



#### THE GREAT NEED OF THE WEST

MR. F. W. HIRST, editor of the London *Economist*, has hit the West a rather hard blow in an article which he has contributed to his paper. If the Englishman goes to one of the three prairie provinces, says Mr. Hirst, he "must be prepared to do without most of the amenities of home life." He must be prepared against the "terrible isolation of the western plains which drives so many men and women crazy, filling the lunatic asylums." He quotes the experiences of a man who set up a young kinsman at Grenfell three years ago. The first year, the crop was small but satisfactory. In 1907, the grain was frozen and in 1908 there was a similar experience. Result: The Englishman will withdraw his kinsman. The "six months' solid winter" is too much for him, considering the possibility of frozen wheat.

In regard to this incident, one can only say that the frost injury of 1908 if it occurred, which one may doubt reasonably, must have been light and quite exceptional. The frost damage of last year was small, the whole country considered. The amount of good wheat harvested was larger than in 1906, a bumper year. Mr. Hirst has done the West a great injustice by quoting an unfortunate, if not mis-stated, example.

Towards the other provinces, especially Ontario, Mr. Hirst is more kindly. He says: "The English farmer who wants a certain amount of society and home comfort, with reasonable prospects of steady prosperity, will do well to look first at Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia or Quebec." What Mr. Hirst overlooks is the cheapness of land in the West compared with the east. He also forgets that railways are being extended very rapidly in the west, that telegraph and telephone lines are being quickly built, that towns and villages are increasing in number, and that "the amenities of home life" are in sight. Five years from now, most of Saskatchewan and Alberta will be as well served by towns, villages, schools, telephones and railways as most portions of Ontario and Quebec. In ten or fifteen years, the lonesomeness of the west will have been driven north of the north branch of the Saskatchewan River. To the Englishman Mr. Hirst's advice may be good; but to the Canadian and the American farmer who know how fast the frontier has been pushed back on this continent, the problems of the new settler are not so horrible as Mr. Hirst has painted them.

His letter shows one thing clearly. The government at Ottawa and the governments in the West must do their best to ameliorate the settler's life by providing him with roads, railways, post-offices, telephones and schools. These governments must be enterprising and bold. The criticisms, which Mr. Hirst and such as he are making, must be rendered impossible. It can be done rapidly if we but realise the necessity and the wisdom for prompt, generous and comprehensive governmental activity. The prosperity of the whole country depends upon the rapidity of settlement in the West, and the rapidity of settlement depends upon the attention which is given to transportation, marketing and other forms of general public service.

#### CANADA'S NATIONAL WINTER SPORT

WHETHER lacrosse is gaining or losing ground in its native land is open to argument but as to its ice-clad sister there can be only one opinion. Hockey is gaining ground with the speed that is its chief characteristic. To-day it is epidemic throughout the winter-governed portion of the Dominion and from Halifax to Dawson City every Canadian boy seems to be born with a pair of skates on his feet and a hockey stick in his hand. Nor can it be said that hockey, like Rugby football flourishes for lack of competition. Winter sports Canada has in greater number than any other country in the world. Curling has grown and waxed fat on our climate till here it has been reduced more closely to an exact science than even in its native Scot-

land. But curling is the sport largely of men who have left their more strenuous sports behind. Tobogganning has outlived its craze period but is still taken in homoeopathic doses. Snowshoeing furnishes a pleasant afternoon's tramp with the ladies and a good appetite for supper. Skating is simply a pleasant exercise. Ice-boating and ski-ing are practised by the few. But hockey remains to urge the young Canadian to deeds of daring, to develop his muscles and nerve, to teach him to keep his temper under control and to arouse the enthusiasm of hundreds of thousands of his fellow Canucks who have dropped from sport into the whirl of business life.

And surely, no game ever appealed more thoroughly to player and spectator alike. Played on the same lines as lacrosse the difference being that the puck is shot from player to player along the smooth surface of the ice instead of being thrown from a net it requires the same generalship as the national summer sport, and the same spirit of do and dare, while owing to the acceleration furnished by the skates, it attains a speed lacrosse can never even hope to equal. It has all those qualities that appeal to the strong, active fight-hungry Canadian boy and he takes to it as naturally as a duck takes to water.

How many Canadian boys play the game? you ask. It would take a statistician to even make a guess. Toronto alone has its scores of leagues, its hundreds of clubs and its thousands of players. It is the same in Montreal, Ottawa and Winnipeg. Every town and village in Ontario and Manitoba has its team or teams and every sprouting village on the prairies gathers a hockey team as one of its first influences to bind the inhabitants into a community. Hockey stands to-day one of the strongest sporting influences in Canadian life, and that it is a permanent influence is evidenced by its steady, if rapid growth, and its Canadian-thistle-like quality of sticking wherever it takes root.

#### ENGLISH vs. UNITED STATES SPELLING

CONSIDERABLE excitement has been caused by the proposal to adopt the English spelling in all books hereafter published under the authority of the Department of Education for Ontario. The spelling reformers seem to think that it is a backward step. The main point at issue is who should take the initiative in reform, the Canadian or the British educationists? We venture to suggest that the reform must come from Great Britain, not from Canada, and that until the British scholars have decided upon reform Canadian spelling should be the same as the British.

This may be characterised as old fogeyism. Yet it seems reasonable that, having no dictionaries of our own, we should retain the British dictionary. We must adopt some standard. At present there is none. The United States educational authorities have a standard of their own and every person there follows it. This is quite understandable. At present, Canada is in confusion. The Government has officially adopted one form, and the "Canadian Courier" and a few other publications accept it. The daily papers and many school teachers and professors have adopted the American standard, with the consequence that some people use one form and some another. If th "u" is to be omitted from labour, and the "z" is to be used in realise, let us have an official declaration on the subject. So long as there is no new declaration, a person who desires to be right must follow the official spelling as laid down by the Privy Council Minute of 1890.

The "Courier" is not averse to spelling reform and it not unwilling to admit that there are arguments in favour of it. It does maintain, however, that these arguments must be addressed to the scholars and authorities of the Empire to be effective. The university men of Great Britain have set a standard and it is for them, not for a small number of English-speaking Canadians, to make the change. Let the agitation for spelling reform go on, but let us in the mean-