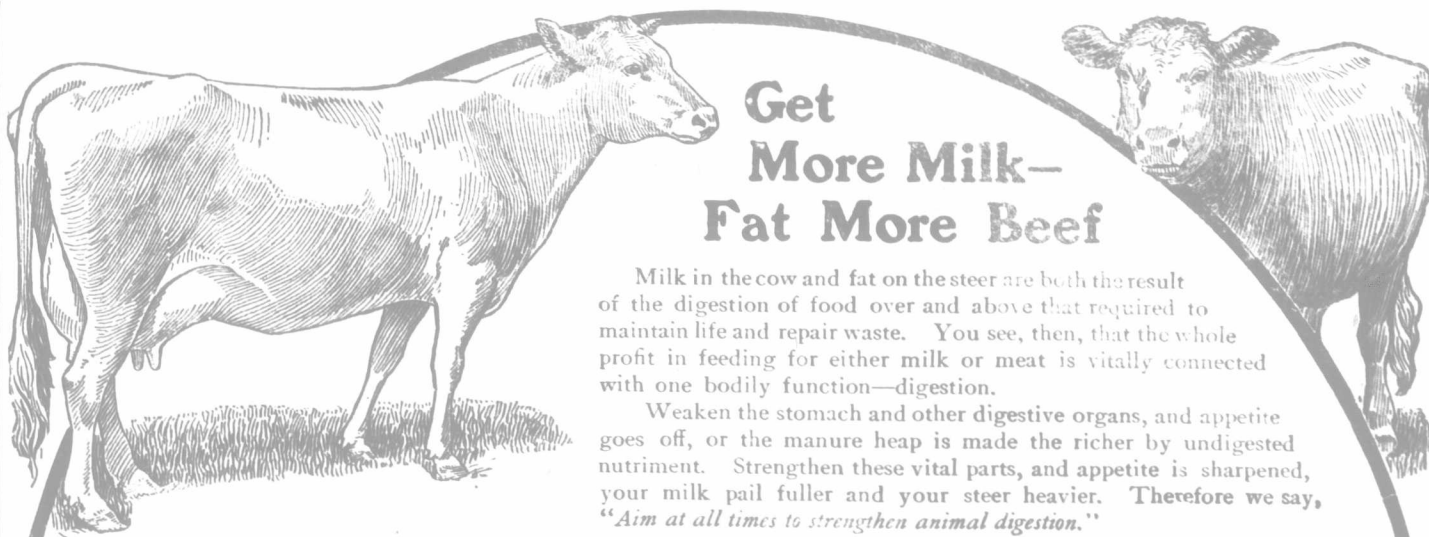


Twenty-five years ago Winnipeg was contested by an enthusiastic politician who had as his platform the immediate construction of the Hudson Bay Railway. It was needed then about as much as a line of airships to Paris, but he came within six votes of being elected. All over the prairie the insistent demand has been for an outlet to the bay, though it is not really needed yet. In ten or fifteen years there will be sufficient grain in the West to justify the expensive experiment, and then it will be a paying proposition and a great boon to the Western farmer. It will probably be nearly ten years before the railway is built, the immense terminal elevators erected on the shores of the bay, and a line of steamers built for the ocean carriage. There will be five railway lines from the wheat fields to the Great Lakes next year, and if properly equipped they will handle the grain until the bay line is built.

Hudson Bay is already within four hundred and eighty miles of railway connection. After completing the Canadian Northern Railway to Edmonton, a branch was built at Dauphin with a line to Prince Albert. At Hudson Bay Junction, or Etomami, as it is called, it branched off to the northeastward and started for the bay. It is three hundred and eighty-one miles to Etomami from Winnipeg, and ninety miles further to The Pas. Work has been in progress on the line for several years and the rails reached the river last fall. Ballast has gone thirty miles. The country is all level and the road has been easy to build when the weather has been dry. The ballasting has stopped this summer, but is expected to go ahead this fall again. There is no hurry, for when the line is all ballasted there will be no traffic to pay operating expenses. Etomami, the southern terminus, built in the woods, is a town of barely two hundred souls. The only other settlement on the line is six miles from Etomami, where there is a lumber outfit at Ruby Lake. The inhabitants and their families travel back and forth to the main line on lorry cars and jiggers, and this is the only regular train on the Hudson Bay line to-day. After the first few miles there is no merchantable timber on the line to The Pas. The spruce is mostly scrub, but there are big patches of poplar that will some day make a profitable pulp industry and turn out fine paper to the benefit of Canada. There are occasional Jack pines, but few of them are large enough for use. The greater part of the ninety miles is muskeg, which, unless in very dry seasons, is practically impassable. In one place the railway passes over thirteen miles of one large muskeg. The country, as far as can be seen, is of the same character nearly as far as the Pasquia Hills, which run to the northwest about forty miles to the west of the railway.

One of the peculiar features of the railway to The Pas is the fact that splendid depots have been built at distances of eighteen miles all the way from Etomami to the Saskatchewan. Not a living soul can be found within miles and miles of them and never will be until agricultural science reveals methods for the redemption of muskeg. The depot at The Pas is rather more fancy than the others, and would be a considerable ornament to many of the real towns on the main lines across the prairie. Though there are no trains running to The Pas, the inhabitants of that place get much good from the rails. The construction gangs left several handcars on the line, and they form the means for transportation. Four husky Indians from the reserve will pump a handcar down the line in a day. They then build a frame on it and load it with freight and spend three or four days walking home and pushing the car. Passengers make the trip back and forth in the same way, saving a couple of weeks on the regular trip via Prince Albert. Letters sent down on a handcar arrive at their destination a month ahead of the regular route.



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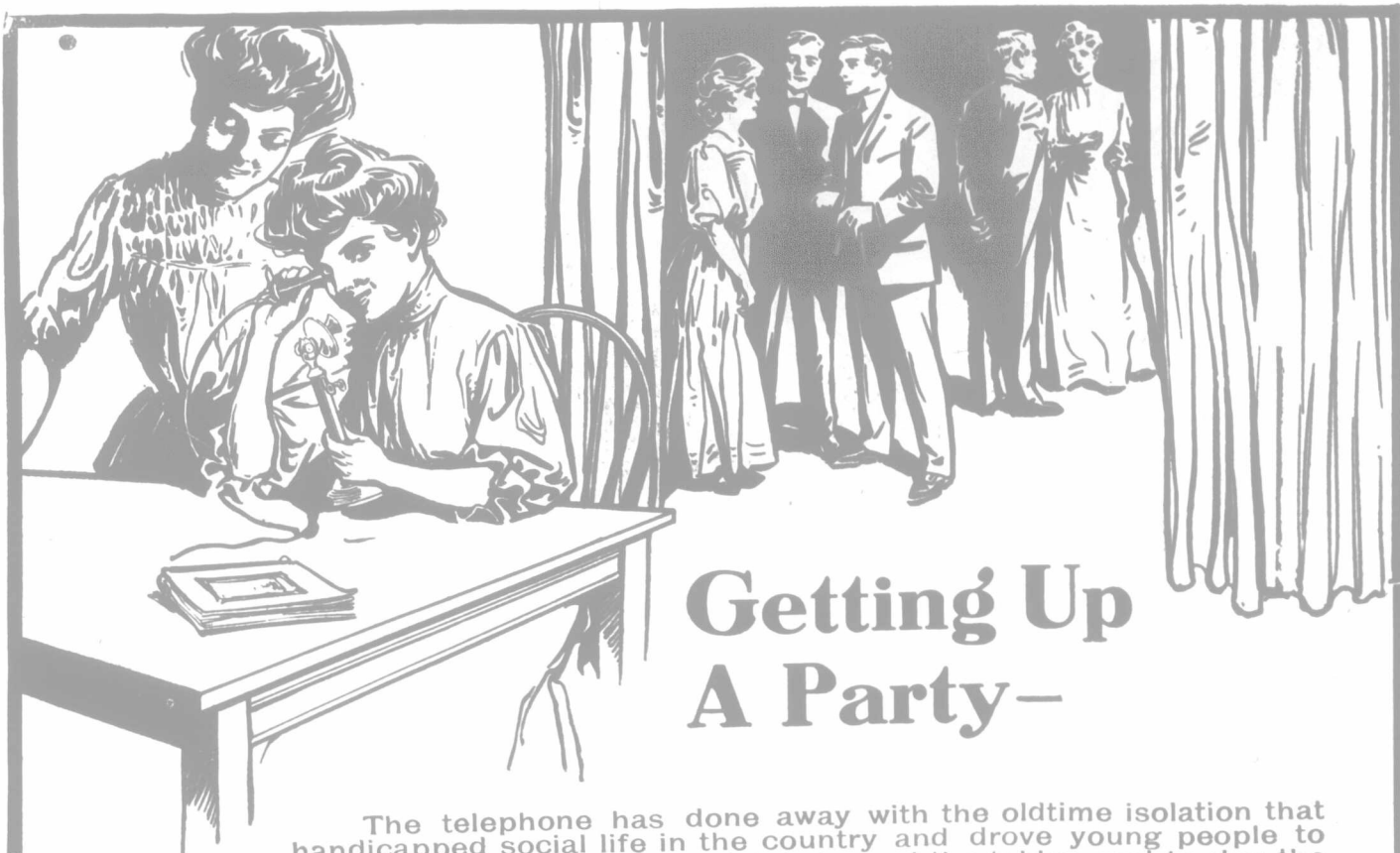
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