

INCREASING THE WHEAT SUPPLY.

In view of the recent high prices of wheat and the fact that we are only a few months distant from the 1909 harvest, the possibility of increasing the world's wheat crop is of intimate interest. Not more than a decade ago Sir William Crookes, the well-known scientist, made some computations showing that the world's demand for wheat would in a few years overtake the supply. The recent Patten affair in Chicago, when record prices were made for wheat, helps to strengthen this theory. While manipulation may have figured in the matter, undoubtedly the fact that wheat was actually scarce was the main factor in soaring prices.

The increase in the world's crop during the past ten years is seen in the following table:—

	Bushels.
1907	3,062,000,000
1906	3,414,000,000
1905	3,249,700,000
1904	3,134,000,000
1903	3,238,000,000
1902	3,087,000,000
1901	2,822,000,000
1900	2,583,000,000
1899	2,697,000,000
1898	2,894,000,000
1897	2,226,000,000

Thus between 1897 and 1907 the gain in production has been about fifty per cent. It seems beyond doubt that the world's supply of wheat can be increased by at least five billion bushels. Probably, too, the crop will keep pace with the demand, such as it is. The demand must be largely regulated by the price. Many authorities predict one dollar a bushel in the near future. A Manitoba wheat man writing to the Monetary Times not long ago stated that the dollar per bushel must come in the natural course of things. The price of every other commodity has increased with the exception of wheat. It may be some years before the dollar basis will be permanently established. Should that price rule in Chicago and a similar price in Liverpool, wheat-growing would doubtless receive an impetus sufficient to stem the tide of supply. Mr. Rollin E. Smith, an authority on all phases of the wheat question, shows that any increase in the world's supply must come from the following sources: "Natural" new lands—by irrigation and by dry farming; and increased yield per acre—by fertilization, crop rotation, better farming methods, and better yielding seed.

In considering the natural new lands, so termed to distinguish them from new area that can be used only by means of irrigation or dry farming, there are three great areas, and probably a fourth. Western Canada, as has been previously pointed out, comes first. All that is wanted is the settler.

Argentina is the next country of great possibilities, but it will be slower in developing than Canada. Still, the area is there, and it will help to put to confusion the scientists who arrive at theoretical conclusions. The following prediction was made by Senor Tidblom, of Argentina:—

"The wheat area will undoubtedly extend toward the south, disappearing from the north and centre of Cordoba, Sante Fe, and Entre Rios, and definitely settling in the extreme south of those Provinces, in all of the Province of Buenos Aires, especially in the north, west, south and south-west; in all the territory of the Pampa; in the extreme south of the Province of San Luis, and in the territories of Neuquen, Chubut, Rio Negro, Santa Cruz, and Terra del Fuego. It is absolutely impossible to predict its growth, but there are more than 80,000,000 acres in the Republic that could be immediately devoted to successful wheat farming if we had the farmers to do it."

Mr. William Goodwin, F.R.G.S., in his account of wheat-growing in Argentina, published in Liverpool in

1895, said: "If one-half the supposed suitable land were to produce a crop of ten bushels of wheat per acre, the result would be 1,237,815,000 bushels, which is about half of the estimated wheat crop of the world in 1894. The Argentine Republic may well be called a country of great possibilities."

Siberia will become a great wheat-growing country; though how great and how soon no one can tell. About all that can be said is that there is a gradual increase in the acreage under cultivation, and that there is sufficient arable land to grow, when settlers can be found to cultivate it, another billion bushels of wheat.

While the estimates of the area of arable lands in Siberia have gradually been reduced from time to time, authorities have now agreed upon 425,000 to 450,000 square miles as approximately correct. This is exclusive of the steppes of Turkestan. The area is equal to that of the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri; and only a small part of this vast extent of arable lands is under cultivation.

Of 450,000 square miles, or 288,000,000 acres, that admits of colonization and agriculture in Siberia, less than 11,000,000 is actually planted. Thus wrote Mr. Rubinow, economic expert, division of foreign markets, United States Department of Agriculture, in 1905. That writer continues:—

"With the semi-barbarous system of agriculture that is prevalent in Siberia, only a small part of the land occupied is planted each year, so that the area under agricultural occupation may be estimated as three or four times larger than the area planted: i.e., 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 acres, or 10 to 14 per cent. of the cultivable area.

"It still remains true that a very small part of available territory in Siberia has been settled as yet, and the farther east one goes the smaller does that part become. Thus, in Western Siberia, out of 80,000,000 acres, 7,500,000, or 9 per cent., is under crops; in middle Siberia, 2,186,000 acres out of 73,600,000, or 2.5 per cent.; in Transbaikalia, a little over 1.1 per cent. (750,000 out of 64,000,000 acres); in Amur, 0.6 per cent.; and in the Ussuri-Littoral region only 0.3 per cent.

"It must be acknowledged, therefore, that sufficient land is to be found in Siberia for an enormous extension of agriculture, which will depend only upon the supply of labor; i.e., upon the growth of population."

Manchuria is the fourth country that may give to the world a large area of new wheat lands. While the area of arable lands is not as yet known, travellers agree that it is very large; and it is known that the climate and soil are suitable for wheat-growing. Whether China may develop as a wheat-eater as rapidly as Manchuria does as a grower is a matter for the future.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

The recent successful sale of Prince Rupert town-site lots has accomplished much for British Columbia. Aside from the natural interests of big corporations and governments, the publicity given Prince Rupert and its possibilities has helped not only the Grand Trunk Pacific terminus. Men and capital and interest in foreign lands have been attracted to Canada's Pacific Coast province. To reach Prince Rupert they mostly stopped off at Vancouver and Victoria and New Westminster. A glimpse at these thriving centres sharpened the travelling appetite; so other towns were visited and resources inspected. British Columbia real estate generally received a price impetus. Some think that figures got ahead of the times; they may be correct. Anyway, it is only a matter of time. Those who have real estate there must await general development before their holdings increase in value. The far-sighted bought with early appreciation in view.