

CANADA'S GREAT NORTH-WEST.

(Continued from page 2 of Cover.)

" There is no doubt that in all the best wheat districts of Manitoba there are many hundreds of acres where the yield will go up to 30, 35, and even to 40 or 50 bushels to the acre. For example, we have reports of a yield of 47 bushels to the acre at Belmont, of 35, 40 and 50 in the Wawanesa district, of 30 bushels at Rosebank, of an average yield of 47 on one hundred acres at Baldur; of a five-acre field on the farm of Mr. Dougald C. Gillespie of Douglas, thirteen miles east of Winnipeg, running up to 252 bushels, and of 40 acres running 45 bushels to the acre; of a yield of 1,193 bushels, or an average of 57 to the acre, from 21 acres on the farm of Mr. Charles Cuthbert at the Portage, and perhaps a general average on the Portage plains of 35 to the acre; of 35 to 40 bushels to the acre in the Emerson district, of a 40-acre field on the farm of Mr. C. A. Irvine at Boissevain which gave 42 bushels to the acre, of 47 bushels to the acre on the farm of Mr. D. Steedsman at Deloraine, of 6,000 bushels from 97 acres of wheat on the farm of Mr. R. J. Steward of Camille, of 40 bushels to the acre on the farm of Mr. R. Latimer and of 60 to the acre on the farm of Mr. Walter Turnbull both of Holland, of 40 bushels of wheat and 100 bushels of oats to the acre on the farm of Mr. James Dale of Glenboro', and of a yield of 4,500,000 bushels within a radius of fifteen miles of Brandon. The average, however, is preserved by the fact that there has been injury by frost in some districts where crops were late and ripening slow."

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" This season, notwithstanding its wonderful harvest will furnish examples of failure, partial or complete, in Manitoba as well as in the Territories. So it has been, so it will be. So it is in Ontario, so it has been in Ontario ever since the Province was founded. In fact many of the older settlers even in the best counties of western Ontario will tell you that in the pioneer days they suffered from frost, as Manitoba has suffered, and it was the opinion of many of the fathers that the rich loam turned up on the virgin fields drew the frost, and that the very fatness of the soil was a disadvantage during the early stages of settlement."

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" We have heard a good deal of the failures in Manitoba and the North-West. The failure has his mouth always at one's ear. His tale is never told. But the great mass of prosperous settlers are less concerned to trumpet their successes abroad. They are probably well content to go on from year to year sowing and reaping their crops, increasing their herds, beautifying their homes, and rearing their families in the blessedness and plenty of a fruitful land. There have been failures in Manitoba due to the country, to frost, drouth or hail, but there have been many more failures due to improvident farming or to utter ignorance of all sound methods of agriculture. In the flush of the boom era, the farmer, like the speculator, got the notion that he could reap where he had not sown, and that farming was merely a summer pastime. In many cases this notion was encouraged by a phenomenal crop. In consequence there were failures from careless husbandry, failures from reckless assumption of debt and interest obligations; and for the faults of unthrifty men and the losses due to ignorance of climate and conditions of soil and tendency of seasons the country suffered out of all proportion to the percentage of failures and out of all proportion to the real drawbacks of the country.

The wise policy for the new-comer, as pithily put to me by Mr. Richard Waugh of The North-west Farmer, is, "Begin low and go slow." The settler must not come here, as hundreds have come in years past, predetermined to farm after the English fashion, or the Ontario fashion, or some other outside fashion. All that he knows of farming he can turn to advantage in Manitoba, as elsewhere, but he must farm after the Manitoba fashion, study the methods and conditions by which the best men in the country are succeeding, and be governed by their experience. He will not lack for advisers. Manitoba has in full measure that neighborly sympathy and spirit of helpfulness which blesses and ennobles a pioneer community, notwithstanding that the pioneer era must seem

to be very remote from these inviting prairie homes and far-spreading wheat-clad valleys.

Two main causes have operated to retard settlement in Western Canada: (1) the boom of the early eighties, discouraging investors and prejudicing the reputation of the country; (2) false methods, and crop failures due to lack of trustworthy data respecting soil and climate. But now the settler has the experience of years whence he may draw instruction. He is certain, where his fore-runners were only guessing. He has branch railways and market facilities, and he buys his farm implements at half the price of twelve years ago. True, against this he must put the fall in grain prices, but this again is offset in some measure by a general drop in the value of his purchases.

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" Notwithstanding the general unwisdom of trusting to wheat only, there are parts of Manitoba, for example the Portage Plains, where wheat yield so wonderfully and the crop so rarely fails to reach maturity unharmed that it would be a mistake, a financial mistake, to devote the soil to any other purpose. The crop is so certain and the cost of cultivation so light that nothing else to which the land could be put would yield such good results. There are other districts subject to frost or other drawback where stock-raising and general farming are the only wise plan of operation. As I have said, the wise settler will not take his course from newspaper writers, or from immigration pamphlets, whether issued by Government or railway, but will put himself into the hands of the best men of the district in which he may locate, and learn of their experience."

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" As there are districts in Manitoba especially adapted to wheat, so there are districts that offer special facilities for stock-raising. Westbourne, they tell me, is a good grazing district. In the Minnedosa country and west 100 miles stock can be profitably raised with a little winter feeding. Beyond Yorkton and in the Saskatchewan country are good cattle districts, and feeding can be carried on with some winter help. The grass cures itself upon the plains, and is of first-rate quality. In the Pilot Mound district stall-fed cattle are raised successfully. In the Star Mound neighborhood, ten or twelve miles east of Crystal City, they raise fine cattle. In the northwestern district wheat is perhaps a precarious crop, but oats give a splendid yield, and it is said to be profitable there to feed oats in the sheaf. It seems that all over Manitoba there is good grazing country right in the heart of the wheat belts, or, at least, bordering on the best grain areas, and the incoming settler should seek to learn the local conditions and understand the local aptitudes before he determines finally upon the character of his operations. It is just to add, also, that in stock-raising, as in grain-growing, transportation rates make in favor of Manitoba, and should not be left out of the calculation."

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On one farm that I visited on the Portage Plains, owned by Mr. Samuel Marlatt of Portage la Prairie, the grain stood higher than my shoulders, with scarcely a lodged patch to be found, and I have learned since that this crop yielded 42 bushels to the acre, and the grain is a splendid sample. Mr. Marlatt, by the way, took up the first homestead on the plains. It was surveyed in 1871, and homesteaded in 1873. Mr. Marlatt is from Middlesex, near London, and came out here in 1871. He and ten others bound for the Canadian west banded together at St. Paul, bought a mule team for \$500, loaded their belongings on the pioneer cart, and walked behind the cart the great distance of 480 miles to the Portage. But these experiences were common in the early settlement of the west. The Marlatt homestead is now owned by Mr. Robert McGowan, formerly of Scarborough, and Mr. Marlatt is the head of a firm of prosperous lumber merchants at the Portage. Mr. William Wishart of the Portage Plains is among the most successful of the farmers of Manitoba. He is, I think, a native of the County of Wellington, and lived for some years in the State of Missouri. But for some reason he was not content with the conditions or the prospects in that State, and he came to Manitoba in the spring of 1874. His possessions at that time were a wife and three children, a team of horses and a waggon. He has not been a speculator.

The English tenant farmer who comes here (Manitoba) willing to farm after the methods of the experienced prairie farmer, and he has little to learn save to take advice, will very soon become his own landlord, and very soon establish his prosperity upon an enduring basis. Settlers of Ontario stock of course do well in Manitoba.

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" The harvesting excursions of the Canadian Pacific Railway are probably effective immigration agencies. It is estimated that during this season between five and six thousand harvest hands were taken into the country by these special excursions. They all seem to have found employment during the harvesting, and the hope is that many of them will remain and become permanent settlers. Of course, notwithstanding the multiplied labor force of the binder, the Manitoba harvest could not be handled except from this great influx of outside help. The harvest season lasts for only a few weeks, and during this time a crop worth from \$16,000,000 to \$17,000,000 has to be reaped. Then the threshing follows. It will be understood that a percentage of the grain is not stacked. The thresher is set down in the harvest field and men and teams gather the grain from the stooks to feed the machine."

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" Of course only the farmers who are able to thresh soon after harvest can avoid the labor of stacking. There is a great deal of stacking done in some parts of the Province, and even on the Portage Plains I saw as many as fifteen stacks in one group, and judging by the location of other surrounding groups these seemed to represent the product of only a small patch of land. The stacks almost better than the stooks give one an idea of the wonderful fertility of this prairie country. In some threshing gangs there are a score of men and eight or ten teams. They bring the grain from the fields to the thresher and take away the straw. The threshers, too, are fed not by the farmer's wife but by the cook, whose kitchen is a part of the travelling outfit. The Ontario housewife who has to provide for and feed a score of hungry threshers will pray that this fashion may extend eastward. All that the farmer does is to take the grain from the thresher and pay seven cents a bushel for the threshing. Of course many farmers own their own threshers. I was told that from the best point of observation at Portage la Prairie as many as 70 threshers have been counted at work on the plains at one time. The labor of threshing this year is very heavy, and many of the hands who came up for the harvesting have also found employment in the threshing."

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" As farming becomes more diversified there will be more employment for labor all the year round, and the necessity for this great influx of harvest labor will become less imperative. Aside from the development in stock raising, flax has become an important crop. The value of this year's yield is put at \$70,000 or \$75,000. It is said that it can be sowed at the first ploughing and is worth from 75 cents to \$1 a bushel."

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" Of course all the world knows that the Province grows the finest roots and vegetables. Splendid hay crops also. A score of creameries and more than two score cheese factories prove the rapid development of dairying. What more is to be said?"

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" Here we have a magnificent estate, and it is our business to develop on these broad-spreading lands a civilization that will be worthy of a British stock and of British traditions. We have here now a splendid population. Among its leaders in church, state and trade are some of the best sons of old Canada. The sway of law and order is as absolute as in any old land on earth. There are schools in every settlement. There are branch railways through all the fertile districts. There is an interesting social life, an enterprising commercial life, a keen political life. Here are virgin lands and an advanced civilization; the opportunities of a new settlement, the comfort, conveniences and advantages of an old community. The country stands open to all the world, and man cannot long neglect a land that God has filled so full of plenty."