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SEMI-WEEKLY.

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DUNCAN MARSHALL, Manager.

MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 1909.

THE DANGER OF DOLLAR WEAT.

In the midst of prosperity we are in danger. The West is promised an ample crop from the wheat fields and the price of wheat is \$1.11 in Winnipeg. To the man whose fields are standing thick with waving wheat ripening to the harvest the news is eminently satisfactory, but he would do well to avoid the temptation of the splendid outlook for the present season. To the farmer and the country it would be a calamity if the fulfillment of the splendid prospects before the wheat grower this year resulted in stampeding the farmers into the wheat-growing business to the ignoring of the other branches of the farming business without which wheat-growing cannot be carried on permanently on a profit-paying basis and which in the event of a partial failure of the wheat crop or a depression in prices should be the mainstay against disaster. The history of a dozen States, of unnumbered farms in the other provinces and of certain districts in the first settled western province establish the fact that the farmer cannot go on cropping his farm to wheat year after year without wearing it out and reducing its productive power to a point where he must either undertake expensive methods of renewing its fertility or go out of business. The economic condition behind the movement of American farmers to the Canadian West is that the prairie across the line have been so long and so persistently cropped to wheat that for this grain the point of exhaustion has been reached in many places and so nearly reached in great tracts of country that it is no longer an inducement to farm the land. The settlers who ousted the ranchers from the western plains of the United States devoted their attention almost exclusively to wheat raising. They worked on a soil that had never been cropped, that was rich with the fertility of unnumbered seasons' vegetation that had fallen and rotted and added its richness to the earth. Climatic conditions were favorable. It was easy and cheap to begin wheat growing on the open prairie. Wheat growing became the almost exclusive business of the farmer. But the largest bank account plays out in time if no deposits are made against the cheques that are issued; and the farmer found that rich as his home-lands were originally they could not be cropped to wheat eternally without playing out. They must go into some other line of farming or move. They are moving to the Canadian North-West.

There is a tremendous temptation to repeat here the methods of the pioneers of the Western States. The initial expense of starting a wheat farm is much less than that of beginning mixed farming; or, to put it in another way, the same amount of money will put much more land under wheat than it will provide with the buildings and stock necessary for an all-round farm; and, therefore, offers larger immediate returns for the money invested if crops and prices are good. There is here the virgin fertility of soil, the same favorableness of climate which greeted the pioneers of the Western States and determined the course their operations should take. The means of getting the grain out to the markets of the world are rapidly extending everywhere. Wheat crops in the past have been wonderfully successful. Add that wheat is now worth more than a dollar a bushel and the argument is complete to persuade the farmer to plunge into wheat growing exclusively. Already this has become the one and only kind of farming followed in large districts of the West and the successful gathering and marketing of this year's crop at the present high prices must be expected to give impetus to the movement. But if a bumper crop of wheat at one dollar a bushel or more resulted in driving the farmers of the West more exclusively into the business of growing wheat to the disregard of other branches of farming the ultimate result would be calamitous to both the farmers themselves and the country which depends on them for its success. Nature has ordained that soil cannot produce grain year after year without exhaustion. To

disregard this is to flout the initial and essential fact of agriculture everywhere. No country has ever yet built up a permanent prosperity on the basis of wheat growing alone. The country that tries to do so loses at both ends of the game. Its soil becomes yearly poorer and less able to produce crops that pay for the labor and seed. At the same time the poor wheat goes abroad with the good, lowers the reputation of the country's wheat in the markets of the world and therefore the price that can be got for it. The only safe way to a permanent prosperity based on agricultural operations is the way of mixed farming. Under this system the farmer grows his good wheat as wheat, his poor grain as poultry, beef and pork, and leaves his farm as rich at the end of the year as at the beginning. To the western farmer who stands here in laws of nature and co-operates with them there awaits a substantial and abiding prosperity. Those who disregard the laws must suffer the consequences. They are writing cheques without deposits and must not wonder when the response comes, "No funds."

MAIL.

Some eastern papers are going through their annual spasm about the matter of fact the destruction here is not heavier this year than ordinary, and it is not ordinarily heavier west of the Great Lakes than east of them. In the West hail is not considered a serious enemy of the crops, for though some districts or other get it every year the area affected is infinitesimal compared to the total, and though the consequences are very serious to the individuals whose crops are ruined the effect on the general progress and prosperity of the country is nil—unless, indeed, damage is done by those whose interests it is to deter people from coming hither by distorting the amount or importance of the damage. The western crop is scattered over an empire a thousand miles long and five hundred wide. It would be a phenomenon unknown in any other grain-growing country in the world if somewhere in this area hail conditions did not form at some period of the summer. But anything approaching general destruction or even serious injury to the western crop, as a crop, from this cause has never occurred, unless in some early stage of settlement, when the only farmers in the country were grouped in a few spots which by unlucky coincidence were the places hit by the storms. Since settlement began to spread over any considerable portion of the country there has not been any large part of the crop lost from this cause. Area considered, the West does not suffer from hail more than Ontario and Quebec and the Maritime provinces. But it is made to appear a greater sufferer in the columns of papers published in those provinces. This, for several reasons. The West has not been backward about blowing its horn and has aroused jealousy among those eastern people who think their first country on earth and alarm among those who fear that their customers and friends will migrate thither unless cold water is thrown on their enthusiasm aroused by their crop returns. The localism of a closely settled country, too, gives the people of those provinces a distorted notion of the extent of the West, and hence, of the relative importance of a disaster which overtakes one section of it. The average man in Ontario, for instance, has his interests confined to a pretty limited area. His business is done with the people living within a few miles of him and his association is with those living on the near-by farms or in the neighboring village. The people in the second country away are to him an unknown people, in whom he takes no real interest, and whose calamities or successes are remote from his concern. Ontario, to him, is a very large world, and the outlying fragments of the universe dwindle proportionately in his thought. Incredible as it may seem this limitation obtains in degree even in the newspaper offices whose directing minds have not seen the West for themselves. So when a despatch comes along telling of a storm in some little, and perhaps, isolated, corner of the prairie, it is "from the West," and that is all there is about it. In it goes with full head-dress, a solemn warning to prospective immigrants to stay at home and an assurance to the people of the locality that they have all the finest country found. The illusion is further helped out when a couple of lines are casually dropped in acknowledging the arrival of a hail storm which destroyed more crop and cleaned out more farms in the adjoining country or township. This disproportionate treatment is not all venom. Some of it comes from wrong ideas of the country's resources, which could be only obviated by personal observation.

MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP SUCCESS.

Calgary made about four thousand dollars from its street railway system last month, its first in operation. Edmonton's system has more than paid it way from the start. Edmonton is getting at least as good and probably rather a better service than we would get from a company under the circumstances. The same is probably true in Calgary. It would take some pretty strong arguing to persuade these cities that they would do better to turn over their franchises to private corporations. The notion that a city cannot manage an enterprise of this kind so satisfactorily to the public as a private company, has no foundation in fact, provided the city is prepared to do as companies do—get the men and pay them the price. The danger of their not being willing to do so is, of course, where municipal ownership's weakness lies, for there is an indisposition on the part of many communities to pay managing officials as much as companies are prepared to offer. In consequence the companies get good men, but municipalities are not always equally fortunate. Edmonton and Calgary, however, seem to be exceptions to this undesirable rule and to have got the right men in the right places. The success of these enterprises must go far to strengthen the faith of the people of both cities in the efficiency and wisdom of municipal ownership of public services generally, and to lessen any likelihood there may have been of either of them giving up any franchise for a public service monopoly. The effect should be more wide reaching yet. These are the two first cities in the new provinces to install street railway systems. Our success, supposing it to continue, there is every reason to hope and expect, should go far to persuade other western cities of the desirability of following the municipal ownership plan when they reach the street railway stage. By consulting and consulting our own interests we are doing a measure of service to others.

THE CITY AND THE ROADS.

The importance of good roads is not all on the side of the farmer. The city is interested in them as well as the country, not less really, and hardly less vitally. The roads are the primary transportation system of the country, and however many railroad and tram lines may afterward come to make a district, this network of the most used and the most actually necessary means of communication through it. Countries have grown up without railroads, flourished in commercial splendor and reached high levels of material advancement and civilization. But no country ever developed without roads. The city is the product of the country road more than of any other transportation agency. Railroads may help its growth by the way rolls they establish, by bringing to it business which without them would be done in smaller local centres, by offering advantages to industrial concerns. But our cities are in the first instance trading centres for farming communities, to which access is had by road. And trade of the adjacent country is the mainstay of even most large Canadian cities and this can only be handled over the wagon roads. The farmer who comes to town is usually on a double mission. He brings something to sell and he takes home something that he has bought. It is not of more importance to the farmer that he be able to transport his load of wheat to town than to the merchant that he be able to haul the goods he bought with it back home. Each has an interest real and practical in the question of whether or not there be roads, and if so of what kind they be. And through the merchant and the farmer every one in the town who benefits directly or indirectly through or because of the operations of either is personally and materially concerned in having the channels of this trade cleared of obstacles. The city and the country are thus one in benefiting from the existence of good roads and in suffering from want of them. It follows, of course, that liberal Government assistance to road-making is justified, for all should help in securing what is of benefit to all. Nowhere in Canada have the towns and cities a more real and apparent interest in the road question than in the West. We have here a tremendous territory with a comparatively few towns and cities scattered along the lines of railway. Settlement is spreading far back from these. This opens to them immense possibilities for growth, provided the trade of their respective districts can be held. But it cannot be held unless the remote farmers have an easy means of access to the town. For though they may be forced to travel over bad roads, they are not bound to haul the merchant's goods back through the quagmires, because local trading

centres will spring up nearer home to supply their needs. An unbridged river is an arbitrary barrier, because it shuts off the country on that side and offers an opportunity for the development of other trading places in what would otherwise be the tributary territory of the town. Bad roads operate in much the same way, only they cut off business on all sides in stead of one. Good roads on the other hand enable the merchants of the established town to bid for, and get, the trade of the farming community for long distances in each direction, and thus to build up a much more substantial and larger community than would be possible if half of a third of the trade was done in small outlying points for which there was no real necessity except that the farmers of that part could not reach them by the established town to bid for, and get, the trade of the farming community for long distances in each direction, and thus to build up a much more substantial and larger community than would be possible if half of a third of the trade was done in small outlying points for which there was no real necessity except that the farmers of that part could not reach them by the established town to bid for, and get, the trade of the farming community for long distances in each direction, and thus to build up a much more substantial and larger community than would be possible if 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