

## Life on the Prairie.

By Thos. Morris, Jr., (Continued).

MANITOBA boys, who live on the prairies, know nothing of the many winter sports which our boys enjoy. There is no coasting, no skating, not even snow-balling. The snow, which is just like fine white sand or granulated sugar, instead of packing, runs through the fingers. In walking, it crunches and churns up under your feet, while you slip and slide about at every step.

Manitoba snow is like sand in many respects. Everyone has read of the simoons of the desert, how the wind sweeps across the trackless waste, carrying the sand along with it in clouds; and every one knows how dangerous these sand-storms are to the unfortunate traveller,—well a blizzard, or blinding snow storm, is exactly like a simoon, only instead of hot sand, fine, sharp, cold particles of ice blind your eyes, and fill your nose, sift down your neck and up your sleeves, and between your jackets. The snow is so easily shifted that, when a wind sweeps over the prairie, it drives underneath and literally rolls it along in billows.

Sometimes you may start out, the sun shining and with every indication of a pleasant day, the next thing you know the wind suddenly rises, and before the danger is realized you are enveloped in a dense cloud, and you can't see a dozen steps ahead of you. Many a man has thus been overtaken and bewildered, and has lost his way. The best method to adopt when overtaken by a blizzard, is to stand still, place a stick or something visible upright in the snow, walk around it in a circle, backwards or forwards beside it, while the storm lasts. By remaining in a known position one has an idea where he is, and may afterwards proceed in safety, otherwise, a person might wander in an aimless manner for miles, and lose all idea of his bearings, and become lost.

From the shifting nature of the snow, you can easily understand that tremendous snow drifts are found around houses, stacks, stables, and in the tall grass and stubble. A settler frequently has to shovel out a tunnel to get from his house, or to get into his stable. Sometimes a settler's pig-pen is ten feet deep under the snow, and he is obliged to send the feed down by means of a shoot; and he may not see his pigs for weeks, or even for months at a time. The average depth of snow, on the prairie, does not

generally exceed eighteen inches, although if the grass has not been burned off in the fall, the snow lodges in it, and it may be drifted three or four feet deep.

Snow shoes are not so generally worn as you might expect. I suppose the reason is, that unless one is accustomed to snow shoes they are very awkward; and the settlers being mostly European and Ontario farmers, have not been brought up to their use. On one occasion, I improvised a pair, and by their aid, extricated myself from an unpleasant situation. I left Winnipeg one Saturday for Lowestoft, a distance of sixty miles. I got as far as the Lowe farm, (managed by Mr. Wm. Stephenson from Waterdown) the first evening, and stopped there over night. Next morning I started out at ten o'clock, a beautiful bright day, with ten miles before me still to traverse. I had some idea of what I might experience, although I did not expect it to be so bad as it proved.

The entire ten miles was through a frozen swamp, with tall grass drifted full of snow. In some places as I soon discovered, the snow was neck-deep. There was no kind of a trail, consequently, I had to traverse it alone and on foot. If I went straight, as the crow flies, it would be ten miles, with no house or protection of any kind. If I made a slight detour of two miles to the south, I would pass an empty shanty belonging to Willie Shanks, a good natured French Canadian bachelor, who was my nearest neighbor, six miles on the east side. I knew that his shanty was vacant just then and locked; but if a storm should arise, or if I should get tired, I could pull the staple and go inside. After considerable thought, I finally decided on the latter course. The first mile I got along very well, because the grass had been burned off, and there was a stiff crust on the snow. I was congratulating myself upon the rapidity of my travelling and was in good spirits, singing and whistling, and laughing at the amusing pranks of the young foxes, running and gambolling like puppy dogs, when, before I was aware of it, and without any warning, I went down through the crust, in snow up to my arm pits. Now this, "was a pretty how d'ye do" and in spite of myself I could not help smiling at my own predicament, however, this was but the commencement of my troubles. True, there was a slight crust on the snow, even among the tall grass, but not thick enough to hold up much weight, consequently, it made walking all the more difficult.

(To be Continued.)