

and the "blockade," though never very serious, was one of the greatest arguments against the C. P. R. monopoly. There will be no block this year.

What is usually called "bonanza farming," the raising of wheat on monster farms, has not been much tried in our own North-west, and the results when tried were scarcely encouraging.

On the much advertised Bell farm at Indian Head, the rebellion was the lucky accident which saved the concern from immediate financial atrophy, and this year after the shareholders had given up in despair, the Major has got on his own account an excellent crop, on the strength of which he has gone to England to raise the wind and form a new company. There any tony fellow with a good address can raise cash to put into a showy scheme here, whether prairie cattle companies or some newer venture with a change of title. There have been a few attempts, such as the Quinte farm near Deloraine, made at joint stock grain raising, but the long haul, sixty miles, to Brandon, in its early years made sad inroads on the returns from an otherwise well-conducted scheme.

Upon the whole the half-section farmer, either with the aid of his own growing family or one or two good hired hands, with himself always leading, has been the making of Manitoba. Where such men brought experience, steady habits, patience and a little money, going slow at the outset, most of them have done well and will yet do better. Those who started with a few jars of Hudson Bay whisky in the bottom of their waggons, bought freely of high priced implements and a buggy, are to-day better known in the records of the loan companies than for any more satisfactory achievement. Free loaning in boom times has sent many a man to Dakota who to-day would have been a well-doing citizen here had there been nothing available but what he could scrape out of his farm.

The Province is getting over that period of debauch and extravagance, but it has had a very bitter and expensive experience. Of course political men blame the measures of their rivals, but general big-headedness, combined with one or two unfortunate seasons, was the main cause of the stagnation from which the prairie province has scarce yet recovered. The fact that more land has this year been sold, and to the best sort of purchasers, small men want to increase their present holdings, is the best test of the reliability of Manitoba as a poor man's country.

A limited quantity of oats, and of barley for both feeding and making purposes, has been sold, going both east and south. Barley for making purposes may prove a good thing in the near future, but wheat is the crop, and some people will ask what profits there are in raising it. The answer must be a very general one. There are well attested cases of wheat having been raised at even less than 20 cents. Anything from that up to a dollar, according to who does the figuring and who does the farming. There are hardly any farms on which grain only is raised, everyone wants to try a few cattle, or a pair of breeding mares, so as to avoid the risk of having all the eggs in one basket. In easily worked prairie sections, wheat raising must be the principal idea; no use preaching there about mixed farming. But many farms of this sort have hay bush, or unsold railroad lands convenient, and can with advantage follow for a time mixed farming.

A sample of a clear prairie farm favorably situated for a preponderance of grain farming may be here referred to in detail. After ten years experience, in every part of the North-west, the Portage Plains came out with the best average returns, and perhaps also the best staying power. This staying power is an important point in country where as yet the main idea in farming has

been to take all that was possible out of the soil, as quickly as possible, and in the easiest way. The value of these plains is attested by the fact that unbroken land has been selling at or near \$20 an acre, about double the price of the same land elsewhere. The frosts that have dipped down on almost every other place at one time or another, have been here nearly harmless; there is a good market close at hand; good neighbors, no end of plant food without undue luxuriance, and easy cultivation. There are lands there bought last year, which this season's crop has more than paid for. They stretch, roughly speaking, 30 miles east and west, and ten miles broad, a great wheat garden, some of which has been under crop for thirty years or more. Twenty years ago Rat Creek, ten miles west of Portage, was the Indian boundary, and all the settlement was in the bush along the Assiniboine River.

In 1875, a farmer now living a few miles west of Portage, coming in from California, got settled as the result of a business "deal" on his present holding, and good judges decided that neither he nor his farming would ever amount to much. He had been partner in a hotel business before going out there with his ox-team. There was a large swamp now pretty much dried out on one corner of his half section, the rest good dry land with scarcely a stone on it. One patch had borne two crops before he started, and with an occasional summer fallow, is being steadily and profitably cropped yet, almost always in wheat. In spite of booms and all other temptations, he stayed with his land, marrying the daughter of a Highland settler. All the early settlers were either Highlanders or half-breeds. His outfit to-day is about 10 head of horse-flesh, two good breeding mares in foal, two horses, two big colts, and a team of clever driving ponies, for he has a good eye for horse-flesh; about a dozen full grown cattle, and as many youngsters. He milks only two cows, the others suckle their calves, and all are well graded or pure bred Shorthorns, his last four-years' bull being one of the best farmer's bulls in the Province. About a score of good pigs and some poultry make up his live stock. He cut with his relays of horses 5800 bushels of wheat this fall, and all the oats he requires, doing 15 or more acres per day all through, and handling the binder always himself. He had two hired men stooking, one of whom, a capable little English farm hand, is engaged all winter at \$15 a month, having made \$28 the four previous months. There are not many Englishmen of the same pattern, let it be said here. The majority of those that find their way to Manitoba are rather a poor sort, and dear at any money.

All his grain was threshed and cleaned up early in the season, all his stubble plowed except what is meant for fallow and oat crop, which does better with spring plowing, closely followed by the seeder. A thousand bushels of this wheat were sold early at \$1 15, the rest can wait for a spring market. Fifty acres in one block has borne wheat five years in succession, averaging thirty bushels and a little over for the whole time. A summer fallow this year is all the change it will have. The steady good crops keep weed growth at a minimum, and it is one more advantage of these plains that they go less to weeds than almost any other section of country. It must be conceded by every reader that this man, who has never been advertised in the eastern papers, or given a free ride to Ontario to talk up the country, is pretty well fixed, with a good farm, good buildings, good stock and implements, and hard pushed for only a month or two in spring and fall, he may fairly be set down as a pretty successful wheat grower and half section farmer.

The fact that this man can rub along with only one hired man for most of the year is noteworthy. A two furrow plough with four horses abreast turns over a lot of land in a fortnight, and harrowing, seeding, haying, reaping are done in the same speedy way with the best appliances, while the high price of hired labor is balanced by the cheap food of the horses, which do the most of the work.

It must not be hastily assumed that there are very many farmers whose good fortune has been on a par with the example just cited. There are hail storms, and examples might be mentioned of three such storms within eight years on one farm, both here and on the other side of the line. Prairie fires in more sparsely settled districts make great havoc, as was the case at Virden this year, when one Sunday a strong wind carried the fire over a wide strip of country, for many miles burning stacks, granaries and other property. Frosts, too, which, by the way, all old settlers agree are a new thing in their experience, have struck again and again. The whole country embraced by the Red River and its tributary streams has been scourged by the early summer frost of August. It is not all profit, this wheat growing, though at a dollar a bushel, and some men here have made more since harvest. Wheat growing on virgin soil at a low price is fairly coining money. With all drawbacks, it will still be freely gone into by the men who know about those drawbacks, and the wheat area of next year will be the largest yet known. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and the hardy yeomen of the north-west are quite as sanguine as other people.

FOR THE CANADIAN LIVE-STOCK AND FARM JOURNAL.

Stock-keeping in Ontario.

The intensified competition in all branches of commerce which now exists, produced partly by the modern facilities for transit, calls for increased energy and economy of resources in manufacturers and producers. While the change has vastly benefitted the farming interests of this and all newly settled countries, we have, through it, to compete with the productions of cheaper land and, in some regions, more favorable climate. If on this account we perceive the need of more intelligence, thrift, and enterprise on the part of the farmers of Ontario, it is even more important to recognize it as arising from the very general deterioration of the soil which is going on by the usual system (or the want of system) of cropping which prevails. Probably not one farmer in twenty realizes the fact that all the plant food which his crops gather from the soil must be returned to it in some shape, or his farm is running down. Happily there is some awakening in the minds of many on this matter, expressing itself by the remark, "I must keep more stock, and have more land in grass." When this course is resolved on, and it is a step in the right direction, the importance of producing stock of the best quality, and at the least cost, at once suggests itself. We do not yet know to what extent the products of the Great West of this continent and the vast prairies of South America may lower the price of beef and mutton, and for this and the other reasons our operations in stock should be carefully and skillfully conducted.

Having in past years had successful experience on a limited scale in breeding and feeding cattle, and being impressed with the foregoing considerations, I would gladly further, if possible, the operations of others in the same line. Although the locality where I reside is favorably known for its superior stock, I can safely assert that but a small proportion of the farmers in the neighborhood breed and feed cattle in