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Optimism of the West

Written for The Western Home Monthly, by William Lutton.

THOUGH the towering steel structure pauses momentarily in its upward course the West is optimistic. Though the Industrial Commissioner has put down his megaphone, no man, nor thing, nor institution is daunted. "Every man is cheerful," said Sir Thomas Shaughnessy who has been on his annual tour of inspection. "When I saw the golden fields and unbroken stretches of oats thousands of acres in extent, I felt the compelling inspiration of the West," said Mr. C. E. E. Usher, the passenger traffic manager of the C.P.R. who has been visiting all the large centres of interest. That money tightness is almost a thing of the past already. The people of the North West will have \$300,000,000 in their pockets before the snow flies. The wad in the hip pocket will give courage to trembling finance. The returning confidence of the farmer will compel the more accommodating attitude of the banks. A good crop and paying prices will set such activities in motion as suffered from momentary palsy. Three great railway systems are moving heaven and earth to provide accommodation for the crop which moves with celerity and abundance. The set back to inconsiderate borrowing constituted a necessary rebuke. An abounding prosperity produces a sort of delirium. Ambition stays at no bounds; and in the general prosperity circumspection is thrown to the winds. That does not mean that the municipalities are necessarily dangerous. It does not mean that we are suffering a loss of credit in the West. It does mean that notice has been served on all wild "speculators," some of whom opened gilded palaces in London and deceived the British public with dazzling propositions destitute of reality. It does mean that all respectable elements must set themselves like a flint against irresponsible creatures who would for a sudden gain, place an indelible stigma upon the country. You see how Sir William McKenzie has returned from London with the simoleons in his hip pocket—millions of them. Necessary municipalities will get all requisite encouragement, flamboyancy will be discouraged, possibly even with good intent. The pace was too swift, in more than one municipal instance. The development has been marvelous, and as stable on the whole, as marvelous. First class institutions were set up in nearly every case with the laying down of the streets and sewers—there was however a feverish desire for emulation—wholesome enough in moderation, but liable to produce disaster when pursued without regard to consequences. The growth under such conditions might tend to become hectic. The raucous megaphone, too, rather alarmed the steady going British money market. There is no collapse, there is a steadied nerve. There is no pessimism; there is the sober second thought. No man experiences the slightest tremor respecting the future; all men feel that over exuberance is a dangerous thing. The sixteen story building pauses a moment, but is not daunted. The unfinished columns point irregularly upward, but in brief space they will reach completion. The writer visited a family in a dug-out not long ago. One saw beautiful silverware with the monograms and crests which bespoke gentility; bits of bric-a-brac almost priceless in their speciosity. One marvelled; but the husband and head of the family pointed with pride to the timber and the bricks outside with which he intended to build himself a proper home when he could get time; and also to his bank book, which was enviably fat. Asked if she had suffered from loneliness, the lady of the house said that she would not think of going back East after tasting the fresh, free and wholesome life of the prairie, which, too, was fast becoming a so-called and animated life, seeing that the people were coming in so rapidly. Mr. J. B. Foster, the assistant passenger traffic manager of the C.P.R. said to the writer that he will not soon forget the

thrill of the first car load of new wheat which reached Winnipeg. "The people timed it to a moment," he said. "Everybody felt thrilled over that first car and train." Of course the thrill would pass; you could not have it a second time; but it was intense. Why? Because that was the guarantee of prosperity to the West and to the world for that matter. That first car load timed to a nicety, was eloquent of what was to follow. It meant that \$300,000,000 or more. It meant the resumption of every activity—not that there had been any visible slackness, except perhaps in Real Estate. It meant the cheap loaf for the poor of London, and it meant for Canada more population, the easement of money stringency; and the recovery of the general confidence. And when the wheat is sold, and the big wad sticks out of the hip pocket, the home is enlarged, the sod covered roof disappears; the church, the school is enlarged; the university adds to its degree-conferring power; and we remember the heathen in distant lands. Lord Strathcona, who was recently in Canada, referred in conversation to the West—expressing his delight that the development was going on so rapidly, and that at the same time the conditions were on the whole so sound. Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, well understanding that the last great West halt in the West, continues his policy of ready made farms, and the laying down of the steel before the settler arrives. He does this with confidence—understanding that the last great West has made its irresistible appeal to the world. Mr. Smithers, the chairman of the board of directors of the Grand Trunk said to the writer the other day that the British emigrants coming out here were at once a gain to the Dominion and the Empire at large. When they come to you they are ready-made citizens. They have been brought up to conserve the laws under which you live. They have sentiments identical with your own. They are merely enlarging their horizon a bit. That is all. And under the old flag they are ready at any moment to render necessary service to the Empire in the moment of need. Moreover, they will leaven, in any community, the other elements and produce in time a wholesome citizenship. Therefore, encourage the British emigrant, who although he leaves England is not lost to the Empire. One can see that in all the large centres the spirit is one of confidence. While great work may have paused a moment, normal life and activity are pursued. There is ample employment. Business is good. Nascent manufacturers are gaining in strength and diversity. While the East may supply some of the industrial need, the West is fast becoming self-contained in respect to its fabrications. The urban population grows, supplying the market for the farmer. The manufactured article is given in exchange for the desired natural products. Minerals which enter into manufacturing and make it possible, are being discovered in large quantities at the precise localities where they are most desired—exactly as, by a law of subtle compensation, you find the curative spring at the location which is provocative of rheumatism. That industrial feature needs emphasising, as does the other hopeful feature of mixed farming, which one was able to see so much evidence of. These complementary features assure the success of the West in all material regards; while the setting up of high schools and colleges, and universities, attest the growth of culture, lacking which material success is as barren as the East wind. In the younger cities one visited there might be something to fear in their crudeness, there might be features which will disappear before dawning aestheticism; but there were also the hints of beauty—in architecture, boulevard—while in striking evidence was the care of the people for the education of their children. They are still gathering money in England for the salvation of the North west; and salvation is always necessary

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