



Backsetting the Farmer

II.—Farming the Farmer instead of the farm

By A. S. Handicap



Where does wealth come from? You say, "the banks." Why, all the banks in Canada never produced enough wealth to buy a dude ledger-keeper a pair of silk socks. Banks gather wealth, buy and sell bookkeeping for wealth, deal in it, and sometimes lend it at a good stiff rate of interest; but they never produce it.

"Oh, but," you say, "the government produces money. Look at that nice, crisp four dollar bill!" True, the government can stamp "Four Dollars" on a piece of paper, and the people accept it as four dollars' worth, but outside of the promise to pay what it represents it is not worth a cent. Its value is dependent upon the promise of the people of Canada, which stands behind the printed slip, and upon our reliance on that promise.

The Secret of Wealth

"Well, then, trade produces wealth." Wrong again. Commerce and trade of every form employ wealth, but do not produce it. You have no doubt heard the story of the two men who were wrecked on a deserted island. Each had one hundred dollars and certain salvage from the wreck. They sought shelter in a rude cave and started buying and selling back and forth. They were both enterprising and energetic, and they carried on a thriving business, but at the end of the year they had exactly what they started with, somewhat the worse for the wear and tear of the many exchanges made during the season.

Then they changed their methods. Instead of trading their tools they dug up the earth with them, planted their seeds and grew food; they cut down trees and made a comfortable shelter; they made a net of their twine and stretched it across a water channel and caught fish. Thus their needs were supplied and they had discovered the secret of how to produce wealth.

Permit me to quote some figures. The farmers of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba last year raised 342,948,000 bushels of wheat. If we take for an average 85 cents a bushel in Manitoba, 81 cents in Saskatchewan and 79 cents in Alberta, the season's wheat crop was worth \$280,629,000.00. Add to these an oat crop of 334,840,600 bushels, worth \$95,457,000.00, a barley crop of 35,254,200 bushels, worth \$15,871,000.00, and a flax crop of 10,559,000 bushels, worth \$15,843,000.00, and it will be found that on these four staples alone the farmers of Western Canada produced a wealth of \$407,800,000.

New Wealth Comes From the Soil

Note that this wealth has been created. It did not previously exist. It has been taken from the soil as a result of the combination of the brain and muscles of the farmer, working in harmony with the laws of nature. The doctrine of the Farm is that every man ought to stand in primary relations with the work of the world, ought to do this work himself for the reason that labor is true education and that he only is a sincere learner, he only can become a master, who learns the secrets of labor and by real cunning extorts his wealth from nature. Every man ought to have this opportunity to conquer the world for himself. Knowledge, virtue and power are the victories of man over his necessities. The whole interest of history lies in the fortunes of the men who have stood in the jaws of need and have, by their own wit and might, extricated themselves and made man victorious.

How different this is from the ordinary business ethic of exploiting the other fellow and getting something for nothing! This wealth is not siphoned by some complex process from those who produced it, it is not procured by shearing lambs in the market, by keeping toll gates on the public highways of transportation, by extortion under the legal cover of a tariff wall, by sweat shop labor, or adulterated food, or exorbitant rental of filthy tenements.

The Prey of Enemies

A man who supplies his own wants, who builds a raft or a boat to go a-fishing with, finds it easy to repair it. What he gets only as fast as he wants it for his own purposes does not embarrass him or take away his sleep with looking after. But when he comes to give all the goods he has year after year collected in one estate to his son—house, mea-

dow, plowed land, cattle, silverware, carpets, provisions, books, money—and cannot give him the skill and experience which made or collected them, the son finds his hands full—not to use these things but to look after them and defend them from their natural enemies. Every species of property is preyed on by its enemy, as iron by rust; timber by rot; cloth by moths; provisions by mold, putridity or vermin; money by thieves; an orchard by insects; a grain field by weeds and the inroads of cattle; cattle by hunger; a highway by rain and frost; a bridge by freshets. Whoever takes any of these things into his possession takes the charge of defending them from their troops of enemies and of keeping them in repair.

Degeneration

To the father these things were means; to the son they are masters. What a change! Instead of the good humor and sense of power and fertility of resource in himself, instead of those strong and learned hands, those piercing and learned eyes, that supple body and that mighty and prevailing heart which the father had, whom Nature loved and feared, whom snow and rain, water and land, beast and fish, all seemed to know and to serve, we have now a puny protected person, guarded by walls and curtains, stoves and downy beds, automobiles and men servants and women servants—one who is forced to spend so much time in guarding his wealth



that he has quite lost sight of its original use, namely to help him to the prosecution of his desires, to the helping of his friend, to the enlargement of his knowledge, to the serving of his country, to the indulgence of his sentiment. And he who is called a rich man is the servant of his riches.

The figures given above are only for grain production, and do not include the millions of dollars represented by the livestock and dairying industry, nor the additional millions included in the root, fruit and garden crops. The milk, butter and cheese production of Alberta for 1915 was valued at about \$11,000,000.00. The potato crop of the three provinces was worth \$5,500,000.00. Corn and alfalfa—comparatively new crops, charged with tremendous possibilities—amounted to over a round million.

Farm Exports and Manufacturers

Now let us look at this subject from another standpoint. A comparison between the exports of the farmers of Canada and the manufacturers rounds very much to the credit of the farmers, as the following statistics will show: The total exports of agricultural products from Canada were \$205,000,000.00, as against manufactured exports, \$115,000,000.00. These figures do not include \$27,000,000.00 made up of flour, bacon and cereal foods, which were products of the farm, given their finished form by the manufacturers.

It would thus appear that the farmers export about twice the value the manufacturers do. But it must be noted that the farmers create the wealth

they export, while in many cases the manufacturers import more or less finished portions of their manufactures as raw material free of duty, put these portions together and export the article, getting credit for its full value, whereas they should only have credit for the small increased value they produce.

Money In Farming

There is money, then, in farming, in addition to health and virtue and power and independence, and there are thousands and thousands of acres of land in Canada not under cultivation, offering untold opportunities for settlement. Alberta alone has over one hundred million acres of arable land, of which only about four million acres are under cultivated crop. The remainder of this enormous tract is growing prairie grass—grass of great richness, and famous for the quality of the beef steers it produces.

For unknown centuries Nature used this grass to maintain the enormous herds of buffalo that then roamed over it, but since the arrival of the white man the buffalo has disappeared and has not been replaced. True, there is some grazing done. Alberta is an important producer of grass-fed horses and cattle, but the comparatively little that has been accomplished only serves to emphasize the possibilities which remain.

A careful estimate by the Livestock Commissioner of the province was that there are nearly two thousand townships of land which are as yet too far from railways to be profitably used for grain farming, but which are suitable for stock raising. It is the estimate of the Commissioner that these unoccupied grazing lands are capable of producing livestock to the value of \$14,000,000 a year. This wealth at the present time is being absolutely lost to the world for lack of settlers.

Yet Farmers Are Leaving

Yet the figures which have been given as to settlers show us that the movement of population is not towards but from the land, that the illimitable farming and stock raising possibilities not only do not appeal in a practical way to those who have had no experience on the land, but that many of our best experienced settlers are leaving their farms and in some instances quitting the country.

A man who had come to the country with some capital and a highly colored idea of the profits of wheat farming tried grain growing on the prairie for several years. Thru one cause or another his crop did not materialize as expected and he lost heavily on his venture. He then left the open prairie and settled in a mixed farming district, where he had abundance of wood, water and hay, as well as some open land for grain. An old neighbor, visiting him, found him an enthusiastic advocate of diversified agriculture. The visitor listened to him for a while, then asked, "But, are you making any money?" The settler's face brightened perceptibly. "No, I ain't, sir," he replied hopefully, "but I'm losing it slower'n I ever done before."

There must be a cause for this state of affairs lying much deeper than mere comparative isolation, lack of social attractiveness, dearth of home comforts, distance from and cost of medical assistance and the other stock paper reasons why people desert the land; for agricultural life has compensations that balance these drawbacks.

"Rolling In Wealth!"

What is this deeper, radical cause? The article from which is quoted the fact that Western Canada produced \$407,800,000.00 wealth last year goes on to say: "That's where the money is—in the jeans of our honest friend, the farmer."

The inference to be drawn from this statement is that the farmers were simply rolling in wealth, that money with them was as plentiful as corn bread in a southern home.

An English professor, travelling thru the hills in the south, sought provisions at a mountain hut. "What d'ye all want?" called out the woman. "Madam," said the professor, "can we get some corn bread here?"

"Corn bread? Corn bread, did you say?" Then she chuckled to herself, and her manner grew amiable. "Why, if corn bread's all ye want, come

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