

salers, jobbers and manufacturers of the city in the valley of the Bow. Cement works, biscuit factories, milling companies, brick plants, and foundries of some importance have been located there during the past five years. Like Calgary, Edmonton gets its coal cheap, and a better and larger supply will be available when the C. N. R. and G. T. P. get two hundred miles west. Therefore Edmonton hopes to beat out Calgary in the race. Away to the north, 500 miles, yes 800 miles, grain has been grown and people may find farms, mines and trading opportunities. Edmonton is already a city with many small industries. It lies just on the inside edge of the greatest beyond in the West. For these reasons, its citizens look forward to a population of one hundred thousand prosperous and happy people, lining the two banks of the Saskatchewan.

Then there is another city with hopes and prospects. In the centre of this vast prairie country lies Saskatoon, through which run all the great railway systems of the West. It also is on the Saskatchewan—the great southern branch which runs almost due north to meet its mate, a few miles east of Prince Albert. Saskatoon is 500 miles west of Winnipeg, 160 miles north of Regina, 500 miles north-east of Calgary, and 350 miles south-east of Edmonton. It is the national distributing centre for a district of 450,000 square miles. If each section of 640 acres supported twenty people, this district could accommodate nine million people. In this vast stretch of prairie it has no competitors. As it is a divisional point on two or three main lines, and has nine outlets by rail, a new rival of any strength is scarcely possible.

This great rivalry will be settled by the relative ability of the sets of merchants which make up each city and by the decisions of the railway companies as to freight rates. As these two elements are somewhat uncertain, it is difficult to foretell accurately what may happen.

A TENDENCY TO EXTRAVAGANCE.

Extravagance of statement is not the only kind of extravagance in the West. In fact it is the most

excusable variety. I have already referred to the extravagance in real estate booms. Led by the chartered banks rushing to buy the best corners, the people have bought and sold town property at rapidly advancing prices. In the course of this feverish business, many people have become wealthy. Others have lost heavily. An official in Regina told me that there were men in the provincial service drawing \$60 a month who were once so wealthy that they drank champagne for breakfast. He probably would not care to be taken too literally, but his remark indicates the true position of some of the less fortunate boomsters. All over the Dominion, there are generous investors who have bought town lots in the West at \$50 to \$100 a piece, who would be glad to sell them at half their cost.

The Western farmer and the Western merchant have been extravagant in their purchases of land. Some are land poor. Every man is a speculator, since speculation is in the air. I asked a man in Saskatoon why a certain firm of butchers had built such a fine store, scarcely equalled in Toronto or Montreal, and why another man had built a hotel at a cost of \$125,000. To me, these investments betokened extravagance. His reply was: "They have made their money easy, mostly out of real estate, and they have implicit confidence in the town." The farmer with too much land is paying out a great deal of his profit in interest, and is unable to give his land the attention it deserves. Land once cultivated and then neglected, grows weeds in profusion. These weeds have become so dangerous to the welfare of the West, that Manitoba has gone so far as to pass a law providing that Government officials may cut the weed crops, burn it, and assess the cost against the land.

In the minor details of farming, there is equal extravagance. Money comes so easily that the farmers pay large prices for nearly every manufactured article they buy, from cigars to implements. In this respect they do not differ much from the banker, the butcher, and the hotel-keeper. Profits are high. The introduction of a little of the Ontario parsimony would not do any harm. The easily-

acquired wealth of a country should not be carelessly dissipated.

THE CROPS OF 1908.

The crops this year will undoubtedly break all records. In Northern Saskatchewan and Alberta, the spring wheat and oats were farther advanced than in Manitoba. There had been much rain everywhere. May and June are the rainy months. Scarcely any precipitation occurs after July 1st. The days I spent in Saskatoon and Regina were among the brightest and hottest I ever experienced. They were only three in number, but they taught me why wheat matures in the West in 100 days. When daylight begins at four o'clock or earlier and continues until after ten o'clock at night, and to this is added a noonday heat greater than in more southerly districts, it is easy to understand why growth is so rapid and why Western wheat is designated "Hard."

There is one point which must be carefully borne in mind by those who would correctly estimate the crop conditions in the West, and that is the great variety of soil and climate. There are all kinds of soil in the West, varying from light sandy soil such as occurs in patches in Ontario, to light chocolate, dark chocolate, real black mould and heavy clay. When it rains hard and continuously, good may be done in some quarters and harm in others. Again, an early or a late frost will touch some regions and not others. Therefore, when the news of rain or frost or "growing weather" is flashed across the wires, it is but a general statement and may have no application whatever to fairly large districts. The exceptional districts are not always the same. Sometimes one is favoured; sometimes another. The conclusion of this argument, based on these broadening conditions, is that there cannot now be a complete failure of the western districts. Even in the occasional bad year, such as in 1907, there must be many districts which have an average and some which are favoured with a bumper crop.

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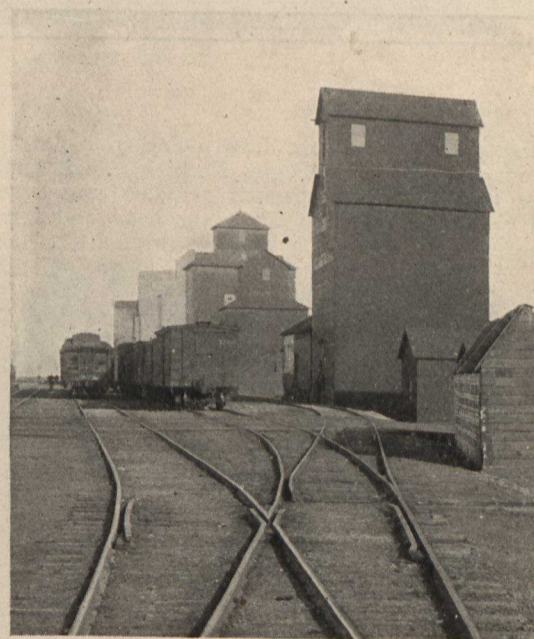
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LAST GREAT WEST



A Stretch of Virgin Prairie—at the Elbow of the Saskatchewan



When Man Begins His Work—Steam Ploughs are much used in the West, where they do Ploughing on Contract at about \$3.25 an acre. The Average day's work for an Engine is 20 acres



The Elevators which Transfer the Grain from Waggon to Box-car