

THE FARMER WILL PROSPER

Natural Conditions are Solving the Problem of Over Production.

PRICES HAVE REACHED THE BOTTOM

An Interesting Array of Facts and Figures Full of Encouragement for the Tiller of the Soil.

The Farmer Will Be Prosperous.

The absence of prosperity among farmers, writes C. Wood Davis in the Forum for May, is largely due to excessive production of the staple products. Such being the cause of the difficulties that beset the farmer, it is desirable to ascertain whether the conditions essential to prosperity can be restored, either by government intervention or by the operation of natural laws.

A measure of relief would be had were a stop put to the dealing in options for farm products, were the rates for transportation always just and reasonable, and were the conditions of the market controlled over the pieces of cattle and other farm products.

That time will readjust the disturbed relations between production and consumption, is as certain as that population will continue to increase. The farmer can hope for prosperity only when domestic consumption shall absorb nearly all his products; but in order to show how and when this will be brought about, it must first be known how much present production is in excess of home requirements.

Assuming the population to be now 65,000,000, with the area in cereals producing average crops and current consumption 15 per cent greater per capita than in the five years ending in 1874, present supplies are in excess of population as follows: Corn for 5,500,000 people, wheat for 14,000,000, cattle for 6,000,000 and swine for 11,000,000. Shortage of population continues to increase. Shortage of production not increase more than seems probable, home requirements will absorb all the food products before the end of the century.

During the last five years population has increased 13.7 per cent, the area in corn 12.8-10, that in oats 23, cattle 20 and swine 14, with a decrease of 3-4-10 per cent in the wheat area. Seven-tenths of such increase in the corn area occurred in the first two years, indicating that the increase in corn growing is nearing its end. That such is the case will be seen when an inquiry is made into the present sources of supply, and we compare the present rate of increase and distribution of areas with those obtaining in preceding periods as set forth in the following table:

ACREAGE OF CORN AND ITS GEOGRAPHICAL INCREASE.

Table with 5 columns: Groups of States, Corn Acreage 1874, Corn Acreage 1879, Corn Acreage 1884, Corn Acreage 1889. Rows include North Atlantic, Lake, Missouri Valley, Southern, Arkansas and Texas, Mountain and Pacific Coast, and Totals.

The increase in the corn area during the last three years has been but 1.2 per cent per annum, as against 4.1 per cent in the two preceding years.

Corn-growing is apparently approaching its limit, the increase of acreage having ceased in the coast region, extending from Maine to Maryland, and in the lake group, which includes such states as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In the states of the Missouri valley—Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas—the increase of corn acreage has nearly doubled in the five years ending in 1879, and the reduction in the rate of increase shows that the quantity of new land being devoted to this crop is less than formerly. This is the scene of the excessive expansion in corn growing which flooded the markets, depressing prices to the present unprecedented level; yet in this district the corn acreage has nearly reached its limit, settlement having passed beyond the corn belt and partially overrun the arid plains where corn culture is impracticable, except upon such limited areas as can be irrigated.

The average acreage of corn in the states of the Missouri valley, in Arkansas and Texas, and in that portion of the Indian Territory lying east of the 95th meridian. It is safe to say that the Indian Territory will not produce any considerable surplus, but will, by the end of the century, have two or three million acres employed in growing corn, which will not compensate for losses in areas east of the Mississippi.

The tendency of the present very low prices will be to contract the Texas in corn wherever the land can be otherwise employed at the south, in fact, the production of cotton—and some expansion of the wheat fields in the northern localities.

This review of the area of corn production leads to the conclusion that the acreage devoted to this staple will be reduced to a small extent as far higher prices shall render profitable the cultivation of soils of very low fertility; and it is not likely to exceed 80,000,000 acres within five years. Careful computation of the extent of the exportation of animals and animal products, now and fifteen years hence, shows the increase in such exports to be equal to an additional one bushel of corn per capita; and what with the increased exportation of corn in this form and the employment in the manufacture of various forms of glucose and as a substitute for Canadian and home-grown barley, a moderate estimate would put the per capita requirements at not less than 15 per cent above the amount consumed prior to 1875.

With consumption at the rate of twenty-eight bushels per capita, an average yield from 80,000,000 acres would supply 2,240,000,000 bushels, which we may expect to see as soon as the year 1890.

In the North Atlantic group the increase in acreage was constant until 1880, thereafter giving place to a material diminution. The additions to the acreage in the lake states were very great until 1880, thereafter a decrease began, the loss now amounting to 2,599,738 acres. In the states of the Missouri valley, exclusive of the Dakotas, the enlargement of the area within five years ending in 1881, when a sharp corner was turned, the wheat fields of this district having since shrunk 3,088,300 acres. The southern states, including Arkansas and Texas, show a moderate increase from 1875 to 1884, but a loss of 588,708 acres in the last five years, now employed in cotton fields.

There occurred a rapid increase in the wheat area of the three Pacific states prior to 1884, since which time the increase has been less than 1 per cent, and a rapid decrease began, the loss now amounting to 2,599,738 acres. In the states of the Missouri valley, exclusive of the Dakotas, the enlargement of the area within five years ending in 1881, when a sharp corner was turned, the wheat fields of this district having since shrunk 3,088,300 acres. The southern states, including Arkansas and Texas, show a moderate increase from 1875 to 1884, but a loss of 588,708 acres in the last five years, now employed in cotton fields.

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This exhibit shows that in seven years 2,758,000 acres of the corn fields and 2,296,340 acres of the wheat fields of the states named were converted into other uses, while 502,065 acres of the new land brought into cultivation, the remainder of the new land, amounting to 1,555,962 acres, being employed in the production of rice, oats, barley, buckwheat, potatoes and tobacco.

Like conversions of old fields and employment of new ones are continually occurring in all districts, outside of the Dakotas and the mountains and Pacific areas, and must greatly reduce the production of wheat; and such action is likely to be greatly intensified, as the quantity of new land being brought under cultivation is rapidly diminishing, as will be shown further on.

The following table shows the number and geographical distribution of cattle in the years 1880, 1885 and 1889:

Table with 5 columns: Groups of States, Number 1880, Number 1885, Number 1889, Per cent increase. Rows include North Atlantic, Lake, Missouri Valley, Southern, Arkansas and Texas, Mountain and Pacific Coast, and Totals.

*Includes cattle in the Indian Territory not reported by the department of agriculture. †That cattle are too scarce and are being greatly in excess of requirements, is incontrovertible; and it is equally true that the increase has, of late years, been almost wholly in the Missouri valley and the range regions, where cattle subsist, winter and summer, upon the untaxed grass of the public domain.

Much can be found in the table to indicate that the increase has become very slow if, it has not virtually ceased, especially in the Atlantic, lake and southern groups; and this becomes the more apparent when it is known that of the increase shown in these three districts, amounting to 641,677 animals, no less than 541,000 were kept for dairy purposes. In Iowa, Arkansas and Nebraska the increase in all grades of cattle, from 1885 to 1889, was 546,443, of which 411,308 were milk cows, and the remainder 135,135. Practically the only increase, since 1885, in cattle other than such as are kept for dairy purposes, has been in the range country, where the increase has been great, and statistics fail to show that it has ceased.

Throughout the greater part of the range country the valleys are being occupied by farmers, thus forcing the cattle men and their herds away from the water and compelling removal to other pastures. This crowding-out process has been going on year after year, and has greatly restricted the available pastures. Moreover, many ranges have been so overstocked as to destroy the grass, which has been replaced by a worthless growth of weeds.

The severe storms of the winter of 1886-87 were disastrous to the herds on the range, destroying great numbers of cows and younger animals; and such losses will now be felt in finishing supplies of steers from the districts. Financial distress among the owners of range cattle has been extreme, forcing the marketing of every possible animal, old or young, and forcing the rate of increase in such herds. Indeed, many entire herds have been shipped to market as fast as transportation could be had. This is especially true in the Indian Territory. Such excessive marketing has made the supply appear even more abundant than it is.

During the last four years, cattle increased 16.4 per cent, an average of 4.1 per cent per annum; but most of this increase was in the first two years of the period, and in the last two years being but 2.4 per cent per annum. Here we see, for the first time in many years, a lower rate of increase than in any other cattle-raising district, and a troublesome surplus until the remote day when equatorial Africa shall enter the market with abundant supplies. It is impracticable to constantly diminish the conditions accompanying the production and marketing of a portion of the staple farm crops, when or how the desired prosperity can be attained, but we can doubtless do so when we review, as a whole, the field wherein all the great agricultural staples are grown.

If the present increase in acreage were in the same ratio to population as in the five years previous to 1880, the annual additions to the area under plow would exceed 12,000,000 acres.

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starvation point. The Dakotas and the mountain and Pacific regions include the only areas where the wheat acreage does not show a diminution; and in these districts the gain is not likely to equal the losses elsewhere, as the wheat fields have already invaded the arid regions where crop failure is the rule. Indeed, competent authorities declare that profitable wheat culture is impossible without irrigation in the Dakotas, or in the British possessions which have recently reached the western slopes of the Cascade mountains. Notwithstanding the great additions to the area in the Dakotas, the wheat fields of 1889 covered 1,352,029 acres less than did those of 1884, and were but 137,142 acres greater than those of nine years before. As there are no more Dakotas to be explored, wheat-growing has evidently reached and passed its limit, and exportation will grow less and less until domestic requirements shall absorb our entire product of this cereal. That such will soon be the case follows from the complete occupation of the winter wheat area, where other crops are constantly encroaching upon wheat fields in the spring. Wheat-growing in the Dakotas; and even there the fields longest cropped show clear signs of exhaustion, and must be recuperated by a system of rotation which will prevent any material addition to the wheat supply.

Speculators in Canadian lands and politics have reiterated the wild statements about an area unlimited in extent and fertility and capable of supplying the world with wheat, lying far below north of the national boundary. The wheat-growing in the spring, where profitable wheat culture is possible, in Manitoba and the Assiniboine region, is indicated in a tract less than 300 miles from east and west, and extending north less than one hundred miles. This Canadian wheat region has been settled many years, but the settlement is very limited, as is shown in the following extract from the Montreal Star, of January 9, 1890:

W. W. O'Leary is on his way back from Manitoba and the northwest, after having practiced practically all the western Canadian wheat crop. The securing of the O'Leary mill company was not such a big job as might be thought. It took but \$1,000,000 to acquire it, which is a small sum. There is unquestionably a fine wheat region north of the state of Washington, but much of it is now being occupied by the great forest growths before much wheat can be produced. When our population is such as to require more wheat, limited additions to the acreage can be made by subjecting to cultivation so much of plain and mountain as is susceptible of irrigation; but increase from such irrigated lands will be slow, even if the national government unwise commits itself to costly irrigation schemes.

We must not wait, however, till complete equilibrium has been reached between domestic consumption for a return of fair prices, as Great Britain alone requires 150,000,000 bushels of wheat annually for home consumption. The present surplus of wheat is being sold at a price which is not remunerative, and the requirements are steadily augmenting. While a few years since it was widely predicted that the unlimited capacity of India to produce wheat would create a market for our surplus, but these predictions have failed as completely as the assurances that India would furnish the world with all the wheat required. Not that the requirements are increasing annually at the rate of 10,000,000 bushels, and our demand being made against a constantly diminishing supply abroad. That our supplies of wheat will steadily diminish is clearly indicated by the constant decrease in all districts other than those of the Dakotas, mountain areas and Pacific states, such diminution during the last five years being at the rate of 12.1 per cent, or an annual loss of 4,314,291 acres, which is 1,352,025 acres more than the increase, in the same period, in the Dakotas, and in the mountain and Pacific regions. The present surplus of wheat is being sold at a price which is not remunerative, and the requirements are steadily augmenting.

Upon the assumption that the requirements are now such as to employ 3.15 acres per capita, and that the population of the United States in 1890 will be 65,000,000, we can doubtless do so when we review, as a whole, the field wherein all the great agricultural staples are grown.

During the fourteen years prior to 1885, the increase in cultivated area was so great that, after assigning the required 3.15 acres to each unit of population, there remained a surplus of 20,248,000 acres, which was employed in growing products to gut home and foreign markets.

Fortunately the arable lands to be occupied had become so very limited that the increase in cultivated area was so great that, after assigning the required 3.15 acres to each unit of population, there remained a surplus of 20,248,000 acres, which was employed in growing products to gut home and foreign markets.

No doubt the average American could subsist upon the products of less than three acres as he did prior to 1874, but it is very certain he does not, nor will he until prices are much higher; neither is it probable that the average yield per acre of the staple crops will increase until a deficit supply shall necessitate improved modes of culture. Should the American people continue to require the product of 3.15 acres each, that, after 1883, necessitate yearly additions of 6,000,000 acres to the area employed in growing staple crops as well as great quantities of land to furnish the additional dairy, orchard and minor products required by the growing population.

her how thoroughly the arable soils are occupied and that for years the annual additions have been less than three million acres. If our computation of the area required per capita be correct, and if the department of agriculture has not underestimated the area employed in growing the staple crops, domestic consumption will absorb the entire product of cereals, potatoes and hay within five years from January, 1890, and thereafter agricultural exports will cease almost wholly, the volume of which will shrink as constantly, if not in the same degree, as home consumption increases. An equalization of the supply of the various staples will readily follow from the application of corn and wheat fields to the growth of such products as corn, fruit, etc., and in most urgent demand. Meantime prices will steadily advance.

To most people it would probably appear strange that the increase in the last ten years may be found necessary to import large quantities of wheat to feed the ever-increasing population; but such will be the logical sequence of the success of employing wheat fields in the growth of other staples, and of the exhaustion of the material from which such staples are made.

Assuming the substantial correctness of the estimates of area by the department of agriculture, and that home requirements will be such as to employ three acres per capita, the answer to the question, When will the farmer be prosperous? resolves itself into a calculation as simple as the following:

Table with 3 columns: Acres, Acres, Acres. Rows include January, 1890, population, 72,000,000 will require in 1890, 230,800,000, Area now employed in growing staple crops, 211,000,000, such area in four years, 22,000,000, 223,000,000, Acreage deficit, Jan., 1890, 3,800,000.

This deficit should be sufficient to neutralize any possible underestimate of the area now in cultivation. Does not the evidence adduced show that before this decade is half spent all the products of the farm will be required at good prices, that lands will gain in value, and that the American farmer will enter upon an era of prosperity, the unlimited success of which is assured by the exhaustion of arable areas?

WE HEARD PATTI. Leon Mead in the Epoch: Though a resident of Philadelphia, I pride myself upon being a somewhat lively, go-ahead chap. But that is not what I intended to say. A fortnight ago I was regretting, as I had been doing for many years, two doleful actualities—that I had never heard Patti, in a spasm of impulsive self-reproach, I resolved to see New York and hear the "diva."

Thereupon I went to my club to have a consultation with my faithful comrade, Rodney Chumplet. He said he would like to take in Patti, but he had been to New York often and didn't care to extend his explorations in that cosmopolitan settlement. We, therefore, agreed that I should precede him to New York on Monday, March 31, in order to be in time to get seats for the matinee performance of "Martha" on April 5. He assured me that he would join me in New York on Friday, April 4.

Well, I reached New York on the Monday in question and two hours after my arrival, I purchased two tickets for Patti at the news stand of the hotel where I stopped. They cost me \$6 apiece. But that was nothing, I had plenty of money and I wanted to hear Patti. Meanwhile, before that ambition could be gratified, there were several days allowed me to see New York—to paint it red in water colors, as it were—being a votary of glib abstention. I saw in those several days all of Gotham that I could stand, and if I should have been obliged to see more I should have had to do so sitting down—as I was quite tired.

I did not expect it, but he did it. On April 5th, the day he telegraphed me that unavoidable business called him west at once. He was to start for Omaha within an hour.

There I was left with \$6 worth of Patti's voice to dispose of. I didn't know a soul in New York. I thought it was a shame that Rodney was not going to be with me, but I found consolation in the possibility that before the matinee day came I might manufacture a friend to whom I could, with casual and fascinating manner, offer the other seat. I realized, however, that I could not safely trust chance to fish up a proper companion for myself. So, with my usual unerring ingenuity, I hit upon the gallant scheme of advertising for a female to whom an unprotected young man to hear Patti—for the first time. But the personal which appeared in a New York daily the next morning read like this:

ness of demeanor that was truly refreshing. "You desire a young lady to accompany you to hear Patti," she remarked very simply and in well modulated tones as she seated herself on the crash-covered divan.

"Yes," I replied, with a simplicity that surpassed even her own. "Have you ever heard her?"

"No," she answered in a warmer tone. "Patti was going to take me when she was on her former farewell visit, but he was killed on the railroad and so was obliged to give up the idea."

"Are you fond of music?"

"Oh, I should smile," Miss Williamson responded gaily. "I play on the melodeon myself."

That settled. Winifred in my estimation and I told her I would let her know if I decided to take her. She smirked quite joyfully, left me her address and then left herself.

The next applicant was much taller and more rounded. Had her cheeks been as deeply bronzed as was her hair she would have been taken for an Egyptian belle.

She opened the conversation by saying: "I never seem Patti, but I want to see her just the same. If you want me to go with you I can say my folks won't object. They're buried over in the Gen Covert cemetery."

"Thanks," said I, seeing at once her lack of culture. "You have just made a selection. You have come a trifle too subsequently."

She bit her lip, called me something terrible under her onion breath and shuffled out of the room, a disappointed wretch.

Then came a different type of womanhood—a woman fully forty years of age. She was a brunette, by no means ugly, with eyes gleaming like stars.

"I know you prefer blondes, but that does not deter me from coming. I should love to hear Patti, but my gentlemanly friends can only afford to take me to Miner's and Worth's. Will you be so kind as to favor me—this once?"

A slight nausea seized upon me. I told her to wend her way homeward and leave me to my fate. She did.

A very beautiful girl then came in. She was daintily dressed and her face was as doll-like as Lillian Russell's. She never had heard Patti, but she was not asked to do so.

"Where do you live?" I breathlessly asked.

"On Fifth avenue," she said.

"And you have never seen Patti?"

"Never," she said honestly.

"Then," said I, "overwhelmed by her loveliness, 'you shall go with me.'"

She was to call for her at the address she gave me. The other names and cards that came up to me that day, and for the three following days, I paid no attention to.

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Lincoln's Berks County Ancestry. In connection with the recent anniversary of the assassination of President Lincoln it is interesting to observe that while it is a well-authenticated fact Lincoln's ancestry went from Berks county, this state, to Virginia, prior to their settling in Kentucky, it was Jesse W. Fell, who removed from the adjoining county of Lancaster to Illinois, who became one of Lincoln's closest friends and advisers, says the Reading [Pa.] Times. It was at Fell's request that Lincoln penned his only autobiography in which this sentence appears: "The ancestors of my paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks county, Pennsylvania." Abraham Lincoln, a direct descendant of this family, is now a prosperous Lancaster county farmer, living in Carraon township, which adjoins the Berks county district, whence the martyred president's ancestors hailed. Jesse W. Fell, to whom the work is indebted for the brief autobiography of Lincoln, lived to be a very old man, dying within a year or two of Normal, Ill. He was related to the Fell family of Berks county, to which Judge Fell of the Philadelphia courts belongs.

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