

RANCH AND RANGE

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This Great Northwest

A great deal of activity is observed these days on the docks of several Sound cities that carry on business with foreign ports, especially in the line of loading wheat and other grains to be sent out. The grain has been coming in from the country and several big sailing ships that have been waiting for cargoes are now busy loading as fast as their respective forces are able to handle the cargoes. The port of Tacoma is particularly busy in this respect, and boats loaded to the gunwales with wheat consigned to foreign ports are leaving regularly for their long sea trips. The big four-masted ship Manchester finished loading five days ago and started for sea a day or two later. The Alice A. Leigh and the Drumblair, recently in Elliott harbor, Seattle, from Liverpool, England, are loading wheat at Tacoma, and the Queen Victoria is about ready, if work of loading has not already commenced. In addition to these boats, the Pak Ling, a transport, has been taking on ton after ton of hay and oats for the government, and should be ready by this time to start to sea. These are but a few of the big ocean travellers that are on the Sound taking on cargoes of wheat and other farm produce. More are on the way in and a number are getting ready to begin loading. This indicates that the movement of wheat has set in in good shape and it is likely to continue for an indefinite period.

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Another feature that shows how the new wheat is moving is to be found in the number of box cars on the tracks at Tacoma and other points, all loaded with wheat that cannot be handled by the elevators on account of a lack of room. At Tacoma alone the Northern Pacific Railway Company has three hundred and twenty such cars standing on the tracks, the grain in them waiting to be shipped out by the sea route. Some of it may be placed in elevators or sent by rail to other than water points, but it is given out that most of it will go by water. It would seem that the tying up of so many box cars at one point, to say nothing of the same conditions prevailing at numerous other points on both the transcontinental lines, as well as on some of the local lines, would tend to the creating of a bad car famine, but such evidently is not the case. The Northern Pacific officials state that they have plenty of cars to supply the demand and can handle all traffic that may come their way, but at the same time it is admitted that the road does not approve of the cars being tied up in this manner. The company is anxious to have more elevators put up to take care of the grain thus placed in their hands, and plans to that end, that have been in the background for some time, are being resurrected and discussed. They appreciate the fact that should those cars not move soon the additions that come daily will make a car famine inevitable and place all rolling business "in a tight

fix." The company dare not compel the moving of the cars nor charge up demurrage, although both the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern made an agreement at the beginning of the grain moving season to place such charges on grain not unloaded in twenty-four hours. Should they attempt to enforce the rule in this case the shippers will immediately send their grain over the O. R. & N. to Portland and store in elevators, thereby diverting to Portland and opposing lines of transportation a large amount of shipping business which the Northern Pacific is anxious to retain at Tacoma.

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That there is a shortage of freight cars in many sections is not denied, but all indications point to a greater shortage than the railroad companies will admit. This is especially the case with those big lines doing business west of Chicago and feeding the outlets of the Orient. Locally on the coast the shortage is not so evident, but with the increasing trade with the Orient and the handling of grain the railroad companies will feel the shortage more and more and those having large consignments of freight on the way west from points in the interior will feel it, too. As an indication that the shortage is assuming a serious aspect we may cite the fact the transcontinental lines are preparing to raise the freight rates on Oriental consignments. A conference is to be held at St. Paul. It is said the steamship companies are responsible for this move, owing to the fact that their west-bound cargoes are too light in comparison with the carrying capacity of the vessels. Most of the big liners leaving the ports on this coast, especially the Sound ports, carry full cargoes, but return trips are often made in ballast, some big vessels being compelled to resort to water for the purpose. While no definite conclusion has been reached by the railroad companies as to whether rates will be raised or not, it is very likely the raise will be made, and in that event it is believed the rates on all classes of freights—not Oriental shipments alone—will be raised for consignment to and from the coast. Shippers will object to such a raise in rates, and at this time grain shippers especially. They will tell the railroad companies to increase the rolling stock rather than increase the rates to counterbalance the loss that will be sustained as a result of a car shortage. The people are evidently with the shippers.

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Industrial conditions in the Northwest are such that the money value of horseflesh is climbing up slowly but surely. The past season has been a prosperous one for horse dealers in the Columbia valley and eastern sections of Washington and Oregon. J. H. Blakeny, a dealer in Portland, is authority for the statement that prices for horses have advanced fully fifty per cent. over what was being paid last year, and he thinks next year will

see a still better condition in the horse market. There are several causes that tend to raise the prices on horses. A great deal of railroad work is done in the Northwest and will continue for a long while yet. For this work good, big chunks are wanted, and good young horses, tolerably well broken and weighing about 1200 lbs., bring from \$60 to \$75 each in Portland and a few other cities, while those weighing 1400 lbs. bring \$110 each. In addition to the great demand for horses for railroad grading, the rapid development of Alaska and the opening of new logging camps in our state and in Oregon assist in making the demand strong. Not only this, but the expectation that there will be a large demand next year from California farmers for big horses, provided their crops are good, combines to stiffen the price, while there is also a fair demand from the men opening up new farms along the lines of recently constructed railroads. At the same time it is seen that the worthless cayuses of Oregon are being thinned out at a good rate.

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The farmer on the flats west of the Cascades who saved his hay this fall and now has it in condition to ship to Seattle or some other good Sound market is sure to make good money. The demand for hay is now very great and local dealers find it almost impossible to fill orders. The price has taken a good high jump and an average of ten dollars is now being paid for Puget Sound hay that sold for six and seven a few weeks ago, and even then was in little demand. This condition in the Sound country is also to be found on the eastern slope of the Cascades, the farmers on the Stilligumish, Skagit and Snohomish rivers receiving an increased price for what they sell. This rise in hay, and in oats also, is attributed in part to the shortage in rolling stock on the railroads, but largely to the large purchases of hay and oats by the general government for shipment to the Philippine archipelago, and to Alaska business. As stated, the dealers on the Sound have difficulty in filling orders for hay, but this condition, it is believed, will not last long, for outside dealers will see their chance and ship in hay from California and Oregon; in fact, agents from the latter state have already visited Seattle with the purpose of placing orders. It should be the aim of the local jobber to forestall such a condition as much as possible in order to keep the money in the state, rather than allowing it to go into the coffers of outside dealers. In the case of the oat market, the situation will not be so readily influenced by outside dealers, nor will much be sent out, for prices are best in Seattle and other Sound points at present. Shippers could not pay more than \$17 to \$18 for oats intended for the San Francisco market, while the farmers on the flats are now getting \$19.50 to \$20 from local jobbers for their oats.

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Cheese making on the Sound, and in a good many other sections of the state also, is a profitable business when the right men are managing the factories. There are not many cheese factories here, but those that are do-

ing business are not losing money. If conditions were more favorable as regards the number of dairymen supplying milk to the factories, there would be more business done in this line. One of our successful cheese factories is the one operated by J. A. Buck at Ferndale, Whatcom county, which has a capacity of six thousand pounds of milk a day but has never received in one day over two thousand nine hundred pounds. This is due to the limited number of dairies in the country tributary to the factory. Mr. Buck, the manager, is from Herkimer county, New York, famed for its cheese, and his experience has enabled him to turn out one of the finest cheeses on the coast—in fact, so great is the demand that he is unable to make a quantity during the running season sufficient to fill orders till the next season. His factory is operated on the co-operative plan, which is a disadvantage, for, were he paying cash for milk, he would be able to secure nearly 4,500 lbs of milk per day. The dairymen who send their milk to this factory realize about 98 cents per hundred pounds. They would be in position to make good money right through the winter season did they not permit their cows to fall off so largely in milk flow. When they fully realize the value of a continuous flow of milk through the winter they will probably raise fall calves, and provide more succulent food for their cows.

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Two weeks ago these columns contained mention of the organization perfected by the farmers of the Palouse and Big Bend countries to handle their grain independent of the elevators. Comment has been made upon the scheme by a number of the state papers, and it appears to be the belief on the part of many that the scheme will not be successful. That remains to be seen. The Tacoma Ledger cites the efforts of the Kansas farmers to organize a similar association, and says "the trouble is that the managers, who are generally the shrewdest men in the combination, invariably get the best of the other fellows, and the results are unsatisfactory if not disastrous." As to whether this will prove the case with the combination of farmers in the Big Bend also remains to be seen, and we should not condemn the laudable efforts of the grangers before we know they are futile and likely to prove disastrous. Comparisons at this early stage are invidious. Whatever may be the outcome of the combine mentioned, we must bear in mind that the surest way to make a good gain from wheat raising is to carry it on upon strictly business principles. These principles embody the whole gamut of a successful business transaction and each individual must shape his own success. As our Tacoma contemporary remarks, the farmer who devotes his energies to raising better crops than his neighbors, if he can, who reads the papers, keeps posted on the markets and manages his own business will make more money in the long run than the man who places himself unreservedly in the hands of men whom he admits are shrewder than himself.