

# Nick Taitinger and his Methods

*How the Barley King of Alberta Produces Prize Winning Grain.*

Had a western grain grower remarked, previous to the war, that he was born near Verdun, it would have done no more than call forth the question, "Verdun, where is Verdun?" It is different now. The mention of the name summons up a feeling of unbounded admiration for the spirit of the men who made their wills, wrote farewell letters, strapped on their accoutrements and muttering quietly to themselves, "They shall not pass," went into that inferno which raged for months around the old French town of Verdun and successfully stemmed the tide of onslaught when the Germans made their supreme attempt to break through and force a road to Paris.

Near Verdun, in quieter times, Nick Taitinger, known for years as the Barley King of Alberta, was born. On the wall in his home near Claresholm he proudly displays a certificate of graduation from the Verdun Academy. At the outbreak of the war he had two brothers living near Verdun. But since the German hosts swept over the district in their first great advance into the heart of France he has never heard of them. Whether they are amongst the fallen or prisoners in Germany he does not know, and perhaps he will never learn.

It is many years since Mr. Taitinger turned his face to the new world. In 1889, when still a young man, he emigrated to the United States, first settling in Oregon. Five years later he rented a small farm, remaining on it for about 10 years. In 1904, however, the call of Alberta reached him and he determined to risk his fortune in the promising new country that was just opening up. After looking over the southern part of the province he decided to settle in the Claresholm district. Here he bought a section of C.P.R. land and started on his career as a grain grower. The following year his crop included a 40 acre field of winter wheat which, though badly damaged by gophers, returned 50 bushels to the acre of No. One. During this year he broke about 200 acres, using a six horse team and three yoke of oxen. The yield from this, in 1906 was 35 bushels to the acre of No. Four wheat. As soon as possible he had the whole section under cultivation with the exception of a small field kept for pasture and he now farms a couple of sections of land practically all of which is under the plow.

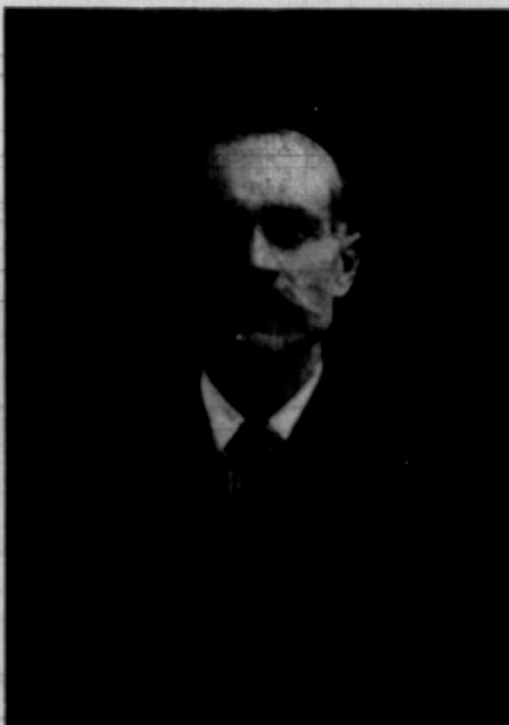
## A Long Prize Winning Record

Mr. Taitinger's success as a winner in the grain classes at the big fairs began in 1910 when he won third premium on Red Fife Wheat at the Dry Farming Congress at Spokane. He followed this success up the following year by winning the silver medal and silver cup for the best five bushels of winter wheat at the Calgary Fair. In 1912 a cup and championship for barley was landed at the Dry Farming Congress at Lethbridge. In 1913 his winnings included the championship for Canada for the best wheat shown at the Canada Land and Apple Show at Winnipeg, his trophies being a gold medal and \$250 in cash. This time it was Marquis wheat which he exhibited. The same year he landed the championship for barley at the Dry Farming Congress at Tulsa, thus securing the barley championship twice in succession. One of the trophies won at this exposition was a five-horse power gasoline engine. In 1914 he added to his long list of winnings by bringing away another gasoline engine representing the championship for barley at the Dry Farming Congress at Wichita. At the Panama Exposition at San Francisco in the same year he won first on Marquis wheat and first on barley, following this up in 1915 by securing second place for barley at the fair at Denver, Colorado.

## Shipped Barley To Glasgow

It was in 1913 that Mr. Taitinger achieved considerable prominence by making a shipment of barley direct to a firm of malsters in Glasgow, Scotland. In this undertaking he worked in co-operation with some railway men in Calgary and the result was the securing of considerable advertising for Mr. Taitinger and for Alberta in general. This, together with his long list of winnings on barley in competition with the best growers in the world, won him the title by which he is sometimes known: "The Barley King of Alberta." At that time the local price of contract barley was only 30 or 35 cents a bushel. The price in Glasgow for the kind of barley which Mr. Taitinger was producing

was \$1.02. Accordingly, arrangements were completed and a cargo was shipped. The freight was something over 30 cents a bushel but even at that the barley netted him over 70 cents a bushel, or twice the local price. The high freight charges were due in part to the fact that the barley had to



NICK TAITINGER, CLARESHOLM, ALTA.

As a seed-grain grower Mr. Taitinger has a long list of world's championships in the wheat and barley classes to his credit.

be shipped in sacks in order that it might be loaded on the ship. Later the experiment was repeated with almost equal success. The barley was always sold by cable. "I could handle barley in that way yet," said Mr. Taitinger as we talked the matter over on his farm one day in July, "but it is not necessary to handle barley that way now. We can get almost as much for it on our local market as can be secured in the old country."

"You do not appear to be growing much barley this year. How is that?" I queried. "When prohibition came in," he answered, "I thought it would knock the bottom out of the barley market. However, my fears in this regard were unfounded as this year I could have sold all kinds of it if I had had it for sale." And now, though Mr. Taitinger gained much of his reputation as a grain grower by raising barley, he has gone almost entirely out

of it and is devoting himself almost exclusively to the growing of choice wheat. "French Chevalier" was the variety of barley that did best with me," said Mr. Taitinger, "it is an easy handler with good, stiff straw and is a strong, healthy grower. It is, as you know, a two-rowed variety. My experience has been that barley is easy on land. You can tell to a foot where the barley grew the previous year in one of my fields that is now under wheat."

Preclude wheat was once tried by Mr. Taitinger but with discouraging results. He found that besides having the objectionable feature of being bearded, it shattered badly. It might, he said, be alright in the north brush country, where the shortness of the season demanded an early maturing wheat, but was not well suited to his district.

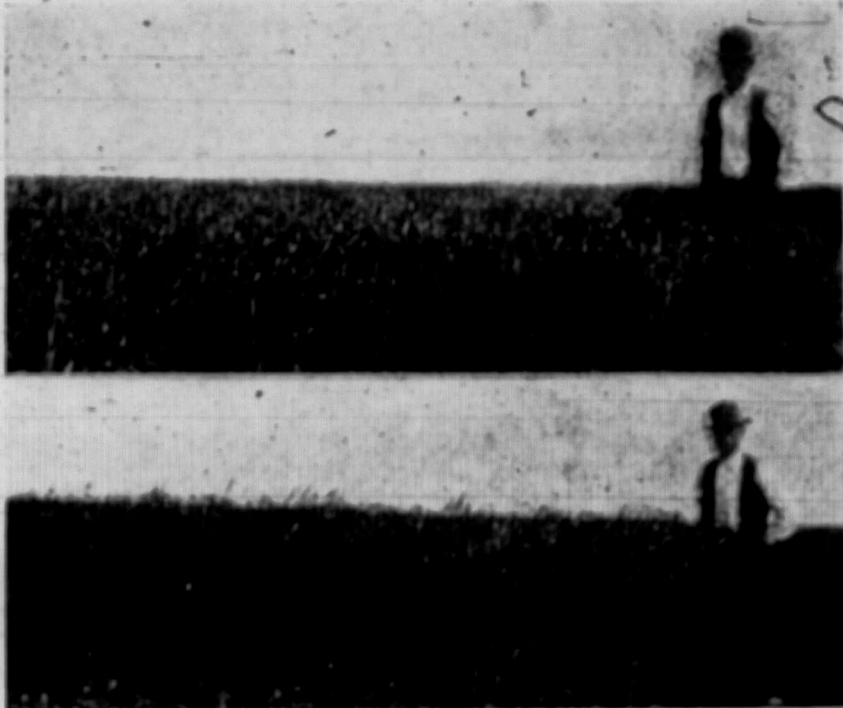
At the time of my visit, which was about July 18, wheat was just nicely out in head. This afforded an opportunity for securing the two snapshots which appear on this page and which show Mr. Taitinger standing in his wheat plots. The upper part of the cut shows Marquis wheat grown from L. D. Lang's world's prize winning seed. The seed for this plot, 20 pounds, was secured from The Guide in connection with its work for the distribution of high class seed grain. The lower cut shows a plot grown from Seager Wheeler's prize winning Kitchener wheat, the seed of which, two bushels, was also secured from The Guide. The Kitchener wheat was looking very strong and healthy; this being partly due, explained Mr. Taitinger, to the fact that it was being grown on ground that was formerly sown to barley and that wheat does better after barley than after wheat. This wheat was sown on April 13 and the Marquis six days later. Both plots headed out on July 14 and 15. In reporting on this experiment, Mr. Taitinger informs The Guide that the Kitchener had a longer, stiffer straw and that the heads were characteristically square and compact. From the seed secured from these plots he expects to sow still larger plots next year with the object of thoroughly trying out the different varieties and seeing how they compare. Writing The Guide recently concerning the yield of these two plots, Mr. Taitinger stated that the acre and three-quarters of Kitchener yielded 65 bushels. Owing to a frost the quality was somewhat affected. The one-third acre of Marquis wheat yielded 14 bushels.

## Methods Of Seed Production

In the production of high grade grain much of which is sold for seed purposes, Mr. Taitinger follows the rules of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association of which he is a prominent member. First of all he has a plot sown with hand selected seed producing elite stock. This plot is carefully "rogued" and everything that is not true to type is carefully eliminated. Every weed is also pulled out and nothing left undone that will ensure the production of the choicest seed. With the elite stock a larger multiplying plot is sown producing first generation seed. Enough first generation wheat is grown to produce seed for the balance of the farm. Everything that is not true to type is also eliminated from the larger seed plots.

This year he had one acre of elite stock and 120 acres of first generation. Under the rules of the C.S.G.A. the field of first generation is carefully examined and inspected by officers of the association. The wheat must be true to type, clean and suitable for seed purposes. After threshing the grain is again inspected and put into sacks, the sacks being labelled and sealed. Of the 120 acres of first generation Mr. Taitinger had 20 acres which he was reserving for seed for next year. Altogether this year's crop comprised 640 acres of wheat and 75 acres of barley. In preparing seed grain, Mr. Taitinger is a firm believer in the free use of the fanning mill. "If a man wants 600 bushels of seed wheat," he said, "he should take 1,200 bushels of the best wheat he has and fan it until it is down to the 600 bushels. By this way he will get the big kernels and these are the ones he wants to put in the ground."

It has been Mr. Taitinger's experience that wheat brought from a distance has got to be acclimated before it will produce to its best. "All the new grain that comes on to my farm is three or four days later than normal," said Mr. Taitinger, "last year I got some elite stock from a prominent grower in



MR. TAITINGER IN PLOTS OF WHEAT FROM SEED SECURED FROM THE GUIDE. The upper plot was grown from L. D. Lang's World's Champion Marquis Wheat and the lower from Seager Wheeler's World's Champion Kitchener. The photo captioned 'acclimated' shows the difference in the growth on the two plots.

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