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The Spirit of The Prairie.

By Merodach Green, Bender, Sask.

It was dusk; the darkening streaks of grey were creeping Westward, obscuring with their dusky veils the fading rays of the sun: chilly winds from the North were sweeping over the prairie in an onslaught on flowers and grass, as if conscious of the fact that no obstruction lay to impede their progress southwards: silently and solemnly, one after another, the sentinel stars shone out to keep their mystic vigil.

Feeling the evening becoming cool I left my plough at the end of the last furrow, drove my team home, stabled them, and then returned to my sod shack.

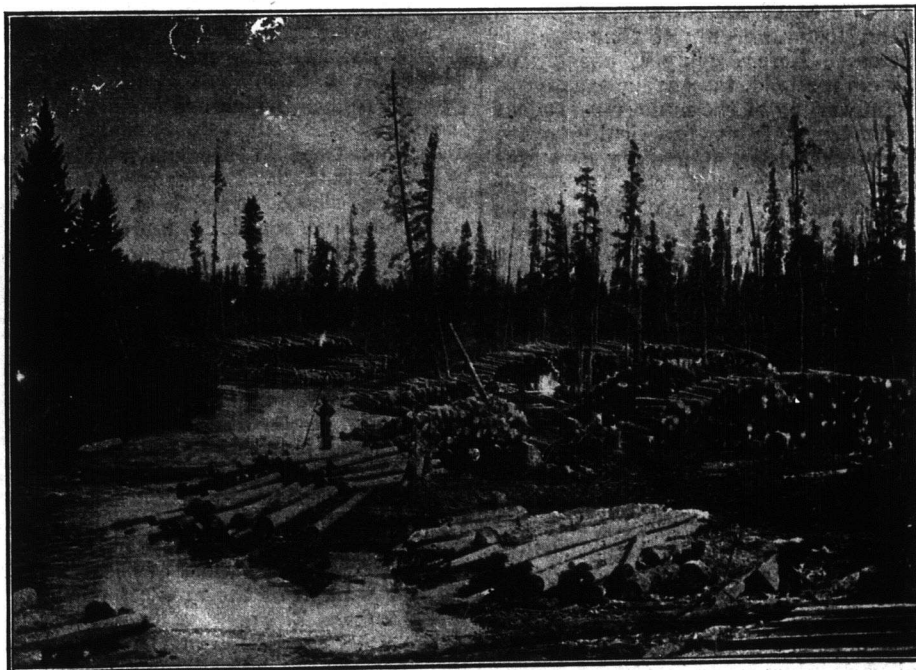
The conveniences of a sod shack are not many; and a lonely life on the prairie is not suggestive of much happiness; but having returned, I lit my fire and was soon partaking of my simple evening fare.

The spread was poor enough, I admit; but the homesteader learns to adapt himself to his circumstances and environment; he becomes very imaginative. He dreams of the hard, almost impervious prairie smiling with golden wheat and yielding wealth to the hands of labor and industry; he sees his sod shacks giving way to frame buildings; he perceives his stock multiplying with

affection and of home? And though I fear I shall not visit the Motherland again, yet around my shack I shall try to cultivate the oak, the ash, the elm, and shall plant a hedge of hawthorne, and make a neat garden in front, and plant two laburnums at the entrance so that when the longing pains my heart, I shall be consoled to some degree by my little England on the prairie.

But the prairie cannot be England, though I hope England will become possessed of its spirit.

The prairie is the free gift of the deep; its birth is not lost in the evolution of the ages; for there came a day when the Mystic Hand raised the bed of the vast ocean that concealed the West. Triton called his waves to the cold Arctic or distant Pacific, and the prairie rose to eminence, emerging as the child of the deep. 'Like a child from the womb,' fresh and unadorned it appeared; not a blade waved over its cretaceous surface; not a leaf obscured its barren appearance; not a flower had been sown to raise its head above its slimy grit; the song of birds had not as yet penetrated its deep wilderness; no sound, save that of the stars of the morning or the incessant requiem of the waves of that ancient ocean, had pierced the



Red Deer Lumber Co's drive. North of Swan River.

the years, and the blessings of Heaven resting upon his perseverance and endeavors; and from the wild waste he sees his future home emerging stately and beautiful, and surrounded by the lavished plenty of Heaven. It is this hope, that enables the lonely homesteader to suffer his unannounced hardships with uncomplaining fortitude.

Supper over, I drew my chair nearer the stove, and was soon indulging in the pleasures and pains of reminiscence. In that hour of twilight and serenity we all like to reflect on the Past—on the turmoil and anxiety, the failures and successes; and once again in fancy, dare walk back over the brambles of poverty and the thorns of disappointments; and bear all, when we depict the valleys of the Promised Land; for we believe them to be flowing with milk and honey.

Three years before I had crossed from England, because I dreaded the future in a country where competition is so keen, where caste is so conspicuous, and where land—the free gift of Heaven—is being held tenaciously by a few wealthy potentates; and where the sons and daughters of the imperial race have to bear the yoke in silence, because the posterity of the Dark demands it.

I love England, my native land: say what child brought up on its verdant meadows, its smiling valleys, its sunlit hills, does not? What Britisher dwelling on the prairie does not occasionally look Eastward, like the Jew towards Jerusalem or the Mohammedan towards Mecca, and long for scenes of youth, of

virgin air; but wonderful it appeared, to play its part in the Story of the World.

The prairie is great because of its apparent and latent possibilities; its greatness does not lie in its vastness, nor in the fertility of its soil, though these be essential concurrences, but in the fact that these wastes are rapidly becoming the home of a people, active, energetic and determined—the progenitors of a mighty nation. The silence of the prairie shall be broken by the monotone of the factory and the throb of industry; its vastness overcome by the flight of Discovery and Invention; its great mineral wealth revealed by the magic touch of Science; and from the lips of its children break forth the psalm of Fraternity. Yes, here is a land in the crucible of fate. Is not this, seen from the Nebo of Time, another Promised Land; is not its atmosphere saturated with the breath of Freedom; are not its toiling people the true pioneers of a great future power? Does not the prairie call for inhabitants—for men of other nations to leave the lasciviousness that luxury and national deterioration produce, and become the makers of cities and provinces; and for women to leave the coquetties of corrupted cities, the glamor of degraded places, and come here to be the mothers of a worthy nation?

And to-day the Spirit of the Prairie is luring the children of the East, to come and enjoy the richness of the fresh soil, and the abundant blessings of the Giver of All.

How wonderful! How strange! The prairie is uniting the nations of the world in one true brotherhood. Here is a cosmopolitan people—a liberty-loving people—united by the Spirit of Freedom, into a nation, and establishing the foundations of a power to be.

The oppressed serf of Russia, trodden and manacled by a vicious and corrupt Government, has come here to breathe the atmosphere of Freedom; the toiling Hungarian—the despised and rejected of his land—has obtained here the liberty that his forefathers cherished in barbaric days, free from the tyranny and incompetency of selfish governments; the poor peasant of France, having left his vine-clad hills, has found here the prosperity which his native country failed to give him; the German, still longing for the beauties of the Rhine, labors on, to obtain the plenty and abundance which the Fatherland denies him; and the Britisher, robbed of his land by the Mammon of wealth, has come here to seek a home; to seek security of labor; the right to toil, to sweat, to live, of which he is deprived in his native land.

Together these people have united; together they are striving towards idealistic government; towards the government that shall reckon men and women the greatest of its assets; that will allow no man to barter precious, yes, sacred, human sweat for the paltry offers of extortioners and social vampires; that will provide for the poor and needy with far more care than for protecting prolific industries, whose proprietors are sapping the life-blood of the masses; that shall protect the bread-winner from the ravages of sickness and unemployment; and that shall establish forever the principle, that the toilers of communities, the rank and file of labor, shall not be ground to satisfy the greed of men whose wealth is utilised, not in fostering industry and raising the masses, but in jeopardising the destinies of the race.

Yes, the Spirit of the Prairie is the spirit of emancipation and liberty—and aims at raising, not submerging, the masses; in making the earth a beautiful casket for the trodden treasures of Heaven.

The New Year's Message.

By S. Jean Walker, Neepawa, Man.

I saw by Time's portal awaking,
The New Year in beauty arise,
There was courage and strength in his bearing,
His smile was so tenderly wise,
As he stood in his place with beauty and grace
Hope shone in his radiant eyes.

He breathed forth his mission right proudly
With never a falter nor fear,
"I am come to right wrong and oppression,
I bring with me blessing and cheer,
That the weak and the sad may grow hopeful and glad,
That the dark ways of earth may shine clear.

"I bring you a page from life's story,
Then write it out boldly and strong,
Keep its purity ever unsullied,
Nor mar it with past doubt and wrong,
But press on to the new with high purpose and true,
Let love be your watchword and song.

"I carry new power for endeavor,
Fair striving, with loftier aim,
Keep your souls all in tune with the Highest,
Your life's good to honor His name."
Then the Old Year passed by with a smile and a sigh,

On one occasion when Gladstone was visiting Rome he accidentally met Macaulay, who introduced himself to the statesman. On Macaulay's telling him that he took a daily walk in St. Peter's, Gladstone asked him what most attracted him in that place. "The temperature," was the answer.

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