

fictitious rumors have come. At one time sixty cents is put down as the figure below which wheat is not likely to be grown in India for exportation; then the belief is expressed that it can be grown for a little over one-fourth of that sum, and now we have an authoritative statement of the Agricultural Department of India, that the production of wheat there has been curtailed by the low prices. The India price for 1884 is put down at 99 cents a bushel; and if this price were to prevail in the domestic market, India could not export at present prices. The probability is that India, with a more extended railway system, could produce wheat for exportation as cheaply as any other country. But railway extension has yet to come, and come it probably will. The statement of the India Board of Agriculture that a fall in the price of wheat from \$1.03 to 99 cents a bushel sensibly checked production, cannot be ignored. This might be true under present conditions and yet a change might come which would prevent its continuing true for any length of time. India has great possibilities which have not yet been taken advantage of. She has a considerable area, though very small in proportion to our North-west, which though capable of being brought under cultivation still remains in a state of nature.

In eleven years, Europe has had only four good crops; these years were 1874, 1878, 1882 and 1884. The low yield of the remaining seven years stimulated the production of wheat in other countries; and it is an important factor in the problem that the increased production outside of Europe took place under the stimulus of high prices. The present low prices must produce a reaction and a considerable decline in production, unless, indeed, some new use for wheat be found. At present prices, it would almost be possible to use it as food for cattle. That present prices cannot be permanent does not admit of a doubt. Seven short crops in Europe, in the course of eleven years, caused an extraordinary demand which taxed the world to supply, and which for the first time brought India into the list of countries which export wheat in large quantities. On the back of a greatly increased supply, in 1882, came a large crop in Europe. The United States refused to realize the change that had come and hoarded her wheat in the hope of obtaining higher prices. Next year she still for some time refused to believe what she saw and continued the same suicidal policy. When prices had fallen in spite of her attempts to keep them up, she rushed her wheat to market and had to accept panic prices. The United States suffered from two things, which may be perhaps reduced to one: a fatal belief that she could control the grain markets of Europe, and speculation, which kept up prices beyond the exporting point. The speculation was stimulated by the belief that the United States' supply was large enough to control the European price of wheat. That delusion has cost the country dear, and it can never again be repeated. At this point in the revolution of wheat production, Europe astonishes the world by producing an unusually large crop. The climax of competition has been reached. Present prices will not tempt to a large production of wheat, countries which grow it under the least favorable

conditions; production must decrease, even if new uses for the existing stock be not found.

In England, wheat has been selling at from 30s. to 33s. a quarter of eight bushels; and it is beyond question that these figures would not cover the average cost of its production in that country. The *Economist* questions whether wheat can be grown by English farmers at 40s. a quarter, under current rents and charges. Rent, tithe, rates and taxes are set down, by the same authority, at £2 an acre, a sum equal to the entire present value of an ordinary crop of an acre of wheat in the United States. The one item in the charges which an English farmer has to meet, and it is the largest, capable of reduction, is rent; and it may be taken for granted that rents must be reduced. "The rent of the landlord," says Professor Thorold Rodgers, "is and should be a matter of interest to no human being but himself. Nobody but himself would be the worse off if it disappeared; nobody but himself is the better if it is enhanced." This is an extreme view of the landlord's position, but it is not to be confounded with a communistic proposal to confiscate rent, under the pretext of taxing the land. What Professor Rodgers refers to is the possibility of certain lands not being in a position to bear rent; a view of the matter which is not new and which enters into Ricardo's theory of rent. There is already much land in England for which no tenants can be found; which probably means that no one can be found to pay the rents asked, for it is scarcely possible that tenants could not be found who would be willing to pay something. The truth seems to be that some landlords are not willing to lower their rents to a figure which will, in the altered condition of British agriculture, enable a tenant to live. Rather than take what they could get, they either farm the lands themselves or suffer them to be idle. They are probably hoping that the present depressed state of British agriculture will soon pass over, and that they will then find tenants willing to pay the rent they ask. To throw out of cultivation lands which could be profitably worked, under a minimum rent, would entail a national loss; and if the evil became general, some legislative interference would probably take place. But it is scarcely possible that the majority of landlords should fail to realize the true state of the case and refuse to readjust rents so as to bring them into harmony with the existing state of agriculture.

In Canada and the United States, rent does not, as a rule, form an obstacle to successful farming. But many farmers in both countries, have charges to meet which practically take the place of rent. They have interest to pay on borrowed capital, for which their farms are pledged. In connection with present prices, these rates are high, but seldom extortionate or what might be called usurious. Many farms are paying seven per cent. on half their value; and the interest must often be equal to the full rent that could be got for the land. Farmers in this condition probably cannot better afford to grow wheat at present prices than the English farmer; especially if their farms have reached a point of temporary

exhaustion, which is liable to follow the first years of cultivation, when the farmer does nothing but sow and reap. And though rents may be reduced, stipulated interest must run its term without reduction. But there are many farms which are not burthened with heavy mortgage debts. Besides, Canada has a greater extent of unbroken virgin soil, capable of yielding abundant crops with the least expenditure of labor, than any other country in the world. What can be done in India is as yet uncertain; but there is little reason to believe that wheat can be grown cheaper in any country than on the rich virgin soils of Canada.

But there is nothing in this view of the future outlook to affect prices this year; and low prices must almost certainly continue as the result of a superabundant if not unprecedented crop. Farmers are naturally suspicious of advice tendered to them by outside parties to sell; but that advice may with a good conscience and without the ingredient of a sinister motive now be given. We are firmly convinced that farmers have nothing to gain by holding back their wheat; for though the price is unprecedentedly low, there are good reasons why it has fallen to the present level.

OPPOSING RATEABLE DISTRIBUTION.

Judgments have just been rendered by the Ontario Court of Appeal in three different suits, all resulting from attempts on the part of particular creditors to obtain an advantage over other creditors, after assignment for rateable distribution had been executed. Fortunately, in every case, the decision has been adverse to the creditors who made these attempts. Our courts have gone so far from time to time, to protest against technical objections, assignments honestly intended to secure rateable division that it is to be hoped we have heard the last of attempts to secure preferences in this particular way.

The first of these cases arose out of the failure of one Jarvis, a small trader in Port Sidney, Muskoka District. This gentleman being pressed by creditors, executed an assignment to Mr. Donaldson, an accountant of this city, for the general benefit of all creditors. It appears that the sheriff was at the time of the assignment, in possession under an execution in favor of a Hamilton firm. A suit was pending at the same time at the instance of a wholesale millinery house, of this city. The latter had their execution placed in the Sheriff's hands the day after the assignment took place. Instead of accepting the situation and recognizing the priority of this assignment they, however, insisted on the Sheriff holding the goods on their behalf. The matter came up before the York County Judge and was decided in favor of the contesting creditors, on the ground that the assignment to Mr. Donaldson did not contain such a description of the goods covered, as to satisfy the provisions of the Chattel Mortgage and Bill of Sale statute which is held to be applicable to these assignments where there is not an immediate change of possession.

To set aside this decision the trustee resorted to the Court of Appeal, which has