



Threshing in an Argentine Wheat Field

The Great Argentine Wheat Mystery

By James McAnsh

THE Argentine Republic has in recent years been in the forefront of world agriculture, particularly as an exporter of wheat, but never has it played so important a part in the international wheat market as during the past year. Harvesting a record crop of approximately 320,000,000 bus from 20,500,000 acres sown in the early months of 1928, the republic found itself at the beginning of 1929 with a surplus of about 234,000,000 bus, after allowing for seed for the new crop and human consumption for the year. Such a quantity of surplus wheat in a country lacking in storage facilities or organized marketing methods quickly reflected in world markets, especially since Canada, the United States and Australia had also harvested very large crops. The latter countries were able through their excellent elevator systems to control the flow of their grain to world markets, but Argentina, not so organized, had no alternative but to ship its wheat as it arrived in steady volume at the various ports.

Sold at Large Discounts

THE South American grain, being of excellent quality as compared with the frost damaged crop of western Canada and the irregular quality of United States wheat, became popular with importers, and under a system of marketing that practically left price making in the hands of the buyers it sold at very large discounts under North American wheat. Throughout the year it flowed uninterruptedly toward the bins of British and European millers, and in the latter part of the season 1928-29 both Canada and the United States had been practically driven out of the European export trade.

The growing importance of the Argentine Republic, particularly in relation to the wheat export trade of North America, is something in which every wheat producer in the United States and Canada is vitally interested. Here is their strongest competitor in world markets for the sale of an evergrowing wheat surplus, and a country which in the past has been more or less obliged to sell its wheat irrespective of price or return to the grower, because it lacked organized marketing methods.

Comparatively little is known on this continent of the actual farming conditions in Argentina, and the time seems opportune to reveal some of the information that has been gathered relative to growing and

handling methods on the farms and the rural economic conditions of the country. Some very interesting data were collected by W. J. Jackman who, as special representative of the Canadian Wheat Pool, made a three months' tour of Argentina and through his knowledge of the Spanish language was able to gather first-hand information on general conditions. Mr. Jackman has been the pool representative in Argentina for the past three years, and speaks with authority.

In farming methods, allowing for the difference in climatic conditions, he found little difference from those

in vogue in the United States and western Canada, with implements of a similar nature in use. Practically no summer fallowing is done, and the land is never idle, maize usually serving the purpose of a cleaning crop, or in districts unsuitable to the growing of maize, oats, barley or alfalfa being used as a change for wheat. The reaper-thresher has come into extensive use within recent years, the one adopted being similar to that in use in Australia. It is used for wheat only, the other crops being cut with an ordinary binder.

Farmers handle all their wheat in bags, the only bulk handling being done at the loading ports. Each bag contains about 140 lbs of wheat or, roughly, two and one third bushels, and about 200,000,000 of these bags are said to be used annually. There are very few granaries or other storage facilities on the farms, and most of the wheat is hauled direct to the railway stations immediately it is threshed. The farmer himself does not usually haul the grain, this being done by "traperos," or carters, who make a business of freighting, for which they are provided with huge wagons, of strong and heavy construction, drawn by from 10 to 20 horses and loaded with 100 to 200 bags of wheat, according to the condition of the roads.

A Short Grain Haul

A NETWORK of railways serves the grain growing areas, and most farms are within reasonable distance of steel, with the average haul from the farm to the railway station probably not more than 10 miles. The railway companies are required to provide galpons or warehouses at the stations in which grain may be stored free of charge if no railway cars are available. These galpons are naturally quickly filled at threshing time, and are liable to be monopolized by merchants to the exclusion of the actual farmer, who is obliged to pile his sacks of wheat on the ground, or rent planchados and canvases from the dealers and exporters, to protect his grain from dampness above and below, unless he disposes of it right away.

The unloading from the wagons is done by laborers called "tanteros," working in gangs, at the expense of the farmer, who pays for his grain to be moved from the wagon to the scales, weighed, and moved then from the scales to the galpon, or planchados, and subsequently from the galpon or planchados to the railway cars when such become avail- (Continued on page 51.)



Typical Small Argentine Farm House and Buildings, Thatched Roof Here Taking the Place of the Usual Corrugated Iron



In Contrast, the Home of an Estanciero, or Estate Owner, a Member of the Class That Owns Most of Argentina's Farm Lands