

## The Real Reason of Western Optimism

by John Humphrey Kenyon.

Of course, it is a complex one, made up of a great many reasons, more or less understood, more or less taken for granted. Yet it is simple enough to those of us who have been on the spot for a number of years, with our eyes and ears open. The real reason is to be found everywhere in this great West. You may not be able to define it at the time you believe it; you may not even see it with your mental eye at the moment you feel the truth of it; but the fact is ever present in your daily consciousness, and you cannot disbelieve it. The whole big West is optimistic because it cannot help it. That is the fact that stares us in the face. It is the chief thing that both surprises and delights the man from the East when he comes here to spy out the land.

Now, why on earth are we so optimistic? There must be a reason, and this must be made up of many obscure, perhaps, but still pregnant reasons, all of which are worth while bringing to the surface. But time and space both forbid the attempt to name all the things that make us convinced that the West of Canada has a future out of all proportion to its place in past history. Proud as we are of what we have accomplished, building upon the basis of the grand

work of the brave pioneers who preceded us, we have no illusions regarding the progress we have achieved. For we know it is merely a beginning of a task that we shall have to leave to our children and to their children, and then it will not be completed, since what we have started to do out here is such a gigantic construction that all of our short-sighted conceptions fall far short of the reality that only posterity itself can estimate. Indeed, we have all become history-makers by laying the foundations of a western empire that cannot be duplicated on earth. This much gives us just cause for pride. We are doing our best to create the very conditions upon which a solid and permanent prosperity will finally have to rest. And we are doing this, more or less unconsciously, because we do it while we go about our daily work, trying to make a living or a competence. In fact, we cannot help doing it, for in a large degree, every man, woman and child who comes to the West from the East, or from the North or South, is a worthy follower of those tireless heroes who gave us new frontiers of civilization. We came out here imbued with the same spirit of adventure, sustained by the same hope, animated with the same resolve. Our eyes were filled

with the golden light of the magnificent western sun, ere we left our homes in the old land, just as truly as this was the case with the fearless pioneers.

Granted, then, that we were optimistic when we started for the West from the East, North or South, why is it we are still so hopeful of the future that no stagnation in business can compel our silence, no stringency in the money market can make us feel despondent? Because we know such an abnormal state of things cannot last. It is only a temporary phase of a prosperity that is speeding too rapidly. It is just a chance to look our good fortune over and tabulate its items of value. It is a mighty good opportunity to shake hands with ourselves for coming out here so soon. It is the time we need to find our souls, perhaps, and to link them up with the great forces of life that are generally unrecognized by men in their race for wealth or fame. At any rate, we are all sure that there will be no slump in values, inasmuch as these have as a foundation the richest land on earth, just beginning to be tilled for the benefit of the world. And as long as we are of this faith, there can come no panic, no cessation of business, nothing, in fact, except perhaps some timely conservation of resources that will add to our country's wealth.

Let us briefly allude to a few reasons why the West of Canada is so consistently optimistic, for we are not visionaries, but practical men of affairs, and we can hold our own in argument with any people.

Here we are in the midst of riches incalculable. The area of the three prairie provinces is 479,162,438 acres. This is

enough land to feed the world. Only about six per cent of it was cultivated last year, and still the crop was worth over \$250,000,000. Mind you, this result is obviously only a beginning.

Commerce is conditioned by the power of land to maintain population; and cities and towns can only grow to the limit of the crop resources. Imagine, if you can, what the future cities of our West will be, when we are really using all of our land. Last year we grew enough wheat on the prairie to keep a steady river of a thousand bushels per minute flowing continuously night and day to the head of the lakes for three and a half months, and if we add the oats and barley to the wheat, the great river of food would run at the same rate of speed for another four months. Can you conceive it? Put it another way. The value of our grain crop last year would be more than enough to build any of our great transcontinental railroads, and then fully equip it. What will the value of our season's crop be when fifty per cent of our rich acreage is utilized? The sum staggers comprehension. It is still, however, only one half of what Western Canada can earn by means of its farms. Then, a lot more, infinitely more, can be made by digging its untold treasures of silver and gold and copper and iron and coal and oil. And we haven't yet started upon this task. Besides mining, we have other ways of adding to the vast wealth of the western country, all of which will come into use, one by one, as soon as we have time to devote to them. Is it any wonder that the enterprising Americans and Englishmen are swarming into the country, bringing with them hundreds of millions

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