

**The Country Between Winnipeg and Binsgarth, via the C. P. R. to Portage LaPrairie, then via Manitoba and Northwestern Railroad.**

(BY ONE OF OUR STAFF.)

On the 10th of June we left Winnipeg and proceeded westward, carefully examining the land and the condition of the farmers along the route. For a short distance the land is somewhat alkaline, but heavy and rich. Professor Macoum says: "These rich alluviums have been the theme of many writers; their fertility and capacity for growing grain continuously is great. The cause of the poor water and alkaline soils in numerous localities can be traced in every instance to the exceeding richness of the soil, and as long as it retains its salts, so long will it be noted for its fertility." Dr. Geo. M. Dawson, naturalist, geologist, etc., in speaking of this and adjoining lands says: "The uniform fertility of the soil cannot be exaggerated. The surface for a depth of from two to four feet is a dark mould, composed of the same material as the subsoil, but mingled with much vegetable matter, and may be said to be ready for the plow. The marly alluvial subsoil would in most countries be considered a soil of the best quality. It may therefore be considered as practically inexhaustible." Fine fields of grain are seen at intervals. The country is flat and apt to be wet in a wet season. In some places drainage would not be easily effected, in other places quite readily. Wood is always visible to the north and south, but no scrub timber on the plains as is seen east of Winnipeg. At Rosser the land is somewhat low and especially adapted for the production of hay, with here and there good grain land. Many cattle are grazed in this section, and much hay annually put up. Wood is near and water good. When drained, this will be a very fine tract for mixed farming. Land can be bought from \$5 to \$6 per acre. At Rosser the altitude is 772 feet. The country continues much the same to Marquette, the altitude of which is 783 feet. From here to Poplar Point (altitude 791 feet), the country gradually changes from a grass and stock section to one adapted to grain and stock. From the last named place to Portage LaPrairie (altitude 830 feet), it is an A 1 country.

The "Portage" is the centre of at least thirty-six square miles of as good grain land as can be found in America. We were assured that the average wheat yield of this tract has been thirty-three bushels. This we think too high, and would put it at twenty-five bushels per acre, though much larger yields are frequently obtained. The wheat fields we saw here were most luxuriant. The prairie is slightly undulating. The farmers are generally prosperous. This and the Brandon district are the most popular wheat sections of Manitoba. The town is a prosperous place; population 3,000. It has four grain elevators, a large flouring mill, oatmeal mill, paper mill, biscuit factory, a foundry, and other industries. Land can be bought in this locality at from \$10 to \$30 per acre, according to improvements and location.

Here we took the Manitoba and Northwestern Railroad, which traverses the country in a north-westerly direction from "Portage" to Salt-coats, a distance of about 200 miles. Between the "Portage" and Macdonald (altitude 803 feet), where there are three elevators, the grain was excellent, very large fields of which are continually seen, and a great deal of new land is being prepared for next year's crop. This section, like other parts of the Portage plain, is adapted to grain, but little stock, except the working horses are kept by the farmers. The natural grass found on the prairie grows very short here, hay is therefore hard to obtain. The cultivated grasses here, as elsewhere, have not yet proved generally successful. Before reaching Westbourne (altitude 803), the country assumes a more grassy appearance. Very large herds of

cattle are seen all along the line for many miles. The country is well adapted to mixed farming and stock raising: it is park-like, and wood is plentiful in the bluffs, which are scattered over the country dividing the beautiful prairie stretches everywhere to be seen. Large grass marshes are south of the track, hay is abundant, easily procured, and of good quality. At Woodside (altitude 830 feet), larger timber than usual appears. The country here is more suitable for grass than grain. As we near Gladstone (altitude 855), at which there are two elevators, the land appears more suitable to grain growing. The settlers are well pleased with their location. Good crops of wheat, oats and barley are grown here, and the big hay marsh a little north, containing 50,000 acres, supplies an enormous amount of hay annually. West of Gladstone the land is sandy and poor, but affords some very fine gravel beds, which will be valuable for road-building in future years. The sandy soil continues to Arden (altitude 1,058 feet), though there was some fine looking fields of grain in the distance. As we near Nepawa (altitude 1,178 feet), the land improves, and the acreage in grain increases. This has become noted as a fine grain growing centre. The soil is good, warm, and well sheltered, and the prairie here is rolling. There is one elevator at Arden and two at Nepawa. Between here and Bridge Creek (altitude 1,572 feet, and at which there is one elevator), is a very suitable country for sheep raising. In this tract there are thousands of acres; it continues beyond Minnedosa, in fact, may be said to continue to the end of the line. The land around Bridge Creek and Minnedosa looked very promising, particularly at the latter place. Minnedosa is a most picturesque town, surrounded, especially to the north, by a very fine grain growing and stock raising country. It is the market town of a large district, including the prosperous Clan-William settlement to the north. The altitude of the town is 1,641 feet. It has three large elevators, a grist mill, and all necessary business places. At this place we met several farmers who live twenty-five to sixty miles north of Minnedosa; they give a splendid report of the country, especially those coming from the Dauphin Lake settlement, sixty miles north. The same general character of the soil continues up to Binsgarth and Russell, which was the extent of our journey in this direction. It may be generally described as a gently rolling prairie, dotted here and there with more or less copse wood, or bluffs as they are called here. The soil is generally a rich mould, overlying a deep and rich clay subsoil, which is generally intermixed with limestone gravel. Some sections have lighter subsoils; in fact, the most fastidious can be pleased in regard to the quality of the soil. At Shoal Lake grazing and dairying are carried on extensively, of which we will give an account in a future issue. The altitude of the various towns not heretofore given, are as follows:—Basswood, 1,921 feet; Newdale, 1,947 feet, which is the greatest elevation in Manitoba, being 347 feet higher than Riding Mountains; Strathclair, 1,875 feet; Shoal Lake, 1,783 feet; Kellor, 1,786; Solsgrith, 1,761 feet; Fox Warren, 1,715 feet; Binsgarth, 1,685 feet; Russell, 1,803 feet; Birtle, 1,675 feet. At each of the above places there is an elevator, except at Birtle, where there are two. This is a pretty town, situated on Birdtail Creek, about 137 miles northwest of "Portage." From 2,000,000 to 5,000,000 feet of spruce logs are annually floated down the creek, to be sawn at Birtle and Brandon. Cordwood is also floated down in abundance. The valley in which the town is built contains a great quantity of building stone, which is found to a certain extent in the ravines and hillsides which accompany every rivulet or river in this section. South of Birtle there is a very large plain, having generally a sandy subsoil. The surface soil is also more or less sandy, but in any other direction the land is heavy and good; the grain here presents a very luxuriant appearance. The residents of this town are the most public-spirited and patriotic of any we have met on this line, especially worthy of mention are Mr. Mickle, M. P. P., and Mr. John Crawford, Mayor of the town. These gentlemen are well posted concerning the lands throughout the whole Province, and are willing

to assist all settlers in making a selection. We would particularly recommend Mr. Mickle in this particular, as implicit confidence may be placed in him. He is highly respected throughout the Province for his intelligence and honor. Near Binsgarth is situated the famous Binsgarth farm, of which Mr. G. L. Smellie is manager. They keep about 260 head of Shorthorns, as well as a large flock of Shropshires. In a future issue we will give a review of this establishment. Mr. S. is a very capable manager. A few miles beyond Binsgarth, at Russell, Dr. Barnardo has a farm of 7,000 acres, of which E. L. Struthers is manager. The soil is a sandy loam, with a clay subsoil. The Assiniboine River passes through it. Thirty thousand dollars has already been spent in improvements, and \$20,000 in outfit. Two hundred and thirty acres are in grain this year, of which fifty acres are in wheat. The stock comprises 100 cattle, 9 horses and 18 Leicester sheep, which the manager wishes to increase to a large flock. He contemplates keeping 1,000 acres in crop, but will make all contribute to dairy purposes. Seventy-five cows are now milked, and he hopes to obtain the cream from 225 others owned by settlers. Butter-making will be the specialty. The creamery will be run summer and winter.

The following evidence is taken from actual settlers:—

Mr. Joseph Lowery, formerly a resident of Simcoe, Ont., now of Clan-William, where he settled eleven years ago, says he is much pleased with the country. Farmers are doing well, though the grain is more or less frozen every year, which is due to it not being sown early enough, nor put in well enough. He has had his grain frozen twice in eight years, but only partially injured. In both cases it graded No. 1 frozen; average price realized, 55c.; average yield for eight years, wheat, 30 bushels; barley, 40 bushels (the latter never being frozen, and of fine quality); oats, 50 to 100 bushels. He says stock does pretty well, especially sheep. The same quantity of ground will not pasture more than half as much stock here as it would in Ontario. A man with limited means can succeed better here than in Ontario. He likes the climate well. Young stock frequently winter out, running about the straw stacks; but they would do better if housed. Clovers and cultivated grasses do not generally succeed, but the native grass is very nutritious, and especially adapted to cattle.

A. Malcome came to Gladstone in 1877, where he remained for four years. He claims the frost was not so destructive there as in Minnedosa, where he is now located. Was not troubled with frost while in Gladstone, but has been frozen more or less two-thirds of the time since leaving there. Two years out of eight, the time he has lived at his present home, wheat has been a total failure with him, but farther to the north at Clan-William, they have never had a complete failure. He gives his average yields per acre since coming to the country, frozen years included, as follows: Wheat, 20 bushels; barley, 40 to 60 bushels; oats, 60 bushels. Stock does remarkably well. He keeps a dairy of 30 to 40 cows, the milk of which he makes into cheese, and has a good demand for all he can produce. He received eleven cents all around for the make of 1887, and ten cents for that made in 1888. His total cash receipts for the make of 1888 were \$1,502.85.

Mr. R. R. Ross, Rosburn, twenty-five miles north of Birtle, came from Ontario to his present home in 1879; he has now 640 acres, of which 180 are in crop. Of live stock, he has thirty-five cattle and five horses. During the period of his residence in Manitoba, his wheat has averaged twenty-five bushels per acre, excepting last year, when it did not average five bushels. Average price, fifty cents. Barley, forty bushels; this is a safe crop and does well. Oats, fifty to sixty bushels. With him the native grass will cut two tons per acre, and is very nutritious. Out of twenty Ontario men who came to his settlement, all are doing well, have comfortable houses, and are in easy circumstances. Some are becoming wealthy. Practical working farmers always succeed. They have a little frost yearly. Clovers and cultivated grasses have not been generally a success, though he has a small plot of white clover.