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9.—*Le blé et les céréales*. Par Daniel Zolla, Professeur à l'Ecole de Grignon, 1909, &c. 298 pp., sm. 8vo. Paris, 8 place de l'Odéon : O. Doin et fils, Editeurs.

This volume forms one of a series of publications now being issued as sections of the *Encyclopédie Scientifique*; a project of great magnitude and intended to embrace in the aggregate no less than 1,000 volumes grouped under 40 distinct divisions or "bibliothèques." The present treatise is but one of the group of 41 volumes dealing with economic questions, which as a whole is entrusted to the very competent direction of M. Daniel Bellet of the "Société d'Economie Politique" of Paris, aided by a talented array of distinguished writers, many of whose names stand in the ranks of honorary members of the Royal Statistical Society. Were the reviewer of the present volume intended to offer any criticism of the subjects of these volumes, it would be right to suggest that distinctively agricultural topics do not appear to be accorded a space at all commensurate with their importance in economic discussions. No one can, however, find fault with the ability of Professor Zolla to treat as he does here of wheat and the cereals.

The treatise, it must be remembered, is expressly written by a Frenchman for Frenchmen, and although the subject handled necessarily admits of more or less frequent excursions into the region of international grain-growing and the wheat trade generally, these are less exhaustively treated than might be looked for in the title, and mainly in their bearings on the French economic position. Some of the comparative tables omit important States, and fail in point of date to give the most recent figures. Nevertheless, as thus limited, the statistics handled and the economic conclusions reached, are of great and abiding interest, and in certain aspects peculiarly opportune for the study of English economists. Nowhere among the older nations can we find more apt experiments in the task of bread supply for a local population within the compass of its own territory than in France, where, alike by physical conditions and by long tradition, the production of cereals, and especially of wheat, is peculiarly characteristic of the native agriculture.

In cereals M. Zolla includes wheat, spelt, barley, rye, oats, maize, rice, millet and buckwheat, all but the last belonging to one botanic family. In France wheat alone occupies 47.9 per cent. of the cereal surface, and naturally dominates the interest of the volume. Of the whole cultivated area (woods omitted), the cereal-growing surface of France, which reaches 39 per cent. as against only 16 per cent. in this country, is not far different from that of its neighbours—37 per cent. in Belgium, 40 per cent. in Germany—and it does not reach the 60 per cent. of Russia. Cereals serve, it is here argued, a double purpose—of food for men and food for animals. In France 57 per cent. of the cereal surface—all the wheat and the small amount of mixed grains still grown, with half the rye, buckwheat and maize—is required for men; the remainder of the grain being required for domestic animals or industrial uses. After comparison with foreign conditions, M. Zolla lays stress

on the changes in area and production, and on the necessity of remembering the large share, often disregarded, of grain and straw which the maintenance of the live stock of the farms entails. In a series of interesting tables the average harvests of late years are compared with the past, and the resultant produce of French grain-fields is shown to have been raised from under 200,000,000 of hectolitres in 1834-43 to 263,000,000 hectolitres in 1896-1905. Wheat alone developed still more rapidly, averaging 115,000,000 hectolitres in the later, against 69,000,000 hectolitres in the earlier period; but oats have increased still more, and are now 92,000,000 hectolitres against 52,000,000 hectolitres. In bulk the rye, barley and mixed grain crops are all diminishing. Per hectare, it is claimed the wheat yield of France has been carried from 10 hectolitres in 1816-20 to $17\frac{1}{2}$ hectolitres in 1901-05; that is to say, although the author does not so tell us, from an acreage yield no more than we are accustomed to see to-day in India, Argentina and Australia to its present level. That level, which is equivalent to some 19 *bushels* per *acre*, is, it is true, a long way under what we can show in our 32 *bushels* here. But the wheat area of France is eight times our own, and covers regions not very suitable to the plant. Wide variations occur, as M. Zolla shows, in the yield in several Departments; some seem still to yield less than the early French average above quoted, while in the north the yields far exceed the average, and more nearly approximate to those of England, Belgium and Holland.

Some portion of this book is devoted to refuting the error that total value of the whole crop of cereals in grain or straw represents a corresponding receipt by French agriculturists. Even to obtain the gross valuation—the estimate of some *five milliards of francs* sometimes put upon this has to be reduced by the large demands which so great an acreage requires for seed, and by the still larger absorption of a great share of the nominal product in the maintenance of the stock of the farm, the manufacture of meat, and the supply of the essential manure. Here an estimate of under *three* milliards is suggested as likely to avoid the “double entry” which invalidates some guesses at the cereal-produced wealth of the rural owners, farmers, and labourers of France. The now distant agricultural inquiry of 1882 placed the gross agricultural produce of France, after deduction of the means of production, at $10\frac{1}{2}$ milliards of francs, whereof seven milliards was then ascribed to products of vegetable origin. With lowered values at later dates, and allowing some material gain in quantities produced, the bulk of the latter, which includes the produce of vineyards, forests, and industrial cultures, is thus well over what the cereals alone furnish.

It is to the volume itself the reader must be referred if he is to study the discussion of the effect of changing values on the relatively narrow balance or margin of profit which remains to the agriculturists after deducting from their gross products the whole expenditure incurred. The fall in prices since 1876-80 is here put at from 24 per cent. in the case of wheat and 26 per cent. in the case of rye to 19 per cent. for barley or maize and 14 per cent. for

oats. The effect on farm rents is illustrated by quotations from various "hospices." The relation of prices to production, and of the effect on the supply of the stationary nature of the French population, are all dealt with. Imports and exports of cereals are shown, and those for wheat alone traced in detail for nearly a century; but the data stop short of the most recent years. One might commend to the reader to refer on this point to M. Tisserand's still more recent address to the Société Nationale d'Agriculture de France at their sitting of November 17 last, where a striking picture is given of the latest figures of wheat imports, which have, as a matter of fact, fallen in 1908 below 750,000 quintals, compared with an annual average over the whole decennium, 1877-1896, of nearly 11,500,000 quintals. The increasing part which Algeria and Tunis now take is a striking feature. M. Zolla treats at some length of the "*régime douanier*," to which no doubt the French agriculturist owes much of his relative prosperity, and this discussion and the tables and graphic illustrations offered of the course of prices and difference of level between the English and French wheat averages are opportune as coming from a trustworthy French source at a time when these questions are somewhat hotly debated here.

Guesses at the presumed cost of producing wheat are condemned by M. Zolla, who, after numerous examples, demonstrates—what the practical English agricultural economist recognises—the impossibility of arranging in a farming balance anything like the accurate calculations possible in other industries, where there is no confusing rotation of crops where the raw material is purchased, and the expenditure of labour known, and its value no matter of mere estimate. In a notice of a work which one can recommend alike for the statistics it offers and the arguments it advances, it is not possible to follow each section in detail, but the careful treatment of the records of prices of wheat and flour respectively, the variations of price level and of stocks of grain, and the overwhelming importance to France of her own successive harvests, have deep interest for the student, who will also mark the opinion offered of a coming period of higher grain values in light of the increasing production of gold. The details as to the organisation of the Paris grain market are themselves an interesting study. We note, however, M. Zolla's refutation of the dogma that speculation and term bargains are in any way accountable for reduced prices, and only wish he had carried further than perhaps the official statistics he quotes would permit the conditions of the wheat industry in other countries than those here noted, both in this connection and as regards the future of the world's supply. P.G.C.