

Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

WINNIPEG, October 18.

The weather has turned suddenly cold with considerable snow and threshing is suspended. This is exceptionally early for so heavy a snow fall and there is some uneasiness for fear this should mean the real setting in of winter. A very great deal of the threshing has been done, but there is still a very considerable amount to do, especially in Northern Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Receipts at Winnipeg in the past few days have been affected by the change in the weather in the matter of quantity; the grade, however, is fully maintained, and much wheat weighing 65 pounds to the measured bushel is coming in. The condition of the market is that of extreme dullness. The Wheat Export Company is taking all wheat offered of the grades of which prices have been fixed and would take a great deal more than is offered if it were possible to get it. The announcement by the Minister of Finance that the finances had been arranged for the purchase of the entire exportable surplus brought a measure of relief, but even yet, the trade has no definite assurance that Britain and her Allies will continue to take the wheat as it is accumulated. The price is basis Fort William, and the line elevator companies would like some definite assurance that as they accumulate lines in the country and forward it to the lake front the Wheat Export Company will assume ownership. For example, after the close of navigation, wheat will begin to accumulate in the terminals at the lakes and comparatively little of this will be gotten out during the winter. Are the elevator companies to pay storage all winter and then receive the fixed price in the spring, or will the Wheat Company assume the ownership of the wheat when it arrives? So far no light on this knotty problem has been vouchsafed to the trade. It is usually figured that the carrying charge from December to May is from 8½ to 9 cents; it would be a little more this year, owing to the high rate of insurance. The line elevator companies are buying in the country on the basis of \$2.21. If they have to pay a carrying charge at the terminal elevators from December to May and then receive just \$2.21 for No. 1 Northern, the prospect is not very alluring.

Trade in coarse grains is on the whole rather dull. On Wednesday, the report came from New York to the effect that Great Britain was prohibiting the export of flax from the colonies, including Canada. It was expected that this would have a bearish affect, but so far the flax market has been stronger. This may mean a cleaning up of business before the order actually goes into effect, and that the drop will come later, but in the meantime, prices are quite stiff, and the demand fairly limited.

OLEOMARGARINE.

The dairymen of the west, in common with those of the whole of Canada, are greatly exercised over the proposal to permit the manufacture and importation of oleomargarine. Ever since the beginning of the war, the agitation for this has occurred at frequent intervals, but it is much more insistent at the present time than it ever was before. The situation in the west is that while there is about the usual quantity of creamery butter in store, a much larger percentage than usual is owned by consumers. This is especially so in Winnipeg. The best grade of creamery butter is retailing to-day at 50 cents, with every prospect that it will go higher. The scarcity of labor on the farms and the improved price of butter fat at the creameries has induced the great bulk of the dairy farmers to send their cream to the creameries, and the amount of dairy butter is smaller than it has been for some years. The advance in the price of butter fat from the first year of the war until the present is fully 14 cents a pound.

The question of butter in the west is not merely one of luxury; it is one of necessity. The severity of the winters necessitates a very considerable consumption of some kind of fat, particularly by children, to keep them in good health. People in anything like moderate circumstances cannot buy butter at 45 or 50 cents a pound and give their children the quantity they should have, and milk is very dear also. Then the necessity of curtailing the use of bacon, as well as the high price, has limited that source of fat. Dairy butter and bacon were the two principal sources of fat to people of more moderate means, so that the situation is really grave in the west.

Whether it can best be met by the introduction of oleomargarine it is difficult to say, but it is not at all difficult to see why consumers are clamoring for something to be done. Of course, the claim is made that the fat in oleomargarine is not nearly so digestible for children as butter, but at the present time the question is largely one, not of digestibility, but of going without altogether, unless some cheaper form of fat can be secured. Grown people may stint themselves in the matter with no particularly bad results, but children who are starved for both butter and milk are drawing on capital, and if the war has pressed home nothing else it has pressed home the need of the care and preservation of the children.

LIVESTOCK.

Livestock conditions in the west have been pretty badly congested the past few days, and an embargo has been placed on the Winnipeg yards until things clear up a little. The Winnipeg yards were enlarged this present season, but the enlargement was not nearly sufficient to meet the increased volume of trade, and moreover, there is a shortage of trackage. These things cannot be remedied this fall, but the matter is being urged on the management of the yards in order that something may be done in the early spring.

Everything that is possible has been done to stimulate the development of the live stock industry and the cattle men feel rather sore that the yards have not kept pace with the development. However, there is this to be said in justification of the management of the yards, that it was not possible to foresee the extremely heavy liquidation which has taken place this fall. Part of it is due to the shortage of feed in some districts, and much of it is due to the high prices and then the movement of feeder cattle from one point to another has helped to add to the congestion.

A comparative statement of the movement of feeder cattle is just issued for the nine months ending September 30th, and shows that in these nine months 20,267 head of stockers and feeders have gone west from the Winnipeg yards. In the same period of 1916 the total movement was 12,037 and in 1915, 5,018. It will be seen from these figures that the nine months have produced a traffic four times as large as the corresponding nine months of 1915. In the same period the shipment east has been 7,017, in 1916 it was 302, and in 1915 it was 54. On the other hand, the movement south has been smaller, being only 11,295 in 1917 against 12,292 in 1916, and 28,920 in 1915.

The embargo has had the effect of lowering the price to some extent, and also the market was affected by the embargo placed on South St. Paul, as it cut out the speculative element for the time being. Compared with cattle, receipts of hogs have been very limited.

SHEEP.

The endeavors of the Dominion Government to have sheep, or rather lambs moved from the east to the west has proved abortive. Apparently, the eastern flock masters, as soon as they thought that lambs were needed in the west, jumped the price. Now an effort is being made to allow of sheep being brought in from Montana.

All the western provinces have sheep sales on in the latter part of the present month and the beginning of the next, and they are including grade sheep as well as pure bred.

BINDER TWINE.

A good deal of interest has been aroused by the statement that there are great quantities of binder twine left over from the recent harvest, and inquiries prove that is to some extent true. The crop of 1917 was very lightly strawed, and took much less than usual to bind it, whereas the orders for twine had been on the basis of a nominally strawed crop. Very few farmers, however, are seeking to have this binder twine taken off their hands. They realize that it is a very good thing to have a reserve and their only anxiety is to preserve it against the mice.

In October, 1914, the price of sisal was 4 cents a pound; to-day it is 19½ cents a pound, I.O.B. New York, and it is likely to go higher, as it is controlled by a combine, and war conditions have cut off the competition by Manila and Java twine.

There is another announcement of a method having been found to utilize flax straw for binder twine

making, and this time it is receiving considerable encouragement from the officials of the Saskatchewan Government and also from the officials of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association. If a means of utilizing this substance has really been found, it will be almost invaluable, but this has been attempted so often that everybody will be from Missouri with regard to the new venture, until it is very clearly demonstrated to be practicable.

OFFICIAL CROP REPORT.

OTTAWA, October 18.

The Census and Statistics Office published to-day the second or provisional estimate of the yield of the principal grain crops of Canada in 1917, a statement of the quality of these crops at the time of harvesting and the condition of root crops on September 30. The report is compiled from the returns of crop correspondents made at the end of September.

YIELD OF PRINCIPAL GRAIN CROPS.

The estimates of the yield per acre of wheat, oats, barley and flax are somewhat lower than those reported at the end of August, and the reduction applies to all the provinces. The latter returns being based to a larger extent upon threshing results appear to indicate that the first estimates, based upon the appearance of the crops in the field, were too high. The total yield of wheat for Canada is now provisionally estimated at 231,730,200 bushels, the average yield per acre being 15½ bushels, as compared with 16½ bushels reported a month ago and with 17 bushels the yield of 1916. Of oats the total yield is 393,570,000 bushels, as compared with 410,211,000 bushels in 1916, the average yield per acre being 29½ bushels in 1917 as compared with 37.30 bushels in 1916. Barley yields 51,684,000 bushels, as compared with 42,770,000 bushels in 1916, the average per acre being 21½ bushels as compared with 23.72 bushels in 1916. The yield of rye is 4,239,800 bushels, which is slightly more than the quantity returned a month ago; the yield per acre is 20 bushels as against 19.3 bushels in 1916. For the three prairie provinces the yields are as follows: Wheat 209,794,200 bushels, oats 237,925,000, rye 2,534,000 bushels, barley 36,727,000 bushels, flaxseed 6,747,000 bushels. The total yields of the remaining grain crops, now reported for the first time this year, are as follows: peas 2,786,600 bushels from 151,030 acres, an average of 18½ bushels per acre; beans 635,700 bushels from 43,000 acres, average 14½ bushels per acre; buckwheat 7,189,000 bushels from 336,400 acres, or 12½ bushels per acre; mixed grains 15,741,000 bushels from 469,140 acres, 33½ bushels per acre and corn for husking 6,193,000 bushels from 173,600 acres, an average of 35½ bushels per acre.

QUALITY OF GRAIN CROPS.

Correspondents were asked to report on the quality of the grain crops at the time of harvest, as measured against a standard of 100, representing grain well headed, well filled, well saved and unaffected to any appreciable extent by frost, rust, smut, etc. The average results for the whole of Canada are as follows: Fall wheat 76, spring wheat 72, all wheat 73, oats 74, barley 75, rye 79, peas 69, beans 71, buckwheat 63, mixed grains 79, flax 67, corn for husking 67. The figures are generally high for Ontario, wheat being 80, oats 92 and barley 89. In Quebec wheat is 67 and oats are 74. In the Prairie Provinces wheat is 75 in Manitoba, 70 in Saskatchewan and 75 in Alberta. Oats are 62 in Manitoba, 57 in Saskatchewan and 56 in Alberta.

CONDITION OF ROOT AND FODDER CROPS.

The condition of root and fodder crops, measured against a standard of 100 as representing a full crop, was, on September 30 as follows: Potatoes 64, turnips 72, mangolds, carrots, etc., 77, sugar beets 76, corn for fodder 72 and alfalfa 81. The condition of the potato crop by provinces was on September 30 as follows: Prince Edward Island 81, Nova Scotia 77, New Brunswick 57, Quebec 47, Ontario 81, Manitoba 69, Saskatchewan 71, Alberta 89 and British Columbia 70.

A FRUITFUL VINE.

(London Times, Sept. 6.)

Grapes grown on the great vine at Hampton Court Palace, which was planted in 1768, were cut yesterday by special permission of the King, and a large quantity of them was allotted to the Dowager Lady Wolseley for distribution among wounded soldiers in local military hospitals. The grapes are in fine condition and some of the bunches are unusually heavy.