

Farmer's Advocate

and Home Journal

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875

February 17, 1909

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

Vol. XLV. No. 856

FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME JOURNAL

THE FARMER'S NATIONAL WEEKLY

Published every Wednesday at Winnipeg

Subscription price: To Canada, and Great Britain \$1.50 per annum, to United States and other foreign countries \$2.50 per annum.

The date on the label shows to what date the subscription is paid.

In accordance with the law, THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE is sent to all subscribers until an explicit order is received for its discontinuance.

Agents wanted in unrepresented territory. British agency, W. W. Chapman, Mowbray House, Norfolk St., London W. C., England.

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FARMER'S ADVOCATE, Winnipeg, Man.

EDITORIAL

The Case of Alberta

Natural conditions have militated against the marketing of Alberta's farm produce, especially her grains and cattle. The province is wedged in between six hundred miles of mountain ranges on the one side and twelve hundred miles of railway haul before lake front is reached on the other; the American boundary and high tariff on the south and two thousand miles of undiscovered territory on the north. With an anticipated wheat yield of twenty million bushels for 1909, most of which must be shipped as surplus, the problem of getting this grain cheaply and with reasonable dispatch upon the world's markets, without any artificial handicap, is one that is not easily solved.

When Alberta and all western Canada have passed the pioneer stage of growth, the natural conditions which are now such a handicap to distribution will operate to the advantage of the producing classes. The very conditions which now make marketing expensive will tend to make the province self-sufficient and to establish large commercial centres within her own boundaries which might otherwise be located elsewhere. Such a condition, of course, is not as advantageous as a location where there is free access to the world's markets, both for selling and buying, but it is much better than the restricted conditions which the nature of things imposed upon the early settlement of the province.

Alberta has the further advantage of being naturally provided with alternatives. It comes as something of a great commercial discovery that grain can be transported more cheaply from Alberta points to British markets by another route than eastward across the American continent and the Atlantic ocean. Nor does the Pacific route alone exhaust Alberta's possible outlets. That province will profit as much as any by the establishment of the Hudson Bay route which will give summer transportation cheaper than is now enjoyed by Manitoba, and in winter the Pacific route is

cheaper than can possibly be expected by rail to Atlantic ports and ocean to Liverpool. In time, commiseration for Alberta's "splendid isolation" will give way to ardent envy.

Waiting for Conditions to Improve

It is likely there will always be men in this country who can see money in no other line of farming but grain growing; men who hold the belief that dairying is simply enslavement to the cow; stock-raising exists merely for the enrichment of the middlemen in the meat business; and other lines of agriculture carried on to the advantage of someone other than the man engaging in it. The majority of men are always content to wait until conditions in any industry are just right before they venture to engage in it. The result is that some have to wait a remarkably long time, in fact, spend most of their lives waiting, and then shuffle off before the large opportunity they have been looking for arrives. Waiting for conditions to improve is a poor way of effecting improvement.

Take conditions in live stock raising as an example. The great majority of the farmers in this country are firmly convinced that live stock of any kind offers rather slim money-making possibilities. Cattle are too low in price to pay for the feed consumed in making beef, and hogs are generally regarded as the most forlorn hope of all. Yet here and there, all over this western country, we find farmers who are raising cattle profitably, men who are making money in hogs, in dairying, in poultry, in lines of farming other than the production of wheat. Recently, we published the experiences of cattle feeders in various parts of the west—in Alberta particularly—experiences which tend to show that even in the present unsatisfactory circumstances surrounding the marketing of cattle in this country—and everybody admits readily that our live stock markets may be vastly improved upon—it is possible to turn grain and fodder into beef, and make, not only market returns on the feed consumed, but a profit covering a good deal more than the cost of the labor involved in effecting the transformation. Last week, one of our homesteader contributors explained his method of making money from cows on a pioneer farm, and in this issue, representative farmers in the three provinces discuss the profitable raising of hogs. The majority of them are making money in the hog business.

These men explain how they have overcome some of the difficulties in these industries, have demonstrated in a practical way that profit in these lines is possible. Simply theorizing on the conditions of the live stock trade will be a long time making any improvement in it. Successful agitation has to have a practical basis. It required more than theorizing to

place the grain trade on a basis having any semblance of being equitable. It required grain first of all. We imagine our live stock trade will develop in much the same way, that the men now producing stock and making money at it are doing more to improve conditions in the live stock trade than anyone else concerned in it. The market for live stock in Western Canada is not all it should be, by any means. But we can produce beef and pork at less cost than that at which the cattle and hogs, that sell for higher prices in the east and south, are produced. It has been demonstrated again and again that the right kind of cattle fed and finished properly will turn grain and fodder into beef profitably, that there is a demand for them. When the right kinds are produced in sufficient numbers, there will be plenty of buyers for them. For the first twenty years or so after this country was opened, farmers had difficulties without number to contend with in the marketing of wheat, they have quite a few yet that have to be removed. It was largely the increasing volume of wheat that induced improvement from the producer's standpoint in the grain trade. Agitation in that case had something real for a basis. The country had the wheat. There was something tangible to create markets for and a whole lot of intense earnestness behind the demand that grain marketing facilities should ensure something resembling a square deal for the man who produced and had grain for sale.

The Balanced Mental Ration

In this issue, Mr. George Langley, member of the Legislature for Redberry, describes a condition which unfortunately exists to the detriment of the country; namely, that young people, of the west particularly, do not read sufficient of the useful class of literature that is available. It might also be said that too much of the sensational trashy, "World News" is read. Young people find themselves possessed of a certain appetite for an intimate knowledge of the private lives of nobles and rich people, especially for those bits of "spicy," suggestive, newspaper stories concerning divorce, or of dare-devil capers in defiance of conventions and laws. Most of such newspaper "stuff" is pure fabrication over which humanity spends, in the total, years of time each day in reading, not to mention the money that is spent in subscriptions, printing, telegraphing, and compiling.

Just why we should choose to idle our time and waste our energies over reading that which neither enlarges the understanding, nor quickens the imagination, is one of the problems that humanity is continually propounding. Sometimes it does one good just to put oneself in the place of the man who concocts the newspaper tales of depravity of fashion, of in-