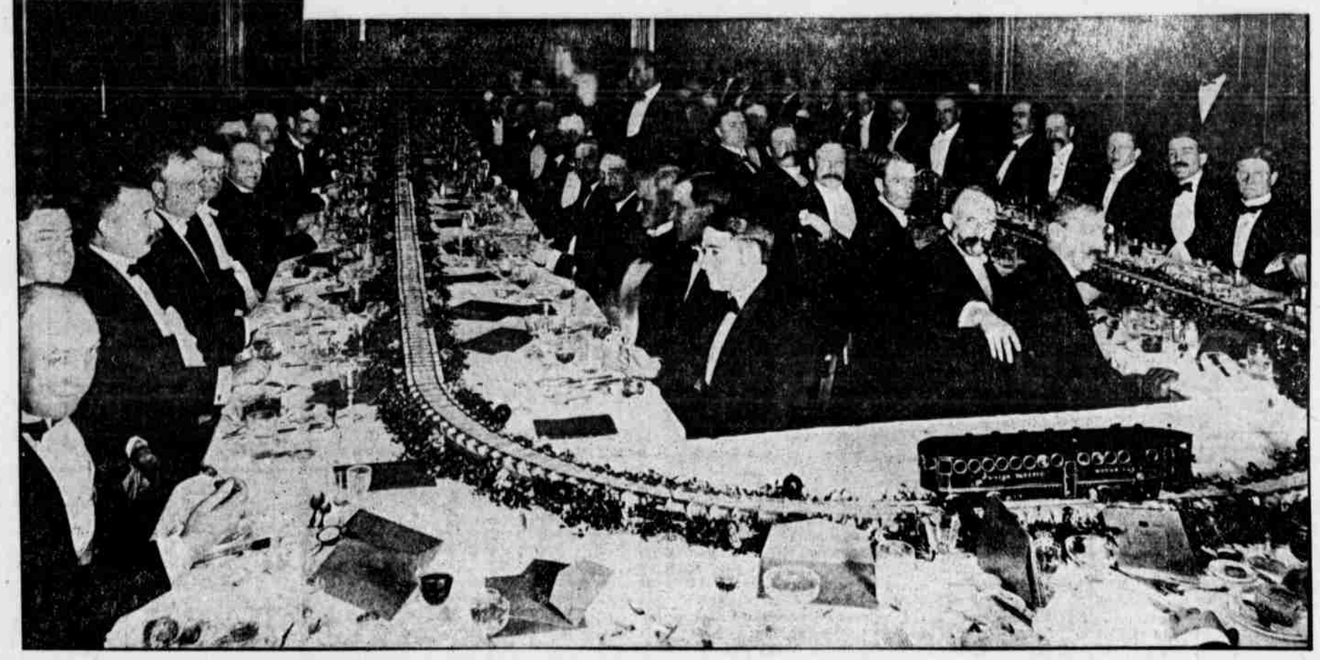
Commercial Club Banquet to Union Pacific General Manager Mohler

IN SEVERAL items the Mohler banquet given Tuesday night by members of the Commercial club to the vice president and general manager of the Union Pacific railway was extraordinary. In the first place it was unusual in these days of rate regulation warfare, the equal taxation slogan and the diatribes concerning rebates and discriminations alleged to favor the big shipper and certain localities. Nebraska and Omaha are not a bit behind the rest of the country in the somewhat feverish discussion of these topics, but the Tuesday night banquet was proof of the sanity of state and city, and an illustration of the fact that they know where to draw the line between personal animosity and the questions at issue.

A. L. Mohler stands at the head of the largest corporate interest that makes Omaha its base of operations. He represents here the highest authority of one of the greatest railroads in the United States and the greatest entering Omaha. His career has been one of those happy ones in which promotion and additional distinction and responsibilities came chronologically

GUESTS' TABLE AT THE MOHLER BANQUET.



FLASHLIGHT PHOTO SHOWING ARRANGEMENT AND DECORATION OF TABLE AT THE MOHLER BANQUET.

Banquet Planned Long Ago.

When Mr. Mohler was given his present post, the business men of the city, recognizing his relative local prominence and having been one to harmonious relations between the city and the railroad, proposed to tender him the complimentary banquet which was given the week. At that time the new general manager was not at all well known here. It was informed of the desire of its new townspeople and let it be understood that he would prefer to have the function postponed indefinitely because of a recent bereavement in his family the death of a daughter.

In compliance to this request the Commercial club laid the banquet idea on the shelf. When it was taken down again Mr. Mohler had been created vice president as well as general manager of the Union Pacific lines and had become one of the most popular men in Omaha in a purely personal way. It was for the latter reason more than anything else, perhaps, that the banquet was seized upon with peculiar avidity.

At first a committee was appointed to round up diners so as to make sure of a good attendance. This precaution proved altogether unnecessary. Acceptances came to the office of the secretary in numbers wholly unexpected. Up to the last minute the committee in charge was at its wits' end devising extra room at the tables. Not a few men classed among the most prominent in the city in a business and professional way were deliberately, though regretfully, turned away. The capacity of the Commercial club kitchen and catering service were taxed to their utmost, but Pryor, the famed steward of the club, made good.

Social Features of the Banquet.

It was a curious banquet from a sociological standpoint. Every man there was successful in some wise or another, but in many widely diversified pursuits. Politicians, professional men, business men, writers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, insurance experts, bankers, famed executive heads and individuals who had made their mark in various other means were there. As one speaker expressed it men were listening to him of all shades of belief from he who was convinced the government should run the railroads to he who believed the railroads should run the government. It was not, however, a meeting for polemic purposes. The primary desire was to impress the idea upon Mr. Mohler that the city values him as a man of ability and honor and his railroad as its most important asset from an industrial and commercial point of view.

To hazard an opinion based on the words and mannerisms of the speaker, the bolt reached its mark, and that full well. Very few banquets have been held in Omaha that came near equalling this one in the spirit of fellowship and loosening the bonds of the admiration man feels for the doer of able deeds. Popular acclaim and reward of the spirit poured forth in a gushing stream. There was merrymaking from the first moment. A stringed orchestra played airs old and new, but all popular, and those who thought they could sing did so whenever their fortitude permitted diversion from the food or between courses. If Mr. Mohler heard all the nice things said about him he would probably be occupied for some days in trying to grow a pair of mundane wings. Literally joy had the hobbles off. It was the case of man to the fore and corporations, burning issues and vexed questions to the rear.

One Note of the Affair.

Yet, when attention was turned from gastronomic exercises to processes of the mind a still, small tone was sounded presently and its echo never died away. It reminded one of that voice the Virginian used when Trampas called him a name and the Virginian assured him that he must smile when it became necessary for him to employ that particular word. More than one of the speakers struck the note. It had a meaning cleft clear and deep and it was understood by all those sitting around the board. It signified courteously, even gently, that railroads are much loved, but they must be good if they would not suffer punishment. It wasn't a warning—merely a message.

Unique and Artistic Decorations.

The decorations were very appropriate and distinctive. The tables were arranged in the shape of a very much elongated letter "U," which obviously was fit as regards the Union Pacific. The guest, toastmaster and speakers sat at the bottom end of the "U" looking down the rows of banqueters. Behind them a full-sized locomotive front jutted from masses of palms. Every detail of a modern passenger greyhound of the road was reproduced and the headlight shed a blaze of glory over the scene. The ringing of a real locomotive bell commanded silence when silence was wanted and the toastmaster shouted "All aboard," prior to untying the packages of wit and wisdom.

At a famous James J. Hill banquet in St. Paul, which was reported to have cost a fabulous sum, a railway track ran down the center of the tables and had a dummy train of cars upon it. The Mohler banquet went this one better in a tiny motor car, No. 7, an exact miniature of the kind of cars that have been perfected and manufactured at the Omaha shops of the Union Pacific, under the supervision of W. R. McKeen, superintendent of motive power and machinery, and with the hearty co-operation of Mr. Mohler. These same motor cars produced a sensation in the traffic world and have made Mr. McKeen famous. The miniature ran on the sand-ballasted track by electrical air and carried notes and carnations between men along the route. It was the neatest and most unique decorative feature.

The motor car had one terminus in a fourteen-story edifice intended to represent someone's dream of what the new Union Pacific headquarters building ought to look like. It astonished and aroused the admiration of the highest officers of the system who had no suspicion the problem could be solved so easily. The towering structure was brilliantly illuminated. On its dome was a rotund, bald-headed figure operating one eye through a telescope. A tag affixed said the effigy was Charley Lane, the assistant general freight agent of the system, whose name has become a household word, etc.

The building stood at the extremity of one end of the "U." At the other was a replica of the new Union Pacific shops, complete even to the athletic grounds which will be laid out for employes. The motor car stopped here and was turned for a return journey.

Garlands of green leaves set the single track off in a proper looking right-of-way, and were hung in festoons overhead and draped around the posts and woodwork. Red incandescents gleamed among the green on the table and elsewhere and the effect was subdued and pretty.

And Mohler Said Little.

It was generally hoped and presumed that Mr. Mohler might find the occasion auspicious to say something definite regarding the new headquarters building and its location, the enlargement of the shops and the chances for establishing here a factory for the manufacture of the McKeen motor cars. But the vice president ignored his opportunity. He appeared rather flustered when it was demanded that he say something in response to a very elaborate presentation of his abilities and virtues, and he made his speech the shortest of the evening. Before and afterwards he gave evidence of enjoying himself thoroughly. But about the shops and the headquarters the banqueters drew blanks. Finally curious individuals passed interrogations up to the head of the table, but these brought the unsatisfying response that the headquarters would be built, and built in Omaha. This was as far as Mr. Mohler would commit himself.

Two gentlemen who certainly deserved places at the tables watched the game from the sidelines. These were John Steel, chairman of the banquet committee, and Commissioner E. J. McVann. They were overworked and worried captains of the general good. The congratulations they received did much to ameliorate whatever ills they suffered.

To the heart, stomach, mind, sight and fancy the banquet had clever appeals. To expunge unnecessary verbiage—it was a success.

Quaint Features of Life

Broke a Leg Pulling a Boot.

A. J. Curtiss of Bristol, Conn., a commercial traveler, broke a bone in his right leg while engaged in the apparently simple operation of pulling on his boot. This unusual occurrence has brought about a lawsuit in which Mr. Curtiss is the plaintiff and an accident association the defendant.

Mr. Curtiss declares that he broke his leg in Granby on June 10, 1904, the left strap to his boot coming off suddenly, "by which his leg was suddenly and violently wrenched to the right, said wrench causing a fracture of the pubic bone and has caused him great pain and soreness, which has continued to the present time." He says that for more than fifty-two weeks he has been totally disabled and unable to attend to his business or any other, and for much of the time has been confined to his bed.

Japanese Letter Writer.

There is a Japanese magazine, a new one, the "Tagami-Zasshi," which is a sort of periodical complete letter writer. The Japanese are bad business letter writers. They have a way of inditing forty papers of polite oriental highfalutin and getting nowhere. A Japanese brewer receives a letter beginning, "O, most illustrious maker of that most divine of all beverages, deign to commit to me a case," etc. The "Tagami-Zasshi" is trying to teach the native to write: "Yours of the 10th inst. received and contents noted," etc.

Hot Times in a Chicago Home.

Alleging that his wife "kicked him with a pair of French heel boots, always kept three revolvers in her possession with which she occasionally threatened to shoot him, hit him on the head with a hammer, and presided over the dinner table with a revolver in her lap," Charles Schroeder of Chicago filed an answer to the writ for divorce begun by his wife, Mrs. Alma Schroeder.

The suit for divorce is the sequel to a "St. Joe" marriage which took place a year ago last June.

According to Schroeder, while he lived with his bride he was in constant fear of his life. While she frowned constantly upon him and said little caustic things that tend to arouse a man's wrath, Schroeder overlooked these until he discovered that his wife had three large revolvers. Then, he says, he began to "take notice" and discovered that, while at the dinner table, she held a revolver in her lap, with which she threatened him while he ate.

Then he says that last January she kicked him with her "French heel boots," and on the same day hit him on the head with a "claw hammer."

The couple separated November 30, 1905.

Tobacco and Beads Fetched Him.

Beads and tobacco are the open sesame to the affection of the savage. The Commonwealth Secretary for External Affairs has been visiting British New Guinea, and among the curios with which he returned to Melbourne was a gorgeous headdress made of the feathers of birds of paradise, the many-colored plumage of parrots and various other of the brilliant birds of that region, all securely sewn together and bound with beautiful shells. Two axes and a pocketknife was at first offered for the treasure, but the Papuan owner shook his head. A strip of calico was added, with the like result; but the owner's eye glistened at the sight of a string of beads and a plug of tobacco, and the bargain was clinched.

Lucky Discovery of a Will.

In order to secure some token by which to remember a great-aunt to whom she had been much attached, Mlle. Bertha Chevanne of Paris, a young Frenchwoman, attended a sale of the old lady's effects. The girl was poor and most of the articles were beyond her purse.

A shabby old book—a book of devotions—was, however, put up. Nobody bid for it except Mlle. Chevanne, and she bought it for next to nothing. In turning over the leaves she came across a folded paper. It was a will bequeathing her the whole of her great-aunt's estate, valued at $80,000.

Pictures of the Great Northwestern Wheat Belt

(Copyright 1906, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

BATTLEFORD, Saskatchewan, Jan. 18.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I want to tell you how Americans farm in Canada. There are something like 150,000 ex-United States citizens in this British northwest, and 50,000 came here last year. All own farms, and most of them are the prize farmers of their communities. They have been cultivating similar lands in Minnesota and the Dakotas, and have brought their farm machinery and household effects with them. They have imported their own horses and they began breaking the prarie the moment they landed. By way of illustration, one American, who came in last spring, arrived at Saskatoon, more than 200 miles north of the American boundary, at 10 o'clock one morning. The cars had hardly stopped before he began jerking his stuff out, and by 2 o'clock that afternoon he had three plows at work breaking the prairie. Many farmers, who arrive in the spring, live in tents until the first crop is planted, others knock up rude shacks while they are plowing and seeding, waiting for the summer to build their homes. Within a few months from now the plowing will be going on all over the wheat belt and the people will do nothing else until they get the grain planted.

Breaking the Prarie.

The methods of farming here are different from those in the settled parts of the United States. There are millions of acres of land which have never been touched by man. The prairie is covered with a thick sod and one must have strong teams and good plows to turn it. The best time for breaking is in the early spring, when the earth has been softened by the winter snows. As soon as the frost is out the plows are started and they are kept busy until the crop is in.

The breaking is done by the farmers who own the land and by contractors, who make a business of preparing the land for outsiders, and who, later on, do much of the threshing. The ordinary farmer uses a gang plow and from three to a half dozen horses. With three horses he is able to plow about two acres per day and with additional horses more in proportion. Much of the work is performed by traction engines, which haul machine plows so large that they turn over a strip of sod as wide as the average city sidewalk at one time. These plows will make nine furrows in crossing the field, and will break up as much as forty acres in one day. Such work is done by contract, the contractor charging $3.50 per acre for doing the plowing.

The next process is back-setting; that is, going over the field again and throwing the furrows in the opposite direction. This may also be done by contract, the total price for plowing, back-setting and seeding being $5. This means that a man can have his wheat planted in fields reduced from the virgin prairie at $5 per acre and the cost of the seed. Indeed, I have had real estate agents, who have been trying to sell me land, offer to take charge of a farm and put it under crop for $5 per acre and the cost of the seed. This is in addition to the purchase price.

Some of the farmers here, who are anxious to get quick returns, sow wheat the same year that they break the soil. Others plow the land in the spring and back-set it in the summer, seeding it during the following spring. This process insures a good crop. Those who plant immediately upon breaking do not expect to get much the first year. Others plant flax for their first crop and wheat the next year.

Sowing the Wheat.

The old picture of the farmer going over the plowed ground sowing the grain broadcast is not to be seen in Canada. All grain here is planted with drills. The ordinary drill is pulled by three horses, and on the larger farms several drills follow one another over the fields. The drill plants the seed and covers it, and after this the farmer lays off until the harvest.

He may now break up or back-set other lands for the next year, or may build his house, make fences or undertake other general farm improvements.

Harvest in Canada.

The most strenuous time of the year comes with the harvest. This is a land of short seasons. The crops grow faster than in the United States and harvest comes on all at once.

Along about the 15th of August these prairies become golden seas, which rise and fall under every wind. Each sea is composed of grain ready for cutting and all is ripe at just about the same time.

The farmers now go into their work with a rush. In many cases the women and girls join the men and boys in the fields. Nearly every man has his own harvesting machinery and the girls often drive the harvesters to cut the grain. Each harvester is drawn by three horses, but the husky wheat-fed American maiden manages such a team without trouble. At the same time thousands of hands have been imported from the United States and eatsern Canada. They have received reduced fares from the railroads and are sure of work at high wages from now on until the grain has been loaded upon the cars, which will take them to the great lakes.

How One American Reaps.

Harvesting on the larger farms is pushed from sunlight to dark, and even by twilight and moonlight. Thousands of bushels of grain must be reaped within a week or so and a little delay may ruin the crop. The grain must be cut when it is just so ripe, and no riper. If left too long it will hull in the harvesting. If it becomes wet it will lose in quality, and an untimely frost may ruin it. Take, for instance, a farm like that of Emile J. Mellicke, which had last year one wheat field containing 1,900 acres, from which came 57,000 bushels of grain, worth $20,000 and more. That farm is situated near Dundurn, in Saskatchewan, several hundred miles north of the American boundary. It is owned by a Minnesota state senator, who probably got his experience in the United States. The moment his wheat was ripe he started a dozen harvesters into it, and worked his machines from daybreak to dark until every stalk was cut. He had relays of horses, and he instructed his men to push them to their utmost. There was no stopping for rest at the end of the field, but every four hours fresh teams were put into the harvesters and the work went on, the machines following each other over this vast tract, cutting down scores of acres at one swath. The result was that the wheat was all harvested in time, and it brought excellent prices.

Among the Threshers.

I have seen considerable threshing during my trip through Canada. The work is done by steam, and in riding through the country last fall one was seldom out of sight of the smoke and the noise of the threshing machine.

The business is interesting. Let us visit a farm and see how it is done. The field which we enter contains a thousand acres. It is spotted with wheat shocks, or stooks, as they are called here. Each stook consists of a half dozen or more sheaves, stood upon end, with others on top so arranged as to shed the rain. In this form the stooks are thrown on the wagon, to be carried direct to the thresher. There are a half dozen teams moving over the field gathering them up. Men stand on the wagons pitching the sheaves. As soon as a wagon is loaded it is driven to the thresher. There are two there all the time, and the sheaves stream continuously into the threshers from sunrise to sunset.

At the same time there is a little river of grain flowing out. It comes from the thresher through a tin pipe, which has a flexible end of canvas. This end is placed in the wagon box and the wheat is not handled by man from the time it leaves the straw until it reaches the car. Wagon after wagon comes to the thresher and is filled with wheat, its driver carrying it on to the elevator or up to the platforms, which are provided at the stations, from where it may be shoveled into the cars.

The work here, as on most of the Canadian farms, is done by contract threshers. Few farmers own such machines, but there are contractors who go from farm to farm, carrying gangs of men with them. They thresh the wheat at so much per bushel. They have threshing machines, many of which come from the United States, and American traction engines by which they move their outfit from one farm to another. Every thresher carries with him a little caboose upon wheels, which constitutes the cooking and eating places of the men. There is also a water tank wagon in which the water for the engine is carried. The ordinary threshing outfit requires a force of about eighteen men who are hired for the season at wages of about $2.50 a day, including board. The food is supplied by the thresher, and all that the farmers need do is to furnish the wagons to carry away the grain.

Marketing the Wheat.

In the eastern part of the United States the wheat is often stored in granaries, and the farmers watch the market until the price is just right, when they haul it to the station and ship it. In the new Canada there are practically no barns or granaries. The wheat goes direct from the threshers to the elevators, or it is sent to the cars and shipped to the storage elevators upon the great lakes. Throughout the wheat region there are now more than a thousand elevators. There are several at every station; they stand out on the landscape, marking the value of the wheat districts surrounding. There are 300 different stations, which have such granaries, and altogether they have a storage capacity of 30,000,000 bushels. This is outside the great elevators at Fort William and Fort Arthur, at the head of Lake Superior, which will hold something like 20,000,000 bushels more.

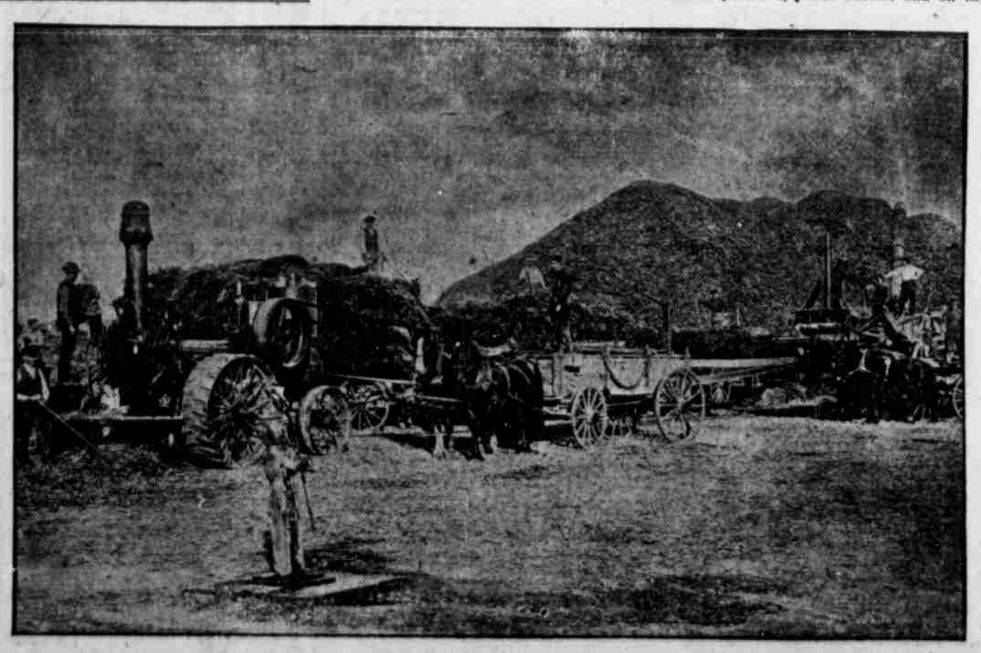
Canadian Elevator System.

These elevators are largely owned by companies which buy, ship and store wheat. One company will own thirty or forty elevators located at different points, and its agents will make summer and winter rates of storage and sale. The number of elevators is rapidly increasing. It has doubled within the past five years, and new buildings are going up every day. All these elevators are under government supervision. Each has a license, and it is inspected regularly by the warehouse commissioner. Every bit of grain which is sold in Canada has to pass through such inspection. It must be weighed under the government weighmaster, and all grain put into vessels has to be passed upon by the government. This is to maintain the high standard of western Canadian wheat.

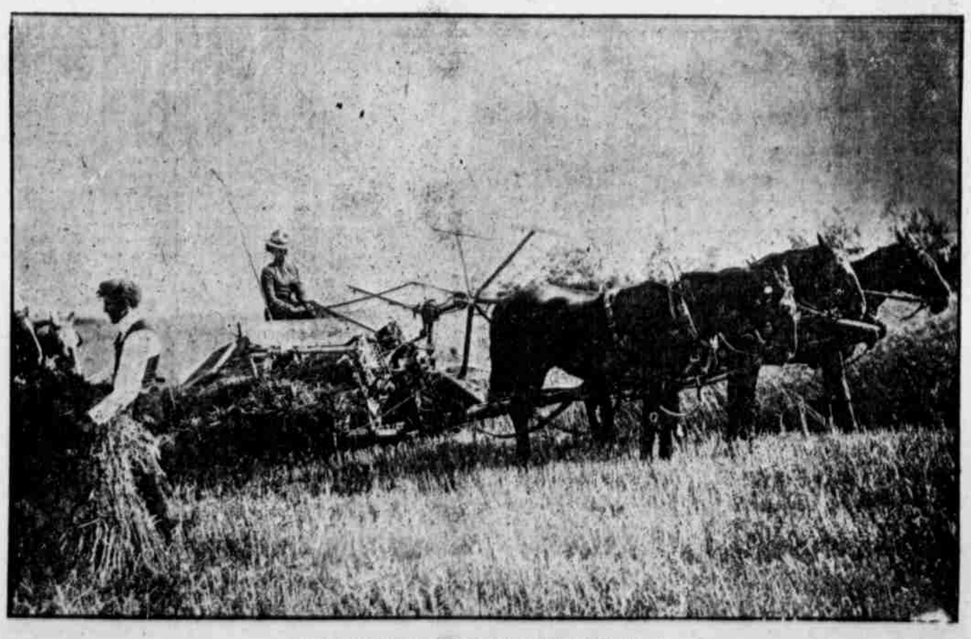
These elevator companies will hold the farmer's wheat and sell it as he orders, or they will agree to handle it on commission and get what they think is the highest price. If the wheat is shipped on the train the railroads will charge in the neighborhood of 25 cents for hauling a hundred pounds 1,000 miles, and it can be taken down the great lakes by water a thousand miles farther for about 5 cents per bushel.

The elevator companies are much criticised by the farmers, who claim that they delay the shipment of wheat in order to increase storage charges. The wheat begins to come to the elevators about September 1, and the elevators are pretty well

(Continued on Page Seven.)



THRESHING SCENE IN NORTHWESTERN WHEAT BELT.



AN AMERICAN GIRL HANDLING A REAPER.