

WESTERN CANADA SECTION

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BUILDING UP THE WEST.

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The more are built the railroads the more is produced wheat. The rest follows as night does day. When coal is scarce, when farmers are praying for ten cars and can get only six, when two thousand Canadian miles in the fewest number of hours are to be obliterated—than the transportation company gets the average thought. The directors of a railroad company once told a man to look out of the train windows for six months. Of that trip new industries came. The railroads earning power was increased with the creation of business.

In North America, as elsewhere, one of prosperity's greatest debts is to the steel rail. Only seventy-two years ago, the railroad here was measured not even in inches. In the twenty years between 1835 and 1855 the locomotive had less than a thousand miles of road for running. Now it has not far short of twenty-five thousand miles. Statistics are not pleasant educational swallowing; but in the statistical story of Canadian transportation, romance stands out in bold relief. Measured against population, Canada has higher mileage than any country which knows the engine's whistle.

The mission of the railroad is to change nature's physiognomy. With the help of steel, the plain prairie has been transformed into an agricultural whiskerando. Where once was mutely pleading soil are now wheat producing fields for the world. Every western town or city has its choice of banks. A few years back, the only banks were of the riverside variety. The Indian patois has been superseded. It is an all nations language now. The wooden shack has made way for the towering business block. Vancouver's first real estate office was in a scooped-out tree trunk. In Vancouver a hundred modern real estate offices now add charm to architecture. The Indian trail has been buried by the steel rail. While some honour is due to the pioneer, much is due to the railroad. Geography has been newly shaped time and again, and it has been created. Peninsulas have become islands. Islands have been made mainland. Mountains have been levelled, and the flat raised.

What locomotive steam has done for this country is realized if the country can be imagined without it. Especially the Canadian Pacific, the Canadian Northern, and the Grand Trunk have helped. The time of the Grand Trunk Pacific is to come. Although pegging away for years past has been their lot, they realize what remains. To a simple art they have reduced the making of new towns. In it is less impressiveness than in the sight of millionaires laying foundation stones. The silence of nature is broken by the surveyor's footfall. His comparative quietude is transformed by the construction gang's activity. Then comes the equipment

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train. A station is built. They dub it appropriately. With a pair of tweezers the telegraph superintendent electrically links the embryo city with the world. That is the primary work. The modern pioneer then comes in to set up store. Later the railroad gets its reward. That is when the lands around are yielding their bounty.

Transportation fashions the sod into civilization. What railroad directorates and their keen-sighted lieutenants have done for the Dominion any observer can realize. The field of their future enterprise comes nearer more slowly. That it is vast is indisputable. Immensity of area tickles the imagination of your Shaughnessys and Hays and Mackenzies and Manns and Jim Hills. To cobweb a few hundred flat miles with steel does not notch the brain of those directing the destinies of railroads. The tongue they like to be glib in is millions. To the Arctic explorer, attending to the summer's ice supply is piffle. So are the fifty miles to the railroad man. Stretching lines of communication thousands of miles across a continent—that is a task worth the trouble. The American transportation expert figures in millions, thinks in continents, travels in thousands and talks in riddles. His conundrums' answers come with the first laying of steel. These men combine the talk of the diplomat with the foresight of the business man. Usually is thrown in that possession which makes men great. Future plans are announced only in time for a small real estate flutter. If lots are purchased twenty miles from a proposed terminal, that is the buyer's business.

In three or four years the Grand Trunk Pacific will be running freight and folks into Prince Rupert. The dignity of city has yet to come. With the completion of this road, thousands of miles will be added for train jaunts. Those who have stood at the foot of Mount Hayes or looked up to the summit of Mount Morse or have navigated the landlocked harbor of Prince Rupert, have the best idea of what its future may be. The fact that they have visited the townsite speaks for foresight. What is now the future will be the present. The first debt is to the railroad. This is but one instance. The Hudson Bay proposition may one day evolve from pure chatter. The Peace River will doubtless know a single track running mate before many years have passed. Once a railroad man is to be so always. In this is no cause for wonder. Transportation is continually changing possibilities into the tangible. That is all, but yet how much?

F.W.F.

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