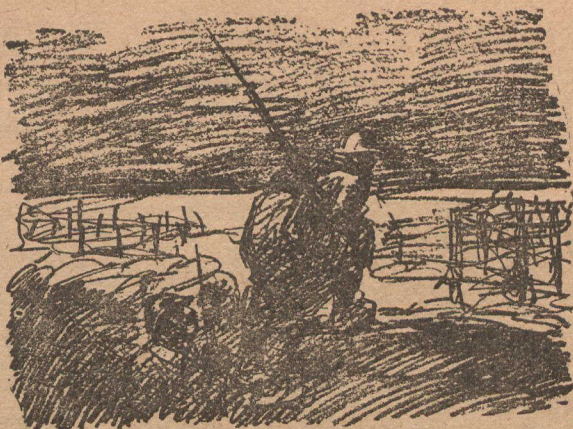


gaining and keeping the initiative. Germany would prefer that the heaviest fighting should be in the east because she knows that if she can but put Russia out of the running she will then be able to gain the preponderating strength everywhere else. Russia will strike heavily for the sake of choosing her own positions, and the French and British will do what they can to prevent the sending of reinforcements to the east, and also if possible to compel the sending of reinforcements from the east and the consequent weakening of the German forces in Russia. The Russians indeed are already attacking heavily in the neighbourhood of Riga and have admittedly won some successes there. But this does not necessarily mean that they have chosen Riga for their ultimate offensive. Frozen ground is much to the advantage of the attackers, since it is they who have to move from their positions. Moreover, we must remember that an artillery assault upon fortified positions is more effective when the ground is frozen than when it is soft, and that an enemy forced from its trenches in frozen ground finds it difficult to dig new ones. The same reasons account for the immediate energies displayed by Mackensen in Roumania. Whatever is to be done there must be done quickly and before an Allied offensive elsewhere compels the sending of reinforcements. Indeed, it seems as though the Russians and the Germans were racing for the initiative. If Mackensen can cross the Danube and seriously menace the Russian flank, the initiative would be with him, since a threat to the Russian line northward to Galicia would demand all possible Russian attention. But if

the Russians can show a dangerous aggressiveness elsewhere then the German activities in Roumania would probably be starved out.

As to the prospects of an Allied offensive in the



AH, YOUTH!

"You aren't going! Are you crazy?"
"Got to. Promised my girl a pickelhaube."

—From L'Opinion, Paris.

west we can do nothing but guess. The expressions of confidence on the part of the commanders are, of course, worth little. They would be hardly likely to express anything else. Sir Douglas Haig speaks of the Somme battle as being unfinished. He says it

was stopped by the weather and will be resumed as soon as the weather allows. Indeed it has already been resumed in the Ancre section. The German commanders assert that they won the battle, since their lines were only pushed back and not pierced. They, too, expect that it will be resumed, thanks to British stupidity, but naturally they express the utmost confidence in the result. Prince Rupprecht speaks of his twelve lines of defence and of his ability to hold them, but none the less he adds, rather indiscreetly, that "we can safely say now that there were some critical moments at the beginning when the enemy was immensely stronger than we." But we may remember that at the time to which the prince presumably refers, there was very little fighting in the east and it was possible to bring men back to the Somme. But what would be the situation if Russia should make a great effort such as Brussiloff made in the direction of Lemberg and which probably ceased from a shortage of ammunition? Would not the British and French then once more be "immensely stronger" than their opponents? Nor must we forget that the British forces in France have been steadily increasing in numbers and improving in efficiency. If there were "critical moments" at the beginning of the Somme battle the Allies may reasonably hope that there will be more of them. Hindenburg may express his comparative unconcern with the western situation, but he must, none the less, be uneasy as he foresees the tremendous strain to which that situation will be exposed by a simultaneous Allied effort in east and west.

WESTERN FARMER HAS BOTH

Wheat Prices and Title Deeds

By CHARLES STOKES

If there is one job at least at which I personally draw the line, it is pitching sheaves. It is comparatively light work to pitch them from the top of the rack-wagon into the separator, but it's another matter entirely to follow the wagon and pitch them up into it from the ground. Therefore the farmer had no cinch, and his indignation was perceptible on being requested by the foreman of the imported gang—a gang he was paying, mind you, by the day, and whom he fed—to hustle some.

The curious thing about agricultural work is that the last thing it will do is to hustle. It is either slack or it is feverish; at this present season of the year, it is feverish. The separator eats up wheat at the rate of some three thousand bushels a day if there is a large gang working and there is plenty of help for hauling. This one was not working so fast; its attendant sprites were few, but the ambition of the man in control of its destiny seemed to be to make its performance equal its biggest competitors.

The farmer told me afterwards at lunch, over the liver, that threshing help is ruinous. He gave me details. It would be—in any other year and to one whose gross returns were not so high. For if there is one thing certain in this world of changing perspectives, it is that the Western Canadian farmer is making money. He has not had such a wonderful year as 1915—in fact, it is scarcely fifty per cent. of that year's crop—but it is worth more. The western wheat crop has undergone many vicissitudes. Beginning with a smaller acreage under cultivation, due to the retarding influences of 1915's abnormal harvest upon this year's ploughing and to the scarcity of labour, it encountered new and unexpected terrors in the shape of rust as well as extraordinarily unfavourable weather conditions. To cope with rust is almost impossible even in countries where it is a frequent visitor, and to most Western Canadian farmers it is a stranger.

But God sent rust to the United States, too, and all over the world He seemed to have had a special grudge against wheat. The consequence is that the western farmer is rejoicing in wheat prices that seemed like a fairy tale three years ago. Wheat stands to-day at approximately twice its price a year ago, and any man who has had any kind of a crop at all is making money at a rate that demagogues might call scandalous. Quite a number of farmers, it must be confessed, do not regard wheat prices as anything but a dream. They read them in newspapers, but incline to the conviction that it is some new trick of them there fellers in Winnipeg or Shicawger; that they will actually get them at

their local elevator is another matter. They are apprehensive that they will not last; they view every fluctuation with alarm, as a breath that will bring the house of cards down. Hence, they are rushing more grain to market at a rapid rate than circumstances really justify, to be able to stand from under when the anticipated collapse comes.

Meantime they are paying their long-standing debts, buying cattle, paying off their mortgages and getting their title-deeds. That a man should pay for his land with one crop only is far from the phantasm it once seemed, in these days when \$25-an-acre land is producing crops valued at twice or three times that sum. The official statistician estimates that the average yield of wheat per acre in Western Canada is sixteen bushels. Multiply that by \$1.90, or a few cents less, and you will see that a man has to get per acre only the official average yield to realize more than the current average price of land per acre. From crop reports received from many quarters, there is every reason to believe that the government's estimate was unduly pessimistic as regards Alberta.

A ride across the prairie is a wonderfully revivifying thing these days. Several impressions stand out. One—rather trivial if you like—is the waste of a by-product; the high straw flies out of the separator into a golden mound ten or more feet high and is left there to be burned. One day it will be conserved. Another memory is standing on a slight mound and counting the smoke from sixteen separators in a panoramic swing round the horizon. Yet another is meeting all those teams travelling the road to the elevator, some of them having come forty miles or more and consumed two days in the journey. We meet them later in the small towns that cluster round the elevators; the drivers are being barbered and bay-rummed and transformed out of all resemblance to farmers, blowing in a prudent pile in the pool rooms or bowling alleys, or even—such is the off-guarded state to which unexpected prosperity will reduce a man—visiting the offices of the country weekly newspaper and paying arrears in subscriptions. The prairie sunset calls for mention. Always wonderful, its soft clearness is at this season of Indian summer still further beautified by the straw-golden glow that fills the western sky.

The last impression is of the elevator in a small town at night. Ugly and gauntly dominant as it is by day, by night it takes on a kind of massive strength. The town quieters to absolute still, except when the light comes through after midnight, and in the clear cold air, with a million stars twinkling as a background, these great structures look not unpicturesque. There seems to be some significance of mystery to them, as they tower over the two-storey frame buildings and shacks of the pioneer town. They seem, somehow, to symbolize eternity by suggesting a heathen idol whom the people serve. It somehow reminds one very much of the statue of Memnon by the Nile.

IN a seventeen-mile automobile rush we passed twenty-eight waggons hauling grain. I began to count them after the fifth.

"You may not believe me," said my friend the chauffeur when I remarked upon it, "but you passed nearly five thousand dollars in real money."

A grain-box with its necessary human and quadruped accompaniment is not a very aesthetic sight. The horses could never usually be accused of as much as having sniffed at pure-bred ancestry; what ever good equine blood the owner might possess, he would not use it in the humdrum work of hauling grain. If they were not so sturdy, so essentially farm horses, you might have called them plugs. But they plod along very faithfully at their three miles an hour on the prairie trail, which sometimes runs between fences and often doesn't, their driver, unshaven, and wearing the dirty, thigh-length sheep-skin coat that seems such a favourite with western farmers, mostly dozing with the lines in his mittened hands. He generally keeps to the only travelled ruts of the rough trail—or rather, to be exact, his horses do, for he is dreaming of how he'll blow his money in; and when you honk-honk behind him it is usually several minutes before he hears, and, waking, steers his jarred team to the side. Sometimes he has a double waggon, with four horses, but he sleeps just the same; and as you skim by him he blinks frowzily at you, and you say to yourself, "Five thousand dollars!"

An ugly sight, perhaps, and an uninspiring one unless your imagination can play tricks round the idea of the grain which he is transporting, imprisoned in a homely setting but in essence like fairy gold. Unless, also, your thoughts wander to the many hundreds of thousands of dollars that he and his fellows are bringing down to its primary connection with commerce these days. A little like the whole west, no starched linen, but there with the goods.

Where we turned in for lunch they were threshing. That is to say, one farmer's wife at least wore a worried countenance immediately she saw we wanted lunch, because she was already cooking for ten; but she guessed she could take a couple more. Her husband and the boys were down the field; and having said this, she turned to tell her daughter to go get some more of that there liver. Her husband we recognized at once, because he was having words with the foreman of the gang after the latter had ordered him around like any common farm hand. All help, of course, had been impressed, and the farmer and his two boys were hauling sheaves to the separator. The "gang," consisting of two Swedes and one Irishman, were really hard at work, pitching them into the self-feeder; but the engineer in charge of the motive power that emanated from a very noisy engine seemed to have both mind and hands free, and greeted us jovially from where he read an old newspaper in the cab. What he was apparently paid for was the responsibility.