

THE FARMER'S RAILROAD.

BY FRANK B. TRACY.

"We'll now open this meetin' with pra'r. Brother Mercer, will you lead in pra'r?"

The people arose while Mayor Mercer asked the Lord to bless the gathering. The audience was typical of the dwellers on the "second mountain" (which was not a mountain at all, but only the second elevation from the level of the river, eighty miles away). They were uncouth people. Their long dog-skin overcoats, their high con-skin caps, their uncombed hair and shaggy beards all told of their hardy, tollsome pioneer life. Fifteen years ago, that now rapidly growing and rich section of Dakota lay desolate by all save the roving blizzards, the wolves and the deer—lay all unconscious of the majestic power in its womb to yield No. 1 hard wheat.

The presence of these people in that hall of the proud and new court house at Lansing was a sight to see. Daniel Minds gave out his scheme of railroad building. At the end of the prayer the man who had called for it rose from his knees (he was a Methodist) and began to talk in an embarrassed, halting manner. There was something peculiarly attractive in his way of speaking. There glinted in his eye as he stood before the people that night a winsomeness, a courage and a hope which the dullest folk, he was well, with a small head and eyes; his hair was reddish brown, and his slight mustache, which clustered around his mouth, was of the same color. Awkwardly, apologetically and with a strange smile, he said:

"I s'pose yuh want t' know what I've got yuh sayin' about this new plan to build a railroad. Well, it seems kinder funny fer me to stand up here and try t' talk t' yuh. Amany of yuh, I reckon, think my plan is clean in 'out Moody's stable, 's I used to do seven and eight years ago. Law me, of course I can't make a speech, but I can tell yuh in a plain way what is the Lord's will respectin' this railroad. I believe that the Lord has called me t' do this work."

"Yuh know, I guess, that we've had purty hard times the last few years. Of course, we ain't ez bad off ez the corn states, and ez this winter we'll raise 's good wheat 'z it does now and 's much of it, we'll git along. But we ain't doin' 's well as we used to when wheat was so high. Now, I don't look fer any more dollar wheat, etidly. I don't know why. Some say it's silver, and some say it's t'f, but it seems t' me that with all this wild land bein' plowed up and sowed in wheat we can't expect anything but more wheat and lower prices. And the only thing we can do is to keep down expenses and lower what it costs to produce the wheat."

"Now, one big reason why you and me hev such little left after the crop is sold is the Great Mogul charges us jist ez much for haulin out stuff t' Duluth ez he did ten years ago, when wheat was worth a dollar a bushel."

"An' this high charge works two ways. Yuh know we complain good deal at the way the stores stick it on to us in the way of prices. Well, Brother Mercer showed me a freight bill the other day on some hardware and it was awful. It explained t' me why he had t' charge t' much fer his goods."

"Now you fellows know all this, and I tell yuh the only way fer t' get relief is fer us t' build a road ourselves up t' Duluth. Then we can haul our stuff to git in another road here of the same kind 'z this one. They've got both roads at Gardner, and they ain't any better off."

"I got our school teacher at Hannan t' draw a map fer me, and here it is. Yuh see, both these Dakota roads away 'way down to the south a hundred and more miles out of their way to Duluth. Why don't they run straight? Here I've drawn a line across from this town of Lansing straight t' Duluth, over land where a grade would cost 'most nuthin' and a hundred miles could be saved. This road's goin' t' be built some day. The only question is, whether we're goin' t' build it fer our own benefit or let some Eastern feller build it fer theirs. I say we can build that road, and I'll tell yuh how."

Daniel Minds had always been odd. In his youth he was converted, and became a camp meeting preacher, but he was a rivalist in his ignorant, hearty and peculiar way; but suddenly "the power" left him and he returned uncomplainingly to his farm drudgery, holding fast all the while to his devout faith. To all appearances he was a serious, hard working farmer, like hundreds of others who helped to enthrone King Wheat in that frozen land. He was regarded as "queer" by his neighbors; but they were all loners.

He was thoughtful and the long winter nights gave him opportunity for much reading. In some way his attention became fixed on the transportation problem, and it absorbed him. Bit by bit a plan came to him, and at length he unfolded it to friends and relatives. They told him that it was wild and impracticable, but their words disturbed him in no way.

This meeting at Lansing was his first one, and it had attracted a great crowd. But it was a silent, undemonstrative throng. The road was to be called the Farmers' Railroad, and it was to be built by the farmers of the Red River Valley themselves. The project was to earn no profit, but was to keep up repairs and equipments, and was to be wholly co-operative. But the message was too good to be true, and the audience would not receive it. When he had finished, he asked any who cared to propound questions to him; but no one replied. All sat perfectly quiet, until one arose and left, then, one by one, all the remainder followed his example. Yet they were all self-convicted cowards. They believed Minds was right and that his scheme was possible, but they were afraid to say so to one another. They were saying to themselves, "We build the road? I believe we really can, but it sounds foolish, and I am not going to expose myself to my associates' ridicule, when it is evident that they all think Minds is crazy."

Minds sat quietly in his chair until they had all gone, and then arose, and said nothing as he helped the janitor but out the lights. As they walked down the stairs he made some remark about the weather, and with a cherry "Good-by" he went to his hitching

rack, and was soon off on his pony for home. His thoughts may have been very bitter as he rode across the trackless, treeless, fenceless, and almost houseless country from Lansing to the boundary, thirty miles away. But not at that time, nor at any other time, did any one hear him speak bitterly or hopelessly. To his wife's anxious inquiry he said:

"We had a big meetin', but they didn't say anything. I guess they didn't think much of it, but when they think over the railroad scheme, they'll change their minds."

Mastered and led by his daimon, he began a systematic canvass of towns along the proposed route to the river. His fame had preceded him, and he was pictured as a harmless vision chaser. In several of his meetings he was interrupted by jeers, but his good nature did not leave him. At Brighton, however, on the river, he met his first encouragement. Judicious and respectful questions were asked of him, and several leading citizens remained to talk with him after the meeting was over.

He had felt, for some time, a great longing to go to St. Paul and learn how the great roads were managed. But he had little money, and he could not ride his pony so far without danger of hurting it permanently. So he crossed the river and began a four hundred mile walk to St. Paul. He was one of the Mogul's cheerful days. Prospects for the intercontinental amalgamation scheme were becoming excellent and it looked to the Mogul as if one more visit to Europe would place the two great lines in his grasp. So he said quickly to the office boy who announced Minds.

"Oh, well, let him in."

Minds entered. It was late spring, just before seeding, and the Northwest was a mass of mud. A portion of the mass seemed to have clung to Minds. His face was unshaven and worn. His winter cap looked heavy and wet, and his hair was disheveled and knotted.

At his desk sat the Great Mogul, tall, portly, forceful and with the magnetic tone and air of success. Thirty years before he had worked as a day laborer in that city. He had seized a slender chance and had risen slowly until his genius for railroad building was discovered and developed. He grabbed this line and that one, and extended them first to Duluth, then to Winnipeg, and then on to the West, until, by buying, seizing, leasing, buying, by any means getting lines and connections, his trains reached the Pacific.

Of that whole system he was the boss, the master. His voice was the Jupiter Tonans of the railroad world of the region. He had bold plans for reaching way out to the Orient and securing the monopoly of the business with Japan. Little did he care for the protests of the people. It was no concern of his that his name was a household word in every part of the North-west, and almost always with bitterness and an oath.

"Well, what do you want?" cried the Mogul in his abrupt way.

Minds advanced to the desk with his peculiar smile and told the great man of his railroad project, ending with the astonishing request, made with simple dignity, for transportation over the lines of the road as a courtesy extended from one railroad president to another.

The Mogul, roared with glee. It was his first laugh for days and it caused consternation throughout the building. After quizzing Minds, the Great Mogul said: "All right, I'll give you a pass." And then he added with a chuckle, "and if you are in the same business at the end of the year, drop in and I'll renew it for you."

Minds left the office with a radiant face. He then went directly to Duluth, which was for so many years the terminus of the new railroad, for there he thought he could arouse an interest in business men. But his efforts were apparently fruitless. The newspapers took him up eagerly and much sport over the visit of "Farmer" Minds.

Unwearied and undaunted, he then plunged into the country on a journey never before made by a white man. He had been told that in his route lay frozen and swampy which could not be bridged. He determined to find out for himself, and set out on foot to traverse the land between Duluth and the Red River. The thought of starvation, of dying on the prairie or in the great woods, or being drowned in the lakes did not come to him. He was a dreamer and he thought of naught save the fruition of his dreams.

It had become almost summer. He plunged into the woods, and he was known for so many years a land where a riding whip was hard to find was almost crissed by the great pinetrees. Luckily he had a chart and a compass, and he held doggedly to his route. Now he entered on prairie land, but found few tilled fields after leaving the towns. How he slept in hollow logs or in the open clearings; how he floundered in bogs and swamps; how he was welcomed by the trapper, the frontiersman, the lone farmer and the Indians of the great reservation, all of whom saved him from famine—these are tales which he told very seldom, and then only to justify his faith in the divinity of his inspiration. To those who retained him he never failed to tell of his mission, and they all knew that he was sincere, but doubted his rationality. He found to his great joy that there were no serious obstacles to his route, and that his first plan was entirely feasible so far as the survey was concerned. In three weeks he had traversed the 300 miles, and it was with a glad heart that he saw the Red River and the town of Brighton rise into the cold and narrow minded people of that region, so unresponsive at first to the appeals of the farmer railroad builder, were now proof against his earnest and steady activity in projecting his doctrine, and it was not many months until Minds' many railroad meetings had aroused much friendly interest and sympathy. Duluth finally seized hold of the enterprise, some capital was provided, a company was incorporated, of which Minds was made president, at a salary of \$75 a month, and Brighton was made headquarters. In every county on the proposed railroad, meetings were held and local organizations were formed. The scheme became more clearly defined, and its practical nature was seen by business men. Minds' preliminary plan was to issue shares of stock to the

farmers and business men, for which they would contribute labor on the grade or money. He figured that \$10 from every quarter section of land through which the railroad passed would form a capital large enough for a hundred miles of road. But he found that there would be needed some additional capital to equip the road after the grade should be completed. He had now arrived at the point in his plans where it was necessary to secure the means for the furthering of the road.

So he determined on a step which set the press of the Northwest into a roar of mirth. He announced his intention of going to New York to negotiate for the capital to build the road. It was a bright morning in February when Minds reached New York. He did not pause to look at the sights, but as soon as he left the station he began to hunt for the haunts of the financiers. He soon found, to his great dismay, that the day was a holiday. But he was especially anxious to see a western United States senator whose real home was in New York and who was a wealthy railroad projector. So he learned the senator's residence address and went to the house. And this is the story Minds told to the Dakota farmers of his visit to the east:

"I rung the bell of the senator's house and the feller that opened the door told me that the senator wasn't up yet (though it was after nine o'clock). He told me to come back at noon, but he was sure the senator wouldn't see me that day. Well, I went back at plump noon, and the senator's wife, Mrs. Neal, I s'pose she was his wife, opened the door. When I asked to see the senator she told me that he wouldn't see me nor anybody else. I told her that I wouldn't do it at all, I must see him, for I had come two thousand miles to see one thing. I went on tellin' her about the Farmers' Railroad in Dakota, and she kept on refusin', and I guess between us two there was considerable noise, until finally the senator himself came out to see what the fuss was about. He laughed when he saw me, for some reason, and told me to come in anyway."

"But I tell yuh, he was mad enough when he found what I had come fer. 'Why,' he says, 'I'm bothered to death by the fact that I can't get any of you fools.' I told him then purty warmlike that I wasn't a swindler or a fool, but a plain Dakota farmer, and I kep' on a-talkin' that way until he said, weary-like, 'Oh, well, set down, and let's hear quick what's your scheme!'"

"So I got out my map and pinned it again the wall, and begun t' tell him the whole thing ez I have told t' yuh, and he set there, sayin' nuthin', but blinkin' his eyes. Well, when I told him that I was a farmer, he said, 'I told him then purty warmlike that I wasn't a swindler or a fool, but a plain Dakota farmer, and I kep' on a-talkin' that way until he said, weary-like, 'Oh, well, set down, and let's hear quick what's your scheme!'"

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"In the event he sent out fer a chum of his, and I went over the whole thing again. Then we had supper, er dinner, they called it, and it was sure enough, dinner fer me that day, fer I'd had but one meal before that. Well, I told him that I was a farmer, and he said, 'I told him then purty warmlike that I wasn't a swindler or a fool, but a plain Dakota farmer, and I kep' on a-talkin' that way until he said, weary-like, 'Oh, well, set down, and let's hear quick what's your scheme!'"

"New York is a purty nice, big place, with lots of sights, and I could have spent a whole week there, seein' things; but the Farmers' Railroad didn't have the time, and I went right off to Washington to see about gettin' my bill through congress. Yuh see when anybody wants to build a road through an Indian reservation he has to get a special act of congress. Mebbe some of you 'member that some fellers and newspapers in this country said it would cost us \$50,000 to git that bill passed. Well, it cost us less. It was signed by the president in a week's time, and it didn't cost a cent, and them congressmen wouldn't let the farmer pay even for his own meals."

On his way back home Minds visited the Carnegie mills at Pittsburgh and the Illinois Steel works at Joliet, to see the rails turn out and to get their prices. When he arrived at Brighton he found many circulars from Wall street firms and other capitalists awaiting him in which they explained the reasons why he had not negotiated with them.

His campaign among the farmers now took on notes of power, inspiration and triumph. The meetings were very large and enthusiastic, and stock was taken up with great eagerness. He had called Minds a lunatic now showed him lavishly. The leading men of every community became active in support of the project.

Soon, however, nature conspired with many other circumstances in an attitude which seemed that of malevolence to defeat the scheme. First, there came a "backward spring." The ice and snow remained on the ground until late in April, and in some sections until May, and then came a few days, causing disastrous floods which prevented seeding. Then, after seeding, cold rains fell, and much of the wheat was chilled and required replanting, and the result was that the whole wheat came up with a month behind over the whole Red River Valley. Then there came several terrific hailstorms, which almost wholly wiped out the crops in several townships in one county. The result was that farmers failed to pay their subscriptions for stock in the railroad.

Upon the top of this came a gigantic and crushing blow to Minds at the meeting of the directors that summer at Brighton, at which his scheme for raising the money was rejected and outvoted and he himself was practically removed from the position of chief. There had been rumors during the early summer that there was in the Directorate some jealousy of Minds, and it was said that the inspiration came from St. Paul, but his nearest friends of Minds or any of his nearest friends of any formidable revolt. The action of the directors must, therefore, have been a great shock to his reason and hopes; but he gave no sign. He spent most of his time at Brighton, supervising the surveys and the grading which had already begun. His hopes were high

that when the annual meeting of the road was held in January he would be restored.

Everything looked most auspicious for Minds when the directors assembled at Brighton for the annual meeting. The plan which they had adopted had proved a failure everywhere was conditional in Minds, and the condition of the farmers was better than they had anticipated, which, with higher prices for their wheat made the time an excellent one for the revival of the railroad. But when the meeting began, his enemies were seen to be in full control, and he was retired from the presidency and every vestige of power was taken away from him.

Minds was silent, and for the first time detected, after this overwhelming verdict. But he remained at Brighton for the rest of that winter, and the last heard from him was that he had entered the evangelist field, which he had tried when a boy, and was holding great and thrilling revival meetings near Brighton, until a few days ago when the newspapers contained this despatch:

"Daniel Minds, the Farmers' Railroad projector, was today adjudged insane, and removed to the State Hospital for the Insane. Last Monday he announced that Christ would come in six days and he had been called to see the people of the event. He is in a terrible physical condition, unable to sleep, and talks incessantly on almost every subject. Unless he gets relief soon he cannot live long."

And the Farmers' Railroad was not built.

FINDS A CLUE

In Neal Murder Case—Woodworth and Brown, Burglars, in Fairville That Night.

Handkerchiefs Bearing Mrs. Neal's Initials Found on Them When Arrested.

The inquiry into the death of the late Mrs. Margaret Neal was continued last night at Fairville. Miss Dunn, the young lady who was driving with Frank O'Reilly when he discovered Mrs. Neal lying in an unconscious condition alongside the Sand Cove road, gave evidence which was nothing more than corroborative of Mr. O'Reilly's testimony.

The evidence of Geo. Williams, Officer Lawson and an affidavit made by James C. Bond, of Montreal, revealed facts that throw suspicion upon Smith and Wilson, otherwise known as Woodworth and Brown, the two who were recently arrested in Nova Scotia on a charge of burglary and who have been convicted and now serving a term in the Dorchester penitentiary.

Dr. Lunney's post mortem examination, according to the opinion of Dr. Geo. Hetherington, who gave evidence, was proof positive that Mrs. Neal came to her death from a heavy blunt instrument in the hands of some person. He believed it could not be anything else but direct violence. The position in which she was found was evidence that she had been struck by some instrument, or possibly, a rock. From the post-mortem he would judge that she met her death by violence.

J. J. Hennessey, a dry goods merchant of Fairville, gave evidence to the effect that he was not personally acquainted with Mrs. Neal. Mr. Lawson called at his place of business recently and showed him some pocket handkerchiefs, three of them cotton, and the fourth silk. The letter "M" was on them. About a year ago last Christmas he had goods of the same style of work. The same kind of goods might be bought at other places. The handkerchief found among Mrs. Neal's effects was somewhat like the other ones.

The enquiry will be resumed next Tuesday night.

AMATEUR BASE BALL

A meeting of representatives from the Clippers, Franklins, Y. M. C. A.'s and Portlands was held last night at the Y. M. C. A. rooms, with Frank White in the chair. Mr. Wilson of the Y. M. C. A. was chosen secretary of the team. After some discussion it was decided to call the league the St. John Amateur Base Ball League.

P. J. Hanlon then announced that the solicitor general, Hon. H. A. McKeown, had intimated that he would offer a suitable silver trophy for competition by the league.

A schedule committee was appointed consisting of J. McAllister, Clippers; Ed. Mooney, Franklins; Frank White, Y. M. C. A.'s; Thomas Burns, Portlands; and J. Fred Payne of the Star staff as a disinterested person.

Six games were then decided upon, the games to be played on the Shamrock, Victoria and Barrack square grounds.

The schedule committee are called to meet on Monday night, when the schedule will be drawn up. On Tuesday night representatives from each team will meet, when officers for the season will be chosen.

MORE SUCCESS FOR RYAN.

Mr. Ryan and his company played Ingram again last night and repeated their success of the previous evening. Great credit is due to the company for their handling of standard legitimate and they cannot fail to give a splendid presentation of Damon and Pythias next week.

For this afternoon The Fatal Wedding is announced and tonight the great favorite, O'Brien the Contractor, will be given its only performance. Next week Mr. Ryan announces his last year's success, The Three Musketeers, for Monday night and The Sign of the Cross (not The Sign of the Cross) for Wednesday matinee and night, and Damon and Pythias on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The latter play is promised a splendid production and as it is an interesting story it will no doubt attract large audiences. The benefit matinee amounted only to \$55, but the Ryan company have decided to make the sum \$100, which will be a fairly good contribution to a worthy object.

heard he borrowed \$5 from Mr. Roper. WERE SEEN IN FAIRVILLE.

An affidavit made by James C. Bond, now in Montreal, but formerly of St. John, was read by the coroner, and was to the effect that about 20 minutes to 8 o'clock on the night of March 13th he met two men while walking on a road in Fairville leading to Sand Cove. They asked him for money. He recognized a photograph of one of the burglars arrested in Nova Scotia, as being that of the larger of the two men who accosted him.

William Quillie, shedman at Sand Point, said that he worked sometimes at night up to 12th of last March, which date he remembered. He was out about 5 o'clock on the morning of the 14th of March and on his way home met two strange men on the side of the track near Sand Point. He could not recognize them as it was dark. One was larger than the other. The smaller one was smooth faced. Witness spoke to them. They asked him for matches. Witness replied that he had none. The larger one asked for the matches. The smaller one had a dark suit on. After he heard of Mrs. Neal's death he spoke to his wife about them. He never saw those two men before, as far as he could recall.

HAD HANDKERCHIEFS WITH MRS. NEAL'S INITIALS.

Police Officer Lawson recognized the photographs as being of men whom he had seen some time in Fairville. He could not state the date. The photographs were said to be of Woodworth and Brown. He saw them last in charge of Sheriff Gates on their way to Dorchester. Sheriff Gates gave four pocket handkerchiefs found in possession of the prisoners to witness. Mrs. Neal was commonly known around Fairville as Margaret Minnie. Witness then produced the pocket handkerchiefs, three of which were of cotton and the fourth of silk, on which "M" was worked in silk. He (witness) visited dry goods stores in Fairville and found that they kept in stock goods of the same kind. J. J. Hennessey had in stock exactly the same kind of silk ones. He also had in stock cotton handkerchiefs like the ones found in the case. He had seen the prisoners. But Mr. Hennessey did not know of selling handkerchiefs to Mrs. Neal.

MRS. NEAL WAS SURELY MURDERED.

Dr. Lunney read his post mortem examination, after which Dr. Hetherington said that he did not think it would be possible for the deceased to receive such injuries from an accidental fall. Nor did he think that she received the injuries by being run down by a team, considering the fact that there was no mud on her clothes and that she was found about thirty inches outside of the track. If a shaft had struck her there would have been a "chance" on penetration of the skin. Neither could the injuries have been caused by a horse's foot, because there would in that case have certainly been an open wound.

Continuing, Dr. Hetherington said that he felt from his examination that Mrs. Neal came to her death from a heavy blunt instrument in the hands of some person. He believed it could not be anything else but direct violence. The position in which she was found was evidence that she had been struck by some instrument, or possibly, a rock. From the post-mortem he would judge that she met her death by violence.

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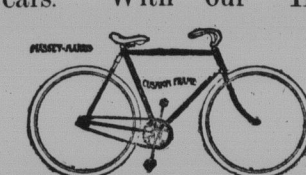
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62nd. FUSILIERS.

The 62nd Fusiliers, under command of Lt. Col. Sturdee, had their first route march of the season last evening. The regiment fell in at the drill shed at 8 o'clock sharp. The various companies were pretty well filled up, unusually so, considering the fact that it is so early in the drill stage. There must have been upwards of 200 men in parade including the bandsmen. The men were brought to attention and the march out began. The route taken was up Carmarthen, along Broad, up Charlotte, along St. James, up Prince William, through Dock, up Union to Germain, along Wellington row and Charlotte, down Coburg and Charlotte, down King and Germain, along St. James, down Charlotte, along Broad and Carmarthen to the shed again. The two bands, the brass and drum, played in turn. On reaching the drill shed the regiment fell into column and the men were afterwards formed into quarter column. Col. Sturdee addressed his men, briefly, expressing great pleasure to observe such a large turnout. He mentioned the new drill. The regiment looked well, the men marching in good style.

Later on a meeting of the officers was held at the headquarters on Charlotte street. Mention may be made of the new

system of taking in recruits. Every man after being accepted must be examined by the surgeon and sworn in by a member of the staff. These men join the recruits' squads and after passing that go into the regular companies.

Drills next week will be on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, when an instructor from Fredericton will drill the men.

A SILVER LINING.

(Baltimore American.)

Recently a Virginia girl went to Washington to visit the parents of her fiancé. Upon her return home her old colored mammy came to see her, and said to her: "Honey, when you goin' to git married?"

The engagement had been announced so the young woman replied: "Why, I don't know, suttin' I am not even engaged. What do you think?"

The old colored woman said: "Laws-a-god, but that suttin' am a pity! But, Miss Nanny, they do say that ole made is the happiest critters there is, once they quits strugglin'."

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

(Chicago News.)

No man ever thinks he will marry a widow—and he doesn't. She marries him.

A charitable man is one who finds good excuses for people he doesn't like. There is such a thing of being too good for one's own good in this imperfect world.