

## A WEST CANADA BIOGRAPHY

Stoney Plain, Alberta, Aug. 27.

This is Sunday, and preaching is in order. My text shall be Martin Ullmer, his farm, family, history and surroundings. Before entering on the discourse intended mainly for the worldly salvation of many Americans and Canadians of the Eastern States and Provinces who now seem unlikely to arrive at a steady annual income of \$5000, it may be well to call attention to the above spelling of the name of this plain. It is not Stony, it has no reference to stones or rocks, not even a pebble has been seen in sixty miles daylight to and fro driving. The whole visible area has been deep, friable loam usually black, overlying a somewhat sandy seeming subsoil, through which creeks and rivers run in channels from twenty to forty feet under the prairie surface. If you dug down from 60 to 100 feet you would come to coal anywhere, bituminous coal of good quality, which burns freely in grates, supplies Edmonton furnaces, and is sold at from \$1 a wagon load at the mouth of the mines, to \$2.50 a ton in Edmonton city. The mines are there a few miles distant. As yet they work only the seams which protrude on the river banks. Before long every few townships, areas six miles square, will associate for the working of convenient coal deposits. Because of the newness of the country and the difficulty of effecting strong municipal organization under the system of territorial government, which is to give place to the provincial system on Sept. 1, such local or township mines are still lacking. Moreover, the region is pretty well wooded with poplar, white and black, some of it sixteen inches or more in diameter, constituting fine "bluffs" amid prairie generally covered thickly with rose-bushes, goldenrod and other weeds. Hence the pioneers have had firewood handy. Their country is that which was formerly inhabited by the Stoney Indians, who received that name for reasons that are dim in the mists of Edmonton conjecture.

In my preliminary the second head is Indians. We drove through two reserves to-day, and saw three more, or the woodlands thereof. We met the braves and their squaws and pappooses of ten on the road, usually in lumber wagons, sometimes in spring wagons, occasionally in covered buggies, and invariably in "store clothes." They live in comfortable-looking white-washed log houses, usually of one and a half stories, and seldom with lean-to kitchens, for the older squaws appear to do the cooking and to prefer the open air. Very little farming the Indians do. They trap a little. They can live without more arduous labors since they are rich in land, partly fed by the Ottawa Government, have their children educated at the public charge, and receive annually \$5 per head from the Dominion. To ascertain how rich they are, and how much richer prospectively, one must consider their numbers, the area of their reserves, quality and selling value of the land. Take the band of 126 souls nearest Edmonton. Their reserve is forty-eight square miles. Every acre of it would fetch \$10 by auction after a month's notice of the sale. That means \$307,200, or \$2,438 per head, or about \$10,000 per family. The land is rapidly advancing in value. It will probably fetch \$20 per acre within five years. Thus it appears that the Government could well afford to pay each family of this band \$500 to live in villaged idleness, and surrender their land.

There is no white agitation to rob them of the reserve. In the Canadian West all sorts and conditions of settlers seem to have caught the infection of the normal Canadian regard for law, order, and public good faith, to say nothing of the consideration that it is far cheaper to "pamper" Indians than to fight them, or even fear them. A first-rate official authority near here, who shall be unnamed lest he be put into hot water by publication of his opinion, says that the young Indians, who are taken into Government boarding and training schools (in the belief that they will learn civilized ways more speedily and thoroughly when separated from their parents' households), seldom if ever stay civilized after returning home. The same is true of them in the United States. I have been informed. They revert to their parents' ways and are rather worse to get on with since they have learned the white man's tricks, lies and something of how he may be fooled. The Indian problem seems unsolvable, except by the gradual vanishing of the pure blood. Set the young, schooled, trained Indians apart in villages, and there is nothing for them to do except

farm. If they get along well their poor relations will cousin on them to no end. If trained Indians go into white communities to labor they do not receive the same treatment as white laborers or mechanics. That they, as original owners of the soil, should be supported forever by its industrious occupants, seems very wrong to multitudes of English, Canadians, and Americans, who are used to the notion that white landlords are entitled to live on rents. Did these Indians but get rich enough to live in prince, have autocars, steam yachts, and flunkies, it is possible that the propriety of securing them forever in a lien on the general product would never be questioned, except by wicked radicals, who don't and, of course, shouldn't count.

A third preliminary head is Frost. The word is not tabooed at Edmonton, not regarded as treasonable. Edmonton defines Frost as a visitation that sometimes does harm elsewhere, very possibly at Calgary, its rival city, 192 miles southward and 1200 feet higher in altitude. This morning the Edmontonese cheerfully admitted there had been a touch of frost in the night. "But come and see the potato blossoms, the flowers, the squash vines in our gardens." They were visibly wilted at 8 a.m. Later in the day, far out on Stoney Plain, some potato patches appeared slightly tipped with brown, but no less sensitive plant showed a "touch." Standing grain, wheat, oats and barley were quite unharmed. Indeed, a frost hard enough to hurt grain at its present ripeness would put ice on the "sloos" and cut potatoes to the ground. A large patch of tobacco near here stands uninjured. The warm day has turned cloudy, and that there cannot possibly be any more frost before the 19th of September is the profoundest belief of the Edmontonese who accompany me. By the way, they say that the tobacco grown here possesses singular merits. Burn a little in the open air, on a "smudge," and not even a coyote will venture near the lambs, fowl, ducks, geese, turkeys or calves that the smudge is designed to protect. Similarly in South Africa, lions are kept at a distance by hanging a few Boer stockings warm from the feet, about the lager. By what sorcery the sheep and fowls are enabled to survive the native tobacco fumes has not been stated, hence one may suspect some romance in the matter. Coyotes seem enterprising enough for almost any venture, since they trot unswervingly across the road not far before the horses, and sometimes stop in the centre, as if aware that we have no gun. Few prairie chickens are now seen, they keep with their young very much in the brush and grass at this season. A month hence the immense stubble fields will be awir with their wings. Now ducks are numerous on every lake and "sloo." Robins are gathering for migration southward. Blackbirds wheel their jolly battalions around the new cut grain. Crows and several varieties of hawk are numerous. It is their harvest time, too, the hawks taking the young of the "chicken," mice and such small deer. Probably half the grain has been cut by reapers which leave much for the little gleaners of the wild. But the impudent blackbirds attack the stooks. They can do this to-day with impunity, since labor has quite ceased in the fields. That is strong evidence to the piety of the population, since the temptation to rush the harvest is extreme.

Martin Ullmer and all his blue-eyed boys and girls and wife and old mother-in-law are in their Sunday clothes, taking their ease after going to church in the forenoon. Their large storey-and-a-half house, log-built, with three gables and a lean-to kitchen, stands amid a big garden of vegetables, in which I remark that cauliflowers, cabbage, kale, cucumbers, potatoes, onions, have all been quite untouched by last night's trifling frost. A flower garden fully one hundred feet long and thirty feet broad, brilliant with sweet Williams, paeonies, geraniums and scores of other usual blooms of the temperate zone, stands surrounded by currant, raspberry, blackberry and gooseberry bushes, all equally unharmed. There are two smaller log houses on the place, successively used by the Ullmers, as their fortunes bettered,

now given over to fowls and cattle. There is a large new barn, pens, out-houses, sheds, a dozen in all. Red Tamworth pigs root numerously about the barnyard. There cannot be less than seventy tons of wild hay in stacks, all fenced in. Forty-two head of fat cattle are in Martin's herd yonder in the meadow. He and the boys, the eldest fourteen years, milk twelve cows daily, from which the buxom blue-eyed wife and her old mother, a typical, hard-handed Austrian peasant, makes butter, which is well sold in the neighboring hamlet. The farm consists of 480 acres, 192 cleared. The miller of our party, a cautious Scot, estimates the Ulmer crop of this year at 1000 bushels of wheat, 5000 of oats, 940 of barley—worth \$2300—to say nothing of hay saved, pigs and young cattle to sell, value of vegetables, eggs and the many fowls stalking about. Taking all together Ullmer's earnings, income or increase this year can be reasonably estimated at not less than \$2600. He and his two boys one fourteen, the other eleven, put in the whole crop, besides breaking ten acres of prairie for the first time.



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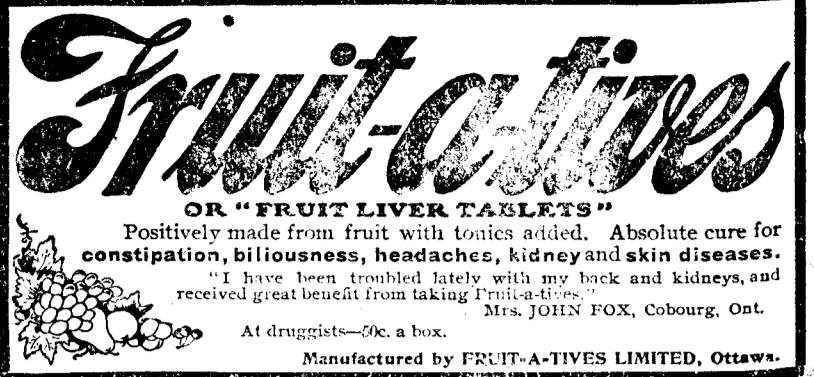
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