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The Most Remarkable Town in North America

By J. O. CURWOOD

(Written Expressly for Twentieth Century Review.)

Not long ago I had the pleasure of visiting one of the most prosperous towns in the world. At least I have not been able to find any other town, either in literature or personal investigation, that equals it in prosperity. In many other ways it is the most remarkable town on the North American continent. In the first place it is a town of farmers. In the second place it is a "city of elevators." This place is Rosthern, on the Canadian Northern Railroad, in Central Saskatchewan. Just fifteen years ago there was only the gray prairie here, with only the grass waving in the wind to greet one's eyes; along the silent banks of the great Saskatchewan the coyote and the bear roamed unmolested; two Indian trails, still used, met and crossed, and went into the north, the east, the south and the west. Over these regions, still principal in their wild beauty, there faded none of the smoke of passing trains. Steam was yet to come; now and then a line of prairie schooners, big gray-white canvas-topped wagons, trailed toward the distant horizon. Loneliness reigned there—lonely but beautiful isolation; and the big, whirring world, the world of steam and iron and commerce, might have been a million miles away.

Then, one day, in the beautiful spring of the year 1886, a band of Indians, traveling down from the far North with their winter's catch of fur, camped for a few days, hunted two tributaries of the Saskatchewan river. And in the evening of that day, as the sun was sinking like a red ball in the direction of

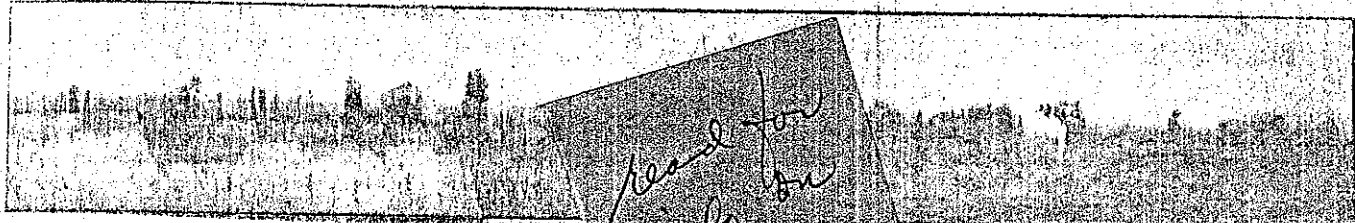
nations of these churches are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, Mennonite and Swedenborgian. A college is maintained by the Mennonite Church, and six teachers attend to the education of the children and the other nationalities. From a distance the little town of Rosthern presents an unusual aspect—and from two or three miles away all that one can see across the prairies are towering elevators and lofty church steeples.

So, as well as being the most prosperous town on the continent, the biggest individual wheat shipping point, a "city of elevators," and the country's most remarkable home of churches, Rosthern and its vicinity is a modern Babel, where, perhaps within half an hour, one may hear the tongues of a dozen different nations spoken.

One might naturally suppose that this unusual aggregation of citizens and settlers, encompassed in such narrow limits, would produce a social situation that is absolutely unique—and it does. Mennonites, Yankees, English, Canadians, Germans, Swedes and the people of other nationalities mingle indiscriminately. Racial barriers seem to be almost absolutely removed, and the Mennonite farmer and the Yankee farmer live side by side in sociable neighborliness; in most cases equally prosperous, clean-livers, contented with life and with

WOULD PAY ONLY THREE TIMES.

Porter Wright, who was a servant in the employ of Daniel Webster, says the great statesman's sense of humor was infinite. On one occasion a man presented a bill to him for payment. "Why," said Webster, "I have paid the bill before." The neighbor assured him that he was mistaken. "All right, then; call again in the morning, and I will settle with you." As soon as the man was gone, Webster called his son Fletcher, and told him to look over his papers and see if he could not find a receipted bill. To the surprise of both, two receipted bills were found, showing that the bill had been paid twice. Webster put the receipts in his pocket and said nothing. In the morning the neighbor returned for the money. Webster took his seat under the old elm, and ordered Wright to bring out the decauter. Filling the glass to the brim, he handed it to the man and told him to drink. Webster then began: "Mr. Blank, do you keep books?" The man assured him that he did not. "Then I would advise you to do so," said Webster, and pulling one of the receipts from his pocket handed it to him. The man was covered with confusion, while Webster continued: "And while you are about it you had better get a bookkeeper who understands double-entry!" at the same time handing him another receipt. "Now," said Webster, "I am going to pay this bill just once more, but I assure you, upon my word of honor, that I will not pay it the fourth time."



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was discovered that this part of Saskatchewan was the greatest country for the raising of grain in the world. It was then, when the settlers were raising as high as fifty bushels of wheat to the acre, that the "City of Elevators" began to take form.

Today this wonderful little town of Rosthern, so far as the visible part of it is concerned, is almost entirely made up of elevators. In it there are just about three hundred and twenty-five side-bread-earners; its total population is 1,200. Yet in this little village there are eight of the largest elevators in Canada, with a capacity of almost half a million bushels. Even these eight are not enough, and very shortly two more will be erected. Besides these eight huge elevators there are two large grist mills for the making of flour, so that it may be said that the entire working population of the place are, in one way or another, in the bread business. At least a half of the workmen and boys are employed in the handling of flour and grain, and the other half is kept busy supplying the wants of the farmers who raise the grain. From early morning until dusk in what is known as the "harvesting season" the prairies in all directions are dotted by the teams of settlers coming in with their wheat. At the elevators these farmers are directly paid cash for their product, and so it has come to be said throughout Saskatchewan that the farmers about Rosthern have more ready money at all times than the people of any other farming community in America.

Recently a Rosthern merchant, a "store-keeper," said to me:

"If you hunted for twenty miles in every direction about here you wouldn't find a settler who hasn't got a good bank account or a well-filled stocking hidden away somewhere in the house. Such a thing as credit is almost unknown in this part of the country."

So far as I was enabled to investigate I found that this was so. In my acquaintance with the people I ran across a good many remarkable and interesting facts. I found, for instance, that so far as Rosthern history went back there had not been a single year's failure in crops. I found, too, that no less than twelve different languages are spoken in and about this little City of Elevators, and that, as a consequence, there are probably more tongues in the little town than in any other town of a similar size in America. It is in the world's most fertile soil that the settlers of the little town have raised their crops, and the yield has been so high that the farmers have had comparatively few years of loss.

A Pretty Stretch of Country

better governed little place in the world. The liquor question, as in all western Canadian towns and cities, is entirely settled by the farmers and citizens themselves, and not by a political machine. There is not a saloon in Rosthern, for according to the law of these western provinces only a bona fide hotel possessing a certain number of rooms may have a bar; and even if there were several hotels in Rosthern they could not all possess bars, for these drinking places are distributed according to population. These bars are closed at eight o'clock on Saturday night and remain closed until eight o'clock the following Monday morning, and such a thing as a "side door" is unknown.

Nature as well as man has worked to make this part of Canada of more than usual interest. As yet there are thousands of square miles of this particular Saskatchewan region which have not been taken up by settlers, and hundreds of these square miles immediately about Rosthern are comprised of the most remarkable soil in the Dominion. Almost without exception it is of a rich black loam, usually from twelve to twenty-four inches in depth, with a sandy clay subsoil, a combination that is ideal for the growing of wheat, as is proved by the fact that last year the settlers in this country raised an average of thirty-five bushels to the acre—a yield that is practically unknown in any state in the Union. As high as fifty bushels were raised to the acre.

I want to give one illustration, which is typical of this phenomenal country. Four years ago Robert Hensley moved with his wife and family from his farm near Des Moines, Iowa, and took up a homestead about eight miles from Rosthern. He was so poor that during a part of his first year in Saskatchewan he worked out. The second year he was in shape to work for himself, and raised 410 bushels of wheat. The third year this was increased to 600 bushels, and last year, with sixty acres under cultivation, he raised a little over 1,800 bushels. The log cabin in which he lived for three years has been replaced by a modern house, and behind it are two big barns.

I give these facts chiefly to show what the future of the wonderful little town of Rosthern may be. With the few settlers now in its neighborhood it stands ready for eight huge elevators. The few elevators in the town are the hundred or so bushels of wheat which are raised in the neighborhood. The farmers have had comparatively few years of loss.

TESTED HOME REMEDIES.

Refined castor oil, applied to a corn or wart on absorbent cotton once a day for some time will surely remove them.

For soft corns between the toes, or for bunions, paint with iodine. This will take the soreness out of them.

An excellent external application for treating colds is made of five ounces of gum camphor dissolved in one pint of coal oil, and then add half a pint of good olive oil. Rub parts affected.

To cause quick perspiration, put one teaspoonful of alcohol into twelve teaspoonfuls of water. Dose: one teaspoonful every fifteen or twenty minutes until the desired effect is secured.

For bruises, severe cuts, barb-wire laceration or rusty nail wounds, place bits of wool or woollen cloth on live coals and hold the injured member in the smoke of this until the pain is relieved. This will prevent blood poisoning.
 Mrs. C. P.

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