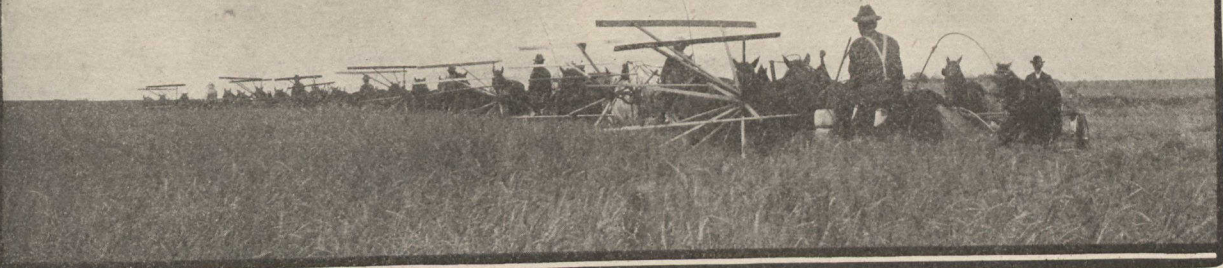


THE WESTERN WHEAT CROP of 1906



FROM 1877 until 1906 is less than three decades, and yet within that time has grown the vast wheat trade of the Canadian Northwest. The first shipment of wheat from Manitoba was made in 1877 by a firm of Winnipeg grocers, Messrs. Higgins & Young to Steele Brothers of Toronto. It consisted of 500 bushels of wheat and went in flat-bottomed boats up the Red River to near Morehead, Minnesota, in the United States, and thence by rail to Duluth and by lake and rail to Toronto.

Competent experts place the 1906 wheat crop of the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta at a little less than eighty-five million bushels. This is only an estimate, and the true amount of the crop will not be known until the season is closed. Experience, however, has shown that the grain experts of Winnipeg can very closely estimate the amount of wheat grown in the country after threshing has been completed. This year they arrived at the amount grown somewhat as follows: Given the total acreage under wheat—4,750,000 acres—and given the fact that a certain number of farms have yielded an average of between seventeen and a half and eighteen bushels of wheat to the acre, a total of a little less than 85,000,000 bushels represents the total crop.

These figures are somewhat disappointing, as at the commencement of the season predictions were made that the crop would be not less than one hundred million bushels, and might go as high as one hundred and twenty million bushels, but a wheat crop is never certain until it is threshed and in the elevator. When the final estimates were made in November it was found that the crop was not much in excess of that of 1905 which totalled 83,634,000.

There are two causes which combined to limit the yield of wheat in the Western Provinces this year. First, the crop of 1905 overtaxed the energies of the farmers, and harvesting and threshing were not completed in time to make ample preparations for seeding. Second, about the beginning of harvest there was a period of excessive heat which did much to decrease the yield.

It seems to be well determined that as the crop acreage increases, there is a decrease in the average yield per acre. Manitoba has had as high an average as twenty-seven bushels to the acre. At present eighteen to twenty bushels is considered a good average. What the average will be later on, time alone will determine. The natural supposition would be that this decrease is taking place by reason of failing fertility of the soil, but experience does not support this, since in many cases the heaviest yields this year have been from land cultivated for a considerable period. The more reasonable supposition appears to be that a considerable acreage is being cultivated by emigrants who are not properly equipped and are unaccustomed to the ways of the country.

Harvesting was commenced in the last week of July and the first car of wheat reached Winnipeg from Dominion City on August 20th. Dominion City is in Southern Manitoba about twelve miles north of the Dakota boundary line. It would naturally be expected that wheat would ripen earlier in Southern Manitoba than farther North, but this is not always the case. In the year 1900 the first car of new wheat exhibited in Winnipeg came from the district of Saskatoon, in the Province of Saskatchewan, fully two hundred and seventy miles north of the boundary line.

It is interesting to know that the farmers of the West are not confining their attention entirely to wheat-growing. This year thirty-five per cent. of the land under cultivation in the Province of Manitoba was under other crops. Barley is commencing to be grown extensively, and experience has shown its culture to be well suited to the conditions of the prairie country. Breweries have been established in the West and are creating a good local demand, while shipments are being made to the Eastern markets.

Oats are now becoming a not insignificant crop and in 1906 more than twenty per cent. of the acreage under cultivation in the Province of Manitoba was devoted to this crop. The immense railway construction taking



The Wheat Fields of the Prairie in Western Canada.