

WILD GEESSE ON THE PRAIRIE AT MINTO, MAN.

The Reflections of a Grain of Wheat.

By L. H. Carp.

I am a grain of wheat; plain, common, No 1 hard; not distinguished in outward appearance; small in my individual capacity, but taken collectively, I form the food of the people, the real backbone of the nation's strength. Where first I came from, where first I saw the light of day is to me a question almost unanswerable. Some say that I was known in the dawn of human history, and that in the ancient valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates I first became a factor in the life of man. Others, equally well informed, have told me that by the banks of the historic Nile, I thrived and prospered ere pyramid and Sphinx had reared their solemn form above the land; and even the Chinese, that strange people who claim patent rights on all the great inventions of the ages, are said to have known me since the earliest of the early records of their country's history. But this is speculative, and of little interest in this hustling age of bustle and achievement; and here I am today, a Canadian, not by chance, nor by birth but from choice; for is it not true that in Canada I have found my true home, the land where I reach the highest possible point of perfection. And the story that I want to tell you today is not ancient history but the warm record of recent events; of wagon tracks in the desert, of burnished bands of steel in place of rock and morass, and thriving towns, and prosperous cities where only a few short years ago the

buffalo roamed, unharmed in all his glory, by the banks of the Red, down the Assiniboia or in that mighty valley of copse and plain and wood bearing the low-toned, musical Indian appellation—Saskatchewan.

Yes, I am a Canadian—No 1 hard Red Fife. But Red Fife is, as you know, not a native of this country. I am from imported stock. My introducer, one Robert Fife by name, purchased me from a merchant engaged in the Baltic trade and I was first grown in the vicinity of Peterborough in Eastern Ontario. But the weevil, that pest of the wheat field, soon learned of my presence and I was forced to abandon that district and then began that westward march which has carried the banner of prosperity from hill to hill, from plain to plain, across barren stretches where the coyote howls and the antelope flee from the iron horse, on and on, in the shadow of the Rockies, under the flicker of the Northern lights, and everywhere I go the earth responds to the tread of marching feet and commerce follows in my wake.

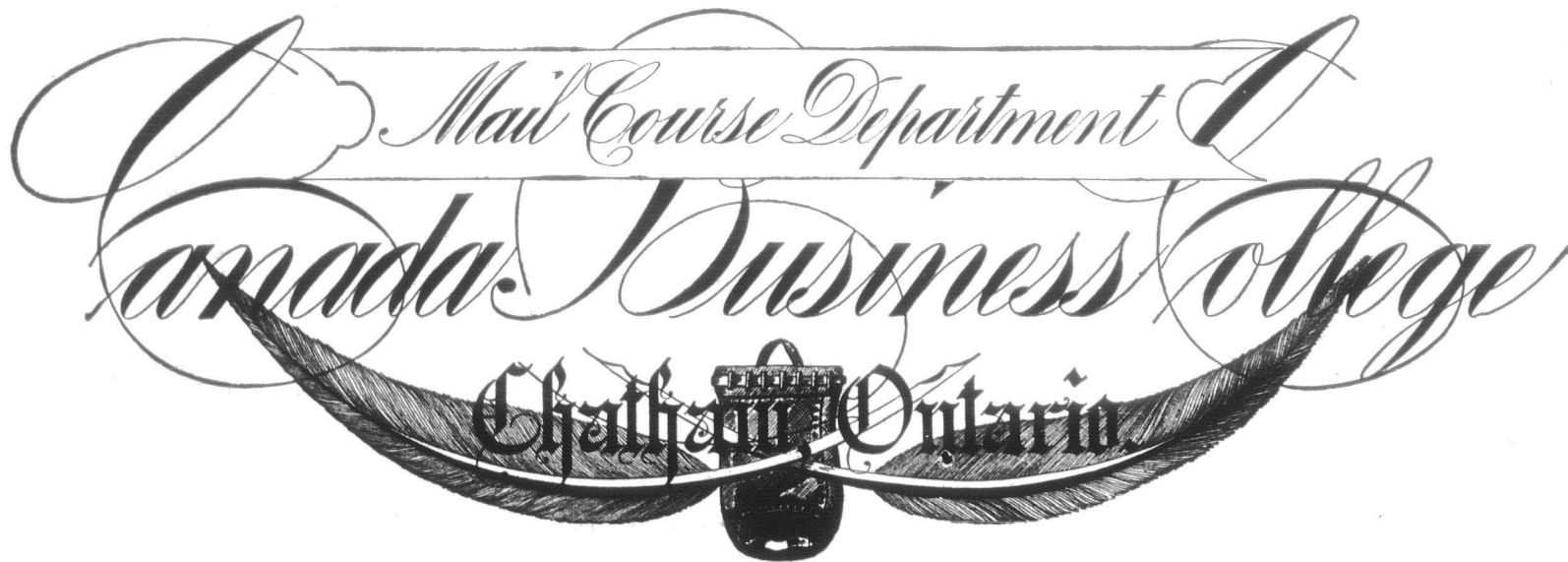
It was in 1856 that my real migration began. In that year I reached Minnesota. But it was not till 1870 that an event happened that sent my old blood bounding through my veins and paved the way for that great measure of success in life which has since fallen to my lot. In that year Edmund N. La Croix introduced in the

which enabled the millers to make from my hitherto despised body a flour equal to the best. That purifier, for it was nothing more than a device for separating shorts from flour, was, to me, the touch of the hand of destiny. From that day my real history began. It was now a forward march, and on to vaster fields to conquer. True, I had my troubles, my life was not always blessed with happiness, my ways not always ways of peace, but when I look back and remember the olden days, I can only hope that in the present I may live a life worthy of the past, prophetic of a still more glorious future.

In the same year 1870, I crossed the boundary into Manitoba, what a historic march! In a Red River cart drawn by oxen. Slow! Oh God, how slow, when compared to modern transportation! But I did well on Manitoba soil. I grew, and thrived, and prospered in that deep, rich loam as if Almighty God had, from the creation of the world, ordained that I should pass the remainder of my days in that haven of rest.

Troubles! My pioneer life was full of them. I said I prospered, so I did, but at first I thought my very life would be destroyed. Some years a biting frost nipped hopes in the bud and the promise of a glorious harvest was dissipated in a single night; then one year the grass-hoppers came, and once, yes, more than once, the rain failed, the sun looked down day after day from a clear sky, the very soil was borne of the fields, the brown-baked prairie seemed as if its natural color was forever gone, and at times I almost thought that God had forgotten me, and that my struggle for existence on the plains must go down in all the

misery and blackness of defeat. In those early days we could not produce sufficient food for the incoming settlers, and thousands of bushels were imported every year. But by this time I was beginning to take hold. I had crossed into the Territories, had worked my way over the Portage Plains, skirted the banks of the Souris and was gradually feeling my way over the better sections of the Province. Then came a magic word. My brothers and I waited with bated breath. Could it be? Was it a reality? A railroad, a transcontinental line, that would send out branches and feelers through all parts of the country and gladden the heart of every man! It came. Years after I had crossed to Manitoba, the sound of a construction train was heard in the great western plain. Oh how I welcomed it. It brought influx of population, prosperity and comfort, such as I had never dreamed of. But still many of my brothers had long distances to travel. I remember one time before the province became a network of railroads, I was quartered in the southern part almost 50 miles from Brandon. A load was made up, and my master who was a wealthy man had a team of horses—not common in those days I assure you—to draw that load to town. The trails were buffalo trails, or no trails at all, but resolutely we bumped along the road. At last we came to a stream, not a large stream, but too deep for us to ford. The horses must swim it. I remember the load was taken off the waggon the box followed suit; the horses plunged in and partly swimming, partly wading, stumbled across. Was the work complete? No, the waggon box was "plugged", that is, a boat was



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