

THE NATIONAL MONTHLY OF CANADA.

VOL. II

TORONTO, MARCH, 1903

No. 3

CURRENT COMMENTS

Getting Our Eyes Open

THE people who know most about a place are its own citizens, and of no place is this truer than of Western Canada. THE NATIONAL MONTHLY recently had the privilege of an interview with a business man from the Territory of Assiniboia, who was returning from a tour of the Western States and some of the American cities. He was a man filled with what we call the "Spirit of the West," and he said that he was going home with a greater faith than ever in his own country. But his American trip had been an eye-opener. Twenty years before he had gone over the same ground, and the object of his recent visit was to see what progress had been made in the meantime. In some districts of Dakota, Nebraska, and other western states, where twenty years ago he had seen only desert plains or straggling settlements, there were now thriving towns and cities, and the prairies had been converted into the best of farm-lands. The American West, he said, was full of the marks of progress. But he believed that the Canadian West was even better country, and that its only need was to adopt the same methods that had been so successful on the other side.

What our politicians ought to do, he said, was to make such a tour as he had,

and then to study the needs of Canada by actual comparison—to see what others had done, and then to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with our own country. The West was already waking up. The two things it wanted most were railways and immigration. The best class of immigrants to be had were the men who came over from the United States, for even when these were of foreign descent they had already had experience which fitted them to become Canadian citizens at once. There is no danger, our informant said, of Western Canada becoming "Americanized;" the people who come over come with the intention of being citizens, and in many cases that he had known personally they had expressed themselves as delighted not only with the resources of the country, but with the excellence of our Canadian laws and system of government.

The greatness of the country was something that no one who had not seen it could realize. Politicians who stayed at home had no conception of it, and therefore an intelligent study of conditions on the spot was almost essential. The Canadian West had the makings of a great country, but its future would never be worked out as it should be, unless a wide-awake policy such as our American neighbors had followed were applied there too.