

They have a good deal of trouble with smut in wheat in the Argentine. Frosts in the southern part of the country also cause damage some seasons. With old lands where wheat has been grown for fifteen to twenty years, and where no plant-food has been put back in the soil, the land becomes tired and foul or sour, thereby producing poor crops.

HARVESTING THE CROPS.

Generally speaking, the reaping is done in a very short space of time, for the reason that nearly every man, woman, girl, and boy works from early morn till late at night to save all of the crop before any of the grain is shed. Reaping-machines and horses are plentiful, but sometimes with a big crop labour is scarce.

Threshing is as a rule done by contract, and is begun as soon after the harvest as machines and men can be secured. Very often estancieros combine and purchase threshing-machines and do the threshing on a sort of share system, or, rather, on the co-operative principle.

The life of the Buenos Aires and Santa Fé wheat-farmer is, saying the least of it, monotonous, although I must say it is probably one of the healthiest climates in the world. Needless to say, the temptations of the ordinary estanciero to spend money are not great. They live very simply, but hardly ever does poverty exist. About the only amusement is playing the violin, guitar, or banjo. It is not a very pleasant feature for an Englishman to hear these Italian wheat-growers discussing matters among themselves when he does not understand them; but if you only get a twinkling of the language you become impressed with it. I know of no language except the Maori language which is so soft and sweet.

Getting back to the wheat business, which I wish to make as short as possible, I may point out that there are about three hundred and fifty railway-stations where wheat is shipped for export—that is, from the country districts. While passing I may mention that there does not seem to be much disposition to rapidly build up country towns, as is the case in Canada and the United States.

At the Port of Buenos Aires they have many enormous elevators on the principle of those at the head of Lake Superior in Canada, through which latter a vast portion of the wheat consumed in Great Britain passes. At the Port of Rosario they have also large elevators. The difference between the methods of handling wheat in the Argentine and Canada is that in Canada, particularly in Manitoba and the North-west Territories, the wheat is never put in bags; it is delivered direct from the machines into large wagon-boxes, from which it is shovelled direct into the elevators, which are dotted all along the line at each small town or siding. The wheat is all classed or graded and placed in different compartments high up in the elevators, after which it is run directly into the cars at a small cost. It is then conveyed to the head of Lake Superior, where it is again run or elevated into these enormous sky-pilot elevators, from which it is delivered into the vessels without very much hand-labour.

In the Argentine all the wheat, as in New Zealand, is put in bags and stacked up at the stations until sufficient cars are available to carry it to the sea-ports. I have seen as much as three hundred thousand bags of wheat stacked up at one station in the District of Tres Arios awaiting transport. In many cases the bags are placed directly on the ground, without any straw or boards underneath. In the case of heavy rains a considerable quantity becomes damaged; this is said to be the fault of the farmer, but I say it is the fault of the Government, for during my stay in the republic large quantities of wheat were blocked at the various stations owing to a strike on the railways; this strike hampered trade greatly, but it was finally settled peacefully at a great expense to the farmers. During the strike I had several quaint experiences while travelling. Nearly every train was paraded by Spanish soldiers; what they were there for one could not tell, for although they had swords, bayonets, rifles, &c., no person seemed to be getting hurt, as would be the case in North America when the Militia is called out for a like purpose. Sometimes we would stop two hours and a half at a railway-station, for what purpose no person could explain; nevertheless we stopped.

The Spanish soldiers are a great body of men. They are all undersized; they wear a uniform which seems to have been specially designed by the Government to act as a target for any foreign foe. They have all sorts of shiny belts and shoulder-ornaments, and the most conspicuous of all is a very high cap, the top of which is a deep scarlet, thus making a grand target in time of war.

GENERAL.

A word or two about the money of the country, railways, &c., may not be out of place. The money of the Argentine is on the paper basis; the minimum value of a dollar was fixed about the year 1900 at 44 cents gold, or 127 per cent. premium. The value of one gold dollar expressed in paper money varies between \$2.27 and \$2.35. I may also point out that the gold dollar of the United States is at about 4 per cent. premium over that of the Argentine Republic dollar.

The great plains of the Argentine are well equipped with railways, and extensive developments yet continue on a large scale. It is said that back as far as 1867 there were only about 360 miles of railway in the country, while in 1900 there were 10,601 miles of these railways; the Government owns about 1,500 miles, and nearly 9,500 miles are owned by foreign companies. In length of line the Argentine stands about eighth on the list of countries. The paid-up capital is about \$560,000,000 gold. The total receipts, according to the Argentine Year-book for 1900, are over \$400,000,000 gold. There are three gauges in railways in the republic. One is a very wide line, being a 5 ft. gauge; it is really the standard throughout the country, although they have short lines with a 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge, and also a narrower gauge, similar to that in vogue in some of the out-of-the-way districts in the colonies, 3 ft. 3 in. (or 1 metre). I suppose one of the most interesting railway-lines in the republic which is now nearly completed is the Transandine, which touches the banks of the Mandosa River; this railway climbs to the summit of the pass of the