

Comments on Current Events

Non-Producers

THERE is no doubt but that there is too great a tendency for the people to flock to the towns and cities and that such tendency is having its effect upon the output of the farm. However, it must be remembered that there are so many large undertakings in the West at present in the way of railway building and local improvement in cities and towns such as the installing of water, etc., that employ so many men that would otherwise go to the farms. These undertakings are necessary for the life of the country. If railways are not built, the products of the farm cannot be hauled out, and the improvements in the cities and towns are essential to health.

After these undertakings are met to some extent, there is no doubt but that the products from the farms will show a noticeable increase. Farm labor has been, and is, scarce in this country, and this must be attributed to these undertakings.

There is a good deal of force, however, in the following article from the Toronto Mail and Empire.

Estimates of wheat acreage in the Western provinces are disappointing. The most favorable of them indicates an increase of about 20 per cent. upon the acreage of last year, and the least favorable indicates no gain at all. If the land under wheat in 1908 had been much more extensive than in 1907, and had this followed a long series of like increases, a 20 per cent. gain would have been very satisfactory. But so far from being large, the annual rate of progression has been quite small. It has not been at all commensurate with the growth in the West's population.

Since the beginning of the century, waves of immigration from Europe and the United States have rolled into our prairie country every spring. If all the men thus added to the number of the West's inhabitants were efficient farmers, the expansion in the wheat producing area would have been quite 50 per cent. greater than it has actually been. The West has been building up towns and cities at a stage in its development when it should be rather spreading out more settlers upon its fertile fields. Great urban communities were bound to come, and the country could better afford to deter their growth than to hasten it at the expense of the agricultural progress. The prosperity of that great region of the Dominion has had some attendant disadvantages. Money for a time was made in land speculation and thousands of those who went to the West were attracted solely by the opportunities for increasing their means by this variety of enterprise. On all hands one would hear the praises of the prairie country sounded as a place for getting

rich quick. With a little money many a man has made his fortune there. Every winner had his home circle of friends ambitious to rival his career, and many trooped into the country with no intention whatever of adding to the production of that general wealth in which they were seeking to share. Of course the actual tillers of the soil to whom land was sold at prices returning a big profit to the speculators must have been able to buy. But how many of these who went into the country with the desire and purpose to carry on farming found the price too high and gave up their farming plans. With their slender means they could not buy land in settlements served by the railways and they were not venturesome enough to trust to the cheaper lands in remoter districts. They consequently fell back upon the towns. Those who did pay high speculative prices and helped to enrich unproductive "boomers" had so much the less to spend upon their properties and in the carrying on of their business. Less was left to lay out on their farm buildings, wire fences, implements, live stock, etc. Consequently, the general commerce of the country was lessened in the same measure as the speculators were benefitted. Manufacturers and merchants of all kinds would have got the money that went to the speculators if a proper land policy had been established and maintained by the Government, and, of course, the commodities that would have been purchased from the manufacturers and merchants would have been the product of labor largely done in Canada. Further, the benefit of such expenditure would have gone directly to the farms, where the better building, better fences, better equipment, and consequent better farming would have been of great capital value.

In another way the Government is to blame for the fact that so large a proportion of the total population of the West is collected into towns and cities. People utterly unfit for agricultural industry and without productive utility in any line were induced, even assisted, to cross the Atlantic and make their homes in our Western country. The consequences of this bad immigration policy and of the bad land policy are beginning to show themselves. The effects would have been serious if the West had not been a country of great and easily developed resources.

No Room For The Drunkard

A FEW decades ago it was common to hear of ability rendered comparatively worthless in many walks of life by alcoholic indulgence. In professional and industrial callings the lament for bad habits of the otherwise competent was frequently heard. Now the able man who drinks is seldom heard of, because his weakness speedily robs him of recognition and of any chance to demonstrate his abilities. There is no longer any room for the drinker, however able he may be. The great railway corporations have effected a complete change in the discipline of their employees in this regard. Railway services require minds keenly alert and watchful, and its demands are too exacting for those who are muddled by alcohol or wearied by past indulgence.

The rules have been gradually growing more strict, until now the men composing train crews on some of

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