

Conditions in the West

By E. COIRA HIND.

The West enjoyed a fairly heavy rain on April 6th, which was followed by a cold wind, some snow and quite a heavy frost. This delayed seeding operations for a few days, but the increased moisture was very acceptable, and especially in the southern and southwestern districts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The weather is now fine and warm and seeding and spring cultivation is being pushed very rapidly.

The labor situation seems to be adjusting itself fairly well, so far as seeding is concerned, but there has been no additional help for the farm homes, and this is undoubtedly curtailing production. The farm women of the West have always found it very difficult to get help, but since the war has opened new avenues for women, the supply of domestic help has been materially lessened in the cities, and in the country it has almost disappeared. So far, it has proved impossible to arouse the Dominion Government or the War Committee to the seriousness of this situation. The urgent request of the Women's Conference that this work be put on a special "war service" basis, has apparently fallen on deaf ears. Everyone, be they man or woman, who is really looking into this matter, knows that no wages that can be paid in a farm house will tempt a woman to do this work, but many are convinced that if it were given a "war service" standing, such as has been given to the women working on the land in Britain, that many recruits would be secured. Probably when it is entirely too late, the "powers that be" will wake up to this fact.

FIBRE FLAX.

The farmers of the West have been considerably exercised over the fibre flax during the past ten days. Seed for flax has become very scarce in Ireland, owing to the cutting off of supplies from Russia and Holland. Last year Ireland had to devote one-eighth of her flax area to the production of seed. This year she is extremely short of seed. A small amount, 10,000 bushels in fact, was secured in Siberia and was shipped via Vladivostok and Japan to Vancouver, and was on its way to Ireland. It was a little late for the Irish seeding season, and a very successful attempt having been made by the University of Saskatchewan in producing fibre flax, it was resolved to try it out in Canada, and the E. R. Wayland Company, of which Colonel Wayland is a member, was entrusted with the distribution of this seed.

The plan proposed is that the farmers planting this seed, receive it free, and next harvest they are to return this seed to the British Government, and the Government will buy the balance of their crop at the guaranteed price of \$4.50 per bushel. When the announcement of this proposition was made there was a grandstand rush and the office was nearly inundated with applications. One reason why men were so keen to get this seed, was because it can be sown on land that is broken this spring, indeed, the Wayland Company are showing a preference for the seed to be grown this way, as being more likely to ensure freedom from weeds. The seed itself seems to be fairly clean.

The test made of samples of fibre flax seed brought from Russia, Holland and Ireland, at the University Farm at Saskatoon, indicated that when seeded half-bushel to the acre, it only yields 75 per cent. of the ordinary crop of flax.

Peter Veregin, head of the numerous Doukhobor colonies, and who has had very great experience of flax growing in Russia, chanced to be in the city at the time the announcement was made, contributed the intelligence that it would be wiser to seed this flax a bushel to the acre, in order to discourage the formation of branches and thereby retain its high fibre quality. There is a question as to whether this precaution is necessary. Of course, all of this flax comes originally from the same stock, but the flax for linen has been developed for a straight thin stem without branches, the seed coming in one head at the top, while the flax for feeding purposes and for oil has been developed in the opposite direction; being seeded thinly and encouraged to branch in order to produce more seed.

An attempt is now being made in Ireland to see how quickly the seed of flax produced almost entirely for oil will go back to the fibre producing qualities, and for this purpose, the Board of Grain Supervisors of Canada was asked to ship a certain amount to Ireland, and 20,000 bushels of choice Canadian grown flax seed was shipped in time for seeding this year. It will be very interesting to watch how this develops. Seeding, according to the usual

practice for fibre production; namely, two bushels to the acre, the 20,000 bushels will seed 10,000 acres in Ireland, while if the advice of Peter Veregin is followed, the 10,000 bushels of fibre flax seed now distributed in Canada, will sow an equal area. The price of \$4.50 per bushel offered by the British Government is not at all excessive compared with the price of wheat at \$2.20. An excellent crop of flax on new breaking will average 15 bushels, but is much more likely to be under 12. Flax is exceedingly expensive to thresh. Threshing machine men sometimes charging as high as \$5.25 a bushel, and all the cars in which it is transported have to be lined with paper, so that it would not be as profitable as wheat to grow on summer-fallowed land, however, if land can be used that is broken this spring, it will be a profitable crop.

LIVESTOCK.

The figures of livestock movement for the last three months of 1918 is now available. The number of cattle received at the Winnipeg yards shows an increase over 1917, of a little over 1,000 head. The receipts of hogs have been very much heavier, being 40,117 more than, for the same months of 1917. The receipts of horses have been much lighter, and sheep show a slight increase. The sheep movement, however, has been mainly of either stocker or breeding sheep, moving from point to point, and the Winnipeg yards served merely as a clearing ground.

Cattle considered by provinces, the receipts show that Manitoba contributed nearly 2,000 head more

in January than in January, 1917, falling behind quite sharply in February and 1,000 head in March.

The same conditions apply to Saskatchewan. The January movement was almost double that of 1917, but February and March show very sharp declines. The movement from Alberta has been comparatively small.

The disposition of the cattle shows a local consumption of 11,188 head, which is very much in excess of the local consumption for the corresponding months of last year. The movement east for the three months shows a total of 6,291 head, which is a very heavy increase over 1917. The movement to the south, however, has been extremely small, less than 1,000 head for the whole three months. The movement westward, of course, accounts for the stocker and feeder cattle, has been good, showing in all, for the three months 6,332 head have been sent back to the farms for finishing. Of these Manitoba took 1,482 head and Saskatchewan 2,251.

In hogs there has been a very interesting movement, a number of feeding hogs and sows. In pigs going back on the farms, returns show that there have been 2,551 compared with 1,328 for the same period of last year. Few hogs have gone south, and the total number shipped south in the month of March was only 5.

5,129 horses passed through during the three months and of these 4,290 came from eastern Canada. This should not be taken as indicating that there is a small movement of western bred horses, as that is not the case, but Manitoba bred horses rarely come into Winnipeg for shipment; they are practically all shipped from Brandon and other parts in the western part of the province, and the movement from there has been heavy and profitable.

The Situation in Ireland

Even in This Critical Hour There is Strong Hope of a Settlement.

London, April 14.

There are strong hopes in London that the Irish troubles will undergo a gradual and pacific solution. An important fact is that the menace of critical events in France overshadows all other considerations and imposes restraint upon even all the factions of Irishmen and their ardent British supporters.

This restraint has been exhibited in several ways. If ex-Premier Asquith had translated his judgment against Irish conscription into a motion to reject the Government's proposal, he might have arrayed a majority of the members of the House against it. This would have meant a change of Government. But Mr. Asquith considered that an impossible thing to propose under the present circumstances, and confined himself to registering his conviction that conscription in Ireland would be a great mistake. As a result, the minority which voted against conscription was composed of Irish Nationalists and a few Liberals, most of them Pacifists and those generally listed as faddists.

John Dillon and Joseph Devlin, who have been jointly filling John Redmond's shoes as leaders of the Irish party, might have made a much more troublesome fight than they did. If they had felt strongly enough to go to extremes, they might have repeated the old scenes of the Parnell days, when Irish members were dragged out of the House by the police, and popular expectation looked forward to such action. But they refrained from parliamentary obstruction and limited their offensive to strong words.

Both of them tempered their fight against conscription with the statement that they believed the cause of Great Britain in the war was a just cause. Mr. Devlin went further by proclaiming his desire to fight for it. This attitude is bound to have an influence in Ireland.

CARSON'S RESTRAINT.

Sir Edward Carson, the Ulster leader, and his Ulster followers, who generally manage to kindle all the animosity there is latent among the Irish factions whenever any Irish question is raised, also exhibited restraint by remaining silent instead of denouncing Irishmen who oppose conscription, as they might have done.

The Nationalist and Sinn Fein newspapers in Ireland maintain a belligerent tone, but Mr. Asquith once described this as mostly "contingent and rhetorical belligerency." A striking example was recently given by events in County Clare. Lieutenant-General Mahon, commander of the British forces in Ireland, proclaimed martial law. There were, as a con-

sequence, rioting and attacks on the police. Small detachments of soldiers took charge of the strategic points. There has been no trouble since, while the people have been very friendly to the soldiers and have given them hospitality, which was unheard of in the Land League Times.

Ireland is enjoying a prosperity hitherto unknown. She is the chief feeder for England.

Her farmers are becoming rich. They are the backbone of the country, and rebellious events would destroy their prosperity.

The Sinn Feiners, of course, are irreconcilable, but they represent none of the property interests of the country.

The foregoing are the features of the situation which cause optimism here. On the other side is the opposition of the Catholic clergy to conscription.

The meeting between John Dillon and Joseph Devlin and the Sinn Fein leaders may develop into a conciliatory influence, rather than otherwise. Dillon and Devlin, it was announced on Friday, have accepted the invitation of the Lord Mayor of Dublin to meet Professor Edward De Valera, the Sinn Fein leader, and Arthur Griffith, founder of the Sinn Fein organization, next week for a conference on the conscription question.

GERMANY'S SOCIAL SYSTEM.

In Germany, says Ralph M. Easley, in his expose in the New York Times of the German bluff of superior social and economic conditions before the war, the greater proportion of the farm work is done by women. According to testimony given on farm wages in 1912 a woman farm laborer earned from 38 to 48 cents a day, and children over 12 received 24 cents a day, without board. Male farm labor got 72 cents a day. The demeaning caste system which sharply defines a peasant in Germany is surpassed in rigidity only in India. The German system is so arranged that the children of peasants must remain peasants; the educational system is so devised that it confines the young to the cast to which they were born. In 1913 a full third of the economic labor of the German empire was performed by women and every second German woman was earning her own living. In 1905, according to an investigation by the Berlin chamber of commerce, there were more than 100,000 sweatshops in Berlin alone.