

BETWEEN THE CHORES

NOTINGS BY A RANCHER = Written for The Western Home Monthly by S. P.

The "Old Judge" had an agricultural eye. This is how he describes a certain tract of land:—

"It is thirteen miles long and seven miles wide; it ain't jest drifting sand, but it's all but that, it's so barren. It's oneaven, or wavy, like the swell of the sea in a calm, and is covered with short, thin, dry, coarse grass, and dotted here and there with a half-starved birch and a stunted mis-shapen spruce. Two or three hollow places hold water all through the summer, and the whole plain is criss-crossed with cart or horse tracks in all directions. It is jest about as silent, and lonesome, and desolate a place as you would wish to see. Each side of this desert are some most royal farms—some of the best, perhaps, in the province—containing the rich lowlands under the mountain; but the plain is given up to the geese, who are so wretched poor that the foxes won't eat them, they hurt their teeth so bad. All that country thereabouts, as I have heard tell when I was a boy was onest owned by the lord, the king, and the devil. The glebe-lands belonged to the first, the ungranted wilderness-lands to the second, and the sand-plain fell to the share of the last, (and people do say the old gentleman was rather done in the division, but that is neither here nor there), and so it is called to this day "The Devil's Goose Pasture."

Here is a sample from another writer who also had an agricultural eye:—"This land consists on the surface, of green shales richly calcareous, sometimes impure shaly limestones to which succeed similar shales containing deposits of rounded nests of gypsum.

begin to cultivate the agricultural eye. The exercise will prove a very delightful mental recreation, and the knowledge that a science underlies the art of agriculture will help the embryo farmer to take more kindly to his new work. I use the phrase "embryo farmer" with no desire to offend any one. Among the new settlers I have met all sorts, and conditions of men: an iron-monger, a jeweller, a bootmaker and scores of city clerks. Farming and agricultural pursuits have hitherto been far removed from their sphere of daily work. But they have crossed the Rubicon, and have burnt their boats behind them, and are now located on our fertile plains, happy in their freedom from the irksome routine of city labor and from the conventional bonds of crowded centres.

Long may this spring flood of population continue, for it is a two-fold blessing; "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes." We cannot expect the benefits to be manifest all at once. Nature declines to be hustled, and in Province-making she precipitates her beneficial results in her own good time. At present in this new Province a great deal is still held in solution, but the alchemist is at work.

If only that eager crowd brought with them a trained agricultural eye how rapidly would this Province advance. Just think what it would mean if all our homesteaders were practical farmers. Land without labor has no value, nor has labor much value if unskilled. The opportunity for skilled labor being profitably spent on land is yearly becoming greater, i.e., the de-

chalk" when this bracing country life is available? They are really happy, for undoubtedly nothing can be more exhilarating and interesting than the building up of a home on one's very



THE HOME OF J. R. SNIDER, NEAR PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, MAN.

These rest on a porous limestone beneath which again occur green and red shales, calcareous and crumbling like those above and like them forming rich wheat soils. The country to the north of it is also underlaid by rocks which crumble readily and yield soils of good quality and generally rich in lime; while to the south the nature of the rocks and the agency of those causes to which the spread of drift is owing, have both contributed to the production of good grain-growing land."

At this season of the year immigrants are tumbling over each other along our trails in their eagerness to secure an infinitesimal portion of this fair Province and to start as agriculturists. One is reminded, *mutatis mutandis*, of that famous picture "The Pursuit of Pleasure." As they hurry along past our door I cannot help asking the question: How many of these have got the agricultural eye? How many in their journey towards their homesteads can distinguish alluvial deposits from an alder swamp or cariboo bog? How many of them can make an accurate diagnosis of the case before them from the symptoms of geological formation and vegetation? Fortunately it is for them that our land is not composed of "Devil's Goose Pastures" so that they may safely locate first and afterwards

mand for the produce and the market facilities are yearly increasing. Consequently land is rising in value, and would probably be much greater were the agricultural eye more common.

It is a laudable ambition to be the absolute owner of "broad acres." The possibility of being a "landed proprietor" fascinates thousands in a country like England where the soil is the property of the few. "The Laird" and "The Squire" are by no means ordinary persons in the old country; and one can excuse the clerk, tired of quill-driving, if he dreams of a Canadian Paradise where he can be his own master, driving his team or riding his broncho. To own 160 acres of land is to the unsophisticated mind to be possessed of riches. Arrived in Calgary he obtains information sufficient for his purpose and in a short time he is off along the trail; south or north, armed with maps of certain townships in which there is still some unclaimed government land. His young wife is probably with him, prepared in her love and enthusiasm to "rough it" on the prairie. A modest house is built and a stable and the quarter section is fenced. The young couple have been busy ever since they arrived, and are happy—oh, so happy! Who would remain in the stuffy city, "perched on a three-legged stool till his bones are

own ground. But the bustle of preparation subsides. The house is built and their small capital is pretty well exhausted. They have got 160 acres of land; they are landed proprietors and the thought of it is intensely agreeable; but they begin to realize the truth of the statement that land in itself has no value. This truth is an eye-opener. Our quondam city clerk and his wife realize that in order to live on their estate they must expend skilled labor on that estate. Now up to this point all land has to them been practically alike. "A yellow primrose 'twas to him and it was nothing more." The country to them had been a charming retreat for a Sunday evening's walk—hedge-rows and shady groves and such like. The agricultural eye had not been cultivated. But here in the Canadian West they are face to face with nature in a business relation, and their eyes are opened to the fact that land to be of value requires to be manipulated by skilled labor, and also to another fact, viz., that they are practically ignorant of the means to extract the value from the land.

In the "good old days," it was thought that anybody could be a schoolmaster. A man could always become "a dominie," when every other trade failed him. Fortunately it was discovered that teaching is an Art and the Theory of

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Education a Science. At the present time it would seem that there is a popular notion that anybody can be a farmer. But farming is an art and agriculture ranks among the sciences. The ability to hitch up a team and plough a straight furrow will make a man a good ploughman, but it will not entitle him to call himself a farmer. The facilities required for success in other businesses—method, diligence, fidelity, earnestness, insight and foresight—are also required in the business of farming, and, paradoxical as it may appear, it is true that a city man bringing with him as part of his outfit a trained mind, which means the power of adapting facilities to circumstances and compelling circumstances to yield success may develop into a scientific farmer, while the practical ploughman on an adjoining section may remain a ploughman to the end. For indeed it is well said, "in every object there is inexhaustible meaning; the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing."

An Inducement: Peddler—"Want to buy an umbrella cheap?" Krankley—"No. What's the use. Everybody steals my umbrellas." Peddler—"Well, this one ain't worth stealing."



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