

The Wheat Crop of the Year.

Wheat, of course, is Canada's staple agricultural product, as the wheat harvest is, so is the year graded, as good, bad or indifferent. While more or less wheat is cultivated in all the Provinces, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories are the great wheat-producing sections of the Dominion, and when the country is reasonably well filled up, and the population commensurate with the area of the country, this vast section will be the premier wheat-producing territory of the world.

The crop of 1897 was one of the best in the history of Canada, the quantity of grain exported amounting to 21,257,147 bushels, in addition to which the home market was supplied and a not inconsiderable quantity held in store. Up to the middle of September, 1898, the outlook was even more promising, a conservative estimate placing the yield in Manitoba at 30,000,000 bushels as against 18,261,950 last year, and 14,271,806 in 1896; and in the Territories at 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 bushels. But before the grain could be garnered an exceptionally long and heavy wet spell set in, and for a time it was feared that 50 per cent. of the crop would be ruined. While, at the time of writing, complete figures have not been made up, there is the best reason to believe that the crop will not fall below that of last year, moderate calculations placing the total yield of Manitoba and the Territories at from 35,000,000 to 40,000,000 bushels. Every year the acreage under wheat cultivation is rapidly increasing, and foreign demand seems to grow in at least equal ratio; the elevator accommodation now enables the farmer to hold his wheat for advancing markets, and with the improving transportation facilities and decreasing charges which each season witnesses, the outlook for the farmers of Canada's great Northwest is indeed inspiring. The total acreage under crop in Manitoba alone this past season was 2,210,942 acres, of which 1,488,232 acres were under wheat as against 1,290,882 acres last year, and 999,598 acres in 1896. While this increase is in itself, gratifying and eminently satisfactory, it must be remembered that a few years ago the farmers of Manitoba devoted almost their entire attention and energy to wheat growing, whereas to-day a vast amount of capital is invested in stock-raising and dairying. For instance, the returns show that last June there were 7,901 beef cattle in Manitoba and 74,775 milch cows, and near the close of the

season one western firm reported shipments of no less than 40,000 head to the old country. There are also 31 creameries and 35 cheese factories. While complete statistics are not available from other portions of the Dominion, where the grain industry is not of such importance, it may be safely stated that in every part of Canada the season's record will be eminently satisfactory.

The matter of our wheat supply has an additional interest this year owing to the somewhat sensational statements made by Sir William Crookes in his inaugural address as President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, at its annual meeting held in Bristol (Eng.) in September last. After quoting extensively from statistics to show, first, that both the total and the individual consumption of wheat had of late years almost universally increased, until to-day there were 516,500,000 bread-eaters, requiring 2,324,000,000 bushels of grain to feed them, and, second, that the world's supply for 1897-98 was only estimated at 1,921,000,000 bushels, there must necessarily be a deficit in the year's supply of 403,000,000 bushels. The conclusion at which the eminent scientist arrived by cold, mathematical calculation was that at the estimated rate of production, and with the present methods, the world's wheat supply would absolutely fall within the next thirty or forty years, and that to overcome this threatened catastrophe artificial means of forcing the yield must be adopted. Sir William's review of the great wheat-producing countries did not impress Canadians as being at all fair to the capabilities of the Dominion, for, having quoted a fancy figure of 500,000,000 acres of profitable wheat land, declared by "somebody" to exist in Canada, he very naturally laughed thereat, and apparently considered the matter sufficiently dealt with. The fact is, however, that, according to most conservative estimates, there are 240,000,000 acres of first-class wheat-growing land in the Dominion, of which but 8,000,000 acres are to-day under cultivation. While it is admittedly difficult for the ordinary intelligence to grasp the meaning of these huge figures, the average intellect can appreciate the fact that the limit of Canada's capacity has not been approached, much less exhausted. Sir William Van Horne, than whom no one is better qualified to speak, declares that the unoccupied wheat lands of the Northwest may be safely counted upon to afford 4,000,000,000 bushels, which