

Our Contributors.

Situation in the Canadian West.

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"The Making of the Canadian West," Etc

To a very remarkable extent the Canadian West has become the Mecca of recent emigration movements from all parts of the world. Even the self-contained country to the south of us has become land hungry, and her citizens in extraordinary numbers have come to the great plains of our West Land, whose enormous extent has scarcely been touched as yet on more than the out-most fringes. It is rather cool on the part of Secretary John Hay to issue an order changing the names of consulates throughout the world from "United States" to "American" at the very time when thousands of his fellow countrymen are discovering that the better part of the American continent lies to the other side of their northern boundary. To day our horticultural and industrial East, with the agricultural and mineral West, compel even the casual onlooker to see there is more than one great nation in North America.

As one who was born on the Red River in pre Confederation days looks back over the years, he, while marvelling with others at the present rapid progress, rejoices that the expectations of his Highland forefathers in the old Selkirk colony have been realized. With the second sight of a seer they prophesied that the fertile plains on whose edge they were the first settlers would become the home of prosperous millions. They were the "first low wash" of the waves, but they knew that over that wilderness there would one day roll a human sea.

The history of the Canadian West shows four distinct periods. The first was that troublous transition period when through the gateway of rebellion we were ushered into Confederation. That period was not only full of peril but of pathos, as the people who had been the lords of the unclaimed prairies began to find themselves hemmed in by the incoming of early immigrants. The second era was that of momentous development, during which the railways and telegraph lines brought the isolated plains into contact with the throbbing world of modern enterprise. Still a third period was that of the first sudden inflation, followed by widespread depression; but the fourth is the present era of unprecedented and permanent prosperity. In this era the hamlets we once knew have sprung into populous cities, and spots across which we chased our roving bands of Indian ponies have given place to thriving towns, with all the accompaniments of progressive civilization.

People who are curious about the outcome of these astounding movements, and who wonder whether the country can keep soberly on its feet and deal with tremendous problems, may be reassured. There are some wonderful forces at work upon the task of building a new nation in the West which insure a stability and power beyond the expectation of any who simply consider the age of the country. The educational system of the West Land is one of remarkable strength. There can hardly be any doubt as to the value of the one Public School. Its influence in assimilating the elements that are crowding from all lands towards the setting sun is wonderful.

All races and creeds in their youthful branches have to go through the same mill, and when they come out the finished product is a Canadian race, unbroken by racial or sectarian strife. Nothing could be more favorable to homogeneity in a new polyglot country, and no one who tries to go back to the old dual system is a friend to the nation now in the making.

The tremendous zeal, virility and liberality of the Churches is an important factor in the building of a stable condition of things in the West. There is nothing more unifying than religion and there is no condition of things in our country like that once prevailing in the Western States when men said there was no God west of the Mississippi River. As in the old days of Israel the prophet has been a greater statesman than those who were supposed to make statecraft their business. The leaders of the Church were men of vision and ministers like John Black, James Robertson, Archbishop McRae and others were the real foundation builders of the new Empire. To day there is no unhealthy rivalry, but there is a vim about the Churches of the West that finds expression in the far flung mission fields and great educational institutions. These make splendid forces working for solid nationhood.

Besides all this there is in the West a spirit of hope like an eternal spring. This was the case from the beginning, so that it may be in the constitution of Western things. The Selkirk colonists were on the Red River for ten long years before their fields produced enough for their sustenance. During that time, famine, flood, grasshopper plagues and the civil war between the rival fur companies had driven them from pillar to post. But by dint of strenuous toil, fishing in the streams and buffalo hunting on the plains they kept body and soul together and pressed on with indomitable hope. To this day it is quite freely said that people in the West live on hope. No better certificate for the future success of the country could be given. When hope dies ambition is buried and without ambition achievement is past. The West is hope incarnate, and there will be no failure in that direction.

But it will not all be plain sailing. There are rocks all about and wise pilotage is absolutely necessary. There is, for instance, the danger of megalomania. This word became fashionable when Louis Riel was on trial, and when his lawyers pleaded that he was suffering from the undue enlargement of his upper story under the pressure of inflated ideas. The Westerner to-day assaults the ears of the visitor with a hail of statistics calculated to prove that they have in that country the biggest things on earth. But they must be saved from the danger of making bigness and greatness synonymous in their minds. A country may be big without being great as all geography teaches us. China has influenced the world less than Scotland; and all the rest of the earth yields the palm to Palestine. "The little town of Bethlehem" has no record of bank clearances or Customs returns, but for pure effect upon the current of human history it overtops all the great cities of our time. The material world is evidently less in power than it seems at first glance. Fortunately for the West there are hosts of men not in

the noisy clamor of business, but in the corridors and nooks of meditative life who keep before the country the thought that bulk is not the supreme thing. Men of this class are the saving leaven in any mass of materialistic progress. That the new land has hosts of them is good for her in this era of tumultuous prosperity.

It may be unreasonable to make the statement, but some years of studying the social problem lead me to say that this problem in the active form of industrial strife is more likely to be prominent in the West than in the East. The wave of immigration has gone westward for so many years from our own and foreign lands that the question of the unemployed is sure to be in evidence in the larger centres. The causes are not far to seek. The population is ahead of the industrial need in view of the fact that the country is an agricultural rather than a manufacturing one. In an agricultural country large numbers of men are required for a few months, and these must be for the most part idle or go elsewhere for the rest of the time. Besides that building and similar work out of doors is practically dropped during the winter except in British Columbia and Alberta, and it is apparent that many men dependent upon such occupations are out of employment for some months of the year. When we add to these the cheapness and quality of foreign labour we need not be surprised if, for a time at least, there will be a considerable degree of social unrest in that country. The fact is that the Pacific Coast for many reasons, is at the present time the hotbed of social agitation and is the home of more socialism of the reckless type than any other part of Canada. Socialism properly understood is less dangerous to the country than the presence of men who advocate it in the wrong spirit, and we shall show wisdom if we study socialism apart from the men who sometimes intemperately claim to be its sponsors. Nothing is clearer to me after spending nearly all my life in the West than that the natural resources of the earth have been exploited beyond all reason in the interests of the few who have a "pull." Most of us believe that God made the earth for His family. Why should a few monopolize it? This is a pressing question and should be considered apart from the fact that some who press the question deny the fact of God which we believe to be the only logical antecedent. From the chaos into which such people would lead us we pray to be delivered, because atheism is the seed of anarchy. But the whole question demands study that the popular movements may be guided clear of danger.

Since coming East a few months ago I have frequently been asked as to the comparative moral standards of East and West. I have no hesitation in saying that the West does not suffer in the comparison, and in some cases stamps out evils with more aggressive energy than the East. Let the people of the East look to their laurels in this respect.

If moral and material progress go hand in hand, the future of the Canadian West is simply illimitable in its possible greatness. The famous speech made by Lord Dufferin at Winnipeg in 1877 was looked upon for years as too glowing and optimistic. Time has proved it to be the sober and ser-