

Marquis Wheat, Choker For Malthusians

It was long after "Progress and Poverty" appeared that Sir Charles Edward Saunders, the Canadian wheat expert who died the other day at the age of 70, produced the varieties of the grain which made him famous. In the 1900's the Dominion's great prairie areas of the West were unproductive. Although pre-eminently suited to the growing of wheat, the areas are so far north that the average growing season, free of frost, was not more than 110 days. The earliest maturing variety of good millable wheat—Red Fife—needed

120 days to ripen. Here, a century after Malthus, was proof that population could press upon subsistence.

But not to a scientist like Sir Charles. He obtained samples of the world's wheat strains. At his experimental farm at Ottawa—a small plot no larger than a suburban garden, with a two-story brick building on it—he crossed and bred varieties, chewing the wheat blobs to measure gluten strength to save milling and baking costs. In 1903 he harvested a single head of Marquis wheat, which matured in 110 days.

Within a decade Marquis wheat made western Canada the "breadbasket" of the British Empire, opened to cultivation the western States, and spread around the world. During the war huge crops of it enabled Canada to meet the loss of supplies from Russia. Sir Charles' career, now regrettably closed, gave spectacular proof how man increases his means of subsistence by harnessing the forces of nature.

—W. L.

See: "Progress and Poverty," p. 130.
"Teachers Manual (P. & P.)," L.
III, 2, 13, 2, 26.