

How I Would Equip, Lay Out and Operate a Given Half Section of Land in Saskatchewan

By JAMES H. BRIDGE.

First Prize Essay, 4th Year Student, M.A.C.

To the stranger coming into this last, best West with the intention of settling and making his home on its magnificent prairies, the question of prime importance is that of location. He desires to find the place where he may secure the greatest returns for the capital and energy expended, and at the same time a desirable spot in which to make a home. So important a bearing has this matter of location upon his future success and happiness that it would be wisdom, on his part, not to be in a great hurry and take up the first piece of land that is offered to him with an assurance that it is the most desirable place in the country. Real estate agents are not in the business for their health, and some of them are possessed of more verbiage than veracity. More than one man has bought land under such circumstances, and has found cause for repentance later on. It may be true that the man who can succeed in one part of the country would succeed in any part; yet we believe that such an important matter as the location cannot be dismissed in any such summary manner.

The location to be decided upon will depend on the personal ambitions and leanings of the prospective purchaser. He may desire to follow a system of grain growing only, or he may possess such an inherent love for live stock as to find it almost impossible to live without them. If his penchant be toward straight grain-growing he will undoubtedly prefer a piece of clear prairie in order that he may get his land broken up and producing revenue in the shortest possible time. If, on the other hand, he is resolved to include stock-raising in his operations, the probability is that he will prefer a district more or less wooded, so that he may have shelter for his stock and, incidentally, for himself. Again, he may desire to locate on land within a few miles of an existing railway, or, on the other hand, decide to go farther afield, in order to obtain the distinct advantage of

the difference in the price of land brought about by lack of railway facilities, with the hope of having a railway closer to him in the near future.

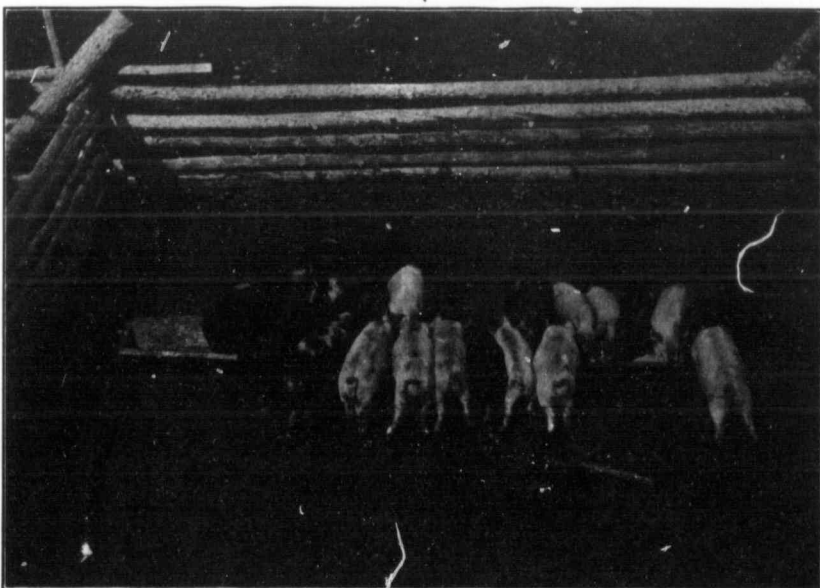
The pros and cons of these various points should be well considered by the intending purchaser of land in this West, as, once the choice is made, it is rather difficult to change, and to do so would probably entail considerable loss. The methods by which a prospective buyer may secure information as to lands for sale do not come under the scope of this article, hence, they will not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that they are numerous, and anyone desiring such information will find a plethora of advice offered gratis.

of this article lies west of the town of Battleford, Sask. As a place of residence, the district has many commendable features. It is bounded on the south and west by the semi-circular range of hills known as the "Eagle Hills," and on the north and east by the Battle river. The hillsides are more or less covered with bluffs, chiefly of poplar, with a few birch and balm of gilead. The valley, or flat, as it is termed, is in some places quite level and free from bush, while elsewhere it is dotted with clumps of trees, giving the country a park-like appearance. This, together with the beautiful background of timbered hillside, gives an attractive and home-like air to the surroundings.

homesteads has been appropriated, but there still remains some desirable locations held by the railway companies and speculators.

The system of farming followed in the past has been like that of almost all newly settled districts, largely grain-growing. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps the chief reason has been the comparative impecuniosity of the settlers coming in. While it is true that many settlers have brought with them considerable capital and a large fund of experience of conditions very similar to our own, it is equally true that a large number of our new-comers have been possessed of very little of either capital or experience. Very

naturally the latter class turned to grain-growing, principally wheat, as the system of farming the least capital outlay, and having the advantage of giving larger returns and in less time than could be obtained in any other branch of agriculture open to them. The cheapness of the land, combined with its virgin fertility, were important factors in determining the system to be followed. Under these conditions great advantages accrued to the man who possessed capital. More than one case has been known where land has been bought, broken up, and the fol-



A good spring crop and moreover a profitable one.

If we should be persuaded by the expression of opinion heard from different parts of each of the three prairie provinces, we would find that there are numerous "best" places in the West. Each settler believes that the particular section in which he has been so fortunate as to locate is equal to, if not indeed better, than any other. It is well that such a feeling exists because it is obviously impossible for everyone to have the same piece of land. However, while there is an enormous amount of splendid land to choose from, there is also some poor land and care should be exercised in selecting a farm.

The district in which I shall choose my land for the purposes

The soil here varies in character from a rather sandy loam to a rich black loam, and has proven a first-class wheat land. Its virgin fertility is evidenced in the luxuriant growth of grasses, and from the numerous remains found scattered over the prairie it is easy to see that the district has been a favorite feeding ground for that noble, now almost extinct, race of animals—the buffalo. It is practically free from stones and where it is found desirable to remove scrub or bush, the quality of the land thoroughly compensates for the labor involved.

This particular section of country has been settled up during the last eight or nine years. Most of the land available for free

following year put into wheat, the crop from which has more than paid for the land after deducting all expenses. In view of these facts, and also because wheat is a product for which a market is available at any time, the first attention of the new settler has usually been turned to the growing of wheat.

Hence, in outlining a system of farming such as I would follow if starting on a half-section of unbroken prairie in Saskatchewan (and this applies equally well in Manitoba and Alberta) I shall confine my efforts principally to wheat production. The advocacy of such a plan will undoubtedly meet with some opposition on the ground that grain-growing, without the keeping of live-stock