

THE HUDSON BAY ROUTE

INTRODUCTORY

GROWTH OF GRAIN-GROWING AREAS.

In 1898 Manitoba and what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan had upwards of two and a half million acres under cultivation. The total grain crop was about fifty-six million bushels. The wheat crop alone was some thirty million bushels.

In 1906 the area under grain was some seven million acres, and the total yield was over two hundred million bushels, of which the wheat crop alone was some one hundred million bushels.

The total cultivable area in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta is estimated at one hundred and seventy-five million acres. It would not be safe to count upon the uncultivated portion being acre for acre as fertile as that which has already come under the plow; but it is safe to reckon its productiveness in the ratio of one to two. On that basis of productiveness we can count on at least ten-folding the present grain yield of these provinces when all the now virgin soil is brought under the plow. Instead of one hundred million bushels of wheat there will be produced a billion bushels, and the total grain crop will increase to two billion bushels.

Forty thousand homesteads were taken up last year, and a large area of land was secured by purchase from railway companies for farming. At the present rate of settlement the grain crop will quickly be doubled, and the day of the billion bushels will be within the range of vision.

CULMINATION OF CONTINUOUS GRAIN BLOCKADE.

But as the grain-growing areas have developed the transportation difficulty has increased. There has been a continuous grain blockade in the West, which reached its culmination in 1906, when neither the outgoing grain nor the incoming freight could be handled by the railways. The crop of last year cannot be marketed before this year's grain crop is harvested.

Every hundred miles of railway built in the three great grain-growing provinces increases production by causing grain to be grown where none was grown before. The construction of the Canadian Northern added to the output and created a traffic that now overtakes its carrying capacity. A similar result will follow the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific. As our grain crop grows so must other industries. Last year some one hundred and thirty thousand head of cattle reached the Winnipeg stock-yards, and eighty-six thousand were carried to the seaboard. Two million tons of freight were received at Fort William, and out of that harbour there was shipped over two million tons.

LARGER OUTLET ESSENTIAL TO DEVELOPMENT.

It is obvious that there must be a larger outlet to the ocean or the development of the West will be retarded. Grain will not continue to be grown in excess of what can be marketed, and as every section of land added to the cultivated area of the West increases the business and therefore the wealth of the East, the arrest of Western development will be as keenly felt from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes as in the country beyond.