

EDITORIAL COMMENT

LIFE PURPOSE

Because of the glorious promise of a bountiful harvest, half a dozen typical farmers in Western Canada were asked to reply in single sentences to this simple question: "If your crop turns out as well as you expect, what do you propose doing with the proceeds." Here are the answers, and they are worthy of a word of comment: (1) Intend to buy another quarter section; (2) I am going to pay for my machinery; (3) I am going to put it in stock; (4) I am building a new barn; (5) I have a girl in the Old Country; (6) I am going to try to repeat the trick for six years, and then the city for me.

These may not be typical answers, but taking them one by one, they set forth clearly some of the aims which Western farmers have before them. It is a good thing for a man to aim at a large farm. It is questionable if the right size of farm in an agricultural country is not one large enough to support a traction engine. Until farmers learn to co-operate cheerfully, there is loss through expenditure for machinery that is used but for a short portion of the year. Anyway, it is good to see a man aim at a half section. Some of his children will be looking forward to farming some day, and it is wise to have enough land for two. Yet when a man has a farm sufficiently large he had better fight against land greed. It was a pretty small life pictured by the Kansas farmer when he said he wanted more land to raise more corn to feed more hogs, to get more money to buy more land, to raise more corn, etc. So the answer given by the first farmer of the six may be praiseworthy, or it may indicate that greed which is the besetting sin of so many in a new land where materialism flourishes so naturally.

With the second farmer we can all sympathize. It is a terrible thing to be loaded up with debt and it is wonderful how many are in debt to the implement firms. It is said that eighty per cent of the money received by farmers last year went at once to the manufacturer of farm machinery or to the banks. And herein is a great pity—a pity that co-operative banks by farmers are not in operation and a pity that greater caution is not exercised in the purchase of machinery, and greater care taken of the machinery when it is purchased.

The third farmer is going to purchase stock. He believes in mixed farming. He knows that the day of wider markets and cheaper transportation is at hand. He is not going to depend upon wheat alone. He is going to be ready for the time when the world demand will be for live stock rather than for grain. That time has really arrived, and happy is the farmer who has anticipated it. There is a delight, too, in stock raising, and even to the man who would be chiefly a grain grower there is need that he keep cattle, else his land will become impoverished. It is just as poetic and just as significant of riches to refer to "the cattle on a thousand hills" as it is to the "fields of waving gold."

The fourth farmer would build a new barn. He, too, contemplates stock. Yet is it not a marvellous thing that in so many cases the improvement of the barn is placed before the improvement of the home dwelling? Surely the mother and the

children deserve some consideration. Ten, fifteen or even twenty years go by. The pink cheeks lose their color, the bright eyes their sparkle, and the hopes of youth fade away and die. Acres have been added to the farm, the stock has increased ten-fold, the barns are large and complete, but there is yet no real home, nothing in which the wife may take a personal pride, nothing which will attract the children and keep them on the land. A new barn is good—but sometimes it costs too much.

"I have a girl in the old land." What a story here of devotion and courage and fond anticipation! And there are hundreds of young men all over this land who are working and singing as they work, because they are looking forward to the time when they may send a message to the girl in the home land. Let us wish the harvest may be thrice bounteous so that when the young girl comes there may be ready for her not only the welcome of her betrothed, but some of those comforts which only money can buy, and which are almost necessary to happiness in what was once the great lone land, but is now only at times a great lonely land. Our young farmer is right. He needs a wife, and the country needs her, and she may be assured she will get a right warm Western welcome.

But what of the sixth farmer? How many, think you, are of his class? Well, there are not a few. The farm, a good place to make money, a poor place to spend it—that is the theory. It is a poor theory—poor in the first place because it implies that money making and spending are the ends of life, and they are only incidents of life. There is no better place in this whole world to build up a life and to spend a life than on the farm, if one only cares to make life all that it was intended to be. A man who restricts his activities on the farm to money making will find at the end of six years that he has capacity for nothing else. He cannot enjoy the city, he cannot sympathize with it. The only thing to do is to make farm life so full of variety that it will appeal to life on all sides. A good library for spare hours, some music, a few games, tools and materials for hand-manufacture, pets for the children and garden plots for each, opportunities for social enjoyment at least occasionally, participation in religious work—these are but illustrations of what might characterize farm life. Where a man and woman have their whole lives ministered to on the farm they will not wish to leave it, and their children will stay by them. One thing that makes children leave the farm is the unrest of parents, and this unrest frequently follows the pursuit of one-sided ideals. A very wise man once said: "The best place to spend middle age is the town, but the best place to spend childhood and old age is the country."

There is one remarkable thing about the testimony of the six farmers. They are all determined to better their own condition. They did not go much beyond that. If there is any altruism in their make up it is not expressed. Possibly all of them intend to get into better financial and social condition in order that they may be of greater service in the community. There is nothing more necessary to an individual who

would realize his highest possibilities than this community sense. A man cannot make real progress in any large sense unless he brings his neighbors with him. In the past Western farmers have been generous in aiding philanthropic institutions—schools, churches, hospitals and the like. There will be found an increasing number in the future who will consider that ministering to the comfort and safety of others is both a privilege and a duty.

Taking half-a-dozen in any other calling than farming how would their answers compare?

A CONTRAST

Within a few weeks two provincial elections have been held in Canada. It is interesting to compare the results, and in the light of these to estimate the character of the electorate in the two provinces.

In Ontario the one great issue was the temperance policy. Evidently the electors had not awakened sufficiently to comprehend the significance of banishing the bar. Some one has said that "people of Ontario are so inert and so wedded to established custom that it would take two generations for a new idea to be understood—to say nothing of being endorsed." Whether this is true or libellous does not just now signify. The fact is that the liquor interests are alive and active, and there does not seem to be very hearty co-operation among the forces opposed to the traffic. Perhaps it is true that although the politicians were fighting out the battle on the ground of temperance, the people were settling the issue on other grounds. They were comparing the administration of Sir James Whitney with that which preceded him, and not always to the advantage of the latter. Under his administration some splendid reforms had been introduced, such as the new penal system. Even in the field of temperance there had been a better system of enforcement than formerly. Above all the administration was honest, frank and sincere, and Sir James, especially after his illness, was loved by the people, while two of his lieutenants had not only local but a provincial reputation that brought support to the government. What can be said about Ontario, therefore, is that though it is incapable of appreciating a great moral issue as it should, it shows good sense in appreciating moral worth in those whom it appoints to office.

In Manitoba things were entirely different. Here there were three or four great moral issues and the electors as a whole were keenly alive to at least two of these. Nevertheless, it was evident to all on the ground that there was something more at stake than a difference of policies. There seems to have been dissatisfaction with some of those in political control because they were believed to have been lacking in frankness and sincerity. They were evidently believed to be playing a double game.

The people of Manitoba have shown themselves more capable than the people of Ontario in appreciating great issues; they have shown greater willingness to sink party feeling and to put a proper value on the triumph of moral principles. Both provinces are to be congratulated on this, that they demand in their leaders sincerity, honesty and good faith. May it ever be so.