

JUNE 16 h, 1893.]

of the tough prairie turf cut into strips two or three feet long, and a foot or two broad. They are built up into solid walls, seven or eight feet high. The roof consists of a framework of poles, thatched with prairie grass, or covered with sods. The roof of a dug-out is made after this fashion also. Sod houses and dug-outs usually contain but one room, and here the family eat, sit, and sleep. Sometimes these dwellings are floored, but frequently there is only a little, rough board floor at one end of the room, where the beds are. The chimney is but a hole in the roof, through which a stovepipe projects. If the owner can afford it, he sometimes plasters the inside of the walls with lime mortar, or lines them with boards. A sod house that has been carefully constructed, is habitable for five years or longer. By this time the rootlets that held the sod together are all quite decayed, and the wall crumbles. Both sod houses and dug-outs are very warm and comfortable, in the severest winter, but dug-outs are said to be damp and unhealthy during summer. The settlers who live in these dwellings are chiefly Swedes, Norwegians and Danes, of whom there are great numbers in the frontier prairie States and Territories.

There is a large colony of Russians in Manitoba, and another in Southern Dakota. These people have made for themselves very comfortable and durable adobes or mud walled houses. A plentiful coat of whitewash on the outside, gives them a somewhat attractive appearance at a distance. These houses are only one storey in height, and of ordinary breadth, but are of an unusual length. The cattle, and other farm animals, are housed in one end, and the family in the other, with a mud wall between.

Sometimes one sees a log house in the sparsely wooded bottoms of the larger rivers, or a stone house in the vicinity of a rocky bluff. But the majority of prairie dwellings in the new districts are such as I am describing.

These houses do not always appear so small and unpretentious. They have a glory of their own. Distance and the sun transfigure them. Mirages are frequent in the summer on the plains, and the effect on the little board houses is marvellous. Time after time we used to think we were approaching a real mansion on the prairie. There it was a mile or two distant but plainly seen in the clear, sunny air, two storeys high, at least, large and airy. But as we drew nearer, the proportions of the house seemed to shrink, until it did not seem much larger than a very big packing case with a door and two windows.

The little villages and towns are magnified and glorified by the same magic influence. Seen in the bright sunlight, under the intense blue sky, a prairie hamlet distant six or eight miles, seems but a mile or two away, and its twenty little frame buildings stand out in the clear air like the massive stone blocks of a large city.

No fair comparison can be drawn between the rude dwellings of the first prairie farmers, and the older farm houses of the Eastern States and Provinces. The true comparison is with the log cabins of backwoods settlers in the East. The comforts and conveniences of the latter are quite as limited. The West will improve as the East has done. Prairie farmers

have wonderful energy and adaptability, the soil is fertile and the crops usually good, and produced at a small cost comparatively. And so their wealth grows apace, year by year. Already, in the older districts, there are good houses and out-buildings, and well-kept gardens of both vegetables and flowers. Fruit orchards have been planted, and large groves of cotton-wood have been set out, and are growing vigorously.

Meanwhile, the pioneer prairie settler away out on the frontier, has compensations. He needs not the commiseration of city dwellers. It is his good fortune to be free from the works and ways of the maddening crowd, and the miasms both moral and physical, that rise from the abodes of the multitude. Though his house is small, his door opens upon infinity. And so he comes to have a development and cultivation of character, like people who live long by the sea, or in the presence and shadow of great mountains. We who spend our lives shut in by streets and houses, do not know well what that is. Yet we may recognize some of the traits of the typical settler on the prairies. These seem to be a certain quiet strength, and depth of temperament, independence and breadth of opinion, and sincerity of disposition. A life that develops such character as this, is not lightly to be esteemed in comparison with the fuss and fury of cities.

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M'IVER'S MALADY.

In the afternoon of Sunday, December third, 1837, Malcolm Maciver was industriously furnishing his rifle in the back kitchen of a small farm-house, a few miles north of Toronto, in York County, Canada.

His task completed, Malcolm loaded the rifle and fired from the door at a black cat, which was daintily stepping along the top of the garden fence. The sharp "spang!" of the rifle brought Malcolm's mother to the side of her son, who was now meditatively watching the blue circles of smoke as they gradually widened and dissolved.

"Ah, Malcolm," bemoaned Mistress Maciver; "ye hae kilt auld Tammy! Puir black beastie; for why did ye dae't?"

"Hunkh," grunted Malcolm; "he was an ugly cat, and I had to take a crack at something."

"Malcolm, ye're no' the lad ye ance was; I mind the day ye wadna shoot on the Sabbath; an' ye hae dune a gey unlucky thing—ye hae ta'en the life o' a black Tammy, an' it'll fare ill wi' ocht ye may undertak' i' the year, boy. Why are ye gaun room sae muckle wi' your gun i' your grup? A buddy wad think ye expectit war i' the lan'!"

"And maybe we do, mother," Malcolm laconically rejoined as he re-loaded, and moodily elevated his weapon to aim at a bird which had alighted near where the cat had been.

"Hold!" cried a voice; and a middle-aged, strapping fellow stepped from behind the fence.

"Ha, Ludwig," Malcolm said; "I nearly finished you that time."

"That's twice I've just missed being shot this week," exclaimed Ludwig. "Plenty of shooting these days; eh, Malcolm? Practice matches and hunting every-

where!" and he laughed boisterously.

"Ye tak' it gey brawly, Ludwig," interposed the old lady, warningly. "But ye maun guard yersel' noo; for it's three times an' oot, ye ken!"

"Mother's always saying queer things," vouchsafed Malcolm. "Come, Ludwig; it's be going. For war there must be bullets, eh?"

Ludwig nodded assent, and the two men trudged away toward David Gibson's farm—which was a little distance nearer Toronto than the Maciver homestead.

"I'll warrant they be gangin' tae that auld gruesome mill o' Shepard's," grumbled Mistress Maciver, as she turned back into the house: "an' it's no' for ony guld th' gang there, I'll guarantee!"

"I wish you would not grumble in that way, mother; what are you saying?" asked Malcolm's sister, Maggie, who was "siding" away the tea-things. "We are happy, and why will you persist in running after trouble, mamma?"

"Ah, ye dinna ken bairn; ye dinna ken," was all her mother would say; and Maggie saw it was no use to talk further.

"I'm sayin', Maggie, that thae mysterious ways Malcolm hae gotten intae hode nae guid tae hisel' or ony ane. He hae no' ben like oor ain boy syne rant'n' Willie Lyon Mackenzie cam' this gait wi' his barangum!"

"He'll get over it in a day or two, mother; it's only some wild youth's freak."

"The guid Lord grant sae," fervently ejaculated the old woman.

Mistress Maciver's surmise was correct, for the two men lost no time in arriving at Shepard's mill—a tumble-down structure near the rear of the Gibson farm.

"Who goes there?" greeted them out of the darkness, as they drew near their destination.

"Friends of the people and responsible government," said Ludwig.

"What bear you?"

"Hearts true to the core."

"But small as crabapples?"

"Crabapples are sour."

"Pass!"

The spectacle inside was a peculiar one. All sorts and sizes of impromptu crucibles were set up, and men diligently reduced pieces of lead-pipe, tea-chest lead and other lead scraps into bullets. The new-comers were recognized by variously modulated nods and greetings.

"Men," spoke up one from among the group; "what about banners?"

"We'll get those at the City Hall," said another in answer.

"They've put Union Jacks there with the arms, and we'll appropriate both. A couple of cops is all the guard we have to overcome, boys; ha, ha!"

There was a general jubilee at this sally; and two or three began to sing in a martial manner.

"I have a flag," Widesman interposed, producing a bundle from his overcoat pocket. He unwound the folds and flaunted before the company a not unpretentious piece of blue and gold bunting, on which was emblazoned:

BIDWELL AND THE GLORIOUS MINORITY. 1832, AND A GOOD BEGINNING.

An uproarious laugh greeted the exhibition of this.