

quintals of wheat for export. I would therefore now on these grounds reduce my estimate of the world's exportable surplus of old wheat on 1st August next from 85 million quintals to 70 million quintals, which is still a much larger quantity than the pre-war average exportable surplus on that date in excess of the usual carry-over. Such a surplus would be sufficient in itself to meet the pre-war average demand for wheat of all countries for nearly five months without drawing on the produce of the harvests to be reaped after 1st August next.

These estimates, and especially those for the closed countries, are necessarily mere conjectures as to what seems most likely to happen. In framing them I have assumed that in each country the weather conditions from now up till next harvest will neither be very favourable nor very unfavourable, and that in a few months general peace conditions will be secured and some progress made in evolving order out of the present chaos in many parts of Europe. A great deal will depend on the action taken by the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief. In ordinary times of peace it may be presumed that practically all concerned—producers, dealers, consumers, and Governments—will be mainly influenced by purely financial considerations, their desire being on the one hand to make as much profit as possible out of the sale or handling of the grain, and on the other to obtain what grain they require as cheaply as possible; and a more or less reliable estimate can be framed, on the basis of a study of the past, as to what is likely to be the general result of the action of masses of men determined almost entirely by motives of self-gain. But in time of war, when peoples and Governments are dominated by military considerations, and many of them willing to make great sacrifices of their own interest or convenience in order to secure victory, and to obtain the necessary supplies of grain at whatever cost, it is difficult to estimate what the final result of their action will be on the world's grain-market. So again, in times of famine, when motives of charity determine the action of many people and Governments and lead them to sacrifice their own pecuniary interest to the desire of saving their fellow-men from starvation, it is difficult to estimate how far these charitable motives will lead them to go. From reports in the newspapers it appears that the Supreme Food Council propose to undertake famine relief operations on a large scale, and at all events to feed the peoples of the liberated countries and Armenia until next summer. It is estimated that £80,000,000 will be required, and it seems probable that the United States Congress will provide a fourth of this amount. The population to be relieved is estimated by Mr. Hoover at 125 millions. It is not clear whether it is intended to expend the whole of this huge sum without return, but presumably an endeavour will be made to obtain payment for part of the food sent from any Government or local body or private consumer who may be in a position to pay for it.

According to our long experience of famine relief in India, the best policy is to provide the famine-stricken with the cheapest grain available in quantity sufficient to maintain them in health and vigour. In the first place this costs less than if they are provided with dearer food, or, in other words, it makes a given sum go further in the relief of starvation; and, in the second place, there is less likelihood of the inferior grain being intercepted on its way to the poor by the rich and powerful—a consideration of great importance in the absence of ordered Government able and willing to enforce a fair system of distribution. At present the cheapest grain in the world to be obtained in any quantity appears to be maize, of which there are probably at this moment in the Argentine about 20 million quintals available for immediate export, with the prospect of another 30 million quintals after the next maize harvest in April. According to Broomhall, the price of wheat for February shipment at Buenos Aires on 18th January was 10.40 paper dollars per quintal (about 42s. per 480 lb.), while the corresponding price of maize was only 4.95 dollars per quintal (about 20s. per 480 lb.); so that, in proportion to its nutritive qualities maize is at present in the Argentine much cheaper than wheat. The United States, again, with its splendid crop of maize in 1917 and its average crop in 1918, could easily spare almost any amount of maize by simply reducing the number of pigs, which seems to be embarrassingly large. The present prices at Chicago are—wheat, 226 cents per bushel (say, 75s. per 480 lb.), and maize 136½ cents per 50 lb. (say, 55s. per 480 lb.); so that in the United States also maize could probably be bought in large quantity at a cheaper price than wheat, with due regard to the comparative life-saving potentialities of the two grains. India, too, had it not been for the failure of the monsoon, could probably have spared for export some 50 million quintals of rice, and may possibly still spare a considerable quantity at a lower price than wheat. The Supreme Council, therefore, may perhaps find it advisable, in its operations