

Present and Future.

Specially written for the W. H. M. by William Lutton.

Governments cannot save us, but a change of government may have a stimulating effect. There is a common belief that government is, in an occult way, allied with Providence. It is hard to realize that we can only be saved by a naked effort. We all like a little coddling, that is why government—for votes, builds that bridge which you should have built—for salvation. But with a new government, a new Governor General, whose name and connection, gives us an Imperial thrill, we make a fresh start. It is not the season for critical book-keeping. In an atmosphere redolent of plum pudding and cordial human warmth, no captious creature must be allowed to disclose the cynic; but it is well to know that after the insistent excitement of a general election, the national silverware is safe. Government is only a temporary expedient, which will disappear when the corner policeman is no longer necessary, but it is well that before we sit down to our Christmas dinner, political issues affecting our life and destiny are decisively settled. The happy abandon of the old pagan festival, in a world which knew not the agonizing incertitude of the stock market, may not be ours. We have a world to fashion in the new. We have the passion for bigness, born of vast and lonely spaces. In an earlier day, the individual was lost in the mass. There was no local paper; there was no contemporary historian; there was no urgent goad to the doing of things. But in this great Western world we have at once vital problems and the daring and the mental power to solve them, the individual bulks not merely because he makes a big fortune, but because he can stand forth, untrammelled, to do the individual things

which in a more cramped civilization he found impossible of accomplishment. Earl Grey has told us how he lived with the lumber Jack; how he spoke with the settler on the prairie; how he found the hopeful, the large individual expression amid conditions calculated, at the outset, to depress the most daring and stoical.

"Where do all the people go to?" the writer asked a leading C.P.R. official, as he watched a long procession of men, women and children entraining for the West. What becomes of them? How are they absorbed? Ah, that is the question. We do not know. They are swallowed up, they disappear, they make no bulk against the sky line—but they tell in the next year's crop report. They tell in the little bits of muslin curtains which you see in the front windows of the shack.

There is a tragical interest in the growth of this great Western world—it is all new and plastic. It will bear any impress, which strong and urgent mentality can place upon it. You have an amazing, ethical hodge-podge, representing, it might be said, every conceivable race and tongue on the globe. For the first time, they feel the overpowering thrill of ownership—they break up the soil—they sow their seed—they set up the home. It is made of sods, it is fashioned with rough logs, it is poor and pitiful, but here are the sanctities of life expressed. The English speaking settlers set them down a little wistfully. There is a sense of loneliness, a lump comes in the throat. Earl Grey tells how he came across English women, who, while trying to sing the old English songs, broke down. And if the newcomer is from that haunting town of "Lun-

non," nostalgia is necessarily extreme, for the heart turns to "Bow Bells" and "Seven Dials," and it might be sweet to starve within sight and sound of the music hall, but there is the prideful sense of ownership. There are the bright faces of the prairie flowers, there are the divine compulsions of glorious sunsets, there is the stimulating hope of independence. The shack becomes home—there are flowers in the windows—there are draperies which spell the recovered sense of life and living, material and spiritual hope. The young voices multiply. The school grows. A social life shows faint but hopeful beginnings. Out of the vastness is evolved a closer neighborhood, and familiar gossip saves the soul. And these formative and moulding processes are going on all over the West. The little cluster of houses becomes the village, is transmuted, as if by magic, into the town, the city, which savingly from the utilitarian point of view, but hopelessly from aesthetic considerations, darkens the pure light of the prairie. The public library puts a soul into materiality—the grace of education refines the coarser elements. The advent of educated women baptizes and redeems arid conditions, and always the cultivable area extends. A self contained people express a new and desirable contentment. The early hardships encourage the growth of virtue. The public spirit is born. The evolution of the politician is accomplished. The embryo statesman claims the regard. The nomad from the four corners of the earth feels the thrilling compulsion of citizenship. The blasts of winter search the humble cabin with shrill persistency, but there is warmth and cheer within. The crop has brought gain. The land rests. The great silence falls. Memories, precious as life itself, dear as remembered kisses after death, throng the mind. The heart swells. Across the waste of ocean comes the old longing, the dear old faces, the echoes of the old songs, the cadences of the "Merry Bells of Yule." There is a throb in the throat,

but here, too, are home and kindred, and happy faces in the new world, in which are possession and independence. There is "full and plenty," the distance makes the infrequent friend doubly welcome; the poignancy of experience makes the sacred season doubly precious.

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Lord Strathcona, whose pre-vision is among his many invaluable qualities, sees in the near future, fifty million people in our great Commonwealth. That is not an exaggeration. The tendency is to belittle the present moment, and to over emphasize the centuries, because they cannot contradict you. But, however, inept, or indifferent, or hindering, governments may be, they cannot retard our progress. We are the last great unoccupied territory on the planet. The pressure of old world populations guarantees destiny. The yearning hope in the heart of oppressed and impoverished peoples for human betterment, under fair and wholesome conditions, books the space before the ship is on the stocks. The lure of a brand new world, all unspoiled; a world which is all in the making, is potent. It appeals to the imagination. It kindles the most stolid. The Briton is not dithyrambic, but even the national phlegm gives way to candid wonder. The "granary of the world" is a hackneyed phrase; actually and potentially, it has great significance. The villages become towns; the towns become cities; the ethnic diversity approaches a unified assimilation; the variety of types expresses a physical and mental homogeneity; in the crucible of time, in the attrition of daily experience, a single entity is educed from the many. A common sentiment is all dominant. A whole population thrills to one destiny. The Galician who kisses the naked earth in token of new found joy in individual

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