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A Lamp is Heavy



by
**SHEILA MacKAY
RUSSELL**

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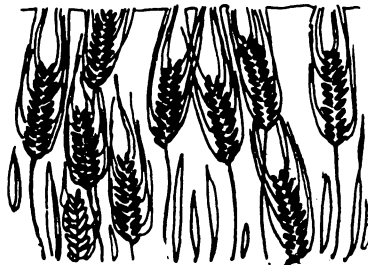
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SN1



Wheat

➤ ACROSS a million fields the combines clank and clatter, their cutting bars flashing in the sun. Dusty, sweating crews of men, following a golden river northward, cut a giant swath across the plains. Wheat is coming in . . . wheat, the most triumphant of all grasses, upon whose bountiful kernels western civilization has grown for 7,000 years.

Into overflowing bins and towers, into vast hangars once echoing with the roar of U. S. war-time might, into rusting Liberty ships lying at permanent moorings, flows the endless stream of grain, too much for 150,000,000 people, too much for sleek cattle and tubby hogs.

Seedtime and harvest, surplus and shortage. The cycle is that of civilization itself. Civilization built itself on wheat.

The earliest inscriptions on the tombs of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia show that the peoples of prehistory fed largely on

two grains, barley and wheat. Barley came first, but wheat was not far behind. From these grains both bread and beer were made.

Wheat must have been cultivated around the earliest campfire settlements, long before the Pharaohs. Kernels have been found in ancient places where they fell 5,500 years ago. The earliest wheat on record was already a cultivated, improved grass.

In those settlements, resurrected by archaeologists, have been found the tools of grain: sickles of baked pottery, others made of wood or bone edged with sharp flakes of flint. In the age of bronze came the earliest scythes of metal. Men grew wheat while still hunting the wild animal for meat and winter clothing.

Yet wheat today is so unlike any common wild grass that for a long time it was thought the parent plant, the original wild species, was extinct. But shortly before the first World War, a brilliant young Jewish botanist named Aaronsohn discovered wild wheat growing on Mount Carmel in Palestine.

The grain stem he discovered is unlike cultivated wheat. The central stem of its head, from which the kernels sprout, was so brittle that it crumbled into pieces when the grain was ripe. It could not be harvested or threshed by modern means, nor perhaps even by the hand methods of primitive peoples.

But in their cultivation, men of the Stone Age practiced plant improvement in some unrecorded way, producing a solid head on wheat many centuries before their wise men learned to write down the story of their exploit.

It is still that golden, waving grass by which men and nations measure wealth and power. On the Great Plains the wheat is in. The staff of life is being harvested.

Science News Letter, August 26, 1950

Books of the Week

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THE ABC OF ACID-BASE CHEMISTRY: The Elements of Physiological Blood-Gas Chemistry for Medical Students and Physicians—Horace W. Davenport—*University of Chicago Press*, 3rd ed., 86 p., illus., paper, \$2.00 A guide book brought up-to-date.

AETIOS OF AMIDA: The Gynaecology and Obstetrics of the Vith Century, A.D.—James V. Ricci, Translator—*Blakiston*, 215 p., \$7.00. Dr. Ricci has translated the Latin version by Cornarius of the last chapter in the encyclopedia of medicine on obstetrics and diseases of women written originally by Aetios of Amida, Court physician to Justinian I, Emperor of Byzantium.

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS: A History—Foster Rhea Dulles—*Harper*, 554 p., \$5.00. The general history of the American Red Cross covering operations during the past seventy years.

BIRD NOTES FROM BARRO COLORADO ISLAND, CANAL ZONE—Josselyn Van Tyne—*University of Michigan Press*, 12 p., illus., paper, 25 cents.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE PUEBLOS—Stanley A. Stubbs—*University of Oklahoma Press*, 122 p., illus., \$3.00. A guide to the Indian villages of New Mexico and Arizona, with aerial photographs and scale drawings.

CANADA GEESE OF THE MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY: With Special Reference to an Illinois Flock—Harold C. Hanson and Robert H. Smith—*Natural History Survey Division*, approx. 143 p., illus., paper, free upon request to publisher, Urbana, Illinois. A report of a study made of a flock of Canada geese wintering in Alexander County, Illinois.

THE CHILD WHO NEVER GREW—Pearl S. Buck—*Day*, 62 p., \$1.00. A mother's account of