

A Trip Over the Morris-Brandon Branch.

A representative of THE COLONIST paid a visit last month to the various towns and villages situated on the Morris-Brandon branch of the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway. This line is the most important in the company's Manitoba system and has tributary to it a very fine section of the province. It is noted for the excellence of its train service and its fine road bed,—an old railroad man who happened to be passing over it at the time of our visit was overheard to remark that he had never seen a nicer piece of road. The passenger trains leave Winnipeg on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, running southward along the valley of the Red river, over the main line to St. Paul, to Morris and from there strike off on the branch due west till Belmont is reached from which point the line gradually bends to the north-west and runs directly to Brandon. From Winnipeg to Brandon over this road the distance is about 185 miles, and the run is made in about 8 hours. In this connection it is reported that a six hour time table is shortly to come into force.

As we have already said the country tributary to the line is a fine one, as good as any in the province. It is rolling prairie for the most part, with here and there small lakes and streams and occasionally a stretch of bluffs to give variety. Between Miami and Balder it skirts the northern extremity of the Pembina Mountains and treats the traveller to a bit of forest and hill scenery which reminds him of Eastern Canada. After Swan Lake is past there is nothing unusual to be seen until Wawanesa is reached, there the Souris Valley is crossed, but as darkness sets in long before the train gets that far, it is only on the backward journey that an opportunity can be had to see it.

The first village we stopped off at was Roland about twenty-six miles from Morris. This is only a small place, but its people are very energetic. It has some 75 inhabitants. The agricultural district for which it is the market is enclosed within a radius of about 10 or 12 miles. The town as it is now came into existence with the advance of the railway, and the site is partly owned by the company. It is enjoying a steady growth, and will always be of considerable importance as a distributing point. A brass band has been formed lately of which some of the leading business men of the place are members, and in many ways a great deal of enterprise in social matters is displayed. A list of the village's business establishments shows: Two general stores, owned by Lawrie Bros. and Steen Bros.; a harness shop; a carriage shop; two blacksmith shops; a butcher shop; dressmaking shop; hotel and livery stable owned and managed by Wm. Lowe; a chopping mill and an elevator owned by Martin & Mitchell. A neat little church building is one of the features of the place. The crops around Roland have been on the whole very satisfactory this year, but a few of the farmers lost quite heavily from hail. A great deal of the threshing remained to be done at the time of our visit, probably more than half the crop. Standing on the doorstep of the hotel and looking

only in the direction which we could see from there 152 large stacks of wheat were counted within easy seeing distance.

Leaving Roland the journey westward was continued as far as Miami, one of the two largest towns on the line. This place is rather prettily situated. All around it is a poplar bush marking the eastern extremity of the hilly part of the road and giving the town a somewhat unusual appearance to eyes accustomed to looking from streets out over endless prairie. Here they are more shut in and sheltered. From appearances we should say the town-site itself has been largely cleared from this miniature forest. The business interests of Miami are varied and extensive, including some of the best institutions in Manitoba. It has two elevators, three or four general stores, a harness shop, hardware store, bookstore, flour and feed store, private bank, and insurance office, blacksmith shops, photograph gallery, two lumber yards, implement warehouses, butcher shop, carpenter shop, and a very good hotel. The surrounding country is very fertile, yielding excellent crops and settled with a good class of farmers. After a day's stay, we took the regular freight train for the west. Freights are not just the best trains to travel on if you are in a hurry, but they are better than nothing and compensate the passenger to some extent in the chance which they give him to see the country.

This one took us through the very section of the country which we most wished to see leisurely—the foothills of the Pembina Mountains. Deerwood was the first station reached, but as it is nothing more than a station no stop was made there. Altamont came next. Here we were pretty well into the hilly country and all around it bush and scrub abound. There is nothing but the station building to bear the name, but considerable wood gathered from the surrounding country is shipped from here. Somerset, the next station, is the centre of a French settlement and is a lonesome-looking place. It boasts a hotel and general store, both run by Frenchmen. Although this is almost in the heart of the hill country, considerable wheat is grown near enough the village to be marketed at it. The quality, however, is sometimes poor and the region is susceptible to frost. After passing Swan Lake, Indian Springs, Mariapolis and Greenway, all showing signs of the proximity of the hills, Balder, our next stopping point, was reached. Balder is in its way quite a famous little village, being known and talked about by nearly everybody in the province. We can't quite explain why this is, but it is probably on account of the hospitality of its people or perhaps because of the excellence of the grain from the surrounding country. While not as big as some of the other places, Balder is still one of the best points on this line. It has several stores, implement warehouses, blacksmith shops, etc., all doing good business and showing signs of prosperity. Although it has not yet a hotel, the boarding house accommodation is exceptionally good and would put to shame many of the so-called first-class hotels which it is our misfortune to have to stop at while travelling in the various parts of the province. And just here we would like to say


that if the proprietors of these hotels would give less attention to their bars and more to their tables and beds they would find it greatly to their advantage and by doing so they would confer an inestimable benefit upon the long-suffering travellers. It is possible to put up with bad whisky or cigars but a dirty bed or table is an abomination.

By the time the next train got to Balder it was pretty well on into the evening and darkness has at this time of the year set in so that our journey from there past Belmont, Hilton and Ashdown to Wawanesa was a blank as far as seeing the country goes, we think though it would be safe to say that it was slightly rolling prairie, that description does for about nine-tenths of Manitoba.

Wawanesa, the last point of importance before Brandon is reached, is quite a large place, probably the largest on the line. It is situated on the bank of the Souris Valley which at this point is very wide and deep. Through its bottom the river runs, a mere thread in comparison with it. The site is one of the prettiest that could possibly have been chosen and the proud inhabitants say it is without a rival in the whole province. The town has the usual complement of stores, business houses, blacksmith shops, carriage shops, livery stables, etc. At present it is filled with railroad men who are working on the line a few miles out, grading and leveling it up. These give the place a busier appearance than it is wont to wear. The district surrounding Wawanesa produces a very fine grade of wheat in large quantities. The settlement is one of the oldest in the province, many of the farmers having come in here in 1881 and '82, long before this line of railway was thought of. Many of the farms in the district have been brought to a high degree of neatness and order. Our stay in the place was limited to one day and late in the evening we caught a train to Brandon and thus completed the journey, passing on the way the smaller points Rounthwaite and Martinville.

Skandinaviske Canadiensaren (the Scandinavian Canadian) has made its appearance in Winnipeg as a weekly paper of four pages, five columns to the page. Its first number under the new arrangement is dated October 21st, and it is to be published every Friday. Mr. Emanuel Ohlen holds the position of manager. The Scandinavians are to be congratulated on having an organ with such excellent promise as this. It is the only paper printed in their language in the country and will no doubt do much to educate them in Canadian affairs.

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