PROBLEMS OF THE WHEAT CROP.¹

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With a production of nearly a billion bushels of wheat in the United States in 1914, and a price of $1.60 per bushel at present in Chicago, it might well be supposed that the wheat crop in this country has no problems. It is the natural course, however, that expansion and depression shall follow each other in any industry, and it is exactly at the height of prosperity when we must be on our guard in preparation for the corresponding period of depression certain to follow sooner or later.

Already there are indications that wheat growing will be attempted next spring in places and under circumstances very unusual, with reckless disregard of adaptation or facilities for market. One man proposes to sow spring wheat in Virginia, another wishes to try durum wheat in Kansas. Virginia is in no sense a spring wheat State, while in Kansas the hard winter wheat probably is too well established to justify the sowing of durum wheat in spite of the premium in price of the latter, though durum is fairly well adapted in the northwestern counties.

The scarcity of good seed, also, is already being felt. This condition will become serious before spring seeding time. The temptation at prevailing prices to sell, beyond the limit of seed reserve is too great. Even to date, it appears that many have not resisted and others yet will yield, it is to be feared, before the winter is over. The probability of still higher prices for the next crop should be considered. The farmer who disposes of his reserve may be killing the goose that lays the golden egg. He should look out especially for durum wheat seed, where that wheat is adapted, as the pressure for selling it is particularly great because of the premium it commands, and there is need of a larger production of this wheat next year.

¹ During the winter months, a lecture is delivered weekly by some official of the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture; before the scientific staff of the Bureau. The present paper, one of these "Bureau Lectures," was presented by Mr. Carleton on February 13, 1915.