by the Way.

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Wheat-supply of the future.—Whether or not Sir Wm. Crookes derives his information from spiritualistic sources, in which he, almost alone of our modern men of science, is a devout believer, we are not aware; but, at the Bristol meeting of the British Association, at which he presided, he gave vent to a most terrific warning as to the probability, nay, certainty, of the wheat-supply of the world falling short of the demand of hungry mouths within a generation of the present day, unless people grew wiser in the interim, and flew to cast themselves at the feet of the chemist, imploring, like a lot of feeble children, his aid against the impending famine.

But he did not leave his hearers comfortless; he mercifully assured them that the chemist would come to their rescue by converting the nitrogen of the air into nitrate. This, as they already knew, had been done already by the combustion of the air effected by electricity; coals, or other fuel, were not sufficiently cheap to effect this transmutation; water-power would have to be used, and Niagara alone was able to supply all that was needed. Thus, Sir William Crookes added, it was possible to raise the average wheat-yield of the world from 12½ bushels to 30 bushels an acre!

Now this prophesy falls on incredulous ears to-day. It might have been all very impressive a few months ago, when the Leiter conspiracy had run up the price of wheat in the London market to all but sixty shillings a quarter—\$14.40—\$1.80 a bushel;—but now, when the price has fallen to just half that sum, and will, very likely, go still lower, we fancy very few people will "take much stock" in Sir William Crookes' vaticination. It would seem as if the learned professor had