

THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY.

WINNIPEG, CANADA.

Vol. XI, No. 5.

MAY, 1910.

The Present and The Future.

By The Editor

If you have lived in the West for any considerable time you are an optimist. You cannot help it. Optimism is in the air and in the sky. It is in the grass and the flowers. Your horizon is boundless and so is your fancy. Reality has so often exceeded your fondest dreams that you are ready to believe anything possible. You boast of the climate, the soil, the natural productions, the possibilities in trade and commerce. All this and more. Yet let me warn you that unless some of you begin to mend your ways, and that right suddenly, you are going to receive a rude awakening one of these bright days. Your Land of Promise may easily prove to be a Fool's Paradise.

Noxious Weeds.

I know you have reason to boast of the soil and its marvellous fertility. Yet, did you ever hear of weeds? Do you know that in some districts land is dear as a gift because it is so overrun with Canada thistle, sow thistle, French weed or mustard? All the way from Winnipeg to Medicine Hat, on the Portage Plains as in the Mennonite reserve, there are districts so burdened with weeds that the raising of grain is practically impossible. To the carelessness of the farmer must be added the criminal negligence or incapacity of those who have administered the Departments of Agriculture. It is sometimes difficult to understand a government's policy in matters of trade and transportation, but there is no doubt of the policy on the weed question—it has been a policy of culpable inactivity and stupid incompetence. Can you not see ahead for five or ten years? If you can, you need no word from me as to your line of action in this matter.

The Fisheries.

A few years ago you were wont to tell of the wonderful fishing grounds in the lakes of Manitoba. Where are they now? You know as well as I that the lakes have been depleted. Here again it has been because of a worse than wasteful policy. The government in charge never gave attention to warnings in this matter, and now we must begin all over again. Thank goodness there are a few little white fish left, and if the man in charge of the hatchery doesn't get on a spree on a cold night and allow the eggs to chill it is possible that in ten years the fish industry may revive. Let us hope that when the lakes are again productive, pains will be taken to keep a few of the best fish in our own country. You have been complaining recently of monetary loss because of the tolls of the railroads and the shippers. That is because you felt it personally. Do you know that the loss to the country from the reckless procedure of fishermen in the lakes is not to be calculated in single dollars or hundreds, but in millions? And you need not that anybody should tell you what to do to remedy this matter. It is all very well to have a great country, but unless you do your duty, it is not going to remain a great country. Do you know what it is to get busy? Your duty does not end with looking after your own little corner lot or quarter-section. There are duties every man owes to his country, for, in the long run, his country's progress measures his own.

The Coal Deposits.

Did you ever take the trouble to ascertain the value of the coal deposits in the Rocky Mountains, that have been given away? There was a fortune big enough to make Western Canada one of the wealthiest of nations. How much of the known area remains in the possession of Canada? Have you ever played the old give-away game in "checkers." Those legislators can surely give you pointers on that game.

The Speculators in Land.

You have travelled more than once over the long line leading from Winnipeg to Calgary. Did you ever observe how small a fraction of the land was under cultivation? Who owns it? Did it ever strike you that the railways and speculators are

in control of the situation? If you find it impossible to organize schools and to support churches, to build roads and bridges and effect other public improvements, do you not know the cause? If the powers at Ottawa had sat up nights thinking how they could make it hard for the settlers here, they could not have devised better means. Again we say, it is time you got busy.

The Timber Limits.

We had considerable timber in the forests of Manitoba and not a little in Saskatchewan. You know how valuable timber is to the settlers. You know too that you have had to pay dearly to get what you wanted. While you have been groaning over the fact that somebody has been robbing you of three cents a bushel on your wheat, did you ever stop to think that your lumber costs you three dollars more per thousand than it should, and that the richest areas have practically been given away? Why do you say so much about one form of robbery and so little about another? Let me tell you why. Because you have allied yourself with one of the political parties and dare not speak out. If the fisheries, the mines, the land and the timber iniquities had not some political significance there would be such a storm as never before disturbed the serenity of the prairies. Again let me say that if you have a spark of patriotism in you, you will get busy.

The Cost of Living.

Once on a time a man could live in a city or town of the West for very little. The cost is now about twice what it was? Do you not know that among the chief causes are the enormous freight charges, the profits of the middlemen, and that worst evil of all, the protective tariff? You are right with me when I thus talk of the middleman. Why do you not wax indignant when I mention the railway rates and the tariff? Again I say, it is because you fear you might reflect upon the actions of some political party. Is it not about time that you asserted your manhood? After all why should the party whip have such terrors for you? What have you to lose by asserting your independence? Have you not everything to gain, personally and socially, by demanding that the West shall receive from parliaments and legislatures something approaching fair treatment. It has not received fair treatment and you know it.

Immigration Policy.

But all that has been said so far refers to the material prosperity of the West. Material prosperity is not the chief thing in the upbuilding of a country. The thing of first importance is to get the right class of people and to get them working intelligently and harmoniously. Did you ever for five minutes stop to think how our country is being filled up? Here a hive of Germans; here a hive of Swedes; here a colony of Poles; here a colony of Galicians; here English; here Canadian; here French. How can there be a united people, when the surest way to effect union has been ignored? Our immigration policy has been suicidal. We are now reaping the fruits of it. When is Manitoba to Canadianize the Mennonites; when will Saskatchewan Canadianize the Doukhobors?

You know perfectly well that your own success and the happiness of your children depends upon the Canadianizing of all the elements in the community. It is going to be a mighty difficult undertaking to Canadianize people who differ so widely in tastes, habits and affiliations.

Education.

Nor can you do very much through the public schools. First of all because you do not send your children to school; and secondly, because you will pay more for farm laborers than for school teachers; and hence, you have poor teachers. Nor do all the legislatures even favor compulsory education. You think you are doing well for your children when you get land for them and place money to their credit in the bank. Yet in your soul you know

that what they have does not ensure their happiness, comfort and peace, but what they are. Let me ask you what are your children today? Are they of as good a type as your own father and mother? If not, why not? Are you fair to them and to your country in your attitude to their education? If you love your children nothing will be too good for them. You will get busy in this matter of education, and then something will happen that should have happened long ago.

Class Hatred.

If you think I am doing nothing but pitching in to governments that is where you are wrong. You yourself are the government, if I know anything, and if there is any wrong you are to blame for it. But even apart from government, there is something in your personal lives that makes it utterly impossible for this to become a great country. Just yesterday I read a letter in a journal in which one member of a class of workers called upon all his fellow-workers to combine in order to fight against the other classes in the community. His doctrine was that there is no help for anybody unless he can fight. Country fight the town; farmer fight the grocer; shipper fight the railway; pupil fight the teacher; employer fight the employee; everybody at it—hammer and tongs! What a fine peaceable community we shall have where our success in life depends upon our ability to fight each other! What a blessed country to live in! Away with the monstrous ideal! It is unworthy of Pagandom. The law of life in Western Canada should not be "Every man for himself and devil take the hindmost," but "Each for all to the extent of his ability, and all to each according to the extent of his need." Surely we have advanced beyond the stage when our national maxim should be "Both feet in the trough."

Religion.

Sometimes when you attend church tea-meetings you are reminded that this is a Christian country. Do you think for a minute that the doctrine of class-legislation and class-warfare is in harmony with the teachings of Christ? Some of you have very little room for His teachings. Evidently you consider that He has had His day. Out in Saskatchewan in a somewhat secluded, but well-settled district an energetic young preacher—if I mistake not, a Presbyterian, and a man of fine reputation—arranged to preach one evening in a rural school-house. It was the first service in the district. Everybody for miles around was notified. The day was fine. Nothing could have been more propitious. Yet when Sunday came there were only six people out. There was time for work, for dances, for fairs and for everything else, but no time for church. Now, if you think a country can be built up without Christian teaching and Christian practice it seems to me you have made a big mistake. I tell you that it was the Christian character of our grandparents that gave this country its good name. How long will it preserve its good name if the people are not strong in the Christian virtues? If you think the case quoted is exceptional you may begin to make enquiries. Perhaps you will find cases equal to that in a rural district not far from this city where in a gathering of boys and girls, aged from eleven to fifteen, not twenty-five per cent. knew the name of the Saviour.

Public Spirit.

You say I am giving the country a bad name. The question is, are these things true? If so, how is it going to affect our country? Here we are rushing away and hustling to get money, each wrapped up in his own affairs. There is a lack of public spirit. You will fight if anybody robs you of a few cents, but you will allow the country to be robbed and say it is necessary to political life. You will grumble if you do not get the best price for your wheat, and you will spend lavishly on your cattle and horses. But what about your boys and girls? So we end as we began by saying, that unless some of you mend your ways and that right suddenly your Land of Promise may turn out to be a Fool's Paradise.