

may be taken as a near approach to accuracy, with the exception of the estimation of the wheat crop, which will certainly turn out better than it is here reputed to be. The farmers in general will find themselves pretty well off, but the arable land tenant on cold, heavy clays will be a severe sufferer.

#### AN ESTIMATE OF THE HARVEST.

The agricultural writer in the *Times* has given a carefully-prepared forecast of the results of the harvest. He says:—

The year 1888 will be a curious one in the history of agriculture, and in marked contrast with 1887. The year cannot possibly be called, on the whole, a disastrous one, so far as the quantity of produce is concerned, if we except the wheat crop, which will be not only worse than in any year since 1879 in yield, but generally of a very inferior quality. At the end of June it was stated that the prospects of the wheat crop were admirable, and that for all other crops they were very doubtful. Grass had made scarcely any growth, and a poor yield was expected. Then came July, which changed the entire character of the season; rains continued throughout the month, damaging the quality of the hay, but increasing its yield. Heavy storms beat down the corn crops, damaged the wheat in its flowering stage, and the result is that at the present time the whole character of the harvest is reversed as compared with what it was at the beginning of July. Wheat is now, so far as yield is concerned, the worst crop of the year, and hay the best. As has been the case since 1881, inquiries have been sent out to some 400 farmers in every part of the United Kingdom asking their opinions on the harvest of the year. The result is to show that the wheat crop is 27.6 per cent. worse than last year; barley is 2 per cent. better; oats are 25.5 per cent. better; potatoes, 27.7 per cent. better; beans, 33.9 per cent. better; peas, 41.3 per cent. better; and roots, 46 per cent. better; while the most extraordinary feature of all is that the hay crop is 35.9 per cent. better than last year. All these figures, it must be borne in mind, refer simply to yield, because it is very certain that, owing to the bad harvest weather, the quality throughout is inferior. From every part of England, although the returns speak of good yields, notes are given declaring the quality to be much damaged and very inferior. Hay, for instance, which is a full average crop, will not be of what may be termed a good saleable quality. Potatoes, again, are much diseased and watery. There will be no fine coloured barley, and no plump and heavy wheat, as was the case last year. Oats, too, will probably be a ragged sample. In a word, the harvest for all crops excepting wheat will be one of fair yield, but of inferior quality. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that even now plenty of sunshine may improve its prospects, while a return of wet weather may make things a very great deal worse.

The greatest interest attaches to the wheat crop of the year, and the quantities of imported grain likely to be required. Last year, on August 24, we gave an estimate in the *Times* that the wheat crop would be one of 32 bushels per acre, and in February last the official returns showed the crop to have been one of 31.97 bushels per acre. Such accuracy as this is not to be expected in estimates made while the crop is still standing, but may well be alluded to as showing that such estimates, if carefully done, are quite near enough for ordinary purposes. We have worked out the figures in the same way this year as last, and the result is that the crop promises to be one of about 23.50 bushels to the acre, this being 5.50 bushels per acre less than an average crop, and 8.50 bushels less than last year. We may put down the wheat crop of 1888 as one of about 6,768,000 qrs., which, after deductions for tail corn and seed, would mean one of only 5,000,000 for sale—probably the smallest wheat crop

grown in these islands in the present century. This will leave us dependent on foreign sources for at least 20,000,000 qrs. That we shall obtain this is certain, but it is very doubtful if we shall get it at the low prices which have prevailed during the past few years. The rise may not be very great, but probably the year may see wheat up to 40s. per quarter. Short crops prevail generally this year in countries, and France must be also a large buyer. At the same time it must not be forgotten that, owing to the lateness of the harvest, the 1887 crops have supplied us with 13 months' wheat, leaving only 11 months to be still supplied. This may have an effect towards keeping down prices, but it may be fairly argued that higher prices must prevail.

Severe frosts on the 6th and 7th September. Buckwheat and tobacco round Montreal destroyed. The latter crop should be covered by the first of the month, as there is frequently an early frost in the first week. There will be no grapes worth speaking of. The wonderful 20,000,000 bushels of Manitoba wheat seem to have somehow dwindled down to, 15,000,000! In 1886, much the same sort of thing happened. Two bad years out of three must try the tempers of new settlers in the North-west. As far as my knowledge goes, this will be one of the worst years ever known in the province of Quebec. The two frosts of the 6th and 7th were naturally followed by rain—and pretty heavily it is falling now, the 8th—and this must finish up the wretched, damaged grain-crop below Quebec. A lamentable state of things indeed, as, there, no farmer has a stock of last year's grain or hay to fall back upon. I am not a pessimist, but I really do not see where the seed for next spring is to be found in such districts as Rimouski, Métis, &c.

Best white wheat in England was fetching 4s. a quarter = \$1.25 a bushel on the 21st August, just 10s a quarter = \$2.40 more than it fetched a twelve-month ago. Fortunately are those farmers in England who have a few stacks of old wheat by them! A. R. J. F.

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