

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, October 4th, 1911

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Despite the tremendous yield of grain throughout the West this year the financial return will be far short of what has been anticipated. Hail, frost and rain have wrought havoc that cannot be estimated. Thousands of acres of grain will never be cut and thousands that will be cut will not reimburse the owner for his outlay in seed and labor. It has been estimated that the total yield of wheat for the Prairie Provinces would be upwards of 180,000,000 bushels, but of this probably more than one-half will be damaged and reduced in grade. There will be an abnormal amount of low grade wheat this year and it will require every effort to find a market for it. One of the fortunate features of the situation is that where the drought ruined the crop last year the damage this season is not generally severe. In the southern portions of the West the damage has not been so severe as in the central and northern portions. Last year farmers were forced to the conclusion that wherever possible all their eggs should not be placed in one basket because in case of accidents the loss was too heavy to bear. This year, though for different reasons, the result is the same. Western Canada is a wonderful wheat producing country and a good crop is a tremendous temptation to devote all attention to growing grain. But leading farmers are of one mind in declaring that other branches of agriculture should be carried hand in hand with grain growing in order that there may be more stability to the agricultural industry. In many sections the water problem is a most serious handicap and one that will militate against stockraising and dairying, but, generally speaking, the Prairie Provinces are well suited to both of these industries. Aside from the financial aspect of grain growing the tendency of raising only one crop is not to build up well settled communities with a permanency of residence. Necessarily, in addition to the hazard, there is more or less of monotony in continually producing only one crop. It also compels the farmer to exert extraordinary energy during two short seasons of the year instead of having his labor more evenly distributed throughout the whole twelve months.

The labor problem is becoming acute and will be more so as time goes on. At the present rate of development in grain growing the next five years will see a famine in harvest help unless there are some very remarkable advances in labor saving machinery for the farm. The help problem for the women in the homes is also a serious one, and the caring for the extra hands on the big grain farms taxes the energies of the housewife to the utmost. All these questions are forcing themselves home every day to the grain farmers of the West. Grain growing, when there are no setbacks, is profitable, particularly so long as land is cheap. But as land advances in value and the elements continue as uncertain as now the profit will not be sure. Again there is a continuous and large exodus from the farm to the town throughout the West. Grain farming exclusively is not so conducive to home-making as is diversified farming. There is too much of the feeling that we are here only temporarily and will move as soon as things come our way. It is the permanency of occupation of the soil which is the greatest factor in the improvement of conditions in our rural life. The farmer who intends remaining in a community for but a limited term of years will not take the same interest as the man who intends his farm to be his permanent home. And after all until the farm becomes the real home of the family things will not be right in the country. The farmer who retires and

goes to the town or city to spend the rest of his days with nothing to do is never contented. He generally loses his interest in the country and he never acquires an active interest in the life of the city. We need the middle aged and old men and women on the farms just as well as the younger and more vigorous. Old age is a blessing to any country and to any community, and conditions are not right until our old people are well provided for after their years of toil are ended. Where the community population is ever changing the social life is never so rich and wholesome as it should be. The moving spirit, or the tenant, never takes the same interest in the church and the school as does the permanent resident. The school and the church form a good indication of the general spirit of the community. Both need improvement. The school is the only place where every individual member of the community has an equal interest and meets on common ground. For that reason it should be far superior to what it is. These remarks are not prompted in any spirit of criticism but merely to draw attention to the tendency of the time and the need of checking it before it develops into more serious results. Conditions have greatly improved over those of the days of our fathers but advancing civilization brings added responsibilities. The burden of responsibility upon the city resident is light compared with that of the farmer. The city is organized as a business concern with paid officials to perform every duty; but the country is not. The progress of the country depends almost altogether upon the voluntary work of the farmers and their families. For that reason the country life has greater privileges and pleasures for those who will take advantage of them.

THE DEMAND OF THE TIMES

The time has gone by when the man on the farm can sow his seed, gather his crop, market it and provide for his family year in and year out and feel that he has done his duty by himself, his family, and his country. Every man's duty extends far beyond the confines of his own business. The occupation of farming has come to the front with wonderful rapidity during the last ten years. The rural life and the city life are being more closely interlocked. In a never ending process of the division of labor the inter-dependency of one industry, or one class in the nation upon another, is becoming more and more marked. Any important movement of progress or retrogression in any leading industry in Canada is immediately felt by practically every other industry. The mechanic who invents a new labor saving device at once opens a new problem in industrial life. Modern inventions of all kinds affect the whole life of the nation. Whatever has the deepest influence upon the rural life has the greatest influence upon the nation as a whole. The men and women who live upon farms in Canada have greater responsibility in the progress of the nation than any other because there are more of them. Whatever the future of Canada is to be as a nation must be decided upon largely by the men and women on the farm. They represent the largest section of the population. They elect more representatives in our legislatures than all other sections of the population combined. In fact they are the controlling influence in law-making in Canada if they choose to use their power. Country life is more wholesome and, as a rule, more healthful than city life. The people on the land are more close to nature. One of the great drawbacks to country life is that the very occupation of farming tends to make the farmer independent and inclined away from, rather than towards, co-operation with his fellow

farmers. But education and the spread of information is overcoming this tendency very rapidly. The farmers are finding that if their occupation is to hold its own, and if their influence is to amount to anything, they must co-operate and organize for their mutual benefit and for the general improvement. More and more is the truth of this being forced upon the minds of the farmers when they see all other industries and occupations organizing for self-protection or self-aggrandisement. The Canadian Manufacturers' association is one of the most powerful organizations in Canada and has an immense influence upon the Ottawa Parliament. It exerts this influence for the sole purpose of keeping the tariff as high as possible to make big dividends for its members. The railway companies of Canada are organized to maintain high freight rates and thus secure huge profits. The retail merchants have a very powerful organization and are fighting co-operation in any form—except among themselves for their own benefit. The lumbermen are organized in a combine to enhance the prices for their own benefit. The flour millers have an understanding with each other that there is no competition among them which will reduce prices. The breadmakers have recently formed a combine for their mutual profit. The cement combine, the canners' combine, the steel trust, the sugar trust and scores of other trusts in Canada are formed for the sole purpose of increasing the profits of those businesses and for influencing legislation in their own favor. All the big banks in Canada are organized together in a Bankers' association, which finances the big corporations and constitutes the money power of the nation. These organizations are all cold blooded business propositions, all working for the benefit of a few at the head of them. There is no sentiment whatever in their make-up. Their profits are derived entirely from the common people, that is, the farmers and the labor classes. They pay the farmer the very lowest possible price for his produce and the laboring man the very lowest price for his labor. The laboring men, however, have organized for self-protection. They have their unions now in every trade, and they are very powerful unions. The result is that in most cases the big employers have been compelled to pay better wages, but in few cases are they paying a fair price for the labor they receive. But the farmers who live on the land, who are the greatest wealth producers of the nation, are still practically unorganized. They are exploited more than any other people in the country. Without organization they have absolutely no influence in the making of the laws. The two political parties of Canada have been dominated largely by organized wealth. They make laws to suit the strongest influences. They have been successful in the past in inducing the farmers to split their power and to vote against each other. When this happens it leaves all power in the hands of the organized capitalists. The only hope the farmers have of securing a square deal is by banding themselves together into an organization for the study of public questions and for the taking of united action towards relief. Every farmer should be a member of an organization for mutual benefit. He should pay his fees regularly and make the work of his organization as much a part of his life as the regular routine of seeding and harvesting. The farmers of the three Prairie Provinces have a greater opportunity in this respect than any farmers on the continent. They have an organization now and all they need is to make that organization more efficient. This can be done by increasing the membership, by devoting time to study and by having the Initiative and Referendum placed on the statute books of every province, so that the people may vote upon public

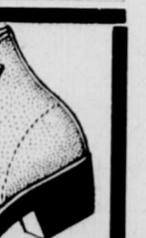
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