

The Canadian Courier

A National Weekly

Subscription: \$4.00 a Year.

Vol. IV.

Toronto, July 18th, 1908.

No. 7

A WESTERN JOURNEY

IN closing this short series of letters from the West, I should like to give some impressions made by the westerners themselves. The larger number of the people seen in the trains and hotels are easterners—sightseers, commercial travellers, representatives of eastern railway and financial interests. The professional and business men are mainly ex-easterners. The clerks in the banks, offices and railway stations are largely from eastern Canada. There are business men who have come over from the United States, but as yet they are not numerous. There are business and professional men who are natives, and a number who are of foreign birth. Yet the easterner predominates.

In passing from the east to the west, the easterner changes his character to some extent. He becomes more off-hand, more cheery, more voluble and a most attractive person to meet. Anxious always to advertise the country and to impress the visitor, he is willing to go a long distance in making you feel at home. Nearly every business man is a reception committee.

That the West has contempt for the East is sometimes the theme which certain croakers in the press and elsewhere persist in discussing. I have mixed much with the westerner and seen him in many moods and I am quite convinced that there is nothing in this croak. It is a figment of the imagination. The East has the respect of the West just as the West has the respect of the East. There is no more thought nor desire for a solid West against a solid East than there is for a solid Ontario against a solid Quebec. There is more feeling between Edmonton and Strathcona or Edmonton and Calgary than there is between Winnipeg and Toronto or Montreal. Even the action of the banks in shutting down on credits and pressing the wind out of the land boom has not left much soreness. The common remark is that the "bursting of the boom" was in the best interests of the West. In fact, their complacency surprised me. They frankly admit that some people had gone wild and that these kite-flyers have been taught a salutary lesson.

The extension of the Canadian Northern Railway system and the arrival of the Grand Trunk Pacific have killed much of the talk about the greediness of the Canadian Pacific. Perhaps the lower rates on wheat and the building of many new feeders by the C. P. R. have had something to do with this also. There is more complaint about wheat inspection and the excessive elevator charges than of lack of railway attention. This is one of the notable changes in recent years.

Again, the erection of two new provincial governments has drawn off part of the criticism formerly directed against Ottawa. The West has now three governments of its own to criticise and that keeps it fairly busy.

Since I returned, a gentleman asked me if I thought that last year's poor crop and financial troubles would cause the West to be more careful and conservative. My answer was that it would have no effect whatever. Just as soon as this new bumper crop is assured, the West will be as buoyant, as extravagant and as reckless as ever. So long as there are millions of acres to increase in value from \$3 to \$30 an acre, and so long as there are new towns to be built with lots increasing in value from \$50 to \$5,000, so long will there be a boom in the West. The boom has left the older sections and gone into the newer. Not until all the new sections become old, will business become quite normal. That will be nearly a century hence.

Moreover, the westerner regards last year's experience as an

accident. It may never happen again, he already declares. He loves his country and has faith in it. He will never go east again. If he gets all the money he wants and desires leisure, he goes on to Vancouver or Victoria, where the winters are milder—he never returns East. Not that he hates the East; simply, he loves the West.

The greatest difficulty the West has just now is to provide education and recreation for its people. The educational problem has been taken hold of and in many respects the town and city schools of the West excel those of the East. Moreover, every child that goes to a public school in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta will henceforth have its school readers free. This is an educational advance which has been accomplished in only two or three eastern cities and in no eastern province as a whole. As regards recreation, Winnipeg has a "Happyland," a professional baseball team, a Country and Golf club, a new race-track, a lakeside summer resort and excursion steamers on the Red River. In the other towns and cities, athletics receive some attention, while local horse-racing is a civic sport. On the whole, however, the people find the long evenings rather wearisome. The theatre and concert halls are not well served, and "society" is not yet highly developed. Nevertheless, the people are learning very rapidly that one of the chief charms in life is to learn to spend money on other pleasures than painted women, doctored whiskey and poor-vintage champagne.

In short, aside from the newness of the buildings and the all-pervading optimism, the West is already quite like the East. There are really no very striking differences. Canada is rapidly becoming homogeneous.

Out at the Dominion Fair at Calgary this year they have an exhibit, a photograph of which accompanies this article, that depicts the cowboy riding along a trail and suddenly finding his way barred by a new wire fence and a field of wheat. The idea is typical. The roughness and the wildness of the West are disappearing with the old trails. The new roads run according to the surveyor's stakes. The buffalo herds and the Red River carts have gone; the rider of the plains must follow. Civilisation is doing its work. It is crowding out the western character and bringing in the eastern. Soon the West will be as civilised and as cultured as the East. Only in the great Peace River valley, in the last Great Beyond, can the western characteristics, save that striking optimism, survive for any great length of time.

J. A. C.

Telephones in the West

ALBERTA and Manitoba are discussing their respective bargains with the Bell Telephone Company. It is declared that Manitoba paid the company \$212.38 for each telephone, while Alberta paid only \$143.00. Manitoba has not been able to reduce rates, while Alberta is in a better position in this respect. Alberta has not really reduced rates as these were already somewhat lower than in other provinces, yet the prospects are fairly bright. This at least is the claim.

Saskatchewan has drafted a provincial policy and will construct trunk lines parallel to all the existing railways. As the Bell lines have not been purchased this will mean duplication if a bargain is not struck. Construction will begin shortly. By legislation passed at the recent session, municipalities and rural communities may form local companies with certain privileges of connection with the trunk lines. Rural lines will be assisted by the government.

These experiments in the provincial management of the telephone monopoly will be watched with the greatest interest in other portions of Canada. The Dominion Government having apparently decided to leave the telephone business to private organisations, these provinces have undertaken public management and construction.



"Another Trail Closed."

Alberta's unique Exhibit at the Dominion Fair, Calgary.