

The Milling Industry in the West.

A sketch of milling in the early days of the Red River settlement would form an interesting chapter in the history of Manitoba. The first flour manufactured in the country was ground in hand-mills, brought out by the Lord Selkirk colonists, probably in 1815. These mills consisted of two stones, three feet across, and two inches thick. The upper stone worked on a spindle fixed in the lower, which was slightly hollowed. The wheat was poured through a hole in the upper stone, and a handle was attached for turning the mill. As the colonists became settled in their new and isolated home, wind mills were brought into requisition for grinding the wheat and still later steam and water-power mills were used. A combined steam saw mill and grist mill was established at Fort Garry in 1868. This mill had two run of stone and did quite a business for a while, but was subsequently burned down. In 1871 there were some three or four small grist mills in the settlement in addition to the wind mills, but it was not until 1876, during which year two grist mills were erected in Winnipeg, that any considerable progress was made in milling. In the meantime communication had been opened up with the United States by steamers on the Red River, and a considerable portion of the flour consumed in the settlement was brought down the river on flat boats and steamers. At this time wheat brought from \$1 to \$1.25 per bushel, and it is said that the price never went below 80c per bushel up to the year 1881. Flour brought from \$2.50 to \$4.00 per sack. The millers charged 20c per bushel for grinding, or took every sixth bushel for toll instead of the cash. In 1878 there were said to have been ten steam grist mills in Manitoba, by which time the wind mills had about gone out of use. These mills were mostly very insignificant affairs, only one of them (one of the two located in Winnipeg) having more than two run of stone. By the time roller mills were introduced in 1882, several additional stone mills had been added to the number, and a few were built in the more remote settlements even after the introduction of roller process milling into the province.

Since the introduction of roller process milling in Manitoba, the old stone mills have been rapidly superseded by the former. At points distant from the railways these old stone mills are still operated for custom work only, but wherever the railways have opened up the country and brought in the new process flour, the old mills have usually been obliged to close down. There are quite a number of these old mills now standing idle, whilst others have been changed over to the new system of milling.

Some of the machinery of these old stone mills, which formerly did duty in the days of the early history of Manitoba as a province, has been moved hundreds of miles away to the north-west, where it will again do useful service in supplying the advance guard of settlement and civilization with the staff of life. The distance that some of this old machinery has been taken from the place where it first did duty, will serve as an illustration of the almost illimitable extent of the wheat growing

are of the Northwest. One mill has been established at Lac la Biche, a point north of Edmonton, and over 1,000 miles north-west of Winnipeg. The English church mission authorities at a point several hundred miles north of this again, in the Peace river district, will also have a mill erected shortly in connection with their mission. When this vast region is settled up and intersected with railways, and these old stone mills which are now removed a thousand miles or more from the competition of their roller rivals, have been obliged to succumb to perhaps a new system of milling, which has in the meantime superseded the rollers,—by the time all this has been accomplished, the exports of the Great Northwest will perhaps have reached hundreds of millions of bushels of wheat, and hundreds of millions of barrels of flour.

Roller process milling in the West may be said to date from the year 1882, with the establishment of the industry in the city of Winnipeg. Previous to that date the flour manufactured in the province was all turned out from the old stone mills. Since the introduction of the new roller system of gradual reduction flour manufacturing has made rapid strides in the country, especially during the past two or three years. To-day there are quite a number of these mills located at points throughout the province and a number in the Territories to the west.

About a year ago the roller process milling capacity of the country was summed up by the writer as follows: "In Winnipeg there are three mills with an aggregate capacity of 1,600 barrels per day. The other mills have a capacity of from 50 to 300 barrels each per day. They are located at the following places (one at each place): Portage la Prairie, Brandon; Carberry, Oak Lake, Virden, Moosomin, Indian Head, Qu'Appelle Station, Fort Qu'Appelle, Moose Mountain, Assissippi, Prince Albert, Regina, Rapid City, Plum Creek, Shoal Lake, Morden, Stonewall, Balmoral and Wolsley." Of the mills named several were not then completed, but they were all under construction. These have all been completed, and the list can now be considerably increased. Two mills were destroyed by fire during the past few months. These were: McMillan's mill at Winnipeg, and Leitch Bros' mill at Oak Lake, Man. The first named was established in 1882, and was therefore one of the oldest in the province, Ogilvie's Winnipeg mill being completed about the same time. The two burned mills will undoubtedly be replaced as soon as possible, and probably both with increased capacity, so that the total milling capacity of the country will only suffer a temporary loss. The aggregate capacity of the burned mills was about 375 barrels.

Of the new mills completed or put under construction since the above list was published, there is first the mammoth mill at Keewatin, which will be ready to grind in the spring or early summer. The building is a massive stone structure, and will have a capacity of from 1,000 to 1,200 barrels. On the Manitoba & Northwestern railway a mill has been established at Minnedosa of about 100 barrels capacity, and another mill was completed a couple of weeks ago at Millwood, on the same railway,

and with the same capacity. At Holland, Man., there is a mill under construction, which will be completed in a few weeks, and another at McGregor, Man., has been partly constructed, but at present work is not progressing. At Neepawa, Man., a mill will be commenced in the spring, and at half a dozen other places the prospects are good for the establishment of mills. What with replacing the burned mills and new undertakings, the promise is that next season will be fairly active in mill building.

One feature of milling in the west during the past year has been the establishment of a roller mill in British Columbia—the first and only one in that province. This mill is located at Spallumcheen, a fertile valley lying to the south of the main line of the C. P. R. and west of the Gold range of mountains. The mill is supplied with wheat grown in the district, and the flour is now coming into competition with the prairie product, in the coast markets of British Columbia. The feasibility of establishing a large mill at a point on the Pacific Coast—say Vancouver—to grind wheat from the prairies, is also being discussed, and it will not be a matter for surprise if such a scheme be carried out at no distant day. The present year will also likely see the construction of a mill at Macleod, in the far southwestern portion of the Territories. A considerable sum of money has already been guaranteed for such a project. It is said there would be no trouble about securing a sufficient supply of wheat in the district to keep the mill going.

Another feature worthy of note was the shipment during the past year of Manitoba flour to China and Japan. Though there is no immediate prospect of a large trade springing up in this direction, yet the fact that the first shipments have been made, is in itself an important item.

In British Columbia, Manitoba flour has steadily gained in favor in competition with the Oregon article, whilst in Eastern Canada there is now almost a universal demand for flour from Manitoba wheat. On this account eastern millers have been obliged to import western wheat to keep their trade. From this it would appear that there will be little difficulty in finding a market for western flour, so long at least as the quality of our wheat is kept up.

Western Weather.

Under the continued influence of the warm chinook, which sent the water over the ice, the ice in the rivers wore away very rapidly, and on Saturday gave way. All the rivers throughout this part of the country are either entirely broken up, or so nearly so, as to render it impossible to cross them.

Plowing has been going on in the Macleod district for two or three days past.

In conversation with stockmen from various parts of the range country, we gather that the month of cold weather did not injure cattle at all. When the chinook came, all of them, with the exception of some poor cows, were in as good fix as when the cold weather began, the day before Christmas. During the whole of the time, the snow did not get crusted, but remained light and loose, making it easy for stock to get at the grass. They rustled well, and the consequence is that, taken as a whole, cattle have never, in the whole history of the range business in this country, been in better condition at this season of the year than they are now. Stockmen are in excellent spirits and they have every reason to be.—*Macleod (Alberta) Gazette, Feb. 1.*