

Harvest on the Prairie.

Harold Bindloss, in The Gentleman's Magazine.

It was sunrise when, leading a yoke of sturdy oxen, I left behind the clustered wheat sheaves surrounding Thompson's house in Western Canada, but the stars were blinding down on the broad sea of grass when we poked thick with dust into the rutted streets of wooden town beside the railroad track. It was autumn, and, as usual at that season of the Assiniboian prairie, the day was fiercely hot, so we rested wherever a willow copse or birch bluff afforded welcome shade, while oxen seldom created an average pace of two miles an hour at the best of times. My business was to assist in hauling a separator, or threshing machine proper, as distinguished from the engine which drives it, back across the prairie to Thompson's farm, and the said separator was not expected until the next day's train. His owners, I understood, had been sent to Winnipeg for refitting, while, when in our hands, it narrowly escaped the same fate a second time.

One of the owners was already waiting me, and we proceeded to borrow another yoke of oxen besides two halftanned broncos, to help us over the ravines, and then waited somewhat impatiently, or at least by conjecture, for the advent of the train. He had hired a sawmill engine somewhere, and because the Western Canadian is above all things adaptable, had persuaded a friend who formerly sailed upon a Lake St. Lawrence steamer to bring him and another with some experience of the business in running what is termed upon the prairie a threshing machine. Now he seemed feverishly eager to get to work, because his whole capital had been already coming along. The Thompsons' prairie is usually characterized by a certain kindness which prompts him, as he would express it, to give the struggling small man a hand. We were chatting together in the general room of the primitive wooden hotel the next morning when the train arrived, and the place was typical of the country. There was no attempt at ornamentation beyond a few pictures above the bare and heads of antelope on the horse-matched boardwalk. A huge stove with the pine disintegrator, a gasolene centre, and two cheap nickle lamps shined down an indifferent light on the group of broncos and men. The Thompsons, rosy and well-to-do, were seated in fringed deerkin jackets, or more simply in old blue overalls, lounged on the hard benches or dined about the bar.

GOULDENHAM HOTEL—VICTORIA'S FAVORITE COUNTRY RESORT.

should join him under threat of promiscuous shooting, when he called for drinks, which in accordance with a curious popular superstition the frequenter of a Western saloon should do. These were the aristocratic and the prairie-sober, resourceful and indefatigable men who had broken new lands on the prairie, and owned their present prosperity to the steadfast labor of their own hands. One of the prairie men, who still remember the dead languages they had learned in English colleges, and others were grizzled veterans of the bush of Ontario, who had spent many months in common with the Covenanters among the hard benches or dined about the bar.

When we stood among the ballast under the gaunt grain elevators beside the great blinding eye, which flickered like a comet beneath the dwindling telegraph poles, I was reminded of the prairie. It was the blaze of the big locomotive's head-lamp, and we could see it milled away in that part of the steel band which binds London, into swift communion with China and Japan, runs straight and level across the prairie. Presently, with brakes screaming, and the men who applied them shouting above the din, we were arrested somewhere further on, and he was racing across a continent with machinery which had been made in the British Columbia, and express cargo the Empire liner would land in Yokohama. Hardly had the train started, and with loud blasts from their muzzles the two giant engines had started out again, leaving me impressed with a sense of the greatness of British commerce and of the globe's littleness. Then with a double span of oxen, in addition to the broncos tugging at their collars and testing the curiously constructed gear, the separator lurched off across the prairie, amid good-humored if ironical queries as to where we were scheduled for, and when we expected to go there. The pace was not exhilarating, though the clear air certainly was, and some time elapsed before the cluster of roofs sank from sight, while long straggling shadows of the grain elevators loomed up above the grass-land's rim like the topsails of a ship hull-down at sea. In other words, the way was suggested, for all round the compass, as beyond level of the globe's littleness, as the eye could see, swelling level of the prairie, which was rising with a deep stillness; moving shadows of them, blackly across the grass, but a sense of unreality accompanied the midnight march, and one commenced to feel that in leaving the railroad we had cast off the last link binding us to a modern world, for the prairie stretched before us as a blank, mysterious waste, as it had done since the beginning.

Again rolled over them wide levels, and drying-strewn them with rich alluvial; then growing and rotting for countless centuries, the grasses piled up a foot or two of jolly mould, and the combination forms perhaps the finest wheat-land in the world. Year after year the soil will return a heavy yield without fertilization. It is, however, a pity that the climate does not always match it. Also, where frost and sun had crumbled the clods of the last fall's breaking, probably the first to unlock its seed, it will return a heavy yield without fertilization. It is, however, a pity that the climate does not always match it. Also, where frost and sun had crumbled the clods of the last fall's breaking, probably the first to unlock its seed, it will return a heavy yield without fertilization.

Men in wide felt hats and the usual coarse blue shirts gathered about the sheaves, for the grain is perhaps most often thrashed from the field in that region, the world being waiting before the torrid heat everyone seemed intent and eager, while the whole scene changed by magic when a voice cried, "We're ready!" and the separator commenced to hum. There was a long, low, steady, stable and a merry beat of hoofs as the separator moved towards the field. The separator was a large, heavy, vibrating machine, the blades of which the farmer's work is spread over most of the year, but upon the prairie it must be compressed into the space between April and October, and, as the settlers in that region, there is occasionally a blighting frost in autumn. There is no sowing, hay-cutting and harvest follow hard upon each other, men toil up a field of grain almost as effectively as in the north. Unless the crop is sown and ripened early, there are heavy risks of losing it.

As a rule the Western harvesters have had no time to make a study of the British field hands, but it struck the writer that they were more enduring and much more energetic, which is, however, natural in a region where artisans are scarce and a man must depend upon his own resources, making what he needs.

Neither was all of them paid, for the small wheat-growers are a kindly race, and those whose work is finished drive long distances with their teams to assist the neighbors, or to assist in the work of their own resources, making what he needs.

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After all, men are the most important product of any soil, and the best that any new country can do is to increase the number of its inhabitants, and not necessarily the riches, but the bodily and mental vigor besides the happiness of the human race. In regard to its second product, grain, the wheat, we estimated, would thrash out 25 bushels per acre, and the oats, 15 bushels, while the Thompsons' 2300, partly broken, had cost them several years' hard work, and the grain was worth some £500 sterling. There are men who began with nothing at all, but, by steady work, they have acquired strength, and they were also, unusually lucky. That crop would increase their



PORTLAND HOTEL, VICTORIA, B. C.

them them done much for the development of the Dominion. But at last they grew heavy, and even those hard limbs weary, so some in the stable, some in the straw pile granary, or strewn about the floor of the house, the harvesters sank into slumber. Then after Thompson junior and I had collected the remainder of the feast, and decided, after much discussion, where we were going to procure the next meal from the moonlit prairie, which seemed away before us out of reach of mortal's knowledge, the far-off and empty call of a wandering coyote, then after stillness again, amid a faint clinking of machinery, with the intermittent clank of steel and an occasional anathema from a tired man for Jullaby, I sank into deep slumber, the first sleep until the first daylight roused us to commence work again.

IRON AND STEEL IN CANADA. After a struggle of more than a century, it can be said at last that the iron and steel industry of Canada has both an existence and a future. When the first furnace was established about 170 years ago, the industry secured a foothold in the country, but up to ten or twelve years ago the only output that was generally credited for Canadian iron concerns was bankruptcy. Of course, there were successful ventures, as the history of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company, Limited, will show; but general confidence in the industry was wanting. One morning our brightest minds saw other men usurping their birthright, they became interested, and as a consequence, the iron and steel industry is today perhaps our most hope-inspiring commercial enterprise. Not because foreign have come in and made things worse, but because the Canadian public has awakened to a realization of the importance and value of the industry, and the need of encouraging it.

For a long time our iron resources were regarded as treasures of no value, because ore and coal were not in juxtaposition. But investigation has shown that in all the four districts in Canada there are at least of iron ore supplies, the assemblage of the raw materials for iron and steel furnaces can be made at a cost here one-third that of the cheapest centre in the United States. That is a fact not fully realized yet. The freight cost on the assembling raw materials entering into a ton of pig iron in Canada is eight times as high as the charges on iron ore, and the cost of the Lake Superior mines, the coal from the Connellville district, and the limestone from the Tyrone district. Iron that can assemble their raw materials at a lower cost than \$3.25 can

OUR STEEL WORKS. Although the production of iron in Canada is about three times as large as that of the year previous, the building of plants in progress ensures a much larger increase this and next year. The production in Canada is only 22 per cent of the capacity, whereas in the United States it is 60 per cent of the capacity. Per capita, the production in the United States is four times as great as in Canada; in the former country it is 110 pounds, in the latter it is 110 pounds. We do not yet produce nearly enough for our own wants, which are estimated at 800,000 tons a year. Not that our iron resources are poor, but that our commercial enterprise. Not because foreign have come in and made things worse, but because the Canadian public has awakened to a realization of the importance and value of the industry, and the need of encouraging it.

MUCH TO BE DONE. But manufacturers of iron and steel in Canada are eight times as high as the charges on iron ore, and the cost of the Lake Superior mines, the coal from the Connellville district, and the limestone from the Tyrone district. Iron that can assemble their raw materials at a lower cost than \$3.25 can

beat the United States manufacturers on the Canadian market, and if production here is more than one cent, Canada will be able to take a foremost place in the world market for iron and steel. Foreign demands for iron and steel are growing faster than the supplies.

WHERE DO WE STAND? If one takes a map and draws a line from British Columbia on the West to St. John's, Newfoundland, on the East, the line will run through four well-developed beds of iron ore, all capable of excellent quality, all capable of being mined as cheaply as dirt. They are related to the coal as follows: 1. In British Columbia coal beds in the United States district not far from Seattle and those of the Crowfoot and the Canadian side are contiguous. It is so possible inside the standard of \$961,531. That is to say, that our exports of pig iron for the first eight months of last year's total exports.

2. On the northern shores of Lake Superior are large and pure beds such as the Helen mine. They are being utilized by Mr. Clergue, who has formed the Cramp Ontario Steel Company, who are erecting two furnaces with a daily capacity of 250 tons each. This district is full of iron ore, and the cost of mining is less than Chicago, where many a large United States plant is situated. It has only to be mined, and it is near the coast, and a distance of, say, 210 miles by rail to the coast, and it is near the coast, and a distance of, say, 210 miles by rail to the coast, and it is near the coast, and a distance of, say, 210 miles by rail to the coast.

MOVING FURNACES TO THE ORE. The number of arguments for assembling the raw material closer to the ore than to the market is multiplying because it requires only one-half as much coke to make a ton of iron as it did some years ago. The proportion is now about two tons of iron to one of coke, it will be cheaper to have the furnaces, it is just half as expensive to haul the coal as the ore. For that reason it will be cheaper to have the furnaces situated near the ore mines. In every country we find the ore and coal separated, a fact which many people don't realize; so Canada's "iron" industry could not be brighter.

3. In the Ontario district exist ores of great promise, within reasonable distances of the coal of either the Connellville or Parrystown districts. Independent of the local supply in the Canadian lakes are to draw from. This latter plan the Hamilton Steel and Iron Company are following for good reason. The government lets coke in free, which policy works in the favor of our iron manufacturer.

4. But our crowning opportunity is in Nova Scotia, where two strong companies—the Dominion Iron and Steel Company and the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company—have endeavored to themselves. The ore is drawn not only from Nova Scotia, in close proximity to the coast, but also from the famous mines on Bellefleur Island. The manufacturing is done at Sydney, and it is claimed the cost of producing pig iron here is lower than anywhere else in the world. Against the Pittsburgh cost it represents a saving of \$2 a ton freight for export. In Sydney being an ocean port, in Sydney steel can be made for \$3 a ton, steel blooms for less than \$10 a ton, and steel rails at about \$12 a ton, and steel OPPORTUNITIES UNPARALLELED. Our opportunities to supply both export and domestic trade are unparalleled, for we have not one on both east and west coasts for foreign lands, and on west coasts in the centre of the continent we ask for it. If Canada does not become a great producer of iron and steel, it will be because Canadians have neglected their resources. But they are recognizing their opportunity, and are grasping it.

Advertisement for Fisher's Fishery, featuring a fisherman carrying a large fish on his back. Text includes 'FORTY THE Fisher's Con' and 'Jurisdiction of Dominion M'.

Advertisement for Canadian Steam Carry Relief to St. Vincent. Text includes 'Another Meeting After Return to St. Vincent' and 'From Our Own Correspondent'.

Advertisement for Outlook for Atlantic, featuring a map of the Atlantic region. Text includes 'The Output of G' and 'Double Last'.

Advertisement for Mount Baker Hotel, a seaside resort in Victoria, B.C. Text includes 'MOUNT BAKER HOTEL—A SEASIDE RESORT, VICTORIA, B. C.' and 'beat the United States manufacturers'.

Advertisement for Boer Delegation, featuring a portrait of a man. Text includes 'BOER DELEGATION' and 'They Are Now in'.