

the far-off binder, already at work. The houses and their surroundings here give the idea of being merely dwelling places: comfort and taste in arrangement do not seem to be desired. After going directly north for some time we turn to the left and pass the famous farm of Mr. Sandison, which is often called the C. P. R. farm. We have all seen pictures of this place representing a harvest scene with innumerable binders in perspective one behind the other. The picture here represented, and exhibited by the Canadian Pacific Railway, is all too bright. They do not publish the fact that even this farm, this wonderful object-lesson of what the settler can do, has failed and the owner become bankrupt. Our journey, however, was made during a prosperous season, and the sight of these vast fields of grain was certainly enough to fire the imagination of a traveller from our Province. Some of these fields contain each a square mile of grain in one unbroken sweep, a simple trail being the only division between them. As we travel farther still from the town the proportion of prosperous settlers grows smaller. We now and then see the bachelor's dwelling (well-named shanty), where the bachelor, after his long lonely day's work with his oxen comes "home" to his supper of stale bread and water and his bed of straw. Such is the daily life for years of many who avail themselves of the glorious opportunity of taking one of the free farms or homesteads which are so often flung at us through the C. P. R. literature. Here the farms become fewer and the country more monotonous, a low ridge on our right seeming to take from the appearance of the scenery, rather than add to it. No rocks, fences, or trees even here to break the wide sweep of the landscape: the only glory is the sky. If the ancients had lived here they would have worshipped the sky: for it is ever awe inspiring, whether with its broad blue, with different colored clouds tossing and struggling together as they are hurried madly who knows where, or with its brilliant ever-changing sunset which fascinates the beholder until the last rays have faded away and he is called to himself by the chill night breeze which arises and the lowering shadows which bid him hasten to regain the train, ere it be too late.

After our long talk we are glad to reach at last the farm-house which is to shelter us during our stay in Manitoba; and we are more than satisfied with our unceremonious but hearty welcome. We are near the banks of the Little Saskatchewan, which with its deep valley, green shrubs, and small trees, forms a delightful contrast to the surrounding scenery. The farm-house is plain and unattractive enough, both inside and out, and consists of a kitchen and bed-room downstairs and a loft above. In this place nine of us spent many bleak cold days while our Ontario friends had not yet quite given up their straw hats, or boating-trips. Nevertheless, we were a jolly household, and made the most of the uneventful days which succeeded. If rain came, one of the boys, generally our leader, saddled the broncho and started on a week's visit to some friends who lived a half-day's ride away. There was nothing then for us to do but sit on our beds in the loft, and shoot at the knots in the opposite wall with a small rifle. We had so much of this target practice that we were proficient enough to drive nails before the rainy season ended.

After the grain was all cut and stooked we struck our tents—or, to speak more definitely, we placed our goods and chattels on a stone-boat, and transferred them by means of a gentle broncho to another

farm some miles east. Here we found things in a more prosperous condition: the owner had seen ten successful years come and go, bringing increased comforts, buildings, and more land. Still he spared neither man nor beast during harvest-time; for his own day's work was measured by the sun, and any unwilling to follow his example were not fortunate in dealing with him. Our work here was pitching and stacking, and we pitched for three weeks without a break, three of us harvesting the grain off one hundred and eighty acres—and Manitoba wheat too. How our backs and arms ached when Saturday night came,—sweet Saturday night—and how glad we were on Sunday that this was a grain farm, and not a mixed or dairy farm. Each day was like the other. We started to the fields after breakfast with our dinner and tea in a box. At twelve o'clock we stopped to "get a bite o' truck;" or sometimes the welcome announcement that it was "time to chew" greeted our ears. In less than half an hour we were at it again, working hard to complete the first stack which we had started in the morning. Our tea, taken about five o'clock, was over in fifteen minutes, and before our last mouthful had been masticated, we had grasped our forks and were working again. We generally reached the house when it was quite dark; and got through with our work in time to enjoy a short talk before the fire ere bed-time, which came none too soon. After all the grain was stacked came the season of threshing. But before this was over the days grew much shorter, the evenings and mornings quite cold, and sometimes a light fall of snow reminded one of the iron grasp of winter which was soon to hold that vast country in its clutches. After the threshing is done the year's work is completed, with the exception of some fall plowing. All that is then necessary is the drawing of the grain to the nearest shipping point, and this work is often protracted far into the winter.

This sojourn on the prairie gave us a better insight into the condition of Manitoba than a much more extended visit in any of the towns would have done. We saw that the country is prosperous and has a great future, without being what agents and other interested persons claim for it. The hardy, hard working man who wishes to better his condition or the farmer of small means who does not succeed here for lack of capital, can do no better than go West. But in many cases where one is doing fairly well, it would be folly to leave friends, surroundings, and everything, to venture into the unknown wilds; as many have learned to their cost. I hope a word of advice will be pardoned. If this meets the eye of any one who contemplates making his home in the West, let him not invest in any way until after an extended sojourn in the country; for while many a Manitoba farmer would change his lot for no one here, others would return to-day if they had the wherewithal to come.

MARK TAPLEY.

A catalogue of the 1,750,000 books in the library of the British Museum is about completed. The work of cataloging has been actively carried on since 1831. Twenty-three volumes are filled by the titles beginning with the letter A, and 35 with those beginning with the letter B. The entire catalogue will consist of 600 volumes.—Ex.