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EDITORIAL

A Prime Essential

Hon. Senator Ross remarked in a recent address that if our young people read more we would have less need of universities. It is, indeed, quite true, providing the reading be wholesome, thoughtful and good. But what shall we read—local gossip, fiction, sensation, trash? It would take a long time to educate one with such a pabulum. Not that we despise fiction, for it has a place, and a large place in our libraries. Nor would we have people oblivious, either, to the events of their neighborhoods, nor would we shut their eyes to the panorama of human activity as reflected in the newspaper press. But he who is satisfied with these things, without ever delving into deeper, systematic reading, will never count as much of a force in the world of action or the councils of men. Let us also read books which induct us into the economic and social problems of men, books which enable us to understand the science of our occupation, books which cultivate habits of clear and systematic thinking. Light reading may serve to lead us through the gate of literature, but let us not remain always at the gate. Let us reach out for heavier and more instructive reading that will satisfy our minds.

Canada's Interest in the Panama Route

It is reported from Panama that some serious engineering difficulties have been encountered in the digging of the canal, and that the big ditch may in consequence be delayed in completion. Canada has some interest in the ship channel which the American government is cutting across the isthmus of Panama—more than a good many Canadians imagine. That, in all human probability, will be a route to Europe from the western prairies long before we have any other, except the eastern one via lake and rail.

It seems rather surprising, but it is a fact nevertheless, that wheat from Alberta and Saskatchewan can be hauled to Vancouver, loaded on steamers, transported down the coast to Panama, unloaded there and taken via railway the thirty miles across the isthmus, reloaded on steamers on the Atlantic side and laid down in Liverpool in as good time as it can be taken over the rail, lake, rail and ocean route, via Port Arthur, Georgian Bay and Montreal to the same market. And the handling is no greater either. Every bushel of grain going east through the regular channel now has to be handled seven times from the wagon to the warehouses at Liverpool. It would need loading and unloading as many times via the Panama route.

Fifty days are required now to move grain from Vancouver, via the coast route and isthmus railway, to Liverpool. With the completion of a ship canal across the thirty mile connecting strip between the two continents, this time will be materially shortened. This country has a good deal of interest in the Panama canal. It will have more when we get other railways in operation across the mountains and better grades and better freight rates from the prairies westward to the sea.

Alberta's Handy Farmers

It is a common occurrence to hear people refer to certain parts of Alberta as "dry" and other parts as "mixed farming" leaving the impression that there are clearly defined lines bounding the different territories, and that within those lines the class of farming is distinctly determined. This notion is dissipated by the first report of the director of the Experimental farm at Lethbridge. Mr. Fairfield makes it clear that on any one farm there may be land that must be treated after the approved meth-

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ods of the "dry" farms and other portions that are well adapted for irrigation. Such conditions involve more than ordinary study and attention to details. Generally, when a man masters any one system of farming, he considers he is doing fairly well, but the man who has settled in southern Alberta has a double task, he must know how to make land produce under irrigation conditions, and how to get crops from land that cannot be irrigated, and if the rainfall is not sufficient, how to bring a crop to maturity when the ordinary methods of cultivation are practised. He must learn how to handle his land when moisture is applied from the top and when it is altogether drawn from the bottom. True, some farmers are so located that they need master only the one system, while others have not the choice of using a different method on different soil, but will have to be prepared to adopt "dry" farming methods on land that has been yielding fairly good crops under the ordinary system of cultivation.

When to this necessity of being versatile in the cultivation, we have added the further imperative one of raising a variety of crops, we shall have developed in Alberta a class of farmers, who for variety of occupation and versatility of farm practise will be the most outstanding in Canada.

Who Shall Improve the Markets?

It augurs well for the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association that the sphere of the usefulness of that organization is being extended, with the object of accomplishing some improvement in our live stock markets. Public opinion has too long been indifferent to this important question, but we believe that a judicious amount of discussion of the subject will be the means of working some considerable improvement.

There is one feature in connection with this live stock market situation at Winnipeg to which we would like to direct attention. The establishment, management and operation of stock yards and the carrying on of an abattoir business requires the employment of large capital. There are three sources from which this capital may come: First, from the accumulations of wealth now seeking profitable investment; second, from the government treasuries; and third, from the producers, through co-operative effort.

Properly speaking, those most interested in the market situation are those who are associated with points one and three, the government, whether Provincial or Dominion, cannot be said to be directly interested, nor is any government effort in such matters regarded as entirely single-minded. By giving publicity to the conditions of our live stock markets, which class of people are most likely to respond with a remedy, the professional investor looking for a dividend of six per cent. or more, or the producers, who are now being forced to contribute fat dividends on the money invested upon the very inadequate facilities now employed in the trade? There can be but one answer—the private investor. Money from such a source, is more easily gotten at, it can be more quickly employed or withdrawn, it has but one purpose to serve and the nature of that service is directed by enlightened self-interest, which, in the past, has proved to be the best incentive to satisfactory results for all concerned.

It is worth pondering, then, whether we want improvement at once and by the most easy method, or whether we want a more tedious introduction of a remedy which will leave the markets under the direction of a party government, or by co-operation, owned and managed in such a way that the first concern shall be that the producers, who would be the owners, shall receive the utmost the trade will permit for their stock, and that the profit also will revert to the producers.

Most of those who have thought hard upon the subject rather favor private ownership with ample government supervision and protection against abuse, and should that not be forthcoming, then a plan of co-operative ownership.

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