

## A Three Years' Program as to the Equipment and Cultivation of a Half Section of Land in Alberta

By WALTER READ.

First Prize Essay, 2nd Year Student, in the Canadian Thresherman and Farmer Contest, by Students of the Manitoba Agricultural College.

We are indebted to Messrs. Bulmer, Downie, Reed and Curle, Winnipeg, for the excellent cuts appearing in this article.

The question of buying a farm in Western Canada and farming it for a few years is one which has confronted many thousands of men within the last few years. Many have tried it and succeeded, a few have tried it and have failed, while many who could have succeeded have not tried it.

Having farmed in Southern Alberta for seven years, and having studied agricultural problems to some extent, it may be that I could give some who intend farming in the West a little insight into the work before them.

I know of no better district for the farmer who is just commencing than just east of the thriving little town of Cayley, Alberta.

Experience has shown this district to be admirably suited to the growing of fall wheat, spring wheat, oats, barley and root crops, as well as that kind of all forage crops — the alfalfa. What more could a farmer desire than a chance to raise these crops on land that has given good results every year since farming was first tried in the district.

For the purpose of this programme, I will take a half section of land three miles from the town of Cayley, with twenty acres broken, but having not been cropped. The remainder of the farm is covered with the naturally heavy crop of prairie grass. The soil is a chocolate loam, extending down to a depth of 10 to 12 inches, and containing a few stones; the subsoil is a light clay which, if tilled, becomes light and friable. No alkali or bush land is found in this locality. The land is high and has just enough slope to insure good drainage.

The annual rainfall has for years been sufficient to raise an excellent crop, with the exception of a single season, and in this case the crops here compared very favorably with those of southern Saskatchewan, Manitoba and of the States just across the International boundary.

This farm was bought by a young married man early in February, 1911, for \$20 per acre. One half being \$3,200 was paid in cash and the remaining \$3,200 was to be paid, with interest at 8%, in eight annual payments, due on or about the 15th of February of each year. These payments will amount to \$656 due in February 15, 1912; \$624 due in 1913 and \$5902 due in 1914 which is as long as we will follow his programme.



The kind of Home that comes through good farming, Farmstead of J. W. Scallion, Virden.

He at once starts improving the place by engaging carpenters to build a house, barn and a work shop. He also contracts with a well drilled company to have a well drilled as soon as possible. While these men are at work, the farmer is hauling lumber and other materials for the buildings.

The workshop is soon finished and the carpenters start to work on the barn. As soon as it is far enough along to afford protection for the stock the farmer moves onto the place so as to be close to work, living in the workshop until the house is completed. These improvements cost him, in round figures, as follows:

Well .....	\$200
House .....	300
Barn .....	425
Shop .....	75
Total .....	\$1000

This young farmer has most of the equipment needed for farming a place of this size, namely, household goods, 6 brood mares, weighing 1,200 lbs to 1,400 lbs each, with harness; two good cows; one brood sow; three wagons; one buggy; one mower; dozen pure bred hens; one hay rake; one 12-inch gang breaking plow; one disc harrow; one drag harrow; one double disc seed drill; one binder; 1,000 bus. of oats; 70 bus. of barley; 50 bus. of wheat; and a few necessary carpenters' and blacksmiths' tools.

This young farmer has a fair knowledge of how to use these tools and a determination to succeed in spite of all odds.

Desiring to keep the new farm as free from weeds as possible, he very carefully cleaned all the grain before bringing it to the place. In order to work the farm to the best advantage,

the farmer must have considerable money to meet the necessary expenses and to place the land in such a condition as to bring quick returns. This young farmer has \$1,300 which can be used in this manner. Everything should be straightened up as soon as possible for the spring field work often commences here about the middle of March and then the farmer should have little to keep him from working in the field. As soon as the 20 acres of plowed land is thawed out to a depth of six inches he discs it twice, smooths it with a plank drag, then discs it again and drag harrows it, which reduces it to a good seed bed. This field he sows Red Fife wheat as soon as the weather appears settled.

Before sowing the seed, he cleans it very carefully to take out the chaff, smaller seed and weed seeds, then he treats it with a solution of formalin to kill the smut spores on it, if they are present. All the grain he sows he handles in this manner because it more than pays for the extra work put upon it. The quantity of wheat sown per acre is 1½ bus. and it is drilled from 1 to 2 inches deep depending on the condition of the soil.

During the first few weeks of field work the horses should receive all possible consideration, for they are in high spirits and very willing to work, but they are so soft that unless carefully watched they are apt to injure themselves for the entire season. By carefully changing the horses around, one or two which need rest the most, are resting all the time.

As soon as the prairie sod is thawed and deeply enough the farmer starts breaking. In doing this he first breaks a fire guard about 16 feet wide around a small field of 10 or 15 acres, burns the grass off as cleanly as possible and then proceeds with the breaking. Every few days he double discs the breaking to prevent its drying out too much. By working steadily he soon has 30 acres broken and double seeded; this he then planks, discs and harrows down fine and sows to oats, using 2½ bushels of good, clean seed per acre. He then breaks and works down 10 acres more which he sows to barley at the rate of 1½ bushels per acre.

This field work keeps him busy until about the first of June, but during the spring, when it was



Getting the Fall Plowing done early