

We rode about over the farm with the courteous superintendent of one of the divisions. The air of the September morning was clear and keen. It had been cold enough during the previous night to make a quarter of an inch of ice. But there was life and vigor in every breath; plenty of ozone, or whatever that mysterious substance may be which makes men and horses happy and lively when they inhale it. The blue sky spanned a cloudless arch above us. There was not a fence nor a hill to break the prairie level. Southward we could see the timber-line of the Maple River, but on the north the horizon was smooth and unbroken—a slender rim of earth meeting the sky. The red barns and white houses of the divisions stood out high and distinct. There were broad stretches of the golden-brown grass of the yet unbroken prairies, vast fields of pale yellow stubble from which the harvest had already been gathered, and here and there fields in which the shocks were still standing, and the steam-thresher, *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*, devoured the remnant of the wheat.

"The fly-wheel with a mellow murmur turned,  
While ever rising on its mystic stair,  
In the dim light from secret chambers borne,  
The straw of harvest, severed from the corn,  
Climbed and fell over in the smoky air."

A little way off we saw a long line of teams pushing slowly across the boundless plain. They were ploughing. It was a very different sight from that ploughing which we have seen in the steep fields of New England, where Johnny steers the old horse carefully along the hill-sides, and the old man guides the plough as best he can through the stony ground; different, also, from that ploughing which Rosa Bonheur has painted so wonderfully in her picture at the Luxembourg, in which the French peasant drives his four-in-hand of mighty oxen, butting their way through the misty morning air. Here on this Western farm there were twelve sulky ploughs, each drawn by four mules, moving steadily along a two-mile furrow. The shining blades cut smoothly into the sod, and left a rich black wake of virgin earth behind them. As we looked out over the great plain, and slowly took in the extent, the fertility, the ease of cultivation, we echoed the local brag: "This is a big country, and don't you forget it!"

"Yes," said Gad, "that is the trouble: it's too big. I can't get it on canvas. A man might as well try to paint a dead calm in mid-ocean."

We spent an evening in the comfortable home of one of the superintendents, and heard him explain the system of book-keeping. Every man is engaged by contract, for a certain time, to do certain work, for certain wages. He receives his money on presenting to the cashier a time check certifying the amount and nature of his labor. The average price paid to hands is \$18 a month and board. In harvest they get \$2 25 a day. A record is kept by the foreman of the amount of wheat turned out by each thresher, by the driver of each wagon of the amount of wheat loaded by him, and by the receiver at the elevator of the amount of wheat brought in by each team. All the farm machinery and the provisions are bought at first hands for wholesale prices. Mules and horses are bought in St. Louis. Wheat is not stacked or stored, but shipped to market as rapidly as possible. Everything is regulated by an exact system, and this is what makes the farms a success.

Brains and energy in the man who controls them and in those whom he chooses as his subordinate officers—this is the secret of the enormous profits which have been made on the Dalrymple farms. The cost of raising the first crop is about \$11 an acre; each subsequent crop costs \$8. The average yield for this year was about nineteen bushels to the acre. This could be sold at Fargo on October 1 for 80 cents a bushel. A brief calculation will give you \$4 20 per acre profit on the new land, and \$7 20 for all the rest; or, say, \$130,000 gain on one crop. These figures I believe to be too small, rather than too large.

But does this large farming pay for the country? It absorbs great tracts of land, and keeps out smaller farmers. It employs tramps, who vanish when the harvest is over, instead of increasing the permanent population. It exhausts the land. The cultivation is very shallow. There is no rotation of crops. Everything is taken from the ground; nothing is returned to it. Even the straw is burned. The result of this is that the average crop from any given acre grows smaller every year, and it is simply a question of time under the present system how long it will take to exhaust the land.

A great many lies have been told about