

National Wealth and the Farm.

In its rapid and remarkable progress the nation to the south of us has made some mistakes that there is yet time for Canada to avoid. One error has been the paying of too little systematic attention to agriculture. Upon this point Mr. J. J. Hill has dwelt insistently of late years—recognizing doubtless that the progress of railroads is largely dependent upon the prosperity of agricultural interests.

Said Mr. Hill the other day in Chicago, at the convention of the American Bankers' Association:

"The idea that the United States feeds the world is being corrected; and unless we can increase the agricultural population and their product the question of a source of food supply at home will soon supersede the question of a market for our own products abroad."

"We have almost reached a point where, owing to increased population without increased production per acre, our home food supply will be insufficient for our own needs; within ten years, possibly less, we are likely to become a wheat-importing nation; the percentage of the population engaged in agriculture and the wheat product per acre are both falling; at the same time the cost of living is raised everywhere by this relative scarcity of bread, by artificial increase in the price of all manufactured articles, and by a habit of extravagance which has enlarged the view of both rich and poor of what are to be considered the necessities of life."

Undoubtedly, Mr. Hill is right when he insists that the farm is America's main reliance, and that every other activity depends largely upon it. The question for Canada to ask itself is whether its rapidly filling West is to be so cultivated as to conserve its soil-wealth, or to be "wheat-mined" year by year until the story of the older Western States repeats itself in gradually lessening average returns.



Trust & Loan Company's Building.

The Trust and Loan Company of Canada will in the near future erect a handsome six-storey office structure on the south side of St. James Street, near the corner of St. Lambert Hill. The company's commissioner, Col. L. Edye, hopes that his office staff will be able to enter their new quarters next spring. It is purposed to have the roof on before winter, so that interior work may be duly proceeded with.

The building's exterior will be of Montreal stone, and the imposing St. James Street entrance will lead to a vestibule and hall of white marble, which will separate the two main offices of the ground floor—one of which the company will occupy. Upper storeys will be conveniently fitted up for tenants, and no care will be spared in making the building fire-resistant.

The first storey will be fifteen feet high and the others eleven feet, making the total elevation from sidewalk to cornice 85 feet, with a frontage of 67 feet and a depth of 88 feet. Altogether, the building will be a most creditable addition to the growing number of notable structures that adorn Montreal's financial centre.



Of Interest to New York Agencies of Canadian Banks.

The New York agencies of leading Canadian banks play no unimportant part in sterling exchange transactions. Of direct interest to them, therefore, was a proposal made at a meeting of foreign exchange experts held in New York a week ago. Hitherto it has been the custom in the New York market to pay for foreign exchange the day after delivery, which means generally twenty-four hours after the bills are drawn. In this way a broker or importer who buys a £100,000 draft on London "for Saturday's steamer" gets his exchange on Friday and pays for it on Saturday. This delay has sometimes resulted in serious loss to the seller. Not long ago, one exchange house alone is said to have suffered a loss of \$125,000 on a single transaction—enough to wipe out the narrow margin of profits on regular business for six months or more. It is not surprising to hear that this house was among those that strongly advocated introducing the rule of cash settlement in exchange transactions. No other market gives one day grace in paying for exchange. Here in Canada, as at London, Paris, Berlin, and the other leading foreign centres, exchange is not delivered until payment is made.

The proposed change, however, is meeting strenuous opposition in New York—chiefly, it is said, from private banking firms which claim that the innovation would favour their competitors the national banks. It is to be remembered that until comparatively recently the national banks were not a factor in the foreign exchange business—there being private firms that made a specialty of such transactions. Of late, however, various new-style banks have vigorously competed in the field. Just how "cash settlements" would make their competition more serious to the private bankers is not stated. Possibly it may be in connection with cable exchange transactions. Owing to difference in London and New York time, a buyer of cable exchange might for some hours following "cash settlement" be at the mercy, so to speak, of the seller. In which circumstances there might be a tendency to patronize the regular banks and bank agencies, rather than private firms, however well established. Happily the reputation which Canadian banks enjoy in New York assures continuance of their full share in foreign exchange business.