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Motorize Farming This Year!

Increase in Acreage—Large Immigration Into Canada—Possibilities of Wheat Growing in Canada are Enormous—Plenty of Land at Low Prices For Immigrants—Machinery is Beginning to Revolutionize Farming—Inventions Come at Opportune Time.

By CHARLES W. STOKES

"CANADA must grow more wheat this year." But merely to repeat this non-arguable fact does not bring one single additional acre under cultivation. The desired end—more wheat—can obviously be attained only by one or both of two methods, either more wheat per acre or more acres under wheat.

The first, depending as it does upon causes mostly beyond human control, can be omitted from this discussion. The second is therefore the only logical solution. Either the man who is growing wheat already must grow more, or else the man who isn't growing it must grow some now.

The Canadian farmer in 1917 grew 234 million bushels, which was less than he grew in the two preceding years but probably the best he could do in the face of natural obstacles. With both patriotic and pecuniary motives to actuate him, practically every Canadian farmer who can grow wheat is doing so. Limited as he is by the possession of only one pair of hands, he has probably reached the limit of what he can grow unless he relinquishes some other branch of agriculture—in which case there would result a storm of indignation at the then-impossible prices of bacon, eggs, milk, vegetables and beef.

The number of wheat-growers has, of course, increased to some extent. Sixty-one thousand immigrants entered Canada from the United States last year, amongst whom were a large number of agriculturists—a larger proportion, indeed, than in most previous years. In the three prairie provinces, whither most of these immigrants went, there was in consequence a large amount of new land broken. There will be a great many more immigrants coming in this year, war or no war, for wheat prices are high, prairie land is cheap, and a good crop will pay for the land in the first year.

Probably, too, the back-to-the-land publicity has borne some fruit. Probably a certain number of city workers, partly in a desire to help the cause, partly attracted by the profit of raising wheat at a fixed price of \$2.21 per bushel (with a not-distant prospect of an increase), partly to beat the high cost of city living, are now growing wheat. Let us hope so, at any rate, if only for the reputation of publicity.

But even then—

This is the day of "even thens." Notice, for example, that when the British War Minister wants 800,000 more men, he pays a splendid tribute to what has been done to date, but concludes "Even then—"; and gets his men. In 1917, Canada had nearly 15 million acres producing wheat, nearly fourteen of which were in the prairie provinces; but even then there are 1,400 million acres in Canada, without going to the trouble of including the Yukon and the North-West Territories.

It would, of course, be ridiculous to suggest that every one of these acres should be producing wheat. Millions of them are already producing something else indispensable, such as bacon or beef; other millions are afforested, rocky, mineral-bearing, clay, swamp, alkali or unsuitable. Yet unless there are not numerous other millions still remaining that should be producing wheat, Canada would not be in the colonization game—would not be able to justify its slogan of "The World's Future Bread Basket," for 234 million bushels, while they sound like a big quantity, are but a drop in the bucket of the world's needs.

The prairie provinces, for instance, have an acreage of 460 million. The estimate has been made, and as far as I know has never been disputed, that 200 million acres are suitable for cultivation. The area actually cultivated to all crops, according to the incomplete data that can be collated from government statistics, is about 20 million acres; that is to say, about 10 per cent. of the estimated resources. In other words, at this, the most stupendous moment in the history of the world, 90 per cent. of the best wheat land in the British Empire, capable of producing enough food to feed for a year, at the most modest computation, from 300 to 400 million people, is lying idle.

Conscript it? This demagogic solution is characterized by a certain ineptitude when it is remembered that while there are speculators in land the same as there are speculators in stocks and in food, the majority of this land is held either by the government, who will readily give any non-teutonic male over eighteen years of age 160 acres of it free, or by owners who would readily sell it to anyone who could pay the current market price. To discuss