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EDITORIAL

The Experimental Farm Muddle in Alberta.

If ever the adage "Distance lends enchantment to the view" was belied it is over some of the ways of administration of the department of agriculture at Ottawa. After nights and days of serious deliberation it was decided upon that some small experimental farms or sub-stations should be established in the West. One was secured at Lethbridge but the bright side of the story finishes there. A suitable farm was found adjoining the town of Lacombe, \$50 per acre was asked for it and for the sake of the wiseacres, who measure progression of values by the same rate as obtains in the East we may premise the price is now \$100 but alack-a-day, the price was too high for the department which it seems has not yet mastered the problem of when to spend and when not to spend. For fear of being dubbed a scold, let us cite the fact that school lands, virgin prairie, have time and again been sold in the West by the department of the Interior for over thirty dollars per acre, even as far back as five years ago, and yet the department of agriculture supposed to have knowledge of agricultural values and how such are arrived at balked at fifty dollars an acre for an improved farm in Alberta. 'Tis a sorry way of showing one's faith in the country; it will take many stump speeches glowing with fervor for Canada's great West to overcome such a strong piece of evidence that the department's belief is exactly the opposite to the tone of the speeches. We are no advocates of land booming, we believe in looking at land buying from the standpoint of an investment which is to be made to yield dividends on the other hand such a wretched exhibition of parsimony is to be deplored. As a result the man appointed as farm manager is chasing around the country looking for a suitable site for a farm. We understand instructions were given him to inspect some farm lands close to Edmonton, where farm lands within a mile or two are subdivided and cannot be bought for less than several hundred or a thousand dollars per acre. Truly the experimental farm division of the department of agriculture needs a little life pumped into it.

Overlapping of Conditions.

One can scarcely believe that the line of demarcation between Manitoba and Saskatchewan methods of farming is so clearly drawn until he spends some time in each province. The line does not follow the provincial boundaries and it would probably be more correct to say between the methods in the long cultivated areas and those in the newer. People who have replied to the advocates of mixed farming, "Show us an instance of the depletion of soil fertility by constant wheat growing," should be easily convinced by a comparison of results from the richest of the older areas and those from the newly broken prairie of Saskatchewan. On the new strong lands of that province this year, there are whole sections that averaged over 35 bushels of wheat to the acre, and quarter after quarter that gave a return between forty and fifty bushels, after summer fallow or breaking. On older lands such yields are rare. One feels that in going from the celebrated old settlements where the yields have run from 20 to 40 bushels to the newer districts where yields less than 40 bushels are considered somewhat disappointing, that he is getting young again, that he is still in the days of monster crops. In the

cultivation of the land too, the method is the same in the new West as it was years ago in the old. A summer fallow, then a crop of wheat, the stubble burned in the following spring, then another wheat crop followed by fallow. Fall plowing as yet is not necessary and, in fact, except in rare instances is a detriment. The land is prodigal of her bounties just as she was a few years ago in other parts. By these comparisons we can get an idea of how long it takes by continual wheat cropping to make the land demand greater care and attention. Fifteen years will leave its effect upon the richest soil but in that time one man may have made a competence if his farm is large enough. His successor, however, begins with land suffering from the first symptoms of exhaustion and if he is wise he will rest and feed it. The fact that he follows the methods of a successful farmer will not insure him good crops or clean fields for the land will have begun to protest. Follow whatever method of farming that conditions warrant but do not follow any method with your eyes shut. Be prepared for the inevitable change.

The Grain Commission in the West.

This commission is now sitting in the West, to give the farmers and their organizations, Grain Growers, et al, an opportunity to discuss matters with a view to improve ways and means of trading in grain, to remedy or suggest remedies for abuses, etc.

Opinions have been hazarded re the commission which if considered together would indicate that that body is doing its work impartially; on the one hand the opinion has been advanced that this tribunal was out to prove the existence of abuses which it believed existed, before evidence supporting or controverting their ideas was in, and it did not approach the matter with the calm judicial spirit that should govern men charged with such an important mission. On the other hand, doubts have been expressed that the commission were influenced by the grain trade interests and were afraid to probe deeply. Others have faulted the commission as not being made up of strong men, or men well informed, or with experience in the grain trade, that the appointments were purely political and with an eye to make the government solid with the farmers. Time will prove which is the correct opinion, and until the evidence is all in and the findings of the commission are published it will be better to suspend judgment, in matters of this kind the correct attitude is to object or draw attention to the lack of fitness of the members at the start, once their labors have begun, a fair field and no favor should be given them, condemnation or approval can be decided upon after their report is issued, and that condemnation or approval will properly belong not so much to the commission, as to the government by whom it was brought into being.

Beware of the Bucket Shop!

All forms of gambling are illegitimate, and immoral and will eventually ruin the individual utterly and irretrievably if he or she continues to indulge in the dangerous pastime of endeavoring to secure 'something for nothing'. The bucket shop is never advertised as such, for to do so would discourage business even from the unwary. To be plain the bucket shop is a place where you bet on the future prices of various commodities with men who have the dice loaded so that those who patronize them are bound to lose. Occasionally a person is allowed to win to act as a steel pigeon, a decoy to entrap the innocent and unsophisticated. The prosperity of western towns and communities has attracted these jackals and carrion crows

of commerce. How may they be recognized? To-day in many a little western town, advertisements appear of firms with headquarters on the United States side of the boundary, who will deal in stocks, bonds and grain, and who offer their patrons the benefit of a private wire. The private wires are not very long, generally from the bucket shop office to the cellar, but if by any means the markets should go against the bucket shop, the operator thereof steals away under cover of night and the victim is out the gains he expected. It is perhaps fortunate that it is so, as the first loss may be a deterrent to future foolishness and playing with fire. The West is a land of boundless opportunity for those who will work out their own salvation; but there is no need or excuse for any man to try and gain riches dishonestly. The shrewd business man does not frequent or patronize the bucket shop, but the papers continue to chronicle paragraphs like the following:

"Two Pittsburg bank clerks who stole a quarter of a million dollars and lost it in a bucket shop have been given ten-year sentences."

The bucket shop is the kindergarten for thieves, and should no more be tolerated than a bawdy house or illicit still. Put it down in your minds as a fact that the private wire artist of the western town is out to despoil you of your earnings by craft, or appeals to the cupidity of his fellowmen. The bucket shop has no commercial standing, it deposits nothing with the government to safeguard its patrons, but engenders a habit which ranks as a vice with the alcohol and morphine habits, demoralizing beyond repair; let every farmer avoid the bucket shop as he would a pestilence.

What Price Can I Afford to Pay for Farm Lands?

This is a question which each prospective buyer should ask himself before buying, and his answer will depend pretty largely on whether the farm is to be bought merely as an investment or a place on which to live and make a living, its proximity to good markets, convenience to schools post office and church, and whether on a well-travelled highway accessible at all times.

Just recently in conversation with a young Scotchman, a man who has farmed and done well in Manitoba and who has recently returned from New Zealand and Australia, he expressed the opinion, that on the ordinary lands of Manitoba under present agricultural conditions, namely, wheat farming, that unless exceptionally located a farm was not worth looking at, from a business standpoint at a price higher than twenty dollars an acre. He held that one year with another, taking into consideration the price of wheat and the cost of labor, that an investment of more than the sum mentioned on the average Manitoba farm could not be a profitable one. It is well to bear in mind that he refers only to wheat farming and not to a more diversified agriculture which includes hog-raising, horse-breeding, cattle-breeding or a modified form of dairying such as may be profitably carried on with the dual purpose type of cow.

It is well to study this question, the successful farmer is the one who will entice others to come and settle amongst us, and for a man to be considered successful on his farm, one of the essentials is that he shall each and every year get a good return on all the capital he has invested, whether such be in cash, implements or livestock. Money is worth six per cent. or more on good security and the farmer's returns should net him at least that per cent on the average if he is to stay in the business permanently.

The young man about to commence needs to get this idea firmly fixed in his mind, that whether he invests his own money or borrows money, that it must be made to return a