

POTASH NOT KNOWN IN EAST

(Continued from Page 1.)
consumed annually about 250,000 tons of K2O, at a cost to the consumers of approximately \$16,000,000. Ninety per cent of this went into fertilizers, of which the greater part was used in the cotton fields. This consumption in the United States was reduced in 1917 to about 25,000 tons.

Composition of Lake Brines.
"The strong water in the Nebraska lake is called brine. Two things stand out prominently in determining value of branes, viz., the percentage of absolute salts and the percentage of K2O in the salts. The brines contain compounds principally of potassium and sodium, and traces of magnesium, calcium, iron, etc. The compounds are principally sulphates, carbonates and chlorides. The relative amounts of sodium and potassium vary considerably in the potash region, and there is a yet wider range if the lakes of the whole sand hill country are considered.

By the percentage of potash is meant the per cent in the water or in the solids of the water. For example a brine running 16 per cent solids and 28 per cent of that as potash (K2O) would be reported: potash, 28 or as potash, 4.44. Both these are correct, but they refer in the one case to the solids and in the other to the water and salts combined.

Under a refining process such as two of the Nebraska plants are installing these other chemicals, now resourced in eastern chemical works, will be extracted. At present prices their value is greater than potash, and is thus one bulwark against German competition after the war."

There is one monopoly long enjoyed by Germany, one which, it was hoped by all cohorts of the kaiser, could be used as a most powerful lever in opening up renewed commerce with the world after the war is over. This is the monopoly of potash.

There are two fields under German control wherein are contained the greatest known deposits of natural potash. These deposits are in Prussia and in Alsace-Lorraine. For many years the production and refining of potash has been strictly under government control. About one hundred companies in Germany prior to the war operated the potash plants. All were under government direction and these concerns constituted a magnificent syndicate which virtually controlled the supply of potash used in agriculture and in the other industries. Only one-half of the potash prepared for commerce was allowed to be exported, the other half retained being wholly utilized in agriculture and in the manufacture in encies ruled by the kaiser.

One German Club in the Discard
Some of the most noted among the German scientists, and the other cultured and foresighted ones in the International affairs of the Fatherland, have confidently believed, and have expressed freely their convictions that this great German monopoly, if nothing else, would force the entente powers to most favorable terms of peace from the German viewpoint. They reasoned and argued that by cutting off the supply of potash the industrial world would be seriously hampered in scores of most important and necessary pursuits.

But these scientists and wily statesmen know not—and they did not know they knew not—that in the United States vast deposits of potash were available, and only needed such a calamity as the present war to set into motion American enterprise and genius for the development and the utilization of these great supplies of

potash which nature has provided. United States the Kaiser's Good Customer

"Necessity is the mother" of the potash industry in the United States. Prior to the breaking out of the war Germany supplied approximately 90 per cent of the potash used throughout the world. How great has been the demand for this essential element in the United States is shown by the figures from the Census Bureau reports and the statistics supplied by the Department of Commerce. The United States for years has been one of Germany's best patrons in so far as potash is considered. In 1913 201,220 tons of muriate of potash and 42,745 tons of sulphate of potash were imported into the country. The total potash in various forms which we purchased from Germany that year was valued at \$1,929,124. In 1916 our total importations of potash amounted to 4,553 tons, valued at \$1,007,228.

From a price of \$39 a ton, sea board in America, in December, 1913, there was an advance to \$500 a ton in December, 1915. No wonder such advance in price of a commodity that a civilized country must have greatly stimulated search for supplies of potash in this country. It is one of the most necessary things in American industries. It is an essential in hundreds of trades. It had been a commodity so cheap that there was no inclination for Americans to make serious effort to produce it in a commercial way. In fact in the Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1915 no mention is made of the production of potash in this country. Even though the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Soils have made exhaustive reports on minerals and other things under the jurisdiction of these government bureaus, little data had been gathered up to 1915 of the potash resources of the country.

Passed Up With Few Words
In the Year Book of the department of Agriculture for 1915, the statement is made: "There are four possible domestic sources of potash: The giant kelp of the Pacific coast from lower California to Alaska; the alunite deposits, mainly in the mountains of Utah; the feldspathic rocks of the eastern part of the United States and the mud of Searles Lake in California."

In the Agriculture Department report issued in 1916, in an article by Frederick W. Brown, assistant in charge of investigation of fertilizer resources, Bureau of Soils, further reference is made to the sources of potash, and for the first time official recognition is given to the potash lakes of Nebraska, which were at that time being utilized in a modest way, and which were passed upon with the statement: "While the size of these lakes precludes the possibility of their ever furnishing a large supply of potash, it is to be hoped that the operators will succeed in perfecting their process so as to be able to continue production upon a return of normal conditions."

Private Research Rewarded
If the clever scientists in charge of our geological investigations knew so little about the existence of potash in this country, it appears that the Germans should know still less. But facts are that in the United States are vast deposits of potash, great fields which have been hardly investigated, and as private researches proceed the vastness and the value of these deposits are becoming known.

In the Sand Hills of Nebraska
During the past year the so-called sand hill country of Nebraska has

been producing about two-thirds of all potash produced in the United States. Nebraska's potash resources are enormous. The field extends from the North Platte river in the western central part of the state to the Niobrara and the Long Pine. These deposits are in the hundreds of small lakes located in the sand hills, principally in Sheridan, Gordon and Cherry counties. Of these lakes there are approximately 700, all of them carrying potash, and about 100 which have been tested run from five to nine per cent, carbonate of potash. The lakes range in size from 15 to 300 and 400 acres. The deposits of potash in these lake beds run from eight to 20 feet in depth.

Crop of New Millionaires
Already some of the pioneers who less than three years ago started in the potash business in these fields, and in a modest way, are rated as millionaires. Three exclusive potash have been built up, and nearly a thousand hands are employed in the industry, which is the newest in America, and the permanency of which seems a certainty.

The story of oil, of gold or any other like discovery is not more interesting than that of potash in the Nebraska fields; and the story of potash in the United States is now only in its first chapter, and no doubt the subsequent ones will be fully as interesting.

Accursed Lakes Turned to Blessings
For years and years the "alkali" lakes of the Nebraska sand hills, now so valuable for the potash they contain, were considered worse than worthless, in fact a nuisance to be avoided. From their waters cattle wouldn't drink, nor would hogs wallow in them; they were even avoided by the flocks of wild ducks passing over them, and apparently their only redeeming features was that they were never the breeding places of mosquitoes. They were the curse of the homesteader, the bane of the cattle and the shepman and thoroughly damned by every thirsty man.

Golden Opportunities Passed Up
A few years ago when the Kinkaid homestead law was enacted, hundreds of homeseekers rushed into the sand-hills hoping that on the 640 acres allowed them they could, raise a little stock and manage to build a home. Many of these homesteaders found part of their claims covered by the alkali lakes. Many of them after a year or two abandoned their claims.

One of these Kinkaiders some day will come to a realization, if he has not already experienced it, that he passed up the one great opportunity of his life. He fled on a section in the southern part of Sheridan county. Three hundred acres of his claim was covered with one of these abominable alkali lakes, a shallow, no-good patch of water wherein the stitmost kind of fish could not be found. He cursed his misfortune, he condemned the country as he would the infernal regions, and picked up stakes and moved to parts not known. His departure was just at the time when it was quietly whispered about that these alkali lakes contained potash. His abandoned claim was "jumped" by a man who was looking for just what it contained, and today the condemned lake is giving up daily several hundred dollars worth of potash, and most conservative potash experts estimate that there is still to be taken out of the once-considered no-good shallow puddle. This man is only one of the many who have missed out in the alkali country.

An Unknown Gift to Hefers
A prominent Nebraska cattleman, now dead, some years ago purchased

a 4000-acre ranch, paying \$32,000 for it. After he bought it he discovered that it included a 100-acre lake. He asked a rebate of \$100 from the man from whom he purchased it. It was not given. Today the heirs of the cattleman are operating a potash reduction plant and estimate that the lake contains more than a million dollars worth of potash.

Rapid Building of Potash Towns
This is only a fragment of the history of potash in America. The future will disclose the rest. In the meantime great plants are running night and day and other mammoth plants are being built. The three potash towns of the Nebraska sand-hills are Hoffland, the first one where potash was gathered in a small way; Lakeside, which for years was a cattleloading station on the Burlington railroad, and Antioch where two large refineries are running and other ones being built. At Lakeside, a company which was put out of the brewing business at Omaha by the state prohibitory amendment, is building an immense plant and utilizing the machinery which it formerly used in making beer. This plant represents an expenditure of more than \$200,000.

Sand Hills Potash Production
One authority on fertilizers writing on the subject of potash makes the statement that in 1917 the total output of potash was approximately 15,000 tons, and this is mainly credited to the utilization of the Pacific kelp beds, the Searles Lake and the Nebraska alkali lakes. The fact is that of crude potash Nebraska alone produced approximately 62,600 tons. From Hoffland, the pioneer potash town of the United States, there were shipped 718 car loads during 1917; from Antioch, 496 car loads and from Lakeside, 351 car loads. With an average of 40 tons to the car the tonnage stated is derived at. The price of potash is about \$5 per unit. The concentrates from the Nebraska fields run about 28 per cent which brings the product to a value of \$140 a ton. Thus it can be easily estimated that the potash industry enriched Nebraska about \$8,764,000 in 1917.

Potash Not a Pike's Game
The potash game is a big one. While the pioneers in it had little capital, it has advanced so that now it requires hundreds of thousands of dollars to engage in it with any assurance of success. The wooden stave pipe lines which must be used for the conveyance of the water from the lakes is expensive costing more than \$3,500 a mile. A reducing plant cannot be well built for less than \$150,000. At Antioch a plant will soon be completed representing an investment of a half million dollars.

Still a Baby Industry
Some men now in the potash industry a few years ago would feel rich had they a hundred dollars cash. Today they are trying to decide what they can best do with their incomes ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 a day. Still the industry is in swaddling clothes. In the bad lands of South Dakota, in North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming and other western states as far as Oregon are lakes similar to the lakes in the Nebraska bad lands. These lakes are now attracting attention. They mean that forever the United States is independent of Germany insofar as potash is concerned. Even though the wise ones in the Geological Survey and other bureaus in Washington have had their eyes closed and made a lot of guess work be accepted as facts, the potash industry promises to thrive. Soon as private enterprise proves the greatness of this particular industry there will be voluminous "official" reports it promises to equal Wyoming oil in this regard.

Potash has never been of sufficient importance in the United States to appeal as being worthy of any special legislation for the regulation of its production. But there has been a sudden change, and astute men among the national lawmakers have turned their attention toward it.

Will There Be a Monopoly Like in Germany
Perhaps some people have heard of or read about the Walsh-Pittman bill recently passed by the Senate, and now lingering before the House. This bill is to "encourage and promote the mining of coal, phosphate, oil, gas, potassium and sodium on the public domain." Note the intent of the measure, then look up in the Congressional Record the amendments to the original drafted bill! There is plenty specific changes as to oil and coal, but strange as it may seem, considering the importance of potash just now, there is not a single modification as to phosphate and potassium. Let it be hoped that the bill will encourage the potash industry. Let it also be hoped that this most promising industry will not become a monopoly like some others in similar commodities. The provision of the Walsh-Pittman bill are most liberal, and provide for the leasing by the Government of mineral and oil-producing lands in tracts not to exceed 2,560 acres to any individual or corporation.

Fake Promoters Not Yet in Evidence
So far the potash business has been free from "wildcatting" but its rainbow-like Lues will attract the wily promoters, and we will soon have numerous fool-seekers and blue-sky artists in the limelight, and the tales of great fortunes made quickly in potash will be played up in the most interesting style of the sure-t-ing operator. In the interim the ones who

were venturesome enough to start in the game will keep gathering in the dollars. Fortunately they have been not stock peddlers, but legitimate pioneers, level-headed men whose foresight and enterprise merits the success they have attained. It will be interesting to watch the progress of the potash industry in our own country—an industry that gives a heavy blow to German ambitions.

Soap as Germ Destroyer.
Lately medical science has been trying to find out to what degree the chemical action of soap can be depended upon as a destroyer of germs. Professor Symes, after experimenting with many varieties of soap, declares that "all soaps possess antiseptic properties in some degree, and that any germs rubbed into soap or dropped upon its surface are not capable of multiplication."



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