

THE  
LETTERS OF RUSTICUS.

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INVESTIGATIONS IN MANITOBA AND THE  
NORTH-WEST,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF INTENDING EMIGRANTS.

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A SERIES OF LETTERS FROM THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF THE  
"MONTREAL WITNESS."

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JOHN DOUGALL & SON, 33 TO 37 ST. BONAVENTURE STREET.  
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## INTRODUCTION.

Two or three years ago the Montreal Witness devoted much attention to the question of finding work for the unemployed in agricultural pursuits, and opened its columns to descriptions of the attractions of different parts of the country. It was soon found that the hope and interest of the people centered largely in the prairies of the North-West, and numerous were the letters of enquiry with regard to that land of promise. In the published accounts within reach there was much evidence of one-sidedness and some contradiction. Another defect which was too apparent in almost all North-Western literature was the fact that the writers were not practical agriculturists themselves, and it might be as wise to send a doctor to examine and test a steam engine as send a man who never did a day's work on a farm to write of the agricultural capabilities of a new country. Still another defect in the writings referred to, was the lack of sympathy, or fellow feeling, between the writers and the class of readers who, above all others, needed correct information. Perhaps a doctor after having carefully examined a steam engine, might be able to make a report on its condition, which would be understood by other doctors as well, if not better, than if the report had been made by an engineer; but it certainly would not be so well understood by engineers as if made by one of their number—so a book-learned gentleman might write correctly and intelligently about farms and farming, but he could make himself much better understood by farmers if he had previously worked for many years on a farm. Again, although a person travelling rapidly for several weeks over a large country will have opportunities for seeing a good deal, yet a great deal more will remain unseen by him, and for a knowledge of what he does not see he must trust to the statements of others who have seen it; but if his informants are all of one class, their statements will be more or less biased to suit the views and interests of that particular class. Hitherto nearly all the writers about the North-West have either been speculators themselves, or were the guests and friends of speculators, consequently their writings have been chiefly derived from, and made in the interests of, that class, but in variance with the interests of the great majority of the people who propose to make that country their future home,

who, from the nature of things, cannot be all speculators.

Having been born and brought up on a backwoods farm, and having afterwards cleared one for myself, the proprietors of the Witness thought I would be a suitable person to send to the North-West to glean information among the settlers there, which might be of use to many of the readers of that paper, as some of them or their friends might be thinking of removing to that land of promise. It was their desire that I should avoid as much as possible the beaten paths in which others had sought for information, and strike out afresh for myself, and to this end I was given *carte blanche* both as to time and means to be used.

I did not at first anticipate that my letters would ever appear in pamphlet form, or my first communications might not have been written so much on the "minor key," as some readers have expressed it, although in all cases I wrote as I then felt; but having just previous to my departure for the North-West, been reading a glowing description of that country, written by Thomas Spence, and finding the true state of the country so unlike the description given, I felt a good deal of disappointment and much inclined to find fault with everything that was not up to my anticipations. Most of the new settlers whom I met in that country seem to have experienced the same feeling of disappointment on their arrival, although they were afterwards well satisfied with their new home, and many of them blamed Mr. Spence's highly colored pictures as the chief cause of their feelings of disappointment. I further believe that Mr. Spence's work, although containing a great deal that is true, has driven hundreds, if not thousands, of intending settlers out of that country after they were at the trouble and expense of going there; for people will sometimes injure themselves in order to be revenged, as they think, on their deceivers. A few words more to the intending settler, and I am done for the present (although I hope to continue my letters to the Witness on this subject after the press of Parliamentary news is over). The best time for coming to the country is early in the spring before the frost is out of the ground, or in the latter part of the summer after the rainy season is over. The month of August I consider

## INTRODUCTION.

the best time, although a person coming early in the spring may secure his lot in a more convenient place, and also raise a considerable crop the first summer, which he could not do if he came later; but I know of a good many people who came to Manitoba at the beginning of April, yet had not done as much work on their farms by the first of October, as they might have done in one month's steady work. Travelling in August here is very inexpensive, and almost as pleasant as a pic-nic, if you have a tent and team of your own. This is also the best time for judging the quality of the soil, as there is no test so safe and sure as "the crop test," or the judging of the land by what it produces. The moles, gophers, and badgers are also useful animals to show the nature of the soil without your having the trouble to dig into it yourself. The moles burrow near the surface, and make deposits of the earth in little piles on the grass, a little distance from their hole. If this deposit is rich black clay, or loamy soil, without any gray or white clay, or gravel mixed with it, the soil is good (that is if there is little or no alkali in it), but if the moles bring up a good deal of light colored clay, or gravel, leave the land to them, and pass on to where the soil is deeper. Except where the soil is exceedingly deep, the gophers and ground squirrels bring up more or less of the lighter colored subsoil, or gravel, but you can judge of the quality of the soil by the quantity and quality of each kind on exhibition. The badgers are powerful animals and expeditious diggers, and are useful in bringing to light the subsoil, so that you may judge for yourself, whether it is white soapy clay, gray clay, gravel or sand.

After a little practice a person can judge pretty well the quality of the soil, even when the grass is burnt off, and there are no earth-mounds

thrown up by the little animals referred to. The surface of the best prairie lands in the North-West is like a turtle's back, irregular like low wide potato-hills. This is caused by the action of the frost on very rich land, but I have not space here to explain it fully. If the surface is very smooth and the grass or weeds fine and not close together, no matter how rich the soil may look, avoid it, as there is too much alkali present. I have also remarked that there is scarcely any alkali in land where timber or bushes grow, although small alkali spots are often met with almost surrounded by timber.

I would advise all new comers to receive with caution a great deal of the advice which they will be sure to receive, perhaps while on the way, but certainly after their arrival in the North-West. Some of the persons giving the advice may seem to be quite disinterested, but even if they may have no axe to grind for themselves, there is great likelihood that some of their friends own a dull axe. I am sorry to say that this applies to some of the Government officials, although I believe that their masters at Ottawa are sincerely desirous of promoting the best interests of the country.

Hoping that the readers of this pamphlet may derive a considerable amount of instruction or amusement from its perusal.

I remain their sincere friend,

DAVID CURRIE.

Montreal, March 10th, 1880.

P. S.—I have just read in the papers that the Government at Ottawa propose to allow settlers in the North-West to import cattle for their own use free of duty, for which considerate act they have my most hearty thanks.

D. C.

## THE LETTERS OF RUSTICUS.

### ON THE WAY TO THE NORTH-WEST.

THE TRIP THROUGH CANADA—THE SMOKERS' PARADISE—A RAILWAY CONDUCTOR WHO UNDERSTANDS HIS BUSINESS—TRAVELLERS' NOTES IN THE UNITED STATES—TO BE REMEMBERED.

St. Paul, March 28.

SIR,—Having for some time been affected, more or less, with the "Manitoba fever," which has been increasing in virulence throughout the greater part of the older provinces of Canada, and is now spreading to the United States, I accepted with pleasure a favorable opportunity of visiting the Great North-West. On the evening of Tuesday, 25th inst., I purchased for \$29 a second-class ticket from Montreal to St. Vincent, near Emerson, Manitoba, and left the Bonaventure Depot at ten o'clock p.m. The journey over the Grand Trunk Railway to Detroit was made in twenty-five hours, including a detention of two and a half hours on the track near Scarborough, owing to the engine of a freight train having become disabled. Unfortunately for myself, I have a great aversion to the smell of tobacco, and in the close, crowded second-class cars of the Grand Trunk Railway an

#### ANTI TOBACCO-STOMACH

has but a poor chance, and mine being of this sort very soon began to cause me considerable uneasiness. I endeavored for some time to induce the smokers in the second-class car to abstain from their incense offerings, or else go to the smoking-car while at their devotions, as my health was not good and the smoking made me sick. Some of them were considerate enough to cease smoking, but others would not; so I complained to the conductor, but he good-naturedly told me that he could not help it, but if I paid \$1.35 additional he would allow me to occupy the first-class car. When we reached Sarnia, the cars with all their occupants were shunted on board a boat and ferried over to Port Huron, and during the passage custom-house officials examined our satchels and valises, which was more a matter of form to the Manitoba travellers than anything else. At Port Huron our baggage had to undergo a similar examination; every box, trunk or bundle had to be opened, but a very strict search was not made.

We reached Detroit Junction at a little after 11 p.m., and there transferred ourselves to the cars of the Michigan Central Railway. I soon made the discovery that there were no second-class cars attached, and we had very superior travelling accommodations the only objection being to the crowded state of the car, and the impossibility of letting in fresh air except by the door. A very

#### OBLIGING AMERICAN BRAKESMAN

kept going around, and if he saw any one standing (although of humble appearance) he would say to him, "You come right along with me

and I'll get you a seat." He would then march along until he found a seat with only one human occupant. Then, no matter how many valises or overcoats there might be on it, he would call out, "Here's a seat, sir," and if the former occupant made any objections to company, he would answer, "Let this gentleman sit down," and would not take "no" for an answer. I could not but admire the good sense displayed by this brakeman in discriminating between a man who is a gentleman and one who is not. He never asked what kind of a ticket a man had, but if he was well-behaved he got a first-class seat; if, on the contrary, he showed signs of intoxication, he had to march to the smoking-car. A steady-looking individual, with two or three sheets in the wind, gave symptoms of "coasting up his accounts," when the watchful brakeman said to him, without enquiring what kind of ticket he held, "If you take so much aboard that you can't stand the pressure, you had better get into the second-class car," and as he did not obey readily, the brakeman took him by the coat collar and marched him to the smoking-car.

It was about 9.30 a.m. when we reached Chicago, where not a vestige of snow was to be seen. We were then transferred to city omnibuses and driven about a mile and a half to the depot of the Chicago, St. Paul & Minneapolis Railway, and at 10.10 started North-westward, leaving our baggage in Chicago to follow by the next train, as there was not time to transfer it across the city, and these trains seem to be very punctual on time. While we were in and around Chicago, the weather was quite foggy, but it soon afterwards cleared up, and the sun shone out beautifully over

#### THE PRETTIEST FARMING COUNTRY

that I have ever seen. The beautiful prairies, at first level but afterwards rolling, seemed to be a delightful place for a farmer. The dwelling-houses were mostly fine, but the barns and other buildings small and often not very good. The farm-yard was generally disfigured with one or more unsightly stacks of straw or hay, which seem to be an eye-sore in these Western States, and are not infrequent in Canada. These stacks look more natural than artistic in shape, and are of various sizes and physical features, a very common form being that of an enormous "grave-mound" at the sides of which

#### A PACK OF HUNGRY HYENAS

had been endeavoring to bring about the premature resurrection of the dead (the cattle having made similar excavations in the sides of the stack). The prairie got quite rolling as we drew towards the southern boundary of Wisconsin. It was generally very fertile, but I was told that

in many places the water is very bad for drinking purposes. We reached Madison, the capital of the State of Wisconsin, at four p.m. This is the most beautifully located city that I have seen, being built on a hill almost completely surrounded by three or four pretty large lakes, one of them at least ten miles long and four miles wide. Shortly after passing Madison we came into a rough, mountainous country strongly resembling the Gaiineau region. In some places we passed through immense rock and sand cuttings and between high towering rocky hills clothed with brushwood and scrubby white pines. The curves are numerous and pretty sharp; the train often seeming as if it were running up against stupendous rocks. At one place called "Devil's Lake" the railway is dug out of the side of a nearly perpendicular mountain of bare rocks some two hundred feet high, on the other side of which is the lake about a quarter of a mile wide, and over five hundred feet deep. It is called by the Indians the

#### "LAKE OF THE BAD SPIRIT."

from a tradition that all persons who fell into its waters were at once dragged under water by the evil one, and could not be rescued. The real cause of the almost certain death by drowning of all who fall into the lake, is the nearly perpendicular banks give no chance for any but swimmers to get out again. The Indians thought the lake was bottomless, but the white man found bottom at less than one hundred fathoms. The rocks on the sides of the mountains which enclose this beautiful little lake with the ugly name, resemble somewhat the perpendicular columns of the "Giant's Causeway," but are not so regular. There is a large hotel on its banks, which is a summer resort for persons from Chicago and other Western cities.

A little while after passing the lake we came to a town of some importance called Baraboo, which is romantically situated on a little river of that name, which empties into the Wisconsin River not far from the town. The railway follows the bed of this river about twenty-five miles, between pretty high mountains, during which the railway, river and public highway seem to be

#### PLAYING HIDE-AND-SEEK

with each other, crossing and re-crossing back and forth I don't know how often. A good deal of the land hereabout is of poor quality, a considerable portion of it having been bought about twenty years ago by people dwelling in the Eastern States, who purchased it from agents without having previously seen it. There is considerable white pine timber in this part, although much of the better kinds has been already removed. The land between this and St. Paul is not nearly as good as in Southern Wisconsin, a great deal of it being very poor, and sandy hillocks covered with brushwood.

We got to St. Paul at six o'clock this morning and got our first view of the "Father of Waters," the Mississippi. At this point it resembles very much the Back River near St. Vincent de Paul, at ordinary summer level. The trains running to Breckenridge, on the Red River, made some changes in their running time this week; consequently, we were detained here until five o'clock this afternoon, when we will (D. V.) pursue our journey to the North-West. Now for

#### A WORD OF ADVICE

to those who may think of coming this way, although my experience is not very extended as yet.

First, it is better to come in companies of thirty or more, as in such cases the Grand Trunk Railway will furnish good, though old, first-class cars, but a person coming alone, or with only one or two others will have to travel in the second-class cars, which are made hardly habitable for common cleanly people, by the amount of tobacco smoking, chewing and spitting which is done in them. The Montreal Anti-Tobacco Society would secure the lasting gratitude of many good people in Canada, if it could prevail on the G. F. R. authorities to stop the smoking, as they have already nearly stopped the drinking on their passenger cars.

A person ought also to carry with him an ample supply of provisions, as he is charged at the refreshment rooms fifty cents for about ten cents worth of food, swallowed down in a hurry, while every moment he is dreading to hear the well-known call "All aboard!" In my own case, I got a good loaf of home-made bread, worth say 15c; a small tin can filled with preserves, worth about 15c; a small jar containing nearly a pound of honey in the comb, worth 20c, and a small parcel each of tea and sugar, and a bottle of pain killer,—but I have had no need for the latter yet. I also got a tin flask for holding milk to drink by the way, as the water is sometimes no better than it ought to be. I had this milk-flask refilled with fresh milk at every opportunity. I also make it a point to get one warm meal each day; yet my whole expenses for eatables from Montreal to St. Paul is less than two dollars, and should no further delays be necessary, two dollars more will do until we reach Winnipeg. They have the habit of charging 50 cents per meal and 10 cents for a cup of tea at the railway stations on both sides of the line, and the delay is generally so short that you have not time to look elsewhere. At Toronto and Chicago there is plenty of time to get a meal elsewhere for 25 cents, although in the latter city I had to pay 50 cents for my dinner, notwithstanding I had been promised to have it for 25 cents. The way it came to pass was this: A hotel-runner, as soon as the bus stopped at the railway station of the C. & St. Paul Railway, invited us to come to his hotel for dinner, and as we objected paying 50 cents, he promised to give it for 25 cents. Several of us went, although the time was very short before the train would start, and after a hurried meal, we tried to settle for 25 cents each, but it would not work. The runner who made the bargain was not to be found, and the landlord said he had never authorized him to make such bargains; and we had each to fork over 50 cents in order to catch the train.

There are a good many places where the cars wait fifteen or twenty minutes for refreshments, where

#### CLEVER TRICKS OF SHAVING

can be done. At Jackson, in Michigan, one of our party who felt hungry called for a cup of tea and a sandwich, and gave a Canadian bank bill to settle the account, but got back only 65c change in those sickly-looking coins called dimes and nickels. He wanted more, but could not get it, the purveyor asserting that Canadian bills were only worth 85c on the dollar, and the cup of tea and sandwich cost 20c. The

Canuck had to leave at once, and I overheard him counting how much that sandwich and tea had cost, which he made out to be 48c, as the 65c change in American money which he received was only worth 52c in Canada. A good place to get a first-class meal of good, plain victuals is at Baraboo, Wisconsin, where the train which leaves Chicago at ten a.m. will arrive at six p.m., and wait for twenty minutes. An hour before Baraboo is reached a person goes round among the passengers to find out how many want to have supper, ostensibly so as to telegraph the information ahead, in order that preparations may be made, but I think the real cause is to prevent the passengers by previous arrangement from getting their supper for 25c. at the opposition houses. One of these opposition houses is a hotel, which I did not visit, but I went to the other, which is a private house, where an old Yankee lady had prepared a substantial meal for 25c, and gave a cup of tea or coffee, with plenty of sugar and milk, for five cents.

I might also add another word or two of advice to induce intending emigrants to Manitoba to have all their arrangements completed and affairs settled several days before starting, so that their sleep may be disturbed as little as possible. The separation from friends will cause enough of sleeplessness without the mind and body being racked with preparations for a day or two before starting. I had several pretty sleepless nights myself before starting, and the sleep got during the two first nights spent on the train could scarcely be called sleep, but only short dozing. Last night, as we had plenty of room and first-class car cushions for a bed, I slept soundly, and feel very much better to-day.

#### ST. PAUL TO EMERSON.

A DISINTERESTED LOOKING IRISHMAN—A SOFT-HEADED RAILWAY—THE ARRIVAL IN MANITOBA—A WORD TO INTENDING EMIGRANTS.

EMERSON, MARCH 31.

We were detained at St. Paul on Friday from six a.m. to five p.m., and, as usual, were swindled by "mine host" of the "St. Paul House." His runner at the station assured us that we would only be charged twenty-five cents per meal, and be driven to and from the hotel free. While we were hesitating about accepting the good offer, a disinterested-looking old Irishman passed by, and told us that we need not hesitate about the charges, as he knew the house well, and the charges were only 25c per meal. Although we had been caught in a similar way in Chicago, about twenty of us accepted the offer, because we could do no better, and were driven to the hotel, where we got a good wash—the first really-good wash since starting. We had breakfast and dinner here, and on settling our account had to pay 70c each—that is the more fortunate ones. One of our party was a young man, who with his two sisters was going to Manitoba. He gave a \$4 bill to pay the account (\$2.10), but

#### GOT NO CHANGE BACK.

The bustling bar-keeper said that he gave the change to another of the party and would not pay again. Although several of the party were present and pointed out that the change given to the other party was only the change which

was due him, we could not get the money back. When we got to the station we had an opportunity of seeing part of our baggage which had been left behind at Chicago. It seemed to have been wrecked on the road, as a good many boxes and trunks were broken open. It requires a very strong lock to bear the abuse which Western baggagemen give to the goods in their charge.

#### ST. PAUL

is a pretty city built on the lower bank of the Mississippi (the higher bank being over 100 feet above the water in the river). A little above here at Minneapolis is the Falls of St. Anthony, where the Mississippi descends about eighty feet in less than a mile. There is some very good land in this vicinity, but the greater part is poor, there being a great many lakes and ponds near the railway north-west from here. While passing through this part of Minnesota (St. Paul to Breckenridge), I had a good deal of conversation with the way-station travellers. Some of these were formerly from the Ottawa region, and told me that a great many Canadians are living in these parts, but many of them intend to sell out in a few years and remove to

#### THE UPPER SASKATCHEWAN

when there is suitable means of going to that country. I may say here, that I found several native Americans, who say they will remove to the Upper Saskatchewan whenever the C. F. Railway is opened to there.

We reached Breckenridge on the Red River at five a.m. Saturday, and had our first view of the "prairie sea." I will leave the description of this "marvellous expanse" for another time. We got to the Glyndon crossing at about nine (Montreal time), or 7.30 local time. I here got an abundant supply of new warm milk—all the milk I had got heretofore was more or less old. The price was five cents per small pint, and a great many of the passengers bought it. We reached Crooktown, on the Red Lake River, at noon, and waited a short time, and left some of our passenger cars. We now entered on the part of the road which was laid last fall, and not yet ballasted, and soon found out the cause for the recent change in the running time, which had delayed us eleven hours at St. Paul. Had we come the previous week we would have reached Breckenridge on Friday, and during the following night would reach St. Vincent; but the condition of the track made it exceedingly dangerous to go at night and it was far from safe to travel on in the day-time. The prairie is in many places

#### UNDER WATER.

the frost is coming out of the ground, and the track is far from steady. We went very slowly, and often the cars would cant over a little as if passing a sharp curve, although the line is straight as an arrow. Often we would feel that the brakes were being applied and the cars would stop, although the engine had given no warning whistle. Mr. Laphorn, of Montreal, who had inducted himself into the good graces of one of the brakemen, was informed by that official that they put on the brakes at all soft places when one side of the track began to sink, but to prevent any fright among the passengers, the whistle was not blown. We reached St. Vincent at

five p.m., and started to the station to make arrangements to get our baggage checked for Winnipeg; but how great was our disappointment to find the station locked up, and not a soul around to give any information! The station was nearly all surrounded by water, the track being only a few inches above the surface. At first we could discover no sign of human habitation, but at last discovered two houses about half a mile distant, but did not feel like wading out to them. We were not kept long waiting, however, before the station agent arrived in a waggon and consoled us with the information that it was uncertain when we could get on to Winnipeg, but we might rest for the present as no train would leave until near noon on Sunday. Had it been another day I would have staid over night along with my companion, as the conductor of the train we came in told us we might occupy the cars over night. But at sundown I started on the track to Emerson, two and a half miles distant, and as the Emerson station is a half mile from the hotel we were to stop in, I got acquainted with

#### MANITOBA MUD,

which seems to be very friendly with your boots, as it rises up and comes along without any coaxing. I have travelled on more sticky roads near Ottawa, where the mud would like to keep your boots and let you go ahead yourself; but if you are determined to go, the greater part of the mud would prefer waiting where it was. Here, on the contrary, you trudge along until the load of mud gets too heavy; then you scrape it off with a stick and go ahead, the only difficulty being the weight of mud, and not its adhesion to the rest of the road. At

#### EMERSON

we found four hotels overcrowded, and were told that the best that could be done for us was a "shake down" on the floor. After a good supper we wanted to go to bed, having had little sleep since leaving Montreal. Contrary to expectation, I was furnished with a regular bed, the excuse being that one of their regular lodgers had gone away for the night; but there might have been other reasons, as our landlord had made the discovery that I had something to do with the Witness. Many of the transient inhabitants of Emerson slept that and the following night on the floor, without any extra bed-clothes, and not a few camped out in stables or wherever they could get a little hay to sleep on. On Sunday morning the Ottawa party arrived, and I met some of the members of the Robinson party from Montreal. These had left Montreal on Monday morning, thirty-six hours before, and reached St. Vincent fifteen hours after me. They complained badly of their treatment and delays along the road, for although they had been detained several hours at various stations, yet they could never learn how long they were going to stop, so they had to stick to the train, and could not go and look for refreshments. The conductors, when asked for information about the length of time they were likely to remain, either could not or would not give any information further than that the train might start at any moment. This treatment of the passengers was bad enough, but the

#### CRUELTY TO THE HORSES

was many times worse, as they were kept in the cars (contrary to law, I believe) from Port Huron

to St. Vincent, near 1,200 miles, without ever getting off for feed or water. Their owners tried to feed and water them as best they could, and had often to travel a considerable distance along with the horses, at no little risk from crushing, to accomplish this result. Two or three of the horses gave out by the way and were left to recuperate, a man being always left to take care of them. When the cars reached St. Vincent on Sunday morning the owners of horses were anxious to get them off the cars, as they had been close prisoners since Wednesday at noon; but through some red-tapeism some of the bonding papers had not been forwarded, and although it was no fault of the horse-owners, the poor horses were kept in the crowded cars until after four o'clock Sunday afternoon. Some of these horses I did not see, as they were sent on to Winnipeg, but about six o'clock twenty-five of them reached Emerson and were at once taken across the ice on the Red River as they were destined for Pembina Mountains. This mode of crossing the river is not altogether unknown in the Ottawa region. The river is about 250 feet wide and has been rising pretty rapidly of late, so that the centre ice is above water for over 100 feet wide, while on each side there is a space of 50 or 60 feet under water, which, near the shore, is 3 feet deep, but slants upward towards the centre ice. The poor horses, some of which showed signs of recent hard work in the shanties, looked rather dejected after their long ride, and were averse to going into the water, but one of the men would mount the tallest horse and lead one or two others into the water, while the rest were driven after. When they got on to the centre ice, some of the horses ran away down the river, on the ice, but were caught and brought back, and again had to go through the water to the west side, having got wet about half-way up their sides. The reason for hurrying them across on Sunday evening was the dangerous condition of the ice, and I have been told to-day that the ice attached to the western shore has since broke up. The poor nags had to stand all night on the opposite shore without the least shelter, although a cold north-west wind was blowing, and I can see them standing there still as I am writing this letter. They are being fed with prairie hay, but no oats can be gotten for them here at present.

#### EMERSON, April 2, 1879.

HOW EMIGRANTS ARE TREATED—CROSSING THE RED RIVER—SOME DISCLOSURES THAT NEED THE ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

SIR,—As most people are aware, the first impressions made on the mind of a traveller on reaching a new country are difficult of removal; consequently, it should be the object of any government who wishes to attract and retain immigrants from other lands to make all possible provision for their comfort on arrival. I will in this letter give a short account of my first three days' experience in the great North-West. The first day at Emerson being Sunday I visited the three city churches, and heard three sermons. The first was in the Episcopal church at 11 a.m., where there were just a dozen hearers. At three p.m. about thirty-five people assembled at the Presbyterian church. There would probably have been more hearers at this church were it not that the church

is situated at some distance from the inhabited portion of the city, and could not be reached without wading through mud and water from two to four inches deep. The little Methodist Church was well filled in the evening, it being the most convenient to the places where immigrants were stopping. In the evening I strolled by myself along the banks of the Red River, and had occasion to remark the doings of a ferryman who was busily

#### "PADDLING HIS LIGHT CANOE"

near the opposite shore. The water in the river having lately risen between three and four feet, had borne up the ice in the centre of the river, leaving the sides, which were attached to the shore, submerged to a distance of from fifty to sixty feet from each side of the river. Both oxen and horse teams were crossing back and forth. On the eastern, or Emerson side, a couple of planks served as a bridge for foot passengers, while on the other side the licensed ferryman for five cents took travellers across the small strip of water between the ice and the river bank. He was kept quite busy, while I was watching, and as the canoe would carry four persons and had to go only a few lengths of herself, the trips were speedily performed, although the craft frequently took in water over the side when the passengers, from fright or other cause, did not keep perfectly still.

On Monday morning, the ice near the opposite shore had risen in broken pieces to the surface, so that the canoe could not be used; but the ferryman had taken his station at

#### THE END OF HIS PLANK

and still collected five cents fare from every passenger, for crossing on the plank, leaving the unfortunate travellers to pick their way, at the risk of their lives, over the floating chunks of ice near the opposite shore. If a woman carried a child in her arms across the plank, she had to pay ten cents, and if a man carried a moderately sized bundle, he too was mulcted in double fare. A man carrying several small bundles in his hands, was about to cross the plank, when he unfortunately dropped a spare coat, not into the water, but on the Emerson shore. He did not miss it until he had paid his toll. He now wished to return a few steps for the coat, but Cerberus who guarded the plank would not permit him to do so until he "forked over" five cents, which operation had to be again repeated when he returned with the lost coat. An immigrant from Ontario informed me that he had to pay in all fifty cents for the privilege of conveying a couple of trunks and a few bags across the Emerson plank.

After dinner I went back to St. Vincent to see about forwarding my baggage, which had been checked to that station. The wind was blowing strongly from the north, and the weather was getting uncomfortably cold. At the St. Vincent station there were a good many members of the Ottawa party, and also the Greenway party from Exeter, Ont., all anxious to get their horses out of the cars. Some of these horses had now been crowded in the Grand Trunk cars for eight days, during which time they had never been allowed to get out. At one station where they were delayed for some time the owners of the horses in one car insisted on taking the suffering animals out for exercise and feed,

but the train left before they could be replaced in the car, and they, consequently, had to wait for another train. The delays at St. Vincent were most aggravating, caused by the

#### NEGLECT

on the part of the Custom House officials at Port Huron in not forwarding the proper papers in time. I saw a number of these horses as they were unloaded from the cars, and felt almost sick to witness the starved-like appearance of most of them. Some of them had also ugly-looking wounds, which they had received in the cars, owing to the peculiar way they have in the West of jerking cars when starting or shunting them at the stations. I did not hear that any horses had died, but several had been left to recuperate at the way stations, and some of those that reached St. Vincent were scarcely able to walk alone.

About half-past five p.m. the train from St. Paul arrived at St. Vincent, and was detained nearly two hours before it could go on to Emerson. The weather was getting uncomfortably cold, owing to the steady north-western breeze which was blowing, and I went into the passenger cars, where my sympathies for the horses gave place to sympathy for a few women and children who were among the passengers. I heard several fervent wishes expressed by worn-out looking mothers, who were striving to pacify crying children, that they had but known what they had to endure, in which case they would not have come on this journey so early in the season. The following night was very windy and cold, yet a number of the people newly arrived in Emerson had to

#### SLEEP IN OUT-HOUSES,

without any bed-clothes whatever, except the clothing they wore. As there was sufficient accommodation in the old Government police stations at Dufferin, on the west side of Red River, and about a mile and a half further down towards Winnipeg, many of the immigrants were exceedingly anxious to get there, and tried to make arrangements with an individual who owned a team on the west side of the river, to take a waggon-load of travellers and their baggage from the shore opposite Emerson down to Dufferin, but Jehu would accept no less than \$2 for his services, and as it would take about a dollar and a half more to get past the plank-tollman, the trip was abandoned. Things began to look blue to the new-comers in Emerson. But as the shore ice had risen the previous day, and the frost the succeeding night had cemented the pieces of ice along the shore pretty well together in some places, some of us thought a temporary bridge might be made with a few planks so that the horses and all might get across. I at once started across on foot to Dufferin to solicit aid from the emigrant agent, Mr. Tetu, to construct a temporary bridge. I found Mr. Tetu and also Mr. Grahame, the Dominion Emigrant Agent at Dufferin, in a snug, warm room. They had evidently just got out of bed. When I proposed that something should be done speedily to assist the immigrants to cross over from Emerson, they seemed to think I was joking, and offered me a drink from a bottle with which they seemed to be on friendly terms. When I at last convinced them that I was in earnest, they called me

#### A GREENHORN AND POOL,

and said that the ferryman (tollman it should be)



was only exacting his just rights, as he was paying a high license to the Government. I suggested that if he had a right to levy toll, he should furnish proper accommodation, and that temporary bridges could be erected for a few dollars. They laughed at me and said that I did not know what I was talking about, as the cost of bridging here was quite different from what it was in the "Ottawa region." I wanted to know if they would not try and do something in the way of borrowing lumber for a temporary bridge, but was informed that they had waded around Emerson all Monday trying to borrow lumber, but could not get any. I left the immigration office, thinking to myself that Sir John Macdonald could apply the pruning-knife with advantage to a few more immigrant agencies. When I got back to Emerson I found that the Greenway party from Exeter had already borrowed twelve planks, about twenty-four feet long and nine inches wide, and had with these constructed bridges at both sides in places where the shore ice had jammed. I waited with them all day, a pretty smart snow-storm blowing from the north-west nearly all the time. The shore leading down to our temporary bridge was rather steep, and the horses had to be taken out of the waggon and led over the bridge singly, after which the baggage was carried over to the solid ice in the centre of the river, and lastly the empty waggon was taken down the steep bank, and although we had pieces of scantling stuck through between the spokes of the wheels to prevent them from revolving, yet, owing to the snow, it was difficult to prevent the waggon from going too fast, and on several occasions one of the wheels would miss the bridge and break through the ice. After the waggon was drawn over the first bridge it was reloaded and driven down the river to bridge No. 2, connecting the centre ice with the opposite shore, where the process of unhitching and unloading had to be gone through again.

A man named Daley had the imprudence to drive his waggon too near the shore, where the ice was cracked, and while taking his team ashore, one side of the waggon broke through the ice, and before we could get it unloaded the whole waggon except the box went down to the bottom, some fifteen feet. But as we had a rope tied to the end of the waggon pole, we did not let it get entirely away from us. We then brought the planks from our bridge, and placed them around the hole in the ice, and after we got the waggon box clear soon drew up the waggon. But the work was not pleasant, as a cold snow-storm was blowing from the north, and our mitts and gloves were thoroughly wetted. As the planks in our bridge were only borrowed for the forenoon, I went to Messrs. T. Carney & Son, lumber dealers, who owned the lumber, and desired them to allow us to keep the bridge lumber all day, and as it was not likely we could get all over to-day we would like to keep it the next day too. To this proposition Mr. Carney kindly consented, on my becoming personally responsible for the safe return of the lumber; consequently, I am detained a little longer at Emerson than I had intended.

"CERBERUS" OUTWITTED—AN EIGHT MILES TRAMP—HOW THE COLD FEELS IN MANITOBA—CROAKERS AND PUFFERS—A GENERAL OPINION OF THE PROVINCE.

WINNIPEG, April 5th.

SIR,—During the first three days of April I remained at Emerson, being most of the time on the ice assisting immigrants to cross over. During the first day of the "new bridge" the tollman remained at his plank, and finding his trade gone, he frequently threatened vengeance to the opposition; but seeing we were not to be frightened, he drew his plank ashore, and went to more comfortable quarters at the hotel, leaving us

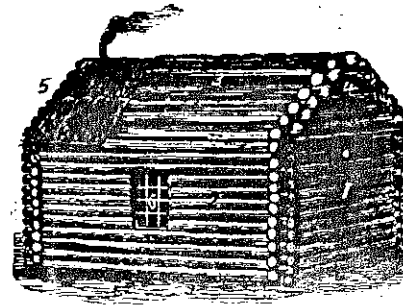
#### MASTERS OF THE SITUATION.

On Thursday forenoon, as very few people were crossing, I strolled up the west side of Red River, through the towns of West Lynn in Manitoba and Pembina in the State of Dakota, then crossed to the east side of the river to St. Vincent in the State of Minnesota, and went northward along the east bank of the river until I reached Emerson again. The distance travelled was between eight and nine miles. The soil was the richest I ever saw; yet, during my journey, I did not find one hundred acres of land that had ever been cultivated, nor as much fencing as could be found on many lots of only 100 acres in Quebec. Part of the land was covered with bushes, chiefly hazel, willow and poplar, with a fair share of elm and oak. There were also a great many berry bushes, which grow from one and a half to three feet high, and were loaded with a small red berry rather smaller than red currants. There were also a good many bushes which bore larger berries, about the size of cranberries, and although they had been on the bushes all winter, they were still soft and good tasted, but I did not care to eat them not knowing if they were wholesome. In some places there were some attempts at cultivation, but the rank weeds seemed to crowd out whatever grain had been sown. Part of this country has been wooded, but almost all the large trees were cut down some years ago to supply the Red River boats with fuel; and at the present time, were all the trees within four miles of Emerson, of four inches and over in diameter, cut into firewood, they would not produce as much wood as could be got from off fifty acres of good hardwood bush in Ontario or Quebec. There were a few houses standing here and there, but chiefly of very small size. One of these houses I took a special fancy to, owing to the

#### SIMPLICITY AND CHEAPNESS

of its construction. I walked around it and observed that it was built in about the same way that we used to make pigeon-traps in Hull. The building was about fourteen feet by twelve, and was made of oak and poplar poles. There might have been other kinds of timber, but from the way it was covered with clay it was difficult to tell. When the perpendicular walls got about eight feet high, the side logs were placed in about a foot and a half on each side and an end log was placed on it, three feet shorter than those below it, when another

pair of side logs were put on, also a foot and a half nearer the centre of the building than the last pair, and thus the construction went on until the building was closed at the top; elm bark was then placed on this slanting roof and all the seams filled up with clay, while a stove-pipe projected through the pitch of the roof. Below is a rough sketch of the frame of this building:



In this drawing 1 are the regular end logs about 12 feet long; 2 are the side logs 14 feet long; 3 are the roof-logs which support the elm bark, they are 14 feet long; 4 are the short end logs which go to construct the gable-end of the house; 5 is a part of the completed roof, two lengths of bark reaching from the eaves to the ridgeboard; 6 is the window; the door being on the other side of the house and having a small porch of rough boards. If the poles could be got convenient to the place where the house was to be built, four men with a pair of oxen could cut the timber, draw it to its place, and erect the building, roofing, plastering and all, in less than a week.

While I was making my observations here, I heard

#### CRIES OF DISTRESS

among the bushes down near the river, and observed a boy about nine years old coming up carrying a pail of water. As the thermometer was about zero, and a keen north wind was blowing, I did not wonder at the poor boy crying with the cold; but I did wonder at the people who say that you do not feel the cold here as you do in Quebec. Although I have been but a few days in Manitoba, I have felt the cold worse in the month of April here, than I remember having ever felt it in the month of March in the Province of Quebec. At the hotel where I stopped, I was obliged to sleep with my clothes on while in bed, and yet was so cold that to keep from shivering I had to place my big overcoat on top of the bed-clothes. I may say that the houses here are chiefly constructed on the balloon fashion, and are not finished with care, so that the cold wind finds a too easy ingress.

Before I left Montreal I heard a good deal about what they call here "croakers." They are people who have paid a short visit to Manitoba and, becoming disgusted, have returned to old Canada, bringing an evil report of the good land. I have not met with any of this class yet; although I have met with several who on coming to Manitoba and seeing the difficulties of travelling at this season of the year, and also the way they were being fleeced on every hand, have abandoned the idea of travel-

ling over one hundred miles to the Little Saskatchewan on Rock Lake, and are going to take up land in the State of Dakota, as it can be got without much travelling. I am convinced that until all the land in the Red River valley, in the States of Dakota and Minnesota, is taken up, a good many Canadian immigrants will be content to remain there instead of proceeding to the Canadian North-West territories.

Although I have not yet met with "croakers," I have met a good many of another class, whom for want of a better name I shall designate as

#### "PUFFERS."

These individuals hang around taverns and drink and swear like troopers, and are ready to assist immigrants when paid exorbitant wages for their services. When one of these puffers overhears an immigrant complaining of the excessive charges, or any other inconvenience arising from the people, country, climate, or water, Mr. Puffer begins to taunt him with cowardice, and tells him he had better go back to Ontario, as he is too much of a green-horn to get along in Manitoba, where he "will likely be lost in the mud or eaten up by mosquitoes." Some of the Government officials are of this class, and do more to disgust intending settlers with the country than almost any other thing that I know of. I have on several occasions begun to complain of Manitoba in the presence of some puffer, just for the fun of hearing him rage and rave at the cowardice of "some people," which of course includes myself. In justice to the country, I must say that, from all I have seen, it is fully equal to my most sanguine expectations, except in the exceedingly small amount which has yet been brought under cultivation, and also the large area which is at present under water (I should say under ice). The water has an unpleasant taste, but seems to be quite healthy, and the soil is such as would make almost any farmer's eyes sparkle.

On Thursday evening all the immigrants around Emerson who wished to cross the river had got over to Dufferin with their live stock and baggage, and not a few had started for the Pembina Mountains, so I returned the planks which we borrowed from Mr. Carney, and that gentleman would accept nothing for their use, except twenty-five cents for one which had got broken. I am sure a good many of the new settlers in Pembina Mountains will remember with pleasure

#### MR. CARNEY'S KINDNESS,

the more so as such conduct is not common in these parts. During the three days in which we had these planks, we assisted about three hundred people to cross the river with their effects, which consisted of about one hundred horses, forty waggons, about eight sleighs, a dozen yoke of oxen, thirty other beef critters, and I don't know how many sheep and poultry of various kinds, including a pig from Ottawa, and various dogs and cats from different places in Ontario. The cars from South going to Winnipeg should reach Emerson Station at 7 p.m., but this evening (Thursday) they did not arrive until after nine, and as there is no telegraph on the line nor any means of telling when the train would arrive, we remained with a good many others walking up and down the track to keep ourselves warm with the thermometer about zero, and no place where we could sit down except on a pile of ties or on somebody's luggage. The

reason we had to remain out in the cold was that the station is nearly half a mile from the hotels, and if we went to the hotels to warm ourselves the train might come along and pass on without our knowing it.

We reached St. Boniface, opposite Winnipeg, at a little after two o'clock on Friday morning, and, after paying a man fifty cents to convey my chest over to Winnipeg, I started on foot to travel the two intervening miles between St. Boniface Station and the centre of Winnipeg, crossing the Red River on the ice, which was quite good, the once open space of water at the sides being covered with about three inches of ice. Mr. Laphorn, who came with me from Montreal, told me that on Monday night he had to pay fifty cents to get his trunk conveyed from the station to the edge of the river, which was open at the sides, while small temporary foot bridges connected the solid ice in the centre with the land on both sides. For the privilege of carrying his trunk across these little bridges, Mr. Laphorn was charged ten cents, and had afterwards to convey it to where he was to put up for the rest of the night. I do hope that all who contemplate coming here, especially those who are bringing their families, or live stock, will defer their journey until the warm weather in May or June.

#### CROSSING THE RED RIVER AT WINNIPEG—THE APPEARANCE, CONSISTENCY AND OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF MANITOBA MUD.

WINNIPEG, April 9.

SIR.—I arrived at the St. Boniface Railway Station, about two miles from Winnipeg, at a little after two a.m. on Friday, 4th instant, and after making arrangements for having my luggage forwarded, I started, along with many others, to walk over to the capital of Manitoba, and crossed the ice on the Red River, which, owing to the late frost, had become strong enough to carry horses. The river at this place is some 300 or 400 feet wide, and the water has been rising of late, bearing up the ice in the centre of the river. Thus, as at Emerson, there was a stream of open water at each shore, from 80 to 100 feet wide, and about four feet deep in the deepest part. A few days before I came here, the corporation of Winnipeg had erected a temporary footpath across these two streams, and had placed a toll-man to collect five cents toll from all passengers. The toll-man, however, had an eye to business, and secured the services of an assistant, whom he placed at one of the corporation bridges and collected another fare himself at the other. Thus, as some of the new comers remarked, they had to pay to get into the show and then

#### PAY TO GET OUT

again. Some of these people told me that they had to pay fifty cents to get one trunk conveyed from the railway station to the eastern bank of the river, and after paying ten cents for the privilege of carrying it across the river, had to pay another fifty cents to have it taken to the hotel where they proposed stopping. When I got here Jack Frost had put his veto on such work, and as sleighs were crossing on the ice, trunks and boxes were taken from the station to the city at a cost of fifty cents each.

I spent the greater part of Friday and Saturday searching for a boarding-house, but could get none to suit, as they were all crowded. The hotels also were pretty well crowded, and the charges not very moderate, considering the accommodation given. The food provided was good enough, but the bed-clothes were rather scarce for a cold night, and you could not get a bed exclusively to yourself, but had to sleep along with some stranger whom perhaps you never saw before, and you were by no means certain of the company he might or might not bring with him. In the hotel at which I stopped for a few days there was a large billiard-room with five billiard tables; and on Saturday evening I counted over seventy persons at one time in it, and bar-rooms, that were separated only by folding doors, which on this occasion were wide open. The charge for

#### BOARD AND LODGING

at the hotels is \$1.50 per day, if you remain for less time than one week; but if you continue more than a week, the charge is but a dollar per day. The boarding-house-keepers charge from five to six dollars per week for board and lodging.

On Saturday afternoon the weather having become mild, I went down to the river to see how the crossing went on, and observed that although the shore ice was sufficiently strong to carry foot passengers, yet it would not sustain horses. A large amount of freight and luggage was being taken over on sleighs, having first been brought to the banks on waggons. Two horses were employed drawing these loaded sleighs from side to side, the horses remaining on the more solid centre ice and by means of long ropes drawing the sleighs across the weaker ice at the sides. Several horses and waggons were also brought over, but before this could be done a road had to be cut through the surface ice near both shores, and the horses driven across, the water coming up to within six or eight inches of their backs. The waggons were also drawn through this watery-way by means of long ropes.

On Monday forenoon this shore ice had nearly all disappeared and about a hundred head of horses and cattle having just arrived from Ontario, the getting of them

#### ACROSS THE RIVER

caused no little anxiety to their owners, more especially as the submerged ice near the shore was beginning to break up and float away in large cakes, leaving openings which would not permit of horses crossing through the water as they did on Saturday. After some negotiations the Ontario farmers made arrangements with the owner of a scow, about fifteen feet long and seven and a half feet wide, to ferry the horses over at fifty cents per head. This scow was laying in the mud on the western or Winnipeg side of the river, and was dragged to the water's edge by a horse belonging to the owner. It was then set afloat, and a number of men and the horse got into it and pushed out to the centre ice, and one end of the scow was drawn up on the ice sufficient to support it, while the horse and men got off, when the nag was hitched to the craft and drew it up on the solid ice and across it to the open water on the other side, where the boat was again launched, and long ropes being attached to each end two or three men got in and pushed across to where the Ontario horses were

waiting to embark. These horses were taken over two at a time in the scow, and left on the centre ice, where they waited until joined by their comrades on shore, when the scow was drawn across to the western side, where the horses had to make another short voyage before reaching terra firma in the city of Winnipeg. This sort of navigation was attended with considerable danger, from passing cakes of ice, as well as from the horses sometimes crowding to one side of the scow, and sinking it so that it frequently took in considerable water. On several occasions I thought it would have gone down with all on board, but fortunately no serious accident took place. On some occasions when there were no horses to bring across, the proprietor of the scow would bring over merchandise and immigrants' effects, including boxes and trunks, for which he charged the handsome sum of twenty-five cents per box.

If any persons felt desirous to hear a variety of

#### IMPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

they would be gratified by waiting on the river bank and listening to the immigrants as they set foot in Winnipeg, after having paid fifty cents per box for the conveyance of their baggage from the station to the eastern bank of the river, and twenty-five cents per box more forgetting it taken across the river, where the carters demanded fifty cents more to take it to the hotel. Some of the Ontario men seemed to think that they could give Winnipeggers a lesson in profane swearing, but they almost invariably found their match, and sometimes a little more.

This work of ferrying over horses, cows, sheep and luggage continued all Monday and until Tuesday evening, when the centre ice began to get bad in some places, and at last the ferryman's horse and also the man who was leading him, broke through the ice. With some difficulty the man was got out, but the poor nag was permitted to take a submarine journey towards Lake Winnipeg, where he may help to fatten the fishes. During this day several men who were assisting in taking goods across the river, broke through the ice near the edge of the open water, but were all got out with no greater injury than a good fright and a thorough ducking.

To day (Wednesday) foot passengers are still crossing the river. A small ferry boat on each side takes them over the open water, and there is a footpath of planks laid across the intervening ice. No heavy freight is being conveyed over, and several immigrants who have yet considerable effects, and also horses, to bring over are anxiously waiting for the ice to leave the river, while others who have got all their effects over are starting out for the Little Saskatchewan.

Most people in Canada have already heard of

#### MANITOBA MUD,

but I think very few have any just conception of its friendly adhesiveness. Where there is considerable water along with the mud there is not much greater difficulty in travelling through it than on many of the roads in the eastern provinces. If the surface water is drained off the mud dries, with a bright sunshine, in a surprisingly short time, and the surface of the road soon assumes the appearance of some of the asphalt sidewalks in Montreal, being a little springy, and very pleasant to walk on. Last night we had a considerable shower of rain, and

this forenoon I walked around the city a good deal to study the peculiarities of this black mud, which you can hardly persuade yourself is not mixed with tar. You don't need to get off the sidewalks to get your boots clogged to almost any desirable weight, as the wagon wheels gather up a cubic foot or two of mud each, and at the plank street-crossings the jolting shakes it off. It is taken up by the feet of travellers and conveyed to the sidewalk, where it is distributed along in curiously-shaped lumps ranging in size from

#### A MARBLE TO A GOOSE EGG.

In a short time the sidewalks in the most travelled localities become nearly covered with these lumps, which are ready to adhere to the first boot that comes along. If you happen to cross the street where there is no sidewalk you will soon have cause to repent your temerity. This morning I crossed the street at a place where yesterday I passed over what seemed to be a beautiful asphalt pavement, but to day, although my boots did not sink more than half an inch, the mud soon rolled up on each side of my boots until the ascending mud walls met together on the top, or instep of the boot, causing them to look more like a pair of mallets than anything else—the weight, also, was not to be despised. When I reached the sidewalk, I succeeded in getting free from the greater portion of the superfluous weight by stamping violently on the hard boards, but a considerable portion would still remain, and required a good deal of scraping with a stick before I could proceed with any facility. Under these circumstances the

#### BOOT-BLACKS

get a good deal to do, but they spend much more time in scraping the boots than in brushing them. It was amusing to see how the mud would gather on the tires of the wheels, sometimes creeping up the spokes until the hub was reached, and the wheel became nearly a solid black mass. I have been informed by several persons that even empty vehicles are brought to a standstill on the street owing to the accumulation of mud on the wheels. Such mud accumulations are always worst on unfrequented portions of the streets and in places that are not very wet. The mud, however, dries up very rapidly, and after two or three hours of bright sun, the road which could scarcely be gone over becomes one of the most desirable that one could wish to walk or drive on. When at Emerson I chanced to get my feet rather muddy, and observing a lot of prairie hay lying near, I stepped on it and began to rub my feet on it, thinking to clean them, but the hay stuck to the boots, which began to look like hedge-hogs, and I was compelled to go to a convenient log, sit down and disentangle them by the aid of my hands.

#### THE NORTH-WEST BLUES—SLIPPERY PLACES—PRICES OF CATTLE AND PRODUCE.

WINNIPEG, April 14.

SIR.—I intended to write about the North-Western blues last week, but put it off in order to see what effect a few days of rest and cessation from worldly cares would have in allaying the gathering symptoms of a disease with which

immigrants from the Eastern provinces are likely to be affected on their arrival here. People who are accustomed to travelling, or who make only short journeys, can scarcely realize the feelings of

#### QUIET COCHIN PEOPLE.

who had perhaps never before been one hundred miles from home, on their starting to seek a new home in the North-West. The bustle and excitement of preparing for removing, and the parting with friends and associations, helps to drive away sleep at a time when they most need it. Then follows four or five sleepless days and nights spent on the cars, which of itself is enough to make a person feel as if he is contracting some kind of fever and ague. You feel chilly and ready to shiver with cold when the thermometer is but a few degrees below freezing point, and, as you have been told that the cold is not felt so much here as it is "down East," when in fact you feel it much more, your faith in the flowery pictures of Manitoba is considerably shaken, and you are ready to conclude that there is about as much truth in the glowing accounts of the great North-West as there are in the assertions of a Montreal street pedler of cheap jewellery or patent worm medicines. While on the journey your courage is kept up with the thought that you will soon reach Winnipeg, when most of your difficulties will be over; but this is a serious mistake, as the difficulties, especially at this season of the year, are but well begun. The trains coming from the South usually arrive at St. Boniface in the middle of the night, and if it should chance to be a murky, damp one, the job of transferring yourself and baggage from the St. Boniface station to Winnipeg is neither pleasant nor profitable. Because of the high charges for conveying your baggage, you do not care to add to it by including yourself in the quantity requiring transportation, so you start to walk to the ferry, and in doing so make your first acquaintance with the far-famed Manitoba mud, in circumstances not the most favorable. At first you will try to

#### PICK YOUR STEPS.

and seek the less wet parts of the road; but finding that the mud is much more adhesive here than where there is plenty of water, you soon cease to shun the water-covered mud (in some places it is almost impossible to shun it) and plunge right along towards the river, and if your boots are water-proof, at least half way up to the knee, you may get through it all without needing to change your socks. When you have settled the exorbitant demands of the individual who assists you to cross the Red River, and in doing so have given vent to a number of very expressive adjectives, which you would not like to see in print, connected with your name, you start for some hotel, and are ready to conclude that since there are plank sidewalks to travel on, locomotion will be much more pleasant than when your footing is on St. Boniface mud. This would, no doubt, be the case were the sidewalks dry, but the slight rain that has fallen is sufficient to wet the mud which the feet of pedestrians have left on the planks, and as you proceed you are ready to imagine that there has been a recent shower of grease on the sidewalk, and if not very careful your feet may, by a quick horizontal movement in the

direction most unexpected, leave you sprawling on your hands and knees, or sitting uncomfortably on the footpath, or, it may be, in the deeper mud beside it. There

#### SLEPPERY SIDEWALKS

are an annoyance to old settlers as well as to new-comers.

The churches were very poorly attended yesterday forenoon, because a slight shower had fallen the previous night, and the sun being obscured by clouds until near noon, did not dry up the roads in time; consequently, many Winnipeggers preferred remaining at home to risking a short journey under such slippery circumstances. I went to church myself, and must confess that I found locomotion more difficult than on the most ice-covered sidewalk that I have ever seen in Montreal. I also witnessed several unpleasant falls, and in one case saw the deeply stamped impression, in the mud near the sidewalk, of the seat of somebody's trousers. Such a fall as the one thus indicated may not be so painful as one on ice; but if the subsequent pain does not continue as long, the mud stains will continue much longer.

When the immigrant has got temporarily located in some overcrowded hotel, his first look out is to secure a team to transport himself and effects to the Little Saskatchewan, or some other place from one hundred to one hundred and seventy miles distant. He tries to buy a yoke of oxen, and is amazed to hear \$175 asked for a pair of oxen which could be bought in Montreal for \$100. He may perhaps have read in some of the provincial papers, or in R. Prettie's circulars, that oxen and other things much needed by new beginners can be procured in Winnipeg nearly as cheap as in the Eastern provinces, but he is not long here when he finds by sad experience that it is all a delusion. If he has brought a team of horses with him he finds that they require extra feed, to make up for what they lost during the journey (several horses died coming on the cars this spring), but there is only the prairie hay to feed them, and oats are 90c per bushel. The idea of starting on a journey of more than a hundred miles, with a loaded team, on roads (excuse the name, since they are in the condition they were left by nature, with the exception of a very considerable amount of mixing in the upper strata by the feet of oxen and horses and the wheels of various kinds of vehicles) covered with tenacious mud of uncertain depth, is not pleasant, and many go no further, but, succumbing to an attack of the blues, turn back to the more conveniently situated lands in Dakota, or perhaps go to their old home in Ontario. I have heard of some cases already this year where the parties had bought horses, waggon, ploughs, stove, and other needed outfit, but before they had gone over a dozen miles on the road to their intended destination the

#### HORSES GAVE OUT FROM FATIGUE

and overloading in such roads, and their owner got a severe attack of the blues and sold out his whole stock at a loss of over one hundred dollars and started for his old home in the far distant east.

The "blues," had enough in themselves, are much aggravated by the constant exactions which are made on the purse of the newly arrived. Although there are many well-disposed people in Winnipeg, yet the immigrant does not

readily meet with them, except he should enquire for some of the city pastors, who, by the way, are overrun at this season of the year by the visits of "anxious enquirers" in other than a spiritual sense. But clerical gentlemen are not always qualified to give the much needed advice about purchasing an outfit for farming, nor can they state with certainty where the most desirable free-grant lands are to be had, and the visitor, whose previous trials have soured his temper, is ready to blame the minister for not being able to give worldly advice with the same alacrity with which he gives "advice spiritual," and perhaps the interview closes with something like a scolding match.

On last Tuesday evening, I met, by appointment, the kirk session of Knox Church in this city, to see if something could not be done in the way of forming a "reception committee," which would meet with newly arrived people at certain hours and advise them as to the best means to take in regard to settling on a homestead of their own. Although my arguments in favor of the formation of such reception committee were ably seconded by the pastor of the congregation, the Rev. Mr. Robertson, yet there were so many seemingly insuperable objections presented that no progress was made. I could scarcely blame the elders of Knox Church for not wishing to undertake so arduous and possibly unpleasant a job, and besides they as well as the pastor knew little or nothing about the places where settlements are being made. In order to fully comprehend the difficulty of giving advice, let us suppose that an emigrant from Scotland should apply to the kirk session of Erskine Church, Montreal, for advice about settling in some back township in the counties of Ottawa or Beauce. Perhaps neither the Rev. Mr. Black nor any of his elders have ever heard of the name of the township about which information is sought, and any advice given in such circumstances is likely to be misleading, and should the intending settler have cause to regret afterwards having taken such advice, you may well believe that Mr. Black's sermons would not afterwards be acceptable to that particular individual.

You must not suppose that I have become so badly affected with the "blues" that I cannot see the superior chances for good farmers in this country. At the present prices of produce a farmer in this vicinity

#### SHOULD MAKE A FORTUNE

in two or three years; but what surprises me most, is, the very small quantity of cultivated land near the city, and even in the gardens most favorably situated, more weeds than vegetables seem to be grown. Passing lately by a garden connected with a fine house in the outskirts of the city, I observed a very large quantity of old dry weed stalks standing over the greater part of it; also here and there a place where some digging had been done last fall. I climbed over the fence to see what kind of crop had been grown here last season, and found that it had been intended for potatoes, but the weeds had so overmastered the potatoes that only a portion of the latter had been considered worth digging; consequently, the rest were left to rot in the ground. I kicked over some of these hills of potatoes and weeds, and must say that I never saw such an inviting soil in which to plant potatoes to make sure of an enormous crop. When

such carelessness prevails in the cultivation you will not be surprised that potatoes are sixty-five cents per bushel, although there has been no rot or bug to hinder in any way their growth.

Before concluding this letter I would like to draw attention to an evil which should secure the immediate attention of the proper authorities in the United States. I refer to the open sale of

#### OBSCURE BOOKS

on the railway trains this side of Chicago. Although these books could not be brought into Canada, except clandestinely, yet they are openly sold on the passenger cars, and the young men who buy them bring them into Manitoba in their coat pockets, which unfortunately are not searched by the customs officials.

It may be too soon for me to offer advice as to the best way to avoid being afflicted with the "blues" on arrival here, but I think if people coming here waited until the middle of June and came by the lake route, they would be less liable to an attack of this disease. They would also save a considerable sum by bringing a tent along and camping out on the prairie while they stop in this vicinity, and also while on their journey to where they intend locating. I think also that the Government might lend tents for a short time to immigrants for a small rent.

Most of the parties who left the Eastern provinces about the same time that I did, got started from here during the cold spell, and would get over the wettest part of the road before the roads got too soft to travel on with tolerable ease; but they must have suffered considerably from cold. Two large parties from the East are expected to arrive here this evening, and I intend accompanying some of them on their journey westward, to see how they get along.

#### OFF FOR THE SASKATCHEWAN—A TRIP OVER THE PRAIRIES—OXEN AND HORSES—A HARDY ENGLISHWOMAN—OXEN AND OXEN.

WINNIPEG, April 21.

SIR,—After resting here for over a week I left on the afternoon of Tuesday, 15th instant, in company with Mr. Garret, formerly of Haliburton, Ont., who with two nephews and another man were going out to the Little Saskatchewan, where they had previously taken up homesteads. Mr. Garret and his nephews had bought two double waggon, one of which was furnished with a cloth covering extended over light wooden semi-circular supports, whose ends were fastened to the sides of the waggon-box, while the middle formed an arch about five feet above the bottom of the waggon. These temporary coverings are very convenient in wet or stormy weather, but are rather a hindrance to the full enjoyment of a ride over the prairie in fine weather. To one of these waggon a pair of oxen was attached, while the other had three oxen to draw it; but in crossing the many bad places in the road this third ox had first to assist in pulling out one waggon and then be unhitched and returned to the other waggon to give it "a long pull" and assist in

#### "A PULL ALTOGETHER."

I don't remember how often this helping process had to be gone through during the seven miles travelled by our party on the first half day's journey to the Little Saskatchewan.



The other man who had left Winnipeg along with us had a good span of Canadian horses attached to his waggon, and, getting weary from our frequent delays, started ahead with several other persons, who being furnished with waggons drawn by horses, overtook and passed us on the way to the same destination.

When about three miles from Winnipeg we overtook an Englishman with his family, who had all his household goods stored on two Red River carts, which were drawn by one ox each. When we came up to him his oxen and carts were stuck fast in a quagmire, several of which he had previously gone through by doubling, that is, hitching the two oxen to one cart, but as this process consumed much time, and as he had already been making much less than one mile an hour, he, seeing help close behind, waited patiently in the mud until we came up, when the difficulty was overcome by Mr. Garret, his two nephews and myself, each getting hold of a wheel and tugging our best, while the Englishman whipped up the forward ox, and his good-wife with a two-year-old child on her back, and more than ankle deep in mud, directed and urged on the hinder ox. When we reached Sturgeon Creek, seven miles on our journey, it was pretty dark, and we stayed there for the night. I had already begun to feel tired, although carrying only a small satchel, overcoat and umbrella, not over twenty-five lbs. weight in all, but I felt ashamed to acknowledge that I was weary in presence of

#### THIS LITTLE ENGLISHWOMAN.

who had carried a two-year-old child nearly every foot of the way from Winnipeg, walking in mud and water of various degrees of consistency and depth, for more than half the way, besides giving occasional aid to an eight-year-old boy, and not unfrequently helping to drive the oxen. They had arrived in Winnipeg nearly four weeks before, and the husband had gone West, and taken up a homestead on the Little Saskatchewan, 175 miles from Winnipeg, then returned and bought the oxen, harness and carts for \$170. He put all his outfit on board, and started towards his future home, having spent nearly the whole of the first day in travelling seven miles. His little wife did not seem disposed to complain, but expressed the wish that she had never left "hold England." She expressed considerable fears lest her feet would get too sore to carry her all the way, as they were wet all the time, and although her husband held out hopes that when they got on the open prairie she might ride on one of the carts when the roads were dry, yet this was no great relief, as she had to get off and walk when the prairie was wet, and sometimes to wade through the sloughs up to the knees in cold water (as I afterwards found by experience), the oxen having as much as they could do to draw without the additional weight of herself and baby.

From Winnipeg to Sturgeon Creek the road is more or less enclosed by fences, and in the wettest places there are something like ditches on each side, while the road is slightly raised in the centre; but as there is scarcely any attempt, except in one or two places, to open a course for the water to flow out of these ditches into the Assiniboine, which is quite near, they were full of water, which had become musical with frogs, while the road between had in many places

become a quagmire, much worse to draw a loaded waggon through than if there had been no attempt at road-making.

On Saturday evening when I was returning over this road, the mud in the centre, except in one or two places, had become dry and hard, although it had sunk in some places below the level of the water in the adjacent ditches, while here and there might be seen a grayish-green puddock hopping across the dry road to pay a friendly visit to his neighbors in the other ditch, and, perhaps, give a little more weight to

#### THE BASS IN THE CONCERT.

which was there in full blast.

About half way between Sturgeon Creek and St. Charles Church, the road strikes the open prairie and divides into two trails, one going west past Headingly post-office, the other trail going north-west towards the half-breed reserve in township eleven, range one, east. (The readers of the WITNESS will perceive by the map that the meridian line from which the ranges of townships in Manitoba, Keewatin and the North-West Territory are numbered to the east and west, passes across the Assiniboine near the dividing line between the parishes of Headingly and St. Francois Xavier, or about fifteen miles west from Winnipeg.) The trail going north-west is the one most used at present, and is said to be much the better for travelling on just now, although there are some pretty deep sloughs to be crossed without any bridges; but there are eighteen miles to be gone over before any house can be reached, the first being the hotel kept by H. G. House at Pigeon Lake post-office, near the further end of the parish of St. Francois Xavier. Even in coming to House's Hotel, a considerable detour to the left has to be made, and many Western travellers who are prepared for camping out, do not call here at all, but continue going north-west through the half-breed townships number twelve in the second and third ranges west, into the settled township thirteen in ranges three and four west, and, after passing round the north end of Long Lake, turn south-west, reaching the front road near to Poplar Point, or fifteen to eighteen miles from Portage la Prairie. As several of the oxen had already begun to develop sore shoulders, it was evident that they could not reach House's Hotel that night, and not being prepared to camp in the prairie, we chose the front trail, and reached Headingly post-office at noon. My travelling companions drove to the banks of a coulee or small creek, which chanced to be close by, and there prepared their own dinners, but as I had little or no provisions with me, I went to the hotel, where a number of returning travellers were taking dinner. Most of these had selected homesteads on the Little Saskatchewan, and were returning to Winnipeg to look for work on the railway or elsewhere; but two or three of them had not taken up land, and seemed dissatisfied with the country, especially the wet roads. One young man acknowledged that he had gone only thirty miles west of Winnipeg, when his feet, having been wet all the time, got too sore to travel further, so he engaged his passage to Winnipeg with a man who was returning there with a waggon, intending to return to Ontario at once, from which he was sorry that he had ever wandered. I may say here that I have met with few who expressed a determination to

return to Ontario, but a good many say that they will go back to Dakota, where good land can be had with less trouble than in Manitoba; also, the settlers in Dakota are said to be more friendly to new-comers than are the people of Manitoba. While my companions were resting at noon, I walked on some distance ahead over a splendid farming country, which is also much better cultivated than anything I had seen in this province, except on the banks of Sturgeon Creek. I saw here a rather novel sight in the form of a Scotch iron plough with an oaken mouldboard. As I had often seen wooden ploughs with iron mouldboards, but never

#### AN IRON PLOUGH WITH A WOODEN MOULDBOARD.

I asked the owner, an intelligent Scotch half-breed, the reason for such a change, and was told that it was very difficult to get iron mouldboards that would clean themselves in this soil, especially where it had been ploughed several times." During my wanderings in the parish of Headingly I saw numerous reapers and mowers, including two very fine "Marsh Harvesters," which bind the grain as well as reap it, all laid up for future use along with other farming utensils, in the bushes or some other convenient spot near the farmhouse without the least protection from sun or rain.

When I had gone a short distance in the parish of St. Francois Xavier, I was overtaken by a covered waggon drawn by a superior yoke of oxen, with two men walking alongside, while a woman and some children were seated in it among a lot of household stuff. As these oxen appeared to trudge along at a better rate than any I had yet seen on this road, I asked their owners how much they had cost, and was told that the sum paid for them was \$110 at Stillwater, some distance east of St. Paul, Minnesota, where they (the oxen) had worked in the log-shanties all winter, but a party coming from St. Thomas, Ont., had the foresight to purchase a carload of these shanty oxen, which were much cheaper as well as in much better working condition than any which could be got at Winnipeg. I have seen several pairs of oxen for which \$170 the pair had been paid here, which were not near as good as were those Yankee oxen for which \$110 had been paid at Stillwater. My new acquaintances reached House's Hotel, 25 miles from Winnipeg, the first day, while my former fellow-travellers, who had started half-a-day before them, did not get within six miles of House's stopping-place.

The following morning about seven o'clock, while I was at House's, several men with two double waggons drawn by oxen came in from the prairie, where they had lost their way on the previous evening and had to camp out without a stick of wood to kindle a fire or a bundle of hay to feed their oxen. I learned from them that they had left Winnipeg the previous morning and after crossing Sturgeon Creek had taken the north-west trail, but night coming on a little too soon, they lost their way in striving to reach House's Hotel and after wandering a while had to camp out, although not prepared for it.

The land from Winnipeg to the parish of St. Francois Xavier, except a few miles in the borders of the city and for three miles east of Headingly post-office, is most suitable for farming, being slightly rolling owing to numerous coulees which empty into the Assiniboine—the banks of this latter being from fifteen to

twenty feet above the present high water—but during the entire length of the parish of St. Francois Xavier and until near Baie St. Paul post-office, not one coulee is crossed, and the country is almost a dead level. The river Assiniboine is exceedingly crooked at this place, and the banks at Baie St. Paul post-office are only between three and four feet high above the present high water, while back a short distance the prairie is in some places flooded with the backwater from the river. Baie St. Paul, from which this parish takes its name, is not properly a bay in the usual sense, but a large extent of drowned prairie, through which the water from Long Lake finds an outlet into the Assiniboine after distilling itself through seven miles of long grass. As the Assiniboine makes a considerable bend to the south here, the direct road to Portage la Prairie crosses this drowned prairie in winter time, but in summer the road has to wind along close to the brushwood on the river banks (at present two feet above the water in the river), or else turn northward until the trail going round Long Lake is met with. The front road along the river banks had recently become impassable for any but foot passengers, owing to the bridges having been carried away from the places where the travelled road crosses short but deep coulees through which the water from Baie St. Paul runs into the Assiniboine. Some of these bridges had been repaired, but one of the largest was still without a bridge. I learned from a half-breed that the way travellers get over this stream is to wade around the head of the coulee among bushes and grass with water over two feet deep in some places. As I had already wet my feet on several occasions, and was already beginning to feel the admonitions of an old enemy called rheumatism, whose first acquaintance I had made while driving sawlogs in the Ottawa County, I concluded to turn back and defer my visit to the places west of St. Paul's Bay until there were drier roads.

During this short journey I had seen numerous large flocks of

#### SNOW-BIRDS, BLACKBIRDS, ROBINS.

sparrows, quails, prairie chickens, wild ducks and geese, and one loon. A good many of the farmers had done considerable ploughing, and some of them had sowed more or less grain. The cattle were out feeding on the prairie, which in some places showed a green tint, yet in many places there were patches of snow among bushes where it had been drifted from the prairie. The weather had been most delightful, which made travelling on the open prairie very pleasant, although in some places I had to wade for a considerable distance in water. When returning about half-way between Baie St. Paul and Pigeon Lake post-offices, I got a last look at my former acquaintances, Mr. Garret and his nephews, and the Englishman with his wife and family. They were more than a mile distant to the north-east of the road I was travelling on, and as a large slough intervened, I preferred to pass on without paying them a last visit, but I took out my glass and watched their movements for a short time. It was now four o'clock on Thursday, and they had already travelled but twenty-eight miles of their journey of 175 miles. While taking a last look at my late acquaintances, I also made a survey around the horizon,

west, east and north, and counted fifteen waggons and carts, chiefly the former, which were all owned by immigrants on the way "to their home in the far distant west." After wishing them all a prosperous journey and fine weather, I again started for Winnipeg, meeting many other west-bound travellers by the way.

**DRINKING AND GAMBLING IN WINNIPEG—FACTS, FIGURES AND GOOD ADVICE—WHERE THE TALL STORIES COME FROM.**

WINNIPEG, April 23rd.

SIR.—"That man who spent his time in the billiard-room, drinking and smoking Saturday night, until a late hour, has lost confidence in himself, in his fellow man, in the value of industry, in the laws of economy and in the virtue of good morals. And, the writer regrets to state that by far too many spent last Saturday night in this manner. A visit was paid to most of the drinking places in the city between the hours of ten and twelve and, without any exception, a flourishing business was going on in each place.

**DRINKING**

was too freely indulged in, and the kind of drinks used evidenced bad taste. Beer was frequently called for; but, whiskey, straight whiskey, and bad whiskey at that, was the chief drink. The crowds were, as a rule, quite orderly, but profanity was indulged in beyond all bar-room etiquette. Money was freely spent, but there was scarcely a saloon in which signs of the credit system did not present themselves. A brave, good-hearted, honest, whole-souled fellow would lead his jolly good-natured companions to the bar—nor was he particular as to the number who joined him, for the invitation to drink here in Winnipeg is to the treaters' friends, and his friends' friends, and to his friends' friends' friends, and their friends,—and when all had been served the leader not unfrequently, with a familiar toss of the head and a well-known wink of the eye, instructed the bar-man to mark it on

**'A PILCE OF ICE'**

which the latter responded to with an 'All right, my lord' calculated to bust all the cash system theories in the city. There was a ring in his voice which at least impressed the debtor that his account might be increased with a welcome on the part of the creditor. After making the rounds of Winnipeg the writer is of the opinion that about three hundred persons spent Saturday evening as above described, that is, either drinking, playing billiards or pool, treating or getting treated, and in many cases mingling their acts with words of useless profanity. If this number is not an over-estimate, and the reporter thinks it is not (I believe it is an underestimate), an

**ESTIMATE OF THE COST**

may easily be made, counting one dollar a head, which is much below the average, and here we have three hundred dollars worse than uselessly spent in this city on a single evening by men who should be saving their money, and spending their valuable leisure time in the improvement of their minds, or attending to the wants, it may

be, of a household. But if this expenditure of time is equally distributed amongst those to whom we refer, not so with the expenditure of money. This fell upon the few, the liberal-hearted, those who were for the time being flush in pocket. There were those—the down-hearted fellows with a touch of the blues, and a feeling akin to homesickness—who drank at the expense of others. Nor was there so much want of equity in this after all, for, more than likely, they each had their

**DAY OF TREATING,**

and were popular while their money lasted."

The foregoing extract is from the Winnipeg Times of Monday, 21st April, and as it states exactly what I have myself witnessed (except as to the lateness of the hours—between ten and twelve o'clock—as I have not been out so late), I can vouch for its correctness, and might add that all the other nights in the week except Sunday are very little better than on Saturday nights.

It is a matter of surprise to many where so many young men come from as are to be seen around the hotels every evening. A good many of them may be called

**WINNIPEG LOAFERS,**

who do little jobs during the daytime for which they charge exorbitant fees, and at evening go to the hotels and play billiards or cards, and are ready to spin out long yarns of their wonderful adventures in the North-West to those newly arrived from the eastern provinces, and also offer any amount of advice as to the best modes of getting along in this country. Of course they are always ready to take their places at the bar when some farmer's son from Ontario, or some laborer from the C. P. Railway, is desirous of giving effect to his generous impulses by standing a treat for all hands.

I believe that many young men belonging to respectable parents in the eastern provinces, who sent them up here that they might take up land of their own, never go beyond Winnipeg, or perhaps a few miles out on the prairie, and after spending their funds acting the good fellow in a Winnipeg saloon, return home to their parents disgusted with the country, and telling wonderful tales of their imaginary adventures, which they had learned from Winnipeg loafers. A great many of the laborers on the Canada Pacific Railway come here to have a good time of it now and again, squandering their means and destroying their health in the taverns and other places which abound in this little city of the North. It is a great pity that intoxicating drinks were ever permitted to be sold anywhere in this fair country, and I fear it will be difficult to root it out, as it causes so much money to be spent here which is supposed to benefit the whole city.

It is rather surprising how little quarrelling or fighting is done, and I can only account for it by the presence of so many strangers; so that, like a lot of strange cattle in a yard, everyone is afraid to begin a quarrel since he does not know who he may have to encounter. Could I reach the ear of each fond parent who intends sending his boy to this province to push his fortune, I would say with all earnestness, "Do not send him until he has become a pledged teetotaler of at least a year's standing."

**KILDONAN—ST. PAUL'S—SELKIRK—"NATIVES" OR "HALF-BREEDS"—WOMEN WHO CAN WORK—SUGAR-MAKING—"LAID UP."**

SIR.—I left Winnipeg on Wednesday, 23rd April, and travelled twenty-three miles down the west bank of the Red River to Selkirk, which I reached on Friday evening. The weather was cold and rainy, and on the following Sunday morning snow fell, but before noon had disappeared under a bright sun; but this morning there was a pretty hard frost, and the weather seems unsettled.

The first place visited on the way was the Parish of Kildonan, which is settled chiefly by Scotchmen and their descendants. There are also a few farmers from Ontario amongst them. As a rule, the

**FARMS ARE WELL CULTIVATED—**

that is, the ends next the river and extending back from half a mile to a mile, the balance being in a state of nature. The dwelling-houses are neat, and many would compare favorably with the average farmhouse in Ontario or Quebec, but the outbuildings are much inferior to those in the Eastern Provinces, a passable barn being almost unknown here—in fact I did not see one between Winnipeg and Selkirk. The cultivated portions of the farms are generally well fenced—no easy job owing to the scarcity of timber and the very narrow strips into which the farms in this section are divided, varying from three to ten chains in width, by three hundred and twenty in length.

The early settlers of Kildonan have had much to contend with, such as want of market and lack of means of communication with the world, the invasions by grasshoppers and by floods, and the occasional troubles and disturbances which have distracted and decimated the people of this parish. During the wars between the rival fur-trading companies twenty-three old countrymen were slaughtered in one day, and all their buildings and crops destroyed. In view of these facts I think that the people of Kildonan have done pretty well, and also, had it not been for the

**CIVILIZING INFLUENCE**

of this section, exercised by the presence here of so many Scotch families previous to the influx of settlers from the East and confederation, the great majority of half-breeds would have been at present but little better than the Indian.

The Rev. Mr. Black, Presbyterian minister, who has been here for nearly thirty years, is, and always has been, a staunch upholder of the WITNESS. From present appearances he is good for another quarter century's work in the North-West. I have reason to fear that the Puritan characteristics of this section are becoming less distinct, as "tripping the light fantastic toe" amongst the young is becoming much too common for the growth of healthy Presbyterianism.

The next parish below Kildonan on the Red River is St. Paul, where there is visible a marked change in the appearance of fences and farm-buildings. Shingled-houses now become the exception and not the rule, thatch being used as the covering of more than half the dwelling-houses from here to Lake Winnipeg.

While passing through St. Paul I climbed on the fence and took a survey of the large

marsh in this parish. By the aid of a small glass I could distinctly see the Provincial Penitentiary at Rockwood, nine miles distant, with only one farm-house occupying the intervening space. This

**WET, UNINHABITED COUNTRY**

extends from the borders of Winnipeg city northward along the third range of townships east, until the border of the province is reached west of the Icelandic settlements. The marsh is eight miles wide in the narrowest place, but is in some places twice that breadth. A good deal of it is fine hay land, with here and there a dry spot, but much the greater part is what they call here "swampy," but I think that name is inapplicable to a tract of country which can boast of bullrushes and cat-tails (flags) like its largest forest trees. All this marshy space can be readily drained, the volume of water and not want of sufficient fall being the chief obstacle, and the time is not far distant when large fields of wheat and oats will grow luxuriantly where the frogs and wild ducks now find a favorite abode.

The houses along the river's banks are close together, especially in the long parish of St. Andrews, which looks like a continuous village for many miles. The inhabitants are almost exclusively Scotch and English natives. I use the term "natives" for those we are accustomed to call

**HALF BREEDS:**

but many of these are as white as myself, and both educated and intelligent, and the latter term is inapplicable to people who have very little Indian blood in their veins, and henceforth I mean to use the term, "half-breed" only in connection with certain land reserves in this province, and instead use the more correct term "natives," with the prefix of Scotch, English or French, as the case may be. A considerable number of the Scotch and English natives, whose fathers were in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company, were sent to Britain for their education, while others made good use of the limited educational advantages of the country. The present Premier of the province, the Hon. Mr. Norquay, is a good specimen of this latter class. There are, however, a good many who have very little education, and there are not a few of them who cannot read or write. I found that the color of the skin was no indication as to the amount of intelligence or education of its possessor, as some of these dusky gentlemen speak fluently English, Gaelic, French and Indian, and subscribe regularly to two or three weekly newspapers.

It seemed particularly strange to me when conversing with some of the darker native women to hear them use the broad Scotch as if they were but a few years from the heather-clad hills of Old Scotia; yet if these same ladies were clad in a blanket and moccasine they would pass in any part of Ontario or Quebec as

**FULL BLOODED SQUAW,**

and this conviction would become much stronger should they converse in the Ojibwa language, which they speak fluently. I may here remark that the Scotch native cling much more tenaciously to the use of the beautiful Scotch brogue in which Burns used to sing than do their fairer cousins in the Eastern provinces.

While passing along one evening on the river road in the parish of St. Andrew's, I observed two native gentlemen reclining on a small straw-covered sled, smoking their pipes, seemingly at perfect peace with themselves and all mankind, while at the two nearest houses, and within less than one hundred yards of the two smokers, were two native ladies engaged in chopping the night's supply of stovewood from piles of poplar poles. The way that the

## LADIES HANDLED THE AXE

showed plainly that they were no strangers to that occupation. Although possessing hands of extraordinary fertility, and situated on the banks of the river, many of these people are pretty hard-up, and have not yet paid the Government for the seed wheat obtained at the time of the grasshopper invasion. Drinking and smoking are much too prevalent here for the intellectual or material progress of the inhabitants of this portion of Her Majesty's dominions.

Here and there along the river may be seen the residence of some old employee of the Hudson Bay Company, some of whom have passed through rather interesting adventures. I called at the residence of Col. James Stewart, an old Nor'-Wester, and who, in company with James Anderson, commanded the expedition which left the north-east corner of Great Slave Lake on the 23rd May, 1855, to search for traces of

## SIR JOHN FRANKLIN'S LOST SHIPS.

After ascending a small river which flows into the north-east end of Slave Lake, they crossed the height of land to the head waters of the Great Fish River, which they descended to the Arctic ocean, and on an island at the mouth of this river found various relics of the lost expedition, among which was a board belonging to a boat on which the name Terror was painted. Col. Stewart and his companions returning reached the north-east end of Great Slave Lake on the 18th September. I also spent a night at the hospitable residence of Capt. William Kennedy, a native of this country, and who also spent two winters in the Arctic sea commanding an expedition which was sent in quest of Sir John Franklin. Capt. Kennedy seems to be considerably exercised about the way the Government agents here treat the Indians, and, although he is a very good man, I fear that he overdraws his pictures of their wrongs.

I reached Selkirk on Friday evening and, after enquiry, was directed to what was said to be the most orderly of six hotels which do business here. On Saturday I travelled around a good deal to see the environments of this the future great city of the North-West, and started numerous ducks and prairie chickens from among the bushes and small ponds which at present cover the greater part of the city. I also travelled along the lower banks of the river below the place where the line of the C. P. Railway crosses, and visited numerous Indian camps, the inhabitants of which have lately been engaged in sugar-making from the pretty

## ASH-LEAVED MAPLES

which abound here, and which have given the name of "Sugar Point" to this locality, and also to a somewhat similar place a little above the city. Several thousands of these small trees, varying in size from three to fifteen inches in

diameter, and from twenty to forty feet in height, were tapped by the Indians, the tapping being done with axes and seemingly with very little regard to the future growth of the trees. These very pretty maple trees often grow five or six and up to a dozen trunks from one stump. I saw one case where a dozen trees varying from two and half to nine inches in diameter grew from one stump, and nine of these trees were tapped, making a little sugar bush in itself. These trees are rapid growers, are easily transplanted, and will grow from young shoots stuck into the ground like currant bushes. I have also seen in some places where these maples have been made into fence pickets. After being driven into the ground they have started to grow healthy branches, and were rapidly becoming trees. I have seen some of these trees with very beautiful tops on them, very much resembling an inverted spinning top, and am informed that with a little care in training almost any desired shape of top can be attained. It is a matter of surprise that these beautiful trees are not planted more frequently around Winnipeg, the only difficulty in their culture being the delight the cattle take in browsing on the young shoots.

After travelling down along Sugar Point for more than a mile, a heavy snow and rain storm came on, and as it was very wetting I turned to the left at right angles to reach the main road, which I knew to be not very distant, but was much disappointed by coming to a lagoon of deep water with a two-masted schooner riding at anchor in it, which compelled me to travel back through the bush by the way I came, the result being a wetting which did me no good. This lagoon extends up in the rear of Sugar Point almost to where the railway crosses, from a point a mile and a half below, and is a most convenient place to winter boats in, as they will be entirely free from danger when the ice is passing out of the river in the spring. There is a similar lagoon of deep water extending from the east bank of the river up to the C. P. Railway near the place where the Pembina Branch joins it, and making

## ONE OF THE MOST CONVENIENT NATURAL HARBORS in the Dominion.

When I reached my hotel I was both wet and cold, and as there was scarcely any fire in the bar-room, I got pretty well chilled before a couple of half-intoxicated individuals could be induced to get a little wet poplar to kindle the fire with. The landlord, who seems to be a clever man, was on this occasion absent in Winnipeg. A good part of the succeeding evening was spent uncomfortably with a lot of half-drunken young men who blasphemed in some of the most disgusting forms that I have ever heard. After I retired to my bedroom these individuals got into a free fight and made a great deal of noise and some havoc among the furniture of the bar-room.

On Sunday morning, as grog-drinking was going on with renewed vigor, and feeling unwell, I left the city of Selkirk and sought the hospitable home of the Rev. Alexander Matheson, Presbyterian minister at Little Britain Church near Lower Fort Garry. On Monday morning I began to write this letter, but soon became too unwell and had to go to bed. About noon, a snow-storm came on, and as I lay in bed watching the big snow-flakes whirling past the window, my thoughts

and sympathies turned toward the hundred of families who were at that time out on the trail, exposed to the snow and rain, on their journey to the Little Saskatchewan. Should any of them be taken sick they could scarcely expect to receive such kind attention and care from a good Samaritan and his wife as had been my good fortune during this sickness.

Little Britain Manse, County of Lisgar, April 28th, 1879.

## REMARKABLE CROPS—EQUALLY REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENTS—IT PAYS TO MANURE EVEN IN MANITOBA—FENCING—FRESH SHAPED FARMS—THE GOVERNMENT AND THE INDIANS.

SIR,—Since coming to this province I have frequently been told almost incredible tales of the productiveness of the soil here, but as there was not sufficient proof of the quantities raised given I did not choose to write under this head until I learned more about the matter. During my stay of over two days at the hospitable residence of the Rev. Alex. Matheson, within a mile of Lower Fort Garry, I learned something of the productiveness of the soil in these parts, from a perfectly reliable source. Attached to the manse at Little Britain Church, there is a glebe with six chains frontage on the river and extending four miles back. This is nearly all covered with brushwood and small poplars, with a good many grassy pastures, making an excellent run for cattle. A little over four acres have been ploughed, from which more produce was raised last year than was grown on many thousands of farms in the Province of Quebec. About an acre of this tilled land is in the form of a garden, on part of which were grown

## MONSTER CABBAGES, BEETS, CARROTS AND TURNIPS:

but no correct account was taken of the quantities. Several common pumpkins (not squashes) grew to over sixty pounds each in weight; cabbages, ten to twelve pounds in weight. A patch of common yellow corn consisting of fifteen rows, with eighteen hills to the row, produced over six bushels of shelled corn. The hills were about three feet apart each way. There was also a patch of pop-corn, which was also very fine, but no account was kept of the quantity grown. I saw samples of both of these kinds of corn "in the ear," and they were up to any average crop that I have seen grown around Ottawa. On a potato patch measuring twenty-three by thirty-one yards were grown one hundred bushels of very fine early rose potatoes, yielding at the rate of seven hundred and twenty-nine bushels to the acre. From one hill sixty-two fine potatoes were dug, which made three dinners for a family of four grown persons and as many children. I ate portions of enormously large beets and potatoes, and they were both superior in taste and flavor to anything of the kind which I have eaten in Montreal for over a year. Mr. Matheson keeps his roots in a pit near the bank of the river, where they are quite safe from frost.

About half a mile back from the manse there is what is called here a "park," or piece of cultivated land enclosed by a fence. I measured this park myself, and found that it contained less than three and a quarter acres of ploughed land, yet Mr. Matheson said that he paid for threshing 180 bushels of oats and 38 bushels of

wheat which grew on this spot last summer. Besides the above, two small cart-loads of unthreshed oats were brought to the stable and fed to the horse and poultry during the fall. I carefully examined the soil here, and found it to be but little different from all the land which I have seen since coming to this province.

It may seem incredible to Eastern farmers to be told that most of the farmers here are living in a "hand-to-mouth" sort of way, and not unfrequently suffer from want, while living on such rich soil. Very few of them think it worth while to use their manure on the land, but pile it up near the stable or on the banks of the river. The highest mounds in some parts of the country are made of manure, which is sometimes drawn from the stable-door to the manure mound on a dried cowhide by an ox, much the same as we use a stone-boat down east. In some places where the manure is drawn out and spread on the land an ox-cart is used, but as it has no box an ox-hide is spread inside of the rock, and the manure piled on it. The Rev. Mr. Matheson uses all the manure produced by a horse and four head of cattle on his garden, and finds that it pays to manure land here as well as elsewhere.

As all the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches in the old settlements have large glebes attached, the parishioners might largely augment their pastor's salary by making a bee in the spring to put in a crop in these rich glebes, and another bee in harvest to gather in the grain. Instead of that, Mr. Matheson has to pay much more for getting his land ploughed than would be considered good pay near Montreal or Ottawa. Most of the churches here of every denomination would require some such preacher as Dr. MacVicar of Montreal to come among them, and preach to them from such texts as 2 Cor. ix, 6, Rom. xii, 11, &c.

As Lower Fort Garry is situated in a comparatively well-wooded country the

## COST OF FENCING

here is not nearly so high as in other places throughout the province. The fencing of a square containing about four acres requires about 200 lengths of fence, consisting of six poplar poles, and two long and one short tamarac picket, for each length.

The cost of the material for such fence delivered on the spot is as follows:

1,200 Poplar poles, each 12 feet long, at \$2 per 100	\$24 00
460 Tamarac pickets, each 7 feet long, at \$3.50 per 100	14 00
200 Tamarac pickets, each two feet long, at \$1 per 100	2 00
Total cost of material	\$40 00

This does not include hazel and willow whittes to tie the pickets together in two or three places. The pickets after being sharpened at one end, are driven into the ground in pairs, about eleven feet distance between each pair. The pickets in each pair are about six inches apart, and a short picket is driven into the ground between those to support the ends of the poplar poles from resting on the ground. After the pickets are properly tied with whittes the poplar poles are laid in their places, slightly zig-zag fashion, but not so much so as is customary in Ontario. There is a strip of bark peeled off each side of the poplar poles to prevent them from rotting as speedily as they

would otherwise do. Where tamarac, oak, ash or maple cannot be obtained, poplar is used for pickets, but it will only last three years, when it becomes rotten at the ground. The fence poles also require to be renewed every eight or nine years, but there is not much lost by this, as they are then used for fuel and green poles put in their places. This changing of the fence rails is often done much more frequently than is needed, as they are often

#### CUT UP FOR FUEL

during the cold weather by people who neglected to lay by a winter's supply of firewood. On the following spring these individuals are often engaged replacing their fences, when they ought to be putting the seed into the ground.

Owing to the very narrow strips of land contained in most of the farms on the river, and also want of arrangement among near neighbors in the selection of their parks of cultivated land, fencing becomes very costly sometimes. I have seen strips of land less than two hundred feet wide and more than half a mile long enclosed by a fence from the surrounding prairie, yet part of this little strip remained uncultivated.

After a few days' rest at the manse at Little Britain, receiving the kindest care and attention from the family of the Rev. Mr. Matheson, I became well enough to proceed down

#### AMONGST THE INDIANS

living on the reserve north of Selkirk, and passed one night at the house where Pégus post-office is located west of the Red River, near the line between township fourteen and fifteen in the fifth range east. I was now nearer to Lake Winnipeg and the north pole than I had ever been before, yet the grass was starting to grow vigorously, and the forests were changing considerably from the dead gray color of winter. The people in this locality are called the Saulteux Indians, but they seemed much more like French and Scotch natives. They seem to cultivate nearly as much land per family as do the natives above Selkirk, but they have very few cattle or horses, which is not very wonderful since the meadow-lands are not as convenient to their homes as is the case further up the river. A good deal of fishing and hunting is done by these Indians, as the fish in the river is very abundant and of fine quality. Most of the dogs have a wolfish look about them, and are pretty generally used in drawing sledges in winter time. I had quite a long interview with the Indian Chief, Henry Prince, who received me cordially, and conversed with me through an interpreter, although I have been told that he speaks pretty good English. He is much blacker in color than I have seen any Indian before. He is of commanding presence and speaks well in his own language, and displays considerable shrewdness, but I fear he smells the cork too often, which gives his eyes somewhat of a dissipated cast, although he complains hardly of the Selkirk hotel-keepers selling grog to Indians. He complained very much of the Government having neglected to carry out the provisions of their treaty with the Indians, saying that they had not supplied them with nearly the number of cattle, nor the amount of seed grain which had been promised. The Government also promised to support a school for the Indians, but had not done so, since the

school here is entirely controlled by non-treaty men. He further complained that non-treaty men, white and native, came into the reserve and bought lands from the treaty Indians, using

#### A BOTTLE OF GROG

in making the bargain, and by this means the treaty lands were slipping out from under the authority of himself and his council. He had applied frequently to the agents, to prevent these unlawful sales of treaty lands, but nothing had yet been done, and he feared that nothing would be done until he was compelled to take forcible possession of the transferred treaty lands. He was very anxious to know if I was an authorized Government agent, and when told that I was only a newspaper man, he desired to know if I would publish a list of his grievances. I told him that if he would make out a list of all cases where the Government failed to carry out their promises, I would see that they were printed. He promised to have a meeting of his council shortly, when a full list of their grievances would be made out and a copy of them sent to my address at Winnipeg. We then parted, shaking hands all round in a friendly manner.

After leaving the Chief, I interviewed several others, both treaty and non-treaty men, and heard various accounts of the "Indian troubles" which seem to be about as follows:—These Indians, or natives (the Saulteux, came originally from Lake Superior, while the Swampy Crees came from north of Lake Winnipeg), settled in this locality a good many years ago (I think they all profess Christianity at present), and were attended by missionaries from the Church Missionary Society.

#### BEFORE THE TREATY

with the Government was made many of these Indians sold their claims to natives and others who would not come under the provisions of the treaty; consequently, they have a perfect right to do what they please with their lands. When the treaty was made, all this tract of country was given to the Indians without any exception being made regarding lands held by persons who would not come under the treaty. This was an unintentional omission, yet the Chief thinks that these lands rightfully belong to the treaty Indian, and that the Government should extinguish the claims of non-treaty men, and give the land to the Indians. The old chief says he is willing to forego his authority over these lands if the Government will secure to him and his people all the lands held by treaty men at the time the treaty was made; as treaty Indians are selling their lands to non-treaty natives and whites. I believe the old chief is quite right on this latter point, and that the Government should not permit treaty lands to be bought by others without the consent of the whole tribe, and I might add, the Government authorities.

#### THE SCHOOL DIFFICULTY

is about as follows: The Dominion Government having promised to support a school for the Indians, have been lately paying \$300 a year to that end, but as there are two schools in the parish (some ten miles in length), the grant is only \$150 to each school. The non-treaty men make up the balance (after the Local Government grant is received) by taxation laid on the

real estate belonging to themselves. As they pay the lion's share of the expense they wish to have control of the schools, which are held in buildings belonging to the Episcopal Church, but Chief Prince cannot endure that others should have greater authority than himself, and wants to rule the schools and choose the teachers. This could be borne by the others were only properly qualified teachers employed, but the chief will have his own friends appointed, although not properly qualified to teach. I think that the Government should tell his chieftainship, kindly but firmly, that any schools receiving Government aid must be under the direction of fully qualified teachers. It seems also that a grant of \$300 per year divided between two schools, is rather a cheap way of performing a treaty obligation to maintain a school for the Indians.

About

#### THE SEED GRAIN QUESTION,

I have been told by several parties that a little over a year ago a Government agent visited all the Indians at their homes, and asked them how much seed grain they would need on the following spring, which amount was entered in a book; but although the Indians went to considerable trouble to prepare the ground for the reception of this grain, the quantity afterwards given was but a small fraction of the amount which the Indians were led to expect, amounting in some cases to a pallful of wheat where several bushels were expected. As I will probably treat of the Indian question a little fuller when Chief Prince sends along his budget of grievances, I will leave the subject for the present.

Winnipeg, May 2nd, 1879.

#### MINISTERS IN THE NORTH-WEST—BACHELORS AND THEIR HOMES—BRIDGING A STREAM—WIVES WANTED.

SIR,—On the morning of Tuesday, 7th inst., I accepted the offer of a drive into the newly settled country lying north-east from Winnipeg. We first drove down the west side of the Red River about seven miles, to the ferry at Pritchard's Mill in St. Paul's parish, and here crossed the river and went over two miles more south-east, crossing the railway near the western point of Birds' Hill, and drove on the top of that ridge eastward along near the northern boundary of Springfield (township 11, range 4, east) to the border of Sunnyside, which lies immediately east of Springfield. We then turned southward some distance to a house recently visited by death, the Rev. Mr. Robertson having come all this distance to attend the funeral and preach a sermon. I might remark here

#### FOR THE COMFORT OF MINISTERS

in Eastern dioceses who think they are overworked, that my reverend fellow-traveller in this journey had to pay four dollars out of his own pocket for the use of the horse and buggy which took us over these fifteen miles of (in many places) very bad roads. We were more than three hours making the journey, and after the services were over, went about two miles to Moose Nose Cemetery in Sunnyside, where I parted with Mr. Robertson at some time after three p.m., neither of us having tasted food since early in the morning. Mr. Robertson had scarcely any previous acquaintanceship with the bereaved family visited on this occasion, and did not expect to re-

ceive a cent for his time or travelling expenses. Birds' Hill is from sixty to seventy feet above the adjacent prairie in many places, and as I had hitherto seen nothing in this province that could be called a hill, or even a mound—unless that appellation were given to some of the piles of manure—I enjoyed the drive very much along the crest of this hill, from which I got an excellent view of the country on both sides. Towards the north very few houses were to be seen, but southward we could see nearly every house and grass swamp in Springfield. The western point of this range approaches near the railway, and a side track is laid to the hill, where an abundant supply of excellent gravel is taken to ballast the Pembina Branch Railway. Should Winnipeg become an important city at some future period, it is probable that a large quantity of gravel will find its way from Birds' Hill to the streets of Winnipeg.

#### THIS BIRDS' HILL RANGE

runs across nearly the whole of the north end of Springfield, then turns north-west to about the centre of Cook's Creek township (township 12, range 5, east). It is almost entirely gravel, and the soil on the top is of little value for farming purposes. The land in Sunnyside, with the exception of Moose Nose Hill, is nearly all wet, and a comparatively small quantity has been brought under cultivation. There is very little wood of any kind (except willow bushes), the little poplar which grew in bluffs here and there having been mostly all cut down, and I think it would be difficult to get one hundred and fifty cords of firewood on the whole township without making a raid on the fences or buildings. The settlers here have almost all come from the Eastern Provinces and Britain within the past eight years, quite a number having come in here this spring and bought their lands from older settlers or speculators, paying from \$600 to \$1,000 for 180 acres, with more or less improvements, the twenty acres of wood land belonging to each quarter section being from two to five miles distant. Almost all the settlers here are pretty largely engaged in stock-raising, some of them owning over forty head of cattle, small and large. These cattle receive very little attention during the summer, and sometimes stray away and are never seen again; in winter they are stabled, and fed with prairie hay, of which there is an abundant supply in these parts.

There is an exceedingly

#### LARGE PERCENTAGE OF BACHELORS

among the settlers here. Cook's Creek school-house is situated at the corner of four townships, and the school section comprises nine sections from each township, or an area of thirty-six square miles in all. It is said that a majority of the voters in this large school district are bachelors, consequently they elect a majority of the school trustees of the same persuasion. Two of the trustees are living in single blessedness, or as it is termed here, "bacheling it;" the third trustee has a wife but his children are too small to attend school. The teacher at present teaching in this school hails from Aylmer, P.Q., where I formerly had considerable experience in the difficulties attending the carrying out of the school laws among an unwilling people. I hope he will have better success among his new bachelors acquaintances. I am told that "bacheling it"

is very generally practiced throughout nearly all the settlements in this country, and since such a state of affairs tends to hinder the increase of both trade and population Sir John Macdonald would confer a lasting benefit on the great North-West if, with the aid of Mr. Phipps, he could concoct some scheme of national policy whereby

#### WIVES COULD BE SECURED

for the many lonely gentlemen residing in this country. Sometimes two neighbors "back it together," and occupy the same house, but for the most part they "den up alone." A few of them keep their dwellings quite tidy, but more of them leave things inside the house in a state of confusion much worse than prevails in many of the homes of the Indians living down near the mouth of the Red River. I find that most of these single gentlemen are in pretty good circumstances, having besides a good farm a large number of cattle. One of them, whose personal appearance seemed less cultivated than any Indian whom I have seen in the vicinity of Montreal, is the owner of a first-rate farm, and over fifty head of cattle, and has also considerable money lent out at high interest. As in all cases I tried to get my board and lodgings in houses made bright by the presence of women, I cannot speak from experience about bachelor fare, but I am told that the bannocks baked by them are generally not very tempting to the appetite nor easy of digestion. They allow their calves to suck the cows, and consequently have very little dairy work to perform. I have been proposing to several of these men that after the harvest is gathered, they should club together and run an excursion train down east to where the ladies are more plentiful, and see if they cannot secure housekeepers. Mr. Joseph Tees, formerly of Montreal, told me lately that he was contemplating starting a

#### "MATRIMONIAL AGENCY,"

as it was likely to be better patronized than the business of undertaker.

On the evening of Wednesday, 8th inst., I crossed Cook's Creek on the boundary line between townships 11 and 12 in the sixth range east, not quite a mile from the north-east corner of Sunnyside, and during that evening and the next forenoon visited most of the houses in these two townships. The creek is quite large here, although not quite two miles from its source in an extensive marsh which covers a considerable portion of township 11, ridge 6, east, and several square miles of the eastern part of Sunnyside. I may say here that this creek is not properly laid down on the map, where it is also wrongly called "Devil's Creek." It runs about ten miles north-east of this place, and does not join the Red River until close to Lake Winnipeg. It seems rather strange that the name of

#### HIS SATANIC MAJESTY

should be so frequently attached to lakes and creeks in this and other countries, while there is reason to fear that he has much more stock taken in the people than in the waters on the surface of this terrestrial sphere.

There is a low gravel ridge running east across the front part of the Township of Rossmore (township 12, range 6, east), and most of the settlers are

located on this ridge. This township and also the townships south and west of it are included in the half-breed reserve, but a good many settlers had located here before the reserve was made, and consequently continue to hold their lots. The half-breed lots are also passing pretty rapidly into the possession of speculators. The gravel ridge in Rossmore, where it is not occupied by man, is largely tenanted by badgers, which burrow holes in the ground large enough to allow a cat to enter, and in some cases I have seen upwards of a cartload of gravel which had been taken out of one hole. Although the holes were pretty numerous, and many of them bearing traces of recent badger-work, yet I could never get a sight of "his badgership." This township is also much infested by

#### PRAIRIE WOLVES,

making it almost impossible to keep sheep. Two of these small wolves had been seen close to a farmhouse here the day before I arrived, but although I wandered a good deal among the woods on the eastern bank of Cook's Creek, I could discover no traces of Mr. Coyotte.

On the afternoon of to-day (9th) I was coming westward out of Rossmore, about a mile and a half north from the south boundary of that township, and in doing so had to cross the creek, which at present is nearly the size of a small river. As I did not like to make a detour of several miles through brush and swamp to reach a bridge, I looked for some time to see if a fallen tree could be found lying across the stream, but none could be found. As I had no axe nor any other edged tool with me, except a small jackknife, the idea of bridging such a stream would indicate the superlative degree of verdancy when viewed by a Western immigration agent on friendly terms with

#### A COAL OIL BOTTLE,

but not so with an Ottawa shantymen. After searching for some time for the narrowest part of the stream, I found a place where it was about fifteen feet wide with a rapid current running three feet deep. Here I laid down my hatchet and went in search of bridging timber, and found ample supplies not far off, in a place where the fire had, some years ago, killed a number of poplar trees, which had afterwards been blown down by the wind. Those that lay on the ground were too rotten for bridging purposes; but where they were supported from off the soil by the stump or some other tree, they were still sound and very light to carry. I first got one of the smallest and put it across the stream, and afterwards, by means of this, succeeded in getting two larger ones placed across, and on this temporary bridge crossed Cook's Creek in safety.  
Cook's Creek, Township 12th, range 6th, east, May 9th, 1879.

#### ORNITHOLOGICAL SWAMPS—CROPS—A VIEW OF THE PRAIRIE—A FRIENDLY INTEREST IN WOODLANDS.

SIR.—On Friday, 10th instant, I made a circuit through the south half of Sunnyside, which seems to be an excellent

#### BREEDING-PLACE FOR WILD DUCKS,

as, during a journey of eight miles, I found four nests of these birds, containing in all thirty eggs.

The ducks when hatching seem to lose a good deal of their former wildness, and will not leave their nests until you are within a few feet of them, when they flutter away as if one of their wings were broken, much after the same fashion as a ground sparrow when endeavoring to induce a boy to run after herself and pay no attention to her nest. These ducks seem rather careless in selecting the place to build their nests, as two of the nests were quite close to a travelled road, and one was in a ploughed field. Prairie chickens are also numerous here, of large size and very tame. I did not see any of their nests, as it is rather early in the season, but was informed that when hatching they are very loath to leave the nests, and will allow people to come up quite close to them, and after a while become so familiar with children who pay frequent visits to the nests that they will remain on them and peck at the youngsters who approach too near, just the way that a cross setting hen would do.

Owing to the large amount of wet land here the settlers are few and far between, there being not one inhabited house to every square mile in the south half of Sunnyside, and the ratio is not much greater in the north half. At the time of my visit I believe that the half of this township was from two inches to two feet under water, and more than half of the remainder was too wet to be ploughed even here, where they plough land in a much wetter state than would be done in the eastern provinces. I believe that I am within the mark when I say that not five per cent. of the land in this township has been ploughed. A

#### COMPLETE SYSTEM OF DRAINAGE,

for the two townships of Springfield and Sunnyside (it should have been called Marahyside) would not cost over twenty-five cents per acre, and would increase the value of all the land from \$1 to \$3 per acre, besides making good roads to market at all seasons; yet the people hesitate about incurring the expense, some of them saying that the wet land is more valuable than the dry, since it supplies them with plenty of hay to feed their live stock with, although the two past seasons were too wet to cut the hay in many places.

During all my journeyings in this province I have been making careful enquiries as to the suitableness of the soil and climate for producing the

#### TAKEN GRASSES,

such as timothy hay, red-top, clover, Hungarian grass, &c., but could get no reliable information about them. Even in Sunnyside, among the Canadian farmers, the general opinion was that only Hungarian grass could be grown with profit to replace the wild native grasses. They had heard of large crops of timothy hay having been grown in some parts of Springfield, but the experiments with that grass in Sunnyside had almost all been failures. I afterwards visited the farms in Springfield where timothy hay was grown, and was equally surprised at the enormous crops grown, and at the small number of farmers who have tried to raise this valuable kind of hay. I was shown several pretty large fields where over three tons of timothy hay to the acre was cut three years in succession, and in one or two cases the produce was

said to be nearer four tons to the acre. These farmers all told me that they had never seen

#### SUCH LARGE CROPS

of timothy hay grown in any of the Eastern provinces, and one farmer who had eight acres of timothy hay, on which three tons of hay per acre had been cut last season, sold the greater part of it at \$12 per ton. I enquired of some of the successful cultivators of timothy hay, why its culture had failed in Sunnyside, and was told that the land where it had been sown was too wet; but wherever it was sown on dry land it did remarkably well, if not too thickly seeded, as it stools out here much more than in the Eastern provinces. The farmers who raise timothy hay feed their horses with it while at work, as they do much better on it than when fed on prairie hay. I have not yet found any cases where clover has been successfully grown, nor anyone who has tried red-top; but Hungarian grass grows most luxuriantly, and if not sown pretty thick the stalks become rather coarse for fodder, more resembling wheat straw.

I went some distance to see a small field of

#### FALL WHEAT,

which the owner says is the only one in Manitoba. The greater portion was pretty well killed out, but a strip about thirty feet wide across the north end of the piece looked well, and promises to produce abundantly. I asked the owner the cause of such a marked difference in the same field. He said that he had sown Clauson wheat, brought from Markham, Ont., in that strip, while the rest of the field was sown with a variety called "white chaff." The part of the field where the Clauson wheat was sown being near the fence, was covered by a drift of snow, while the rest was more exposed.

There are some pretty extensive farmers in the township of Springfield, and in one case I saw a field containing 80 acres of ploughed land, part of it green with the young wheat plants.

There seems to be a strange fatality among horses brought from Ontario to this place, one farmer having lost eleven horses during the eight years he has been farming here. Some of these were raised here from mares brought from Ontario. I have not been able to learn the cause of this

#### MORTALITY AMONG HORSES,

but have strong suspicions that the feed, care, small, close stables, and also bad roads in spring, are the chief causes of it, since Lower Canadian horses seem to do very well.

On Saturday afternoon I again visited Mosee Nose Cemetery, for the purpose of getting a good view of the country from the summit of that hill, which is elevated about seventy feet above the surrounding plain. This hill is situated near the north-west corner of the township of Sunnyside, and from it can be seen nearly all the houses in the townships of Springfield, Sunnyside, Cook's Creek and Rossmore, with a number of the houses in Plympton and Mill-brook (township 10 in the 5th and 6th ranges, east). The view was charming, as the country seemed streaked with a great variety of colors, among which were black, dark brown, dark grey, light grey, dark green, bluish grey, dappled grey and green, and some spots of blue. The appearance at the distance of three



or four miles, when viewed through a small glass, resembled very much some

#### KALYDOSCOPIC VIEWS.

The black streaks were the lately ploughed fields, the dark brown was where prairie fires had been running last fall, burning the grass and killing the bushes; the dark gray consisted of hazel and poplar bushes, which had not yet leaved out; the light gray was pretty extensive, and consisted of unburnt fields of old prairie grass and unploughed wheat-and-ost stubble; the dark green color adorned the wet meadow lands, from which the hay had been taken last year, and although now covered with from two to six inches of water, yet the young hay has already got high enough to overshadow the flood; the bluish gray indicated the marshes, where the bluish-colored new grass, and also spots of water, give a bluish tint to the old and withered marsh grass of the previous year's growth; the dappled gray and green colors arise from the present half-leaved state of the willow bushes, which are very plentiful all over these parts, and the blue spots were places where the water, while covering the old crop of wild grass, was still too deep for the new crop to get above its surface.

The tops of the higher buildings in Winnipeg are seen from

#### THE MOOSE NOSE

—called this name owing to a supposed resemblance which it bears to the nose of the moose—and were it not for the groves of poplars which grow near St. Boniface, the whole city would be plainly visible in favorable weather. The Government own the land on the most elevated part of this hill, it being a school reserve, and have given several acres on the summit for a cemetery and also sites for churches. The soil is composed of very beautiful white gravel, with few stones larger than a man's fist. If near a large city this white gravel, about the size of small marbles, would be in good demand for paving footpaths in gardens and lawns. This school reserve was at one time of considerable value, owing to the large amount of wood on it, but it has been pretty well stripped of that commodity. Some people here seem to have very mistaken ideas about the rights of the Dominion Government and the Hudson Bay Company to the timber grown on their reserves, consequently the school lands and the Hudson Bay Company's lands are plundered without compunction. Not only is the wood grown on these lands taken for farming purposes, but a large portion finds its way to Winnipeg market. Some people who really do not own any land of their own engage pretty extensively in the firewood business, and they seem to have the sympathy of a good many others who ought to know better. Recently forty-six cords of firewood were seized and sold at Selkirk, for having been cut, contrary to law, upon the Indian reserve; but the price at which it was knocked down was less than thirty cents per cord, and the press of that great city of the future spoke approvingly of the transaction. The thieving of Government wood would not look so bad, if it were only done by poor people who have no wood lots of their own, but some of the wealthiest men in these parts, who own wood lots, raid pretty extensively on the Government wood, and leave their own for future use.

Winnipeg, May 15th, 1870.

#### PRIVATIONS OF FREIGHTING—MARSHY PRAIRIES—THE MENNONITES—ORGANIZING SUNDAY-SCHOOLS—A HINT.

SIR,—On the afternoon of Thursday, 15th Inst., I started on a pilgrimage amongst a number of small Canadian settlements lying east and south east from Winnipeg. My course was along the Dawson route (trail it should be called) for thirty miles to Pointe des Chenes; then southwest some seven or eight miles to Clear Springs settlement, which is situated on the south-east quarter of township seven, range six, east, and also includes a strip of land from one mile to one and a half mile wide along the west border of township seven, range seven, east. After crossing the railway track at St. Boniface I passed through a small strip of poplar woods, and entered on the most lonesome and wet prairie I had yet seen, being nearly all covered over by water and willow bushes. The road had been recently passed over by a large number of French natives, who were freighting goods to the North-West Angle of the Lake of the Woods on ox carts, and was cut up in a way scarcely ever seen down east. Freighting on such roads must be hard on the men, oxen and carts engaged in it, proof of which I saw in a dead ox lying beside the road and several portions of broken carts, but I suppose

#### THE MEN ALL ESCAPED WITH THEIR LIVES.

Here and there along this dreary road considerable streams of water are crossed, which run in a north-easterly direction and help to drown nearly all the land for about five or six miles wide by ten miles long, reaching from Kildonan to Protestant Ridge, which is near the east side of range four, and on the dividing line between townships nine and ten. This overflow of water is caused by an ugly propensity which the small rivers in this country have of forsaking their proper bed or channel, and spreading themselves into immense muskogs or marshes, which frequently have Satan's most vulgar name prefixed to them. The marshes which are laid down on the map form but a small portion of the overflowed lands in their vicinity, especially during the early part of summer. By reference to the map you will perceive that a large part of this tract is owned by the Roman Catholic Church, and to "render this savage wilderness more waste," there are no houses nor signs of cultivation to be seen for over eight miles of the journey which took me near four hours to accomplish.

#### PROTESTANT RIDGE,

or Prairie Grove, as the post office here is called, is situated on the borders of the large floating bog where the river Seine loses itself the second time, and contains over a dozen Canadian settlers, who have no school as yet, but have the timber cut for a building to serve as a school and meeting-house.

I stayed over night at the house of Henry McQuade, son, who may properly be called the patriarch of the settlement, as he has six sons and three sons-in-law among the land-tillers and defenders of British Canadian rights in this portion of Her Majesty's dominions. The old gentleman is possessed of a full share of Irish combativeness, and it seems to give him considerable pleasure to relate the encounters which he and his friends had with the French natives

who were sent by Father Richot and Archbishop Taché to

#### DRIVE OFF

the intruding Irish Canadians.

From here to Pointe des Chenes, for a distance of seventeen or eighteen miles, there are no English-speaking settlers that I heard of, and it is only very sparsely settled by French-Canadians and natives. The land is of superior quality, if drained, for which there are excellent facilities, as the water in the pretty little river Seine is from four to eight feet lower than the adjacent lands in most places. I called at the house of a French-Canadian, who had formerly worked nine years with Gilmour & Co. in the Ottawa region, but who last year bought two hundred acres of land, with ten chains frontage on the Seine, having a little house and several acres ploughed; the price paid was only \$300 for the whole. The general price of land in this quarter seems to be from \$1 to \$2.50 per acre. If a considerable tract of this section of country was bought by a company of enterprising farmers from Britain or Ontario, and a comparatively small sum spent in draining and improving it, the selling price of it would be thereby increased more than fourfold.

When five or six miles from Pointe des Chenes, the road comes out into the largest open prairie in Manitoba east of the Red River. This prairie is about ten miles long and five miles wide, and is almost a perfect level with scarcely a bush three feet high in sight, a considerable portion of it being

#### UNDER WATER

with a good growth of fresh green hay growing up through it. I observed also in one place that a considerable extent of this meadow land had the hay cut last season and raked up with a horse rake and part of it cocked; but it was left on the field over winter and continues there still, as it is too wet to burn.

Just before coming to this open prairie I passed two bands of

#### NATIVE FREIGHTERS

who were on their road back from the Lake of the Woods, where they had delivered their loads. There were in all fifty-two ox-carts. The oxen, being unhitched, were grazing on the prairie while their masters were preparing their own mid-day meal. Most of these carts were loaded with cedar and tamarac posts, which were being taken to Winnipeg, while several carts had for loads the debris of other carts which had been broken on the journey. The price paid for freighting from Winnipeg to the Lake of the Woods is \$1.50 per 100 lbs. when the roads are bad, and \$1 to \$1.25 when the trail is in tolerable condition. Most of the French natives in this part do little else than freight goods on this road, and will find it hard to make a living when the freighting business ceases through the completion of the railway to Rat Portage. The usual time taken in making the round trip is from ten to twelve days, each man driving three or four carts, having from seven to ten hundred weight on each cart; but in some cases it has taken these caravans nearly four days going the eight miles between St. Boniface and Protestant Ridge.

#### AT POINTE DES CHENES

there is a large new Roman Catholic church, with a considerable number of French natives and Canadians dwelling on both banks of the Seine, which is here about thirty feet wide and from three to four feet deep, and running about three miles per hour. A rather novel feature about this river is the fact that there is here much more water running in it than there is in it thirty miles further down at its outlet into Red River, although it receives several tributaries by the way. A considerable portion of the surplus water is no doubt evaporated during its slow progress through the two muskogs and numerous other wet marshes over which it has to travel: but a considerable portion of the lost water finds its way to the Red River through two large coulees, which empty themselves near the lower end of Kildonan. There are about half-a-dozen English-speaking families at Pointe des Chenes, but they are a small number to support a school; some of them sent their children to the French school, but the teacher sent the young heretics home again, stating that there was not sufficient room in the schoolhouse to accommodate them, which is quite likely, since the teacher occupies a portion of the schoolhouse as a private residence. There is here also one of the

#### BEST SAW AND GRIST MILLS

in the province. The price charged for grinding wheat is one-sixth, and for sawing lumber \$10 per thousand feet.

On Saturday morning I started for Clear Springs settlement, and in doing so passed through a corner of

#### THE MENNONITE RESERVE,

near to the village of Bloominhoff, to which is attached the land in the north-east quarter of township seven, range six, east. Although Bloominhoff lay about a mile and a half out of my road, and the chance for holding conversation with its inhabitants was very small, as most of them are about as ignorant of English as I am ignorant of Low Dutch, which they speak, yet I could not resist the temptation to visit these peculiar people in their own homes. I had ample opportunities for seeing whatever I wanted to see, as the people were very friendly, but our conversation was almost a complete failure, as my small collection of Gaelic and French words were entirely worthless, and I had to keep to the English, of which they seemed to understand a little, but could scarcely speak a word. On my asking for a drink of milk the obliging lady Mennonite brought along with a jug of rich, sweet milk a plate with bread on it, and another with butter. I gave a copy of the *NORTHERN MESSENGER* to an intelligent young man named Isaac Warkington, and he took it and read it slowly, about as well as a boy who had got through the first book of lessons would do, but he evidently did not understand all he read. I had a much better opportunity on the following Monday of holding intercourse with the Mennonites, through an interpreter, a Scotchman, named John Peterson, who had learned to speak the Low Dutch fluently, and with whom I visited the village of Steibach, where I got civil answers to all the questions asked without being made to feel like an intruder, as I have often felt when searching

for news in the vicinity of Montreal. As the information gained during this interview will probably form the subject of another letter, I will leave the Mennonites for the present, merely saying that, with the exception of the adjoining Scotch and Canadian settlement of Clear Springs, I have seen no such progress made in cultivating the ground and in building dwelling-houses, stables and other outbuildings in any part of the new settlements in Manitoba. In the matter of gardening they are far

#### AHEAD OF THEIR ENGLISH NEIGHBORS;

not only vegetables, but flowers being extensively cultivated by them. I believe that there is more gardening done in the village of Bloom-inhoff than is done in any township in Manitoba east of the Red River, yet the place where the village with its numerous gardens now stands, was only five years ago a wilderness, and the present inhabitants were dwelling in South-eastern Russia.

On Sunday forenoon I attended divine service in the house of one of the Canadian settlers at Clear Springs, and at the conclusion assisted in the organization of a Sunday-school. On the previous Sabbath day I had also assisted in organizing a Sunday-school at Cook's Creek, and as the organizing and starting of Sunday schools in the new settlements of this province will probably occupy many of my Sundays while out here, I would like to say to the superintendents, teachers and scholars in some of the highly favored Sunday-schools in Quebec and Ontario, that if they would save a few of their

#### OLD SUNDAY-SCHOOL PAPERS

and send them here, they would be very acceptable reading for children living in such remote places that the only school that they will have a chance to attend for some years to come is a Sunday-school, and whose parents are at present too hard up to spend money in books or papers. If the benevolent Sabbath-school scholars in the Eastern Provinces would save some of their old Sunday-school papers and tie them in a bundle directed to "R., Drawer 32, Winnipeg Post Office," I will see that they are properly distributed among the Sunday scholars in the newly-settled portions of this province and the Little Saskatchewan country.

Clear Springs, County of Provencher, May 18th.

#### THE CLEAR SPRINGS SETTLEMENT—MARSHES AND RIVERS—THIRTY-SETTLED TOWNSHIPS.

SIR,—The settlement of Clear Springs is the most progressive that I have yet seen in the North-West. This, in my opinion, is chiefly owing to the three following causes: First, The people are nearly all young married men and women, and were possessed of considerable means when they first settled here. Secondly, The land is most favorably situated for farming purposes, being slightly rolling, owing to several coulees which pass through it in a north-westerly direction, the banks being from four to eight feet high. These coulees unite into one stream near the northwest part of Township 7, range 6, east, and form what is called the Moira River, which afterwards takes a westerly course of about six miles, and becomes lost in a large marsh. So effectually is this little river lost

that none of the settlers here could tell me where, or by what means, it found an outlet into Red River. Lastly, I believe that the presence of the Mennonites has a good deal to do with the present progressive condition of their English-speaking neighbors, as the

#### SCOTCH PRIDE

of the latter will not suffer them to lag behind the quiet, plodding Mennonites in the culture of the soil. I think that if the Mennonite settlements had been scattered over the whole province, instead of being confined to two reserves, the whole country would be better cultivated.

The people here had their spring's work nearly finished at the time of my visit (19th May), and I do not know of a place in Eastern Canada where the farmers sow so much grain on an average as is done here. The quantity of land cultivated by each farmer ranges from thirty to sixty acres, and more than three-fourths of this ground was green with the young growing crops when I saw it. As there are ample supplies of tamarac to be had within six or eight miles, the cultivated fields are generally well fenced with tamarac poles. There are a number of beautiful

#### NEVER-FAILING SPRINGS

one in this quarter, from which the settlement takes its name. The flow of water from the largest spring would fill a two and a half-inch auger hole. The water is very clear, but leaves a red stain or soft, pulpy scum adhering to the sides and bottom of its channel, just like a spring which is situated on the farm in Hull where I was born, and the water is the same in taste. Timber has been prepared to build a schoolhouse here, but in most of the families the children are too young to go to school. It is remarkable

#### HOW VALUABLE LAND HAS ALREADY BECOME

here; one quarter section favorably situated was sold this spring for \$2,000, the last being only \$10 seven years ago.

The sections along the west border of Township 7, range 7, are pretty good farming lands, but the rest of the township is of inferior quality, being composed of gravel ridges and swamps, the subsoil in all cases being either coarse gravel or very fine gray colored sand. There are a number of French Canadians settled along the banks of the Seine all through the eastern part of this township, but I fear that few of them will ever come to be well off while they stay there.

On Tuesday morning I went northeast through this township to the French settlement on the Seine, and travelled down the banks of that stream, about six miles, to Pointe des Chenes. In all the distance travelled over, except about a mile and a half as I approached Pointe des Chenes, the land is light, with a fine hungry-looking sand for a subsoil. The crops may be good for a few years, but I am sure they will not hold out long.

From Pointe des Chenes I went north over a wet, open prairie to the Canadian settlement of Caledonia, in township 9, range 7, east. Only the western range of sections in this township are in the open prairie, the rest being what is here called woods. The western portion of this township is nearly a dead level and wet. I travelled nearly two miles on a stretch near the

northwest part of the township without ever stepping on dry ground. All had the usual covering of water, through which a vigorous growth of grass was growing. This settlement was made four or five years ago, when the seasons were remarkably dry, but the two past seasons have been wet, and the people could get in very little crop. This

#### WET LAND

could be readily drained, but the cost would be too great to be borne by the few settlers living here, who own not more than a fourth part of the land which would be benefited by any drain which would take the surface water from the settlement. There is a stream called Fish Creek, which, after a course of five or six miles in a westerly direction, comes out of the woods about two and a half miles from the southeast corner of the township, when it spreads itself into a marsh, and continues in a westerly direction for about five miles, then empties into the Seine through a short coulee. The deepening of this creek would not cost a sixth part of the increased value which the drainage secured by such deepening would add to the adjacent lands. There is also a considerable stream, called English River, which has its source near the border of the province, in latitude 49.35, and longitude 96.26 west. This stream, after a north-westerly course of about twelve miles, partly as a marsh and partly as a creek (river they call it), enters the prairie near the south-east corner of township 10, range 7, east, which is called Richland, but, like a great deal of rich land in these parts, is nearly all under water—at least that portion which I saw of it. When the English River reaches the open prairie, it is transformed into a marsh and drowns a considerable portion of townships nine, ten and eleven in ranges five and six east, the water ultimately finding an outlet in Cook's Creek, near the northwest corner of Township 11, range 6, east. At the time of my visit to these parts (May 21st and 22nd) there were over seventy-five square miles of good land under the waters of English River in its course of over twelve miles as a marsh from the point where it comes out of the bush near the southwest corner of Richland until it enters Cook's Creek near the northwest corner of Rossmore. I believe that a

#### SMALL STREAM SHOVEL

of say twelve or fifteen horse power placed on a flat boat, say ten feet wide and thirty feet long, would dig a channel twelve feet wide and three feet deep through the whole length of this marsh in one season, at a cost of not over \$2,000 for fuel and attendance, while 50,000 acres of wet land would be drained.

At the point where English River reaches the prairie is a favorite camping-ground of the Indians. I visited the encampment, but none of those present (chiefly squaws and children) could speak English. I was told by their neighbors that they are

#### STILL PAGANS.

The only remarkable thing about this encampment was the number and variety of the dogs, which seemed all anxious to let me know that they could bark and growl the same way that Christians' dogs do. Besides the Indians, there are only two or three settlers living in the township of Richland, which is mostly wooded.

There is a Canadian settlement of four or five families in the bush near the centre of Township 9, range 7. Being anxious to know how bush-farming is done in this country, I went nearly two miles through brush and mud until I came to a very stony ridge, such as I had not before seen in this country, the

#### LARGE BOULDERS

protruding out of the soil so thickly that you might travel a considerable distance without letting your boots come in contact with the ground, by jumping from one big stone to another. I here saw four inhabited dwellings and several fields under crop, the land being light and dry and in some places pretty free of stone. Most of the land in these parts, except a wet strip of a little more than a mile wide on the border of the prairie, was overrun by bush fires about eight or ten years ago, and only patches of the larger timber remain, but the second growth is coming on speedily. There is scarcely any more labor required to bring these brûlés under cultivation than most of the willow-covered prairies. The people here, although poor, seem pretty contented with their lot, as their homes are sheltered from the fierce blasts which sometimes in winter blow across the prairies, and they have an abundance of wood for fuel and fencing, and plenty of good-tasted water which is not to be had in many places in this country. There is a school in operation in this township (Caledonia), and there are forty children of school age living in the district, but, owing to the wet state of the roads, the distance some have to come, and also the number of children who have to help their parents at this season, the attendance of scholars at present is only about a dozen.

It was after 4 p.m. on Wednesday, the 21st May, when I reached Millbrook, and had to go nearly three miles before reaching any house which seemed to have been inhabited, although I had passed some half a dozen unfinished buildings. Feeling very hungry, I called at the first house to get

#### SOMETHING TO EAT.

but there was no human inhabitant present, although there was a considerable field of young grain growing, enclosed by a fence, near by. I went a half mile further to another house, which was also deserted. I next visited two other houses with no better success. I was beginning to get a little anxious, as I had no provisions with me, and it was now past six o'clock, and I was growing tired as well as hungry. I then climbed upon the walls of an unfinished building, and with my glass took a view of my surroundings. The country to the south and west was an open prairie with scarcely a bush on it; yet only one house, and it was unfinished, could be seen within a distance of more than six miles. Towards the southeast, from three to eight miles distance, could be seen the houses of Caledonia and Richland which I had lately visited. The view towards the north was cut off by several bluffs of small poplars, but towards the northwest, about one and a half miles distance, I discovered a small shanty with two little children playing in front of it, a sure sign of civilization. I hastened to this hut and found it to be occupied by a family who came from the Gatineau, not far from where I was

born. While the goodwife was preparing supper I learned that the

#### DESERTED HOUSES

which I had visited, as well as some others in that locality, belong to young men whose parents live in Kildonan, where the young men are at present stopping, but as there are extensive hay-marshes in this quarter, they cut a large quantity of hay in autumn and feed it to their dry stock, which are stabled here during winter, the young farmers keeping bachelors' hall and attending to the stock during that time, but returning to the old homestead after they have put in a little crop in the spring, leaving the cattle to range over the country at pleasure. Owing to this cause, and also the large amount of wet land, there are only two or three inhabited houses at present in the south half of the township of Millbrook.

The people living here are very inconveniently situated for receiving letters or papers by mail; their nearest post-office being Cook's Creek which is from eight to twelve miles distant, with an immense marsh intervening. This and the adjacent township west of it, called Plympton, are very thinly settled, although not included in the half-breed reserve. I do not think that there are at present over forty families living in the two townships. I am told that there is a considerable quantity of Government land here yet, but as it is so wet, and also in the railway reserve, settlers do not care to get it, not knowing how much it may ultimately cost.

Winnipeg, May 24th.

#### THE PENITENTIARY AND LUNATIC ASYLUM—ALKALI SPOTS—INVESTIGATING A MUSKEG.

SIR.—On the afternoon of Tuesday, 27th May, I left Winnipeg to visit a number of Canadian settlements lying north-west of the city. After a journey of fifteen miles (part of it through a wet marsh) I came to a place called

#### STONY MOUNTAIN,

in the township of Rockwood. This mountain is a solid ledge of limestone rock, about a mile long by a quarter of a mile wide, and some seventy or eighty feet above the surrounding swamp. There is a gentle slope from the plain up to the top of the mountain, on the east side; but on the west side it is nearly perpendicular. Several lime-kilns are built into the sides of this little mountain, and considerable quantities of lime and stone are brought from here to Winnipeg. The Provincial Penitentiary is built on the top of this rock, and commands one of the most extensive views in Manitoba, the city of Winnipeg being plainly seen, although thirteen miles distant as the crow flies. I was shown all through the penitentiary building by Mr. Bedson, the very efficient warden, who seems to have a special knack for keeping order in an institution of this kind, which gives accommodation to the lunatics as well as the convicts of the great North-West. Twenty-four of the latter and fourteen of the former class now find board, lodgings and employment in and around this institution. There is a considerable farm and garden connected with the establishment, which is being rapidly enlarged, and will soon furnish more produce than is required at the institution.

While walking through the garden in company with Mr. Bedson, a middle-aged man approached the latter gentleman and asked permission to go out of the garden to see his son, whom he had not seen for over four weeks. Mr. Bedson replied that he could not go outside the garden, but that he (Bedson) would tell the boy to come and see his father. After we left Mr. Bedson told me that the man we had just left was a lunatic, and that quite a number of the other persons present in the garden were of unsound mind, who were sent into the garden in fine weather, where they could work or walk around as they pleased, while several of the most trusty convicts were employed to keep watch over their actions and assist in preventing their escape. Several of the penitentiary guards were also within hailing distance. One of the lunatics had recently made his escape from the garden and ran nearly three miles across a wet prairie before being caught. Everything around the building is kept

#### EXCEEDINGLY NEAT AND CLEAN;

yet the convicts sometimes suffer through the lack of proper drainage, which seems the more strange since the building is on the top of a mountain. There is a well in the building bored 180 feet down into the solid limestone rock, and the water drawn from it is very clear and of good taste. From the summit of Stony Mountain I had a good view of the surrounding country, where I saw the evil effects of the alkali in many places.

In every part of the country in which I had yet been, I saw many

#### ALKALI SPOTS,

where the ground was slightly crusted with something like hoar frost, which in some places made the ground nearly white, with scarcely a blade of grass growing. There are many of these alkali spots in the city of Winnipeg, but they were mostly of small size, covering only a few rods. In the townships of Rockwood and Victoria (Nos. 13th and 14th in range two, east) there are pretty extensive tracks of alkali lands, where very little grass will grow. There are very few cultivated fields on the eastern half of the township of Victoria which are not more or less damaged by alkali spots, amounting in some fields to nearly a third of the surface. In the worst spots no grain whatever will grow, while in others there is a very feeble growth of grain intermixed with several kinds of weeds, one of which looked exactly like what we used to call "fireweed" in Canada. I have seen some stubble fields where in places there was very strong grain stubble, indicating a rank growth of grain, while within a few feet there was not a vestige of stubble to be seen, the alkali having prevented any grain from growing.

There is a strip of wooded land about a mile wide which runs northward along the centre of townships 13, 14, 15 and 16, range 2, east. This wooded land is mostly divided into wood-lots of twenty acres each, which are owned by the holders of the adjacent prairie lands. In some places in the township of Victoria and lying to the eastward of this strip of wood, there are most

#### BEAUTIFUL LITTLE BLUFFS

and strips of wood, consisting chiefly of poplar fringed with willows. These strips of wood often enclose beautiful little level grassy parks of very

fine grass of last season's growth, about six to ten inches high. The picture is most charming, but is somewhat marred by the thought that it is caused by the presence of alkali, since wood will not grow on the alkali spots, which are covered with short fine grass. As if the alkali was not bad enough in itself, there is in this township (Victoria) considerable tracts of what we used to call "spouty land," where the land is quite wet, even on the top of the ridges or slight elevations, where the water seems to ooze out of the soil. I passed two deserted homesteads where houses had been built, and also considerable land cultivated during the dry seasons which prevailed three or four years ago. Part of it had also been ploughed last year, but no crop could be sown owing to the wet condition of the land. The owners of these

#### SPOUTY LOTS

have left for drier quarters and the lots are for sale, and any person visiting them in winter time would be ready to consider them suitable for farms, as there is plenty of fall for the surface water, and the spouty nature of the land is concealed by the frost. I walked across a field of this spouty land which had been ploughed last year, and although there was a fall of about a foot in every hundred feet, yet it was a most difficult, and, I might say, disgusting job to travel over it, as at every step I took my feet sank four or five inches in a "soapy like" mud, of a mouse color. Of course raising grain on such land, except in very dry seasons, is out of the question.

On the west side of this township there are numerous dry, gravelly ridges, and near the north end there is considerable land which has a moderate covering of dark loam, resting on a subsoil of exceedingly fine "dead sand," which displays a tendency to "run" when a ditch is being dug through it. There is here a considerable growth of what is here called birch willow, which grows to about the proper size to use in the correction of unruly boys. This birch willow resembles very much the young shoots of the white birch of Canada.

In the

#### TOWNSHIP OF GREENWOOD,

township 15, range 2, east, there is more woodland than in the townships south of this; also the prairie land is mostly covered with bushes, except in the hay marshes. There also seems to be much less alkali lands than in either Rockwood or Victoria. In the range of townships immediately to the east of this there is an extensive marsh, to which I made reference in my letter of April 23th. For some distance along the western border of this marsh, and at the eastern borders of Victoria and Greenwood, there is a natural curiosity called

#### JACK-FISH CREEK

from the large numbers of Jack-fish (pike) which are caught in it. Several young men went out in a boat on this creek last Wednesday and in less than half a day caught fifty-seven (57) pike, weighing from three to nine pounds each. The fish were caught with drag-hooks and many more would have been taken were it not for the loss of three of the hooks, which were broken from the line by these powerful and voracious fish. I got pieces of these fish for breakfast to-

day, and must say that they were good eating, having been salted for a couple of days. There is a very large spring in one place in this creek which remains unfrozen in winter time, and to this place the pike resort, and are then caught in large numbers. This creek (or lake) is said to be five miles long, from ten to two hundred feet wide, and from three to twelve feet deep, and although there is a considerable current flowing through it, yet it has very little water flowing into it, and no visible outlet. Its banks are in nearly all places composed of muskeg. I visited a part of this creek yesterday, and had to travel for nearly one hundred yards before getting to the water's edge, over a spongy-like surface, where at every step I took I sank from four to six inches in water, although I was carefully stepping on the most grassy spots. The journey over this place was certainly exciting, if not very dangerous, as the whole surrounding surface seemed to tremble at each step, and I was not altogether without fears that I might slip through the top crust into the unknown depths beneath. When the open water was reached, which was at that place about 100 feet wide, I could not see the bottom, and felt a longing desire to return to *terra firma*, and the journey back to solid ground was made much more quickly than the one in the opposite direction. When the solid land was regained and I drew a long breath of relief, I could distinctly hear my heart beat from the excitement. I intend to make some further investigations about this creek, but the "June froshet" (as the wet season in this province is called) seems to be setting in, as it has been raining more or less every day for three days past, and in such a time it is not pleasant to be investigating the peculiarities of a muskeg. As the weekly mail leaves early to-morrow morning, I must conclude for the present.

Greenwood, Township 15th, Range two, East, May 30th.

#### JACK FISH CREEK—SLAVISH WORK—WELL DIGGING.

SIR.—The weather being wet on Friday, 7th, and forenoon of Saturday, 8th May, I did not feel inclined to make any further personal explorations of Jack Fish Creek, but was credibly informed that a little to the northward of the Canada Pacific Railway Telegraph Line the surface soil or crust above the bog, through which the water of Jack Fish Creek finds its outlet to Netley's Creek, and through which the pike from Red River and Netley's Creek find their way to Jack Fish Creek, becomes so firm that teams crossed over it the present season. At the crossing of the telegraph line the bog is pretty bad, being nine or ten feet deep and wide also, and is by far the worst muskeg on the track of the Canada Pacific Railway between Selkirk and the Narrows of Lake Manitoba.

The greater part of the townships of Greenwood and Dundas (15 and 16, in range 2, east) is called

#### BROOK PRAIRIE,

being thickly covered with oak, hazel, poplar and willow bushes, with a good many boulders in some places, the land being chiefly a loamy clay, with an occasional sandy ridge. There is also a considerable quantity of wooded land,

from which the farmers draw a good idea of firewood to Winnipeg in winter time with ox-teams, although the distance is from thirty to forty miles. I have done a good deal of wood-hauling in my younger days, and always considered it a slavish kind of work, but in all my experience I never met with such a case of

#### WOOD-DRAWING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

as is experienced by the farmers here. The ox-aleigh is usually loaded with from a cord and a half to two cords of dry poplar firewood on Monday, and a start is made before daylight on Tuesday morning, and after five or six hours travelling a halt of about two hours is made to rest and feed the oxen, when the journey is resumed. This process of alternately travelling for five hours and resting two hours is continued until Winnipeg is reached, sometime during the forenoon of Wednesday. At each halting place, a fire is kindled and tea made, and, not unfrequently, the bottle passed around as there are generally several teamsters going in company. When the load is sold in Winnipeg, realising from \$6 to \$9, the whiskey jar is replenished and a start made for home, when a second series of journeyings and campings is gone through, the bottle being passed around more frequently to drive away the drowsy feeling which troubles the teamsters during the second sleepless night passed on the road. Generally when the roads and weather are favorable, the well-tired oxen and their teamsters reach home early on Thursday afternoon, but sometimes they do not get home until sometime on Thursday night. Although the severe sufferings of both men and oxen when travelling on cold and stormy nights, is not easily realized by Ontario farmers, yet some of the young men here seem to enjoy the whole thing, but I fear they will suffer afterwards from the evil effects of the fatigue as well as the grog-drinking. This wood-drawing business was begun during the time when the crops were destroyed by grasshoppers, and the farmers had to do something to keep the pot boiling; but there is no necessity for continuing so demoralizing a business at present.

As the brush land, when the brush is first removed, is very difficult to plough, some of the farmers here have

#### MAMMOTH GRUBBING PLOUGHS,

which are drawn by three, and sometimes four, pairs of oxen and horses, turning over a furrow eighteen inches wide and ploughing two acres in a day, making good work, although the clumps of roots are numerous and tough. In one case I saw where a "manky plough" had been used drawn by two teams which seemed to do nearly as well as the large grubbing ploughs with three or four teams. Where the ploughing is to be done by one team, these root clumps have all to be first cut out of the ground with axes.

There is a pretty large stream called

#### NEELY'S CREEK,

which has its source in the wet, wooded country at the boundary of Kooewatin, and runs south-east, losing itself in the bog lying to the eastward of Dundas. Although the distance to this creek was not over two and a half miles from the border of the settlement, yet but few of the settlers here had ever seen it, and those who had

seen it could tell very little about it. On Saturday afternoon, the weather being fine, I started to visit the creek, although assured that I would meet with more water than was either pleasant or profitable, even before reaching the creek itself. As there was no road to travel on, I had to steer the best way I could through woods, brush, and willow prairie, the water being almost all the time from four to eight inches deep. The soil here seems to be of excellent quality, since it produces immense crops of wild hay where there is an open space; and even among the trees, where the ground was not too wet, the young pea-vines were growing rank, and some of them in blossom, which seems pretty early for the northern borders of Manitoba, on the 24th of May. The large timber here is chiefly Balm of Gilead, and is from six to fifteen inches in diameter near the ground; but as the

#### BALM OF GILEAD

here, quite unlike the poplar, is of little or no value for fuel or building purposes, it detracts from the value of the land; consequently, this tract of country still remains in the possession of the Government. The fact of its being in the railway reserve, while the track of the railway has been removed thirty miles southwards, helps to keep settlers from locating on these lands. The greatest drawback is undoubtedly the wet condition of the soil and the improbability of its being drained for many years to come. There is a narrow strip of dry ground on the banks of the creek, but a short distance back it is very wet. The creek is about twenty-four feet wide with five feet depth of water running in it at a velocity of nearly two miles an hour. Shortly after entering on the prairie, the creek is lost in a muskeg, through which the water filters for over five miles, when it assumes the creek form again and runs out to Red River in a stream so large that a small steamboat can ascend it for a considerable distance from the mouth.

On Monday and Tuesday I visited the western side of these townships; also, the settled parts of the townships adjoining on the first range of townships east. The land here is much drier than almost any I had seen in this province, and consists chiefly of loam with a clay subsoil, which produces large crops of grain. There are some places rather stony, with an occasional ridge of rather poor gravel. The

#### GROWING CROPS HERE LOOKED REMARKABLY FINE,

and the farmers seem to be getting on well. The limestone rock underlies all this quarter, being from ten to twenty feet from the surface. Most of the farmers here have to blast, or drill from ten to fifty feet into this rock in order to obtain a never-failing supply of water, but a few of them have plenty of water without going into the rock for it. The water obtained from wells which have been dug a considerable distance into the rock, is clear and free from all taste, which in a greater or less degree affects the springs and wells in this province.

I travelled westward for several miles towards School Lake through the unsettled portion of Ridge-way (township 15 in range 1, east). The land for nearly the whole distance is a brush, having been burnt over in 1861, and also in 1874. There are some dry ridges in it, but the greater

part is low and wet, although there is a good chance of draining it. The soil is of average quality, but gets worse as you go north-west, near to School Lake. This place will be settled by-and-by, some people having taken up land here lately, but the

#### COST OF CLEARING UP THE BRUSH LANDS

is much more than would buy excellent prairie lands nearer to Winnipeg.

The Kildonan half-breed reserve is six miles square, partly in the township of Victoria, but mostly in the township west of it, Brank. It is nearly all open prairie with a dry soil, and is favorable for farming purposes. A number of claims—240 acres—have been sold here lately at from \$2 to \$3 per acre. There are only two houses yet built on the whole reserve, but ploughing is being done in several places, and more houses will be built soon. The purchasers of these claims can get wood lots to buy in the north part of Greenwood and Ridge-way at \$1 per acre. The Jack Fish Creek crosses the north-eastern corner of this reserve, and is here a pretty stream with gravelly bottom, and numerous small ponds or enlargements, where the water is four or five feet deep at present. There was more than three times the amount of water running in this creek when I crossed it on Monday evening than was running in it on the previous Thursday, six miles further east, where it joins the bog stream. I was told by the people living here that this stream has an annual freshet about the beginning of June—the wet season—but by the beginning of August the stream and also the ponds through which it passes are all dried up.

On Wednesday I travelled southward, crossing the large open prairie lying southwards of the townships of Rockwood and Grassmere, to the Assiniboine, and in

#### TEN MILES OF MY JOURNEY

did not pass a single house, although the land was dry and quite suitable for settlement. I have not heard of any claims having been sold here the present season, but was told that from \$4 to \$8 per acre is the price asked since the Canada Pacific Railway is expected to pass along the northern boundary of this province, while the Winnipeg branch will pass along the south side.

From the parish of St. Paul westward, extending five or six miles on each side of the fifth parallel north latitude to Bale St. Paul, a distance of thirty miles, there is a track of country containing fully 300 square miles, or nearly 300,000 acres of land, almost all of first quality, although it needs draining in many places. It is capable of sustaining a population of 20,000 people, yet, at the present time, there are not a dozen inhabited houses on the whole track. So much for the blessings of half-breed reserves, which serve to demoralize the natives, and enrich speculators to the great material loss of this unfortunate province.

Winnipeg, June 5th.

#### CERTAIN CHARGES AGAINST "RUSTICUS" ANSWERED.—DAYS KIDNAPED—HAD THE "COAL OIL" BOTTLE SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT?

SIR,—I was much surprised to see in a late number of the WITNESS a communication signed by Thomas Greenway, ex-M.P., South Huron,

in which he charges me with untruthfulness in the statements made by me in my communication which appeared in the WITNESS of April 15th. He says, "I regret exceedingly that I deem it necessary to refer to a few of the misrepresentations which the letter contains," yet

#### DOES NOT POINT OUT

a single statement made by me which is not in accordance with the truth, although he hints that what I said "about delays, used-up horses," &c. are exaggerations. If Mr. Greenway would only state the particular cases where I exaggerated or misstated anything, I would feel obliged to him, since it would give me an opportunity of proving my statements or of apologizing to the readers of the WITNESS for having deceived them. I am the more anxious that Mr. Greenway would forward his bill of particulars at once, and also give the names of at least a dozen of the leading citizens of Emerson (or one or two respectable persons) "who are fully acquainted with the circumstances," so that I might call on them and see if they will undertake "a verification of what I (Greenway) have said in reference to this matter." Mr. Greenway would lead your readers to infer that temporary bridges had been constructed across the open water in the Red River at Emerson, on Sunday, March 30th, while there were really no bridges erected until Tuesday, April 1st, except that referred to in my letter as connecting the shore on the eastern or Emerson side of the river with the solid ice on the centre. I was indeed told that the planks which entered into the construction of this bridge were borrowed from Mr. Carney on Sunday, but I thought that it was the ferryman and not Mr. Greenway who had borrowed them, since the ferryman collected toll from the people who passed over them. Mr. Greenway blames me for saying that I "called upon Mr. Tetu and Mr. Grahams on Monday in reference to this matter." Mr. Grahams also makes a similar statement, but

#### I DENY THAT I WENT NEAR THESE GENTLEMEN ON MONDAY.

and I leave to the readers of the WITNESS if I said so in any of my letters. Mr. Tetu's "coal oil bottle" seems to have mixed and muddled the senses of these gentlemen so much that they failed in their calculations of time. Mr. Greenway's letter infers that I "stood by and saw men hard at work, lifting and drawing like horses, without as much as offering to lend a helping hand." I deny the charge, as I assisted in taking across the temporary bridges the first wagon loaded with goods belonging to Mr. Greenway's party, and nearly every load or empty wagon belonging to that party and the Ottawa and Montreal parties which crossed the Red River at that time; yet, during all that time,

#### DID NOT MEET WITH MR. GREENWAY,

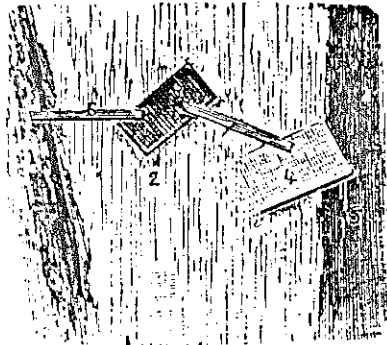
although I was anxious to see him and had made many enquiries as to his whereabouts, while Mr. James Ketch of Kester, seemed to be the working head of the Greenway party. Will Mr. Greenway explain where he was during that cold and stormy 1st of April, when so many of his party took their teams and wagons across the Red River? Mr. Grahams charges me with "being seen at the time I ought to have been present to redeem my pledge" to Mr. Carney to

return the lumber to him, which was borrowed for the purpose of making temporary bridges on which to take the effects of the immigrants across the river. That statement, like many others made by Mr. Grahame, is untruthful. On Thursday afternoon, April 3rd, finding that no more immigrants were wanting to cross the Red River at Emerson, I borrowed a hand-leigh and with it drew the planks which formed the western shore bridge, up the river nearly half a mile on the centre ice to where the eastern shore bridge was located. I then went to hire a team to draw them all up to Mr. Carney's lumber yard, but while looking for a team I met a man who wished me to leave the temporary bridges undisturbed for some time longer, as he wished to take a load across the river, stating that he would deliver the planks to Mr. Carney when he had done with them. I then went with him to see if Mr. Carney was satisfied with this arrangement, and to this he (Mr. Carney) agreed, as the other man was well known to him. Thus your readers will perceive

#### THAT I REDEEMED MY PLEDGE,

although Mr. Grahame has stated that I did not. As it is probable that I will have to refer to Mr. Grahame's false statements and curious actions at some future time, I will say no more on that subject at present.

The following is a rough sketch of the celebrated Emerson toll-bridge:



The Emerson shore is represented by figure 1; the open water by 2; the roof of a flat-boat by 3; a scow for ferrying beams across the river by 4; the centre ice by 5; the plank connecting the Emerson shore with the roof of the flat-boat—the boat itself being fastened in the submerged ice—is represented by 6; and 7 represents the two narrow planks which formed the connection between the roof of the flat-boat and the large scow, the western end of which—the scow—was up on the dry ice, while the other end was submerged in water, the scow being frozen in the partly submerged ice. I crossed this bridge myself, and paid five cents for the privilege, the tollman having taken his stand on the roof of the flat-boat—figure 3—and would not let me pass without paying or fighting, and I preferred doing the former, as I might get a ducking even if I succeeded in giving the tollman a drubbing.

#### THE RIVERS AND LAKES OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCE—A SAIL UP THE WINNIPEG—ENTERING MONTRÉALLES—ATTACKED BY MOSQUITOES—WOODING-UP.

SIR,—As it may be interesting to some of the readers of the WITNESS to hear something about the rivers and lakes, as well as the land in the North-West, I purpose in this letter to give a short account of a recent trip from the city of Winnipeg to Pine Falls, on the Winnipeg River, some seven or eight miles from its outlet, where Messrs. Josiah Adams and G. H. Schneider (formerly of Montréal) are at present erecting a pretty large saw-mill, including shingle and lath machines, and machines for planing, tonguing and grooving. Messrs. Adams and Schneider recently chartered the little steam tug "Victoria," of fourteen tons register, to tow the schooner "Mollie" from Winnipeg to Pine Falls, laden with the machinery for their new mill, and provisions for the men at work there, and having offered me a free passage I accepted it the more readily as the proprietor of the tug "Victoria," Mr. John Doty, of Toronto, and inventor of the well-known "Doty Steam-Engines and Boilers," was to accompany the expedition, and from whom, as well as from Captain McMillan and several of the steamboat hands, I could receive a good deal of information regarding

#### THE NAVIGABLE WATERS OF THIS COUNTRY,

especially in the vicinity of Lake Winnipeg. We left Winnipeg at noon on Thursday, June 12th, and proceeded down the river to Selkirk in less than four hours; here we halted for another four hours, then proceeded to the mouth of the river, and cast anchor to wait for daylight, so that the buoys and stakes which mark the crooked channel at the entrance to the lake might be seen. A sail down the Red River on a warm summer's day is exceedingly enjoyable to a person who has for some time been traveling over the prairies, or among the rather monotonous groves of poplar, as there are numerous beautiful trees, chiefly maple, elm and ash, adorning the banks with green of different tints. The river is not so very crooked, as it is above Winnipeg, but the current is much more swift, and for a distance of about ten miles, between the parish of St. Paul and Little Britain Church, there is a constant succession of rapids which make it very difficult to tow loaded barges up stream from Selkirk to Winnipeg. Mr. Doty drew my attention to a place at the foot of the rapids, about a mile above the Stone Fort, most conveniently situated

#### FOR ERRECTING A DAM ACROES THE RIVER,

with a lock made through a low point of land at the west end, through which vessels could pass up and down the river. The advantage of such lock and dam would be: First—Vessels navigating Lake Winnipeg could bring up firewood, building stone and sand to the City of Winnipeg, where all these needful articles, in the building of a large city, are both scarce and dear. At present, during the period of low water in the river, vessels drawing three feet of water are unable to pass over the rapids. Second—The construction of such a dam would cause a fall of some nine or ten feet in the river, thus creating a splendid water power (the only

one in the province), capable of driving all the machinery required in a large manufacturing city so much needed for the development of this country. Third—A bridge could be constructed here for railway purposes as well as for ordinary traffic, at a fraction of the cost of constructing such a bridge at either Winnipeg or Selkirk, because the river is narrow here (some 400 feet) with high banks and a solid rock bottom, whereas at the two cities named the river is wide with low banks and a mud bottom, that even when filled with piles is not a reliable place to build piers on capable of successfully resisting the pressure from floods and ice in the spring. I am satisfied that the construction of such a dam at the place indicated will be opposed by the persons at present in power in this province, whose interests are chiefly centred in Winnipeg, as it would lead to

#### THE BUILDING OF A RIVAL CITY

which would soon eclipse Winnipeg. It would also in a slight degree increase the danger from flooding, to which the latter city is already too liable. The banks of the Red River for over a dozen miles before entering Lake Winnipeg have a dreary aspect, being very low and covered with a thick growth of reeds and rushes, with a few willow bushes. Here and there on the drier spots there were Indian wigwams, whose occupants seem to subsist on fish; but the locality is dangerous even for Indians to reside on, as the country is subject to be overflowed by the waters of Lake Winnipeg should a strong gale blow from the north for some time. A few years ago

#### A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIAN FAMILIES WERE DROWNED

here by a freshet of this kind. The water having risen rapidly in the night during a gale from the north, floated away their canoes. The poor Indians were aroused from their slumbers by the water coming into their huts, and ran out to find their only means of escape removed; they were carried away and drowned by the furious waves which swept over the land to a depth of six to eight feet. Although there is a low strip of dry land along the banks of the river the greater part of the way, yet a short distance back and extending for several miles the land is mostly under water, with a growth of rushes and wild grass and reeds coming through in most places. In Netly Lake, covering several square miles, the water is too deep for even rushes to grow in it. The outlet of Red River at Lake Winnipeg is about two miles wide, and a sand (or mud) bar lies across the whole distance, the water on which is only from two to three feet deep, except in a narrow, crooked channel, where there is a depth of nearly six feet at ordinary level. This channel cannot be navigated at night, for although marked with buoys and stakes, the darkness of night prevents their being seen. This state of affairs is very disagreeable to vessels coming in from the lake at night, especially when there is a storm threatening, as the unfortunate vessel has to remain at anchor exposed to the fury of the elements until daylight. As this channel runs east and west for nearly a mile in one place, sailing vessels cannot come in at all if there is a strong east wind blowing, but have to remain outside until the wind changes. When coming out through this chan-

nel on Friday morning we met a schooner endeavoring to beat her way up the channel against a moderate east wind. As the vessel had no load she was able to sail across the channel back and forth, while a man at the bow kept continually throwing the lead. She remained beating about here until we were some ten or twelve miles out in the lake. When opposite Point Grande Marie, at the boundary of Keewatin, my attention was attracted to the beautiful white appearance of the shore, which seemed as if covered with snow. Capt. McMillan informed me that this appearance was caused by the fine white sand with which the shore of this lake abounds. The

#### COUNTRY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LAKE

is well wooded, with poplar, balsam of Gilead, balsam and spruce, but the soil is generally of poor quality, being gravelly and stony where high enough for cultivation. On the east side of the lake, a short distance north of the Manitoba boundary, there is a range of mountains or elevated hills running north for six or eight miles. These hills, I think, are from two to three hundred feet above the lake, and are thickly covered with spruce, and can be seen readily from the deck of the tug several miles before reaching Lake Winnipeg, and continue in sight until we reach Fort Alexander, at the mouth of the Winnipeg River, being then some eight or nine miles to the west of us. During the first twenty-five miles of our voyage on Lake Winnipeg, we were too distant from shore to make much observation as to the country without a glass, which the rocking of the boat prevented my using. We passed round Elk Island (the most northern point in our journey) at one o'clock, it having begun to rain heavily about an hour before. Passing near the shore of this island we had a pretty good view of the timber and soil. The southwest point of the island is composed of a ledge of limestone rock with numerous boulders scattered on the beach. All around the island, the beach is more or less strewn with granite boulders, some of them being nearly

#### AS LARGE AS AN INDIAN'S HUT.

In a few places where boulders were not sufficiently numerous to protect the shore the lake continues to make inroads on the land, which seems to be of a light, sandy character. The whole island contains about 5,000 acres of land, all densely wooded with poplar, balsam of Gilead, spruce and balsam. Although Elk Island is distant nearly two miles from the mainland south of it, yet the water is so exceedingly shallow here that only small boats and canoes can pass through. This shallowness of the water causes the voyage between the estuaries of Red and Winnipeg Rivers to be ten miles longer than if there was sufficient depth of water to allow vessels to pass south of the island. We reached Winnipeg River at about five p.m., and took on board the schooner some 2,000 feet of plank and boards, then proceeded up the river six miles to the foot of the Manitou Rapids, which, owing to the prevailing easterly winds having lowered the water in the bay at the mouth of the river, had become rather formidable for an ascending craft. The schooner was left here at anchor while the "Victoria" proceeded up the rapids to Pine Falls, the voyage being nearly as



exciting as running the Lachine Rapids. As I will at some other time give a description of what I saw in this vicinity, I will conclude by an account of the

#### BATHER PRIMITIVE MODE OF "WOODING UP"

practised here and in other places on the lake. On Monday evening, having with considerable labor delivered our cargo at its destination, we proceeded a short distance down the river, and ran the little tug as near the shore as we could in a muddy bay to get a supply of firewood for our return trip across the lake. The end of a long plank was put ashore, and all hands, including myself, started to carry the wood on board. We had first to proceed up a steep bank thickly covered with an undergrowth of poplar, and about forty feet high, and after a journey of about one hundred and fifty yards, came to a place where the poplar had been cut into firewood the winter before last, but had never been piled, and as a very vigorous second growth had since sprung up, there was considerable difficulty in finding the wood scattered around. This wood we gathered up and carried on our shoulders down through brush and bushes to the tug, while the hungry mosquitoes assailed us as if we were robbing their nest. I have seen mosquitoes as bad in the swamps of Hull thirty years ago, but then I could use both hands in keeping them off, but here my hands being engaged holding the firewood on my shoulders, the mosquitoes had it nearly all their own way, for the hour or more which we spent in wooding up.

#### THE INDIANS—SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR APPEARANCE, CHARACTER AND HABITS—A BIT OF ADVICE TO THE GOVERNMENT.

SIR.—There is an Indian reserve at the mouth of the Winnipeg River extending five or six miles along each bank of the river. Here about two dozen dwelling-houses and about as many more wigwams are erected, in which there are Indian families living at present. The quantity of land cultivated by each family is very small, not exceeding one hundred acres in the aggregate, more than half of which is held by four or five families. There is an Episcopal and also a Roman Catholic missionary residing here. Most of the Indians now profess Christianity and some of them seem to practice it more closely than do many white professors.

Last winter a teamster employed in one of the log shanties up the Winnipeg River, was coming to Selkirk for supplies, and passed through the Indian settlement on Sunday. Having only wild hay to feed his horses, he sought to buy some oats or barley from the Indians, but found that only one Indian had any grain to spare. The teamster called at the house of this Indian, whom he found reading his Indian Testament, but when the teamster proposed to buy a bag of oats or barley the Indian flatly

#### REFUSED TO SELL

any on Sunday, since all such transactions were forbidden in that book (pointing to the Indian Testament). The teamster pleaded earnestly the case of his hungry horses, but in vain, as the Indian was inexorable in his purpose to keep the Sabbath. During the Sunday which I spent at Pine Falls, quite a number of Indians transported their canoes and luggage across the portage,

regardless of the fourth commandment, some going up stream and more going down, the latter having been employed to work in the steam saw-mill of Messrs. Burrows and Walkley, which is situated at the mouth of Winnipeg river. The Indians who encamped near the Falls were also engaged in fishing as usual, but I think they are mostly pagans, although seemingly anxious to be very friendly, and will grin, laugh and hold out their hand to shake hands with you when you try to hold conversation with them in English. They seem to have a wholesome—or unwholesome—dread of an imaginary creature, a species of gorilla, called

#### THE "WINDEGO."

which carries death and destruction wherever he goes, and no Indian will remain in the section of country where he is supposed to be. I saw an Indian who speaks a little English, and who professes to have seen the "Windego," but he has been so often jibed about it by incredulous white men that he refuses to tell anything further about it. I fear the "Windego" is not to be found without the assistance of a bottle.

When the steamboat was passing a little above Fort Alexander, I was shown

#### AN OLD INDIAN CEMETERY

not used now, where the dead bodies were placed in boxes, wrapped around with the bark of the white birch and placed on the top of four posts, some eight or nine feet from the ground. I could see from the deck of the steamboat one or two of these aerial sepulchres, and was told that there were many more concealed by the bushes, while the ground in that vicinity is strewn with human bones and skulls, the latter having their full complement of teeth, as toothache was also unknown among the Indians until they began to use civilized food.

The soil in this reserve is of good quality near the river, and heavily wooded with poplar and balsam of Gilead, requiring a good deal of labor to clear it. The Government had promised to furnish these Indians with seed grain, but the grain did not arrive until a few days before my visit, when the season was too far advanced to sow it with any prospects of securing a fair crop. It seems like mocking the Indians to send them

#### SEED GRAIN IN THE MONTH OF JUNE

to be sown in land which is almost certain to be visited by August frosts.

There seems to be considerable room for improvement in the mode of dealing with the Indians out West, as well as at Oka, and I would make the following

#### SUGGESTIONS

for the consideration of those in authority:

First—Let all the treaty stipulations be carried out to the letter, and in the way and at the time when it will do the Indians the greatest amount of good.

Second—The Indians should be encouraged to build dwelling-houses, raise cattle, and cultivate the soil as much as possible, by furnishing them with the things needful to this end, at as low rates as possible, and in some cases, it may be gratuitously.

Third—A practical farmer, with his family, should be stationed in each reserve to conduct a "model farm," where the young Indians could

be taught to work steadily while young, before they learn to skulk around like their daddies, which is not very different from what white people would do if brought up in the same way as the Indians are. The farmers chosen to conduct model farms among the Indians should be something more than political hacks, whose chief end in all their doings is their own and their party's aggrandizement. Each one should, in addition to a complete knowledge of farming, be a jack-of-all-trades, with a great deal of patience and perseverance, and, if possible, an enthusiast in his desire to promote the advancement of the Indian race. His wife and family should also be a little enthusiastic in the same way, and while hating dirt and lice with a perfect hatred should not be too squeamish and easily disgusted by their presence. This farmer should be supplied with all the things needful to begin and carry on the farm, and in addition to a moderate salary receive also a percentage of the produce raised on the farm. A number of Indian lads and some lasses from twelve to eighteen years of age should be engaged permanently working on the farm, and older Indians should be allowed to work in payment for such supplies as they may need. All Indians who may desire to cultivate lands of their own should be furnished with seed grain from the model farm by way of a loan, to be paid back the following fall, when the threshing is done. The farmer should see that the full amount of grain is returned in the fall to be again lent to the same parties the following spring, and thus the ground would not have to remain idle for lack of seed to sow in it, as is so often the case now, since want of forethought, more than laziness, is the great drawback to the Indians becoming successful farmers.

While waiting for the boat to sail to Winnipeg river, I went out about three miles west of this city, where a number of Indians are encamped, and tried to interview several Indian chiefs from Qu'Appelle, at the head of the Assiniboine River, but for want of a proper interpreter I could not get much information. I learned that some of the Indians in that country do a good deal of farming, but the greater part do nothing in that line. The Indians complained of not having received the cattle promised to them, and were considerably annoyed at a recent order of the Government prohibiting the sending of cartridges to the North-West. Some of these Indians had their

#### FACES PAINTED

with yellow, blue and green paint, and with large feathers stuck in their heads, seemed to think they looked formidable; but I think there is not half the fight in them that is in many of the French native traders. I have been informed that the Government has issued orders for the persons who bought lands unlawfully from the treaty Indians in St. Peter's reserve to vacate the lands immediately, which, although it may involve some cases of hardship, is a step in the right direction.

Winnipeg, June 20th.

#### NAVIGATION OF THE ASSINIBOINE RIVER—HELPING THE STEAMER—A WESTERN THUNDERSTORM—PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE.

SIR.—On the afternoon of June 21st I left Winnipeg on the steamer "Cheyenne" to go up

the Assiniboine to Portage La Prairie, which lies nearly due west of Winnipeg about sixty miles in a direct line, but is sixty miles by the land road and one hundred and eighty miles by the water route, caused by the extreme crookedness of the river. Owing to the prevailing rains, the water was unusually high, and still rising, which added to the swiftness of the current against which the good steamer "Cheyenne" had to contend. The boat was heavily laden with freight and about seventy passengers, and in addition had a deeply-laden barge in tow alongside. Under such unfavorable circumstances it was not wonderful that our progress westward was exceedingly slow, so that we were forty hours from leaving Red River until we reached the landing at Portage La Prairie.

This voyage was to me most tedious, owing to the very slow progress of the boat, as well as the monotonous

#### SCENERY ALONG THE BANKS

of the river, which are lined with brushwood nearly all the way; in which there is an occasional opening where some French native has erected a house and cultivated a few acres of ground—when he is at home. On some of these patches of cultivated land the crops looked well, but the greater portion was suffering from too much rain, as the growing crops were in many places being drowned out by water, which by a very little effort at draining would have run off; the Assiniboine and allowed the crops to grow with all the luxuriance which such rich soil is capable of producing.

Although I took cabin passage, for which I paid \$3, the number of lady passengers was so large that they occupied nearly all the sleeping berths, so that I and many other gentlemen had to sleep during two nights on the cabin floor, with no other bedclothes than our coat or catchel for a pillow.

A few miles west of Winnipeg, when passing through the parishes of St. James and St. Charles, there are what are called

#### THE ASSINIBOINE RAPIDS,

to be overcome by every boat going to the Portage. It is probable that the "Cheyenne" would have been able to have sailed up these rapids had she been unencumbered, but with the barge in tow it could not be done without assistance from shore. Ten men (hands of the boat) were landed, and, taking the end of a very long rope, drew it out to its full length up the banks beside the rapid stream and fastened it to a tree or some object on shore, while the other end of the rope was put around the capstan, which is worked by steam. The rope was then drawn in, and the engines kept going at full steam, when the "Cheyenne" and her consort ascended the rapids at a snail's pace. This process had to be gone through three or four times before reaching Headway.

The banks of the river westward from Headway are very low, and in the vicinity of Bain St. Paul only about two feet above the present high water in the river; but as the immediate banks are generally higher than the land a short distance back, the back water from the river in many places flooded considerable tracts of otherwise good land. When passing near the lower end of

## LONG LAKE

my attention was attracted to a large drain or cutting, which had been done by the Public Works Department of this province, for the purpose of draining the water of Long Lake into the Assiniboine; but as the former refused to join the latter at this point, the Assiniboine concluded to use the canal to convey a portion of its surplus water into Long Lake. To prevent this untoward event a dam had to be made across the Government canal, and when I passed the water on the Assiniboine side of the dam was fully two feet higher than the surface of the water on the other side of the dam. The latter finds an outlet along the immense marsh of Bale St. Paul and into the Assiniboine, many miles lower down towards the Red River.

The timber along the banks of the river for nearly half the distance to Portage La Prairie is rather small, but as you approach the Portage the trees are of respectable size and would compare favorably with the low-lying woodlands of Quebec or Ontario.

On the morning of the 22nd June while the "Cheyenne" was sailing from High Bluff towards the Portage, I witnessed the first

## SERVILE THUNDER-STORM

that I saw in this country. The thunder cloud before reaching us had a peculiar indigo-blue color which I have never seen in the eastern provinces. This strange color drew the attention of the passengers, especially of Mr. Wild, of London, Ont., and editor of the *Canada Farmer*, who was with us. The rain which followed was not as heavy as I have frequently seen in Lower Canada, but the flashes of lightning and peals of thunder succeeded each other more rapidly than I had ever seen before. The storm did not continue more than twenty minutes, but a squaw was struck dead in her hut near High Bluff by the lightning, and her husband was also stunned; some cattle were also said to have been killed.

The squaw who was killed belonged to a band of the Sioux who were driven out of the United States. They are still believers, more or less, in pagan superstitions, and almost immediately after death the poor squaw was buried in a hole dug in the spot where she was killed, and the whole band removed their huts to another place of encampment, as they would not venture to remain where such an accident had occurred. Four days after the accident I passed this encampment and found that they were making preparations to have the corpse taken out of the hole into which it was so unceremoniously placed, in order to its being decently interred in the Protestant burying-ground at High Bluff.

While speaking about the lightning in this country I may state that nearly a week afterwards, during a thunder-storm at night, the flashes of lightning were so continuous for several minutes that I believe there would not have been much difficulty in reading ordinary large print by this electric light.

During the present season several voyages have been made upon the Assiniboine as far up as Fort Ellice, or five hundred miles from Winnipeg by the course of the river. These western voyages were made under considerable difficulties owing to the crookedness and in some places shallowness of the river, the danger of running against snags, and the trouble of

## "WOODING UP"

where there had been no previous preparation. When the boat required a fresh supply of fuel she was tied to the shore near to where there are a number of dry trees which had been killed by fire. All hands were then sent ashore to fell these trees, and cut them in lengths of from twelve to twenty feet, suitable for carrying on board, and when enough of them were obtained the boat started on her journey, while the boatmen employed their leisure time in cutting up and splitting these logs into suitable size for firing up with.

## THE VILLAGE OF PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

is divided into east and west by an intervening strip of beautiful farming country. In front of this there is a very large coulee which, at some former period, not very remote, formed the bed of the river Assiniboine, which seems to have a peculiar fondness for opening new channels for itself. It is quite evident that at some remote period the river Assiniboine emptied into Lake Manitoba, as the surface of the water in the latter is considerably lower than that in the former, and there is the mark of the old bed of the river nearly all the way to the lake. I would not be much surprised if the Assiniboine should yet turn to its former course and mingle with the clear waters of Lake Manitoba instead of continuing its present crooked course to the Red River at Winnipeg. Some of the older inhabitants of the Portage state that at times of unusually high water in the Assiniboine, the water has in some cases overflowed its present banks and run north to Lake Manitoba.

The farming country near the Portage seems to be

## THE GARDEN OF MANITOBA,

if not of the North-West. The deep black soil has a slight mixture of sand in it, which makes it much less tenacious than nearer to Winnipeg. The land is also slightly rolling, and consequently does not suffer from the very heavy rains of the present season. While travelling in this vicinity I saw numerous large fields of spring wheat, the growth of which was much ranker than I have ever seen spring wheat in Ontario or Quebec, at so early a period in its growth. I heard also many accounts of the enormous quantity produced per acre from wheat sown here in former seasons; but I fear that proper means are not always used to secure correct figures. The people of the Portage (village) are at present considerably exercised by the great probability of being left out in the cold by the railway passing six or eight miles north of the village, and also by the steamboat navigation on the Assiniboine ceasing when the railway is completed westward from Winnipeg, since merchandise as well as passengers can be much more cheaply as well as expeditiously transported westward by rail than by the crooked, rapid, and often shallow river Assiniboine. There are in the village at present two flour mills and a sawmill, all driven by steam power; there are also numerous stores and hotels, and a court house and jail will probably be added before long.

## WELLS IN QUICKSAND—WADING ON THE PRAIRIE—THE MOSQUITOES.

SIR.—The distance from the Portage (village) northward to Lake Manitoba is about fifteen

## A CHARMING PLACE TO DRIVE ALONG,

miles. The country for the first eleven miles is excellent farming land, but for four miles as you approach the lake the surface is at present a reed marsh, interspersed with small lakes which are a great resort for wild ducks. A sportsman from Winnipeg visited this place last fall, and during a week's shooting secured more than

## A WAGGON LOAD OF BIRDS.

In no place that I visited is the land lying between the Assiniboine and the lake more than twelve or fifteen feet higher than the surface of the water in the river at present, yet, owing to the presence of several winding coulees (evidently the bed of a river at some former period) the land is mostly dry. Only a few quarter-sections are without good dry sites on which to erect the farm buildings. This tract of country is underlain by a bed of quicksand from six to twelve feet from the surface of the ground. Wells dug into this bed of sand have a never-failing supply of water, even in the driest weather, as there is evidently some connection between the waters of Lake Manitoba and the water in the quicksand underlying the country south of it. Several respectable farmers, living from six to eight miles south from the lake shore, have assured me that when the wind blows from the north for several days, causing a rise of one or two feet in the surface of the water at the southern extremity of Lake Manitoba, there is also a corresponding rise in the water in their wells.

Although this section is so advantageous for farmers, it is, like all other new settlements in this province, very sparsely settled. I don't believe there are more than five or six inhabited houses in the whole of the township, thirteen in sixth range, west, yet \$2,000 is the price asked for some unimproved quarter-sections in the south side of this township. There have been a much larger number of

## HOMESTEADS

taken here, but homesteading in this province does not always imply the building of a dwelling-house or the bringing into cultivation of a portion of the soil.

I did not notice any spots of alkali lands near the Portage, but about ten or twelve miles north-east towards the head of Long Lake there are numerous spots of alkali, and north of Long Lake they are very frequent. The land lying north of Long Lake is also more or less stony on the drier portions, and in travelling across this portion of the country (township 13, ranges 2 and 3 west), the road is most of the time either crossing a stony, an alkali, or a wet strip of land, the alkali growing less frequent as you journey eastward. There is also a gravel ridge of considerable height crossing the northern part of these townships, which near the corner of Poplar Heights (township 13, range 3 west) is seventy or eighty feet high. This ridge is generally well wooded, where the fire has not been making recent inroads on the forests. Most of the land north of this ridge is also wooded, while the soil is not desirable for cultivation, being mostly sandy and stony ridges, with wet marshes intervening. When approaching towards the north-east corner of Poplar Heights, the high gravel ridge turns northward through a corner of Bonnie Doon (township 14, range 3, west). The summit of the ridge here is devoid of all bushes or trees for several miles, and is

as it is elevated some 70 or 80 feet above the adjacent plains. I am informed that there is but one settler in the whole township of Bonnie Doon, a good deal of the land being reserved for wood lots. The townships of Meadowlands and Woodlands (townships 13 and 14 in range 2, west) are much more thickly settled than the townships on either side of them, yet there is not more than an average of one inhabited house to every 1,000 acres of land, which is nearly all of good quality, but badly in need of a system of drainage.

The people here are nearly all immigrants from Canada or Britain, and have had a

## PRETTY HARD BOW TO HOM

since their arrival, as the grasshoppers destroyed nearly all their crops during the first two years of their residence here, and the wet weather nearly destroyed the third crop. The reason that the people here came to lose their crops by wet the year after the grasshoppers left was because they were mostly sown on low lands, which are entirely free from the boulders that cause considerable inconvenience when ploughing the higher portions, and during the previous dry seasons these low lands were dry enough to cultivate advantageously; but when the wet weather came they had to be abandoned, and are now lying waste. This tract of country is, however, an excellent place for stock-raising, as there is an abundant supply of pasturage and meadow lands, and this, with dairying, seems to be the chief source of income among the farmers here at present.

At the time when I visited this part of the province the people seemed to be suffering from an unusual series of unfortunate events. They had had a

## "JUMPING UNPLEASANTNESS"

lately, and a number of them had to give bonds to appear to stand their trial at the Court of Queen's Bench, to be held in Winnipeg next September. The weather was very wet, and the land wetter than the oldest inhabitant had ever seen here at this season of the year. People living in the eastern provinces, who have pretty good roads to travel on, with bridges to cross over the streams and sloughs, can scarcely realize the inconvenience of travelling on foot during a wet time like this in these parts. Although my boots are good for travelling through water up to ten inches deep, yet for several days while journeying here I wore no socks. These luxuries were most useful when carried in my pocket, and after wading through each deep slough I would pull off my boots and after emptying out the superfluous water, pull them on again, wet as they were. Twice during one half-day's journey I had to wade through water so deep that it

## WAITED THE TAILS OF MY COAT,

which is not a long one, and on one of these occasions I had to go over half a mile with the water from a foot to two and a half feet deep the whole distance. Perhaps some of the readers of the *WITNESS* may think it rather monotonous reading about so much water; but it was much more so to have to travel through it on foot.

Again, the mosquitoes are now at their worst, and they are sometimes not to be despised. On

the evening of Monday, July 1st, I was travelling through a very wet part of the country near the boundary between Woodlands and Meadowlea. There were occasional showers of rain falling, and between the showers the mosquitoes assailed me in larger numbers than I had ever seen before, and it required the rapid use of both my hands armed with a bush to wipe them off my face and neck. When I reached the home of a poor settler, my

#### WINGED PRESBITORIES

were for a while driven away by a smudge, but a short time after retiring to rest on a "shake down" laid on the "cabin floor," a heavy thunderstorm came on and drowned out the smudges, which emboldened the "skeeters" to pay me another visit, which lasted till morning; consequently, I got neither rest nor sleep that night, and arose in the morning more tired and sore than when I lay down. The forenoon of the next day, July 2nd, was also murky and wet, and I felt as if I would never despise mosquitoes again, but the weather cleared up at noon and with a slight wind blowing the mosquito siege was raised, and I don't know that I am any worse from the effects of this encounter, but would not like to repeat it.

Winnipeg, July 7.

#### LADIES AND THE HOMESTEAD ACT—"JUMPING"—A POSSIBLE EJECTION—SPECULATING IN GOVERNMENT GRANTS.

SIR.—Nearly all the readers of the WITNESS have already heard of the "Homestead Act," by which actual settlers receive a free grant of a quarter section (one hundred and sixty acres) of Government land upon condition of making certain improvements and residing on it for three years consecutively, during which time the settler is liable to forfeit his homestead rights if absent from it for more than six months in any year. All heads of families, and also unmarried men and women who are over eighteen years of age, may take up homesteads, and although

#### THE IDEA OF SINGLE LADIES

faithfully performing homestead duties seems unnatural, yet a number of such have secured the land, but that they have complied with the terms imposed by Government is rather doubtful. During my travels over this province I have met with a great many unmarried gentlemen who are fulfilling the letter if not the spirit of the law by "bushing" it on their homesteads; but I have not yet met with a single case where a maiden lady has been honestly endeavoring to comply with the law which gives her a title to her lands. Indeed my attempt to do so would scarcely seem prudent in a country where the population is so very scattered. The only feasible way by which ladies might faithfully comply with the terms of the law giving them a right to "homestead" land, is by forming a matrimonial alliance with some gentleman friend, in whose company homestead duties may be faithfully performed, thereby securing the approval of a good conscience in addition to a reasonable share of conjugal bliss. I have heard of some cases where parties engaged to be married have each secured homestead rights a short time previous to their wedding day, and by this means

acquired double the amount of land that they could legally secure if they had postponed their homesteading until after they became man and wife. But in all such cases of "double-homesteading" there is a seemingly insuperable difficulty in complying with the requirements of the law. Indeed it is not desirable that persons after becoming "one flesh" should each reside upon separate homesteads, consequently one of the claims must remain unoccupied. If such cases as these were the only ones where the requirements of the Homestead Act are not complied with, the evil would not be great, since there are but few such; but in some townships at least, on more than half of the homesteads the requirements of the law have not been complied with. On a great many quarter sections which were homesteaded from five to seven years ago no permanent settlement was made until within the past two years, while a large number remain still untenanted with only a few acres brought under cultivation, and perhaps the walls of a house erected, and not a few homesteads remain without any attempts being made to bring them under cultivation.

The only check, so far as I have yet heard, to this reprehensible mode of homesteading is by what is called "jumping;" but it seems to me that it would be difficult to devise a scheme better calculated to

#### GRATE HEART-BURNINGS AND LASTING HATRED

between neighbors. Its operations are almost exclusively confined to depriving the poor and friendless of their homesteads when they have failed to fully comply with the law, while the rich and influential are in a great measure protected from its operations. The mode of "jumping" is as follows: Some person who has not yet secured a homestead for himself may have been casting longing eyes on an unoccupied homestead. If its former claimant has numerous friends in the neighborhood where the claim is situated, very few people will care to jump it; but if he has not he can secure his homestead claim with "scrip." A large number of lots which were held for several years as homesteads without being the home of any human being, and during which time their market value was more than doubled, were afterwards secured to their owner by his

#### "PLACING SCRIP ON THEM,"

which scrip perhaps cost originally only from \$40 to \$50. If, however, the original homesteader is not in a position to frighten away intending jumpers, nor yet to "scrip" his claim, and if still unable or unwilling to reside on it, the "jumper" gets two persons acquainted with the lot to be jumped to make affidavits before the Crown Lands agent or a magistrate to the effect that the requirements of the Homestead Act have not been complied with, when the original grant is cancelled, and a new homestead grant of it is made on behalf of the jumper, who in addition to securing the homestead has secured the enmity of its former owner and his friends, and besides is generally looked upon as a "mean fellow."

A rather serious case of jumping and house-demolishing took place in the township of Meadowlea a few days before my visit to that locality. The north-west quarter of section 31 in township 13, range 2, west, was homesteaded some six or seven years ago by Thomas

Bunce, son; but the old gentleman, although cultivating several acres on his homestead, continued to reside along with an unmarried son, whose homestead is on the adjoining quarter section. The Bunces, while they had many friends, had also several enemies in that locality, and applications were made to the Crown Lands agent at Winnipeg to have Mr. Bunce's claim cancelled last fall. Mr. Codd, the agent, referred the case to the authorities at Ottawa, and was instructed to allow old Mr. Bunce an extension of six months' time in which to get located upon his homestead; Mr. Codd also wrote a private letter to Mr. Bunce, urging him strongly to be sure and have his residence on the lot by the time the six months' extension given him would expire. This

#### FRIENDLY ADVICE

was disregarded by Mr. Bunce, acting, it is said, upon the advice of his sons, who have not a very enviable reputation in these parts, and who said that no one would dare to jump the claim in question. This spring the claim was cancelled by Mr. Codd, on sufficient proof of the requirements of the homestead law not being complied with, and Mr. G. F. Hyde had it entered as his homestead, and proceeded to build a house and remove with his family to his new acquisition. But he did not long enjoy peaceable possession, for on the evening of June 17th, a large party of the neighbors, headed by old Mr. Bunce and his two sons, came and forcibly ejected Mr. Hyde and his family from their new home, and after putting him and all his movables off the lot, pulled down his little house, and carted part of it away to the adjoining road, and burnt the rest of it on the spot. Mr. Hyde started for Winnipeg the following morning, and had warrants issued for the arrest of the Bunces and a number of their friends, who were taken to Winnipeg, and after a preliminary examination before Chief Justice Wood, had to give bonds to appear at the next term of the Court of Queen's Bench in Winnipeg next September, to be there tried before a jury of their countrymen. I visited Mr. Hyde, also the Bunces and some of their associates in this transaction, and of course received different accounts of the affair; but what caused me great surprise was the respectable appearance of some of the parties concerned in the unlawful ejection of Hyde, and the destruction of his house. Among the assailants of poor Mr. Hyde were two schoolmasters at present in charge of the two public schools nearest to the scene of law-breaking. A neighboring magistrate is also blamed with being one of the chief plotters and counsellor to these deeds of violence, although not present when it was enacted; and a clergyman who ministers to the people in holy things, not only expressed his approval of the course pursued by the Bunces and their friends, but also expressed regret that he was not present to assist in the good work; so that this disgraceful act of lawlessness secured the approval, if not the active assistance of the magistrate, the minister, and the schoolmasters of the place. I have been thinking that if the plotting J. P. had been present to read the Riot Act, and the sympathetic divine was there to say prayers, the ejection of Hyde and his family, and the destruction of their home, might have been performed in a more orderly if not in a more law-

ful manner. I afterwards learned that the reason which led so many respectable people to participate in such unlawful doings was the fact that they were nearly all of them personally concerned in crushing out any jumping tendency in that neighborhood, since they all are more or less interested in lands liable to be jumped. Although the Homestead Act has declared to be illegal all attempts on the part of the homesteader to sell his claim until he has received his patent for the land, yet such sales are often made by means of the "jumping" clause in the Act, as the purchaser, after paying the price stipulated, is allowed peaceably to jump the lot he has already bought. Although a person making a homestead entry on any lot is required to state on oath (or by affirmation) that he is taking the land for the purpose of making it his home, yet some respectable people have secured homesteads by making the necessary affidavit, while having no intention of ever residing on them; but after holding them for a few years until their value was greatly increased, have put scrip on them or else sold them to some one who would then secure possession by jumping.

The tree-planting scheme, so far as this province is concerned, seems also to be only used as a means for securing unlawful possession of Government lands. I have heard of cases where people have taken up land for tree-planting and after retaining possession for several years without planting a tree on them, have sold them to be jumped into a homestead. Some others are

#### CULTIVATING GRAIN ON THEIR TREE-PLANTING CLAIMS,

but I have not yet heard of one acre of these claims being planted with trees, although obtained from the Government for that very purpose. I think it is high time that all premiums on lawlessness were abolished in this country, and especially that jumping should be discontinued, and in all cases where people neglect or refuse to comply with the terms on which they first secured their lands, the Government might cancel such claims and resell the lands as they may see fit without giving a jumper the chance of making a rich strike at other people's expense.

Emerson, July 10.

#### A HEARTY RESPONSE—A CHAPTER OF INFERRENCES, QUOTATIONS AND THANKS.

SIR.—Perhaps I should have sooner acknowledged the hearty response which many of the Sunday-schools in Ontario, and also private individuals, have made to my appeal for old Sunday school papers, to be distributed among the children attending Sabbath-schools in the new settlements in the North West. I hardly anticipated receiving so many bundles of papers, and for sometime was at a loss to know what to do with those left after I had sent parcels to all the

#### SUNDAY-SCHOOLS

in the new settlements with which I was acquainted. I afterwards sent a considerable number of parcels of papers to nearly all the Protestant clergymen in the province who had Sunday-schools, and by this means distributed most of the papers I had left.

I am much pleased to find that an unusually large number of Sunday-schools have been organized in the new settlements of this province during the present summer, the number started this spring probably exceeding all the Sunday-schools that had been in operation previously, although the wet season has been very much against the organization of schools in sparsely populated districts. Would not the numerous Sunday-school children in Ontario think much more of their present advantages if they saw the difficulties which some children here have to overcome in attending school, both on week days and Sunday! I know of some children who have to walk from two to three miles to attend school,—not on good roads, but through wet, grassy meadows, where they are often up to the knees in water. Although many Sunday-schools have been started this season, yet I have visited some places where there are none as yet, but could not get one started for want of a suitable building in which to hold it, as there are no barns built here, and owing to the scarcity of timber the dwelling houses are exceedingly small in size. As school houses are likely to be soon erected in these parts, this

## WANT OF A PROPER BUILDING

in which to hold the Sabbath-school will cease.

It has given me considerable pleasure in looking over the Sunday-school papers sent to me, to observe that some of them were from six to ten years old, yet had been carefully preserved by the boy or girl who had first received them; and now, when the scholars of eight years ago have grown to be men and women, they have forwarded their carefully-preserved Sunday-school papers to me, to be distributed among the children in the back settlements of the North-West.

I was especially amused, in looking through a large bundle of quite new American Sunday-school papers to discover some clue as to the sender of them, to find after considerable search, written in a bold hand across the head of one of the papers, the name

"LUC LÉVELLIER DE ST. JUST."

If Lieutenant-Governor Letellier really sent that large bundle of beautiful new Sunday-school papers, I hope that he will be allowed to complete his term as Governor without any further annoyance. I have also received several notes from persons who sent parcels of papers, and asks the liberty of making a few extracts from them. A girl eleven years old writes, in beautiful handwriting, without a blot or mistake, "I see from the WITNESS that you request any one who has Sunday school papers to send them to you. I comply with your request, and mail you two bundles to-day, and hope that they will be of some use to little boys and girls in the far-off land."

Another little girl writes: "I send you these few papers for the children. This is all I have just now, as I sent a lot away to Algoma, to my cousins there, but I will try and get all I can for you. Please, sir, will you send me word if you get them, and I will send more if these go all right."

A gentleman who has sent two large parcels of papers to me, writes as follows: "In answer to your appeal in the WITNESS of May 18th, I send you a large parcel of Sabbath-school papers by

this mail, which I gathered from the scholars of the Embro Congregational Sabbath-school. The children were delighted to have the pleasure of doing something to help the schools of the great North-West. I hope that you will see that they are properly distributed, regardless of denomination. I hope to send another parcel in a few days." I take this opportunity to inform the obliging writer of the above note, that the papers have been distributed as directed, and while the children of Embro Congregational Sabbath-school were delighted to give their Sunday-school papers, and as I was delighted to receive them, and as, I am sure, the children in the back settlements in this province were still more delighted to have the reading of them, it must, therefore, be a delightful work all round.

A writer from Halloway, Ont., says:—"Could some cheap way be found to forward books, &c., I have no doubt that many Sunday-schools could send you their old library books." I may here inform the writer that the only feasible way that I know of to send such, is by sending them along with persons coming to this country. I may also add that parcels of papers sent by post only require to be paid at the rate of one cent per four ounces. A good many of the parcels sent here were much overpaid, some of them being paid at the rate of one cent per ounce weight.

I purpose to start to visit the country on the Little Saskatchewan in a few days, and will probably find many places where parcels of Sunday-school papers would be very acceptable, and likely to do good. I trust that many more parcels of Sunday-school papers may be sent to "Rusticus, Drawer 32, Winnipeg, Manitoba," so that on my return from the West I may have the pleasure of forwarding them to their destination. Tendering my hearty thanks, as well as the thanks of many little boys and girls in this country, to those who have already sent parcels of Sunday-school papers, I remain,

Winnipeg, July 22nd.

## UP THE RED RIVER—SOME ENGLISH SETTLEMENTS.

SIR,—A sail up the Red River from Winnipeg to the United States boundary is not nearly so pleasant as a voyage down the river to Selkirk, as the scenery along the banks of the river south of Winnipeg can scarcely be said to have undergone much improvement from the presence of settlers, whose chief anxiety seems to be to cut into cordwood all the larger trees which formerly adorned the banks of the river. For a number of miles

## SOUTH FROM WINNIPEG

the river is very crooked, like the Assiniboine, only the current is not nearly so swift, so that we sail much more rapidly going up stream; yet we feel surprised, after several hours pretty smart sailing, to be told when passing the outlet of the Stinking River, that we are still within ten miles of Winnipeg in a direct course.

The land along the river banks thus far is pretty thickly settled by French natives, but very little of it is cultivated, and even the small cultivated fields often show more signs of woods than of grain. The

## CANADA THISTLE

seems to attain to great perfection here, and being now in full bloom, its pink blossoms help

## THE SCRATCHING RIVER

has its source in an immense marsh into which the Boyne River empties its waters, the latter may be said to be a continuation of the former.

About six miles south from Scratching River, on the west side of the Red River, there is a little village called St. Jean Baptiste, somewhat celebrated as the scene of rather disgraceful transactions at the time of the provincial elections last winter, when two persons were severely wounded by pistol shots, and a Catholic priest rudely, if not illegally, arrested while endeavoring to prevent the execution of a warrant of arrest on another party. There is a pretty stream emptying into Red River here called Plum Coulie, and half a dozen English-speaking Canadians have beautiful farms on the banks of this stream two or three miles west of Red River.

The next township south of this (township three, range one, east) has been reserved for expatriated French-Canadians from the Eastern States, but only two very small huts are at present erected outside of the river lots in this township, although all the land is nominally taken up as homestead and pre-emptions. A number of these homestead lots are taken up by the French-Canadians, who have bought river lots, on which they now reside, but this mode of homesteading is not peculiar to French-speaking Canadians. I have also been informed that several homesteads are taken in this township by persons who are not in the province at present, some of them having gone to Dakota and there homesteaded other lands, while others have never been in the province at all. So far as I can learn, this latter mode of homesteading is peculiar to this settlement, as it has not been practised elsewhere.

The next township south of this (township two, range one, east) is also a French-Canadian reserve, and there are quite a number of dwelling houses built on it, and some of these farmers have also

## PRETTY LARGE FIELDS OF GRAIN

around their dwellings. There is a settlement of English-speaking farmers on the banks of the little Marais river, partly in this township and partly in the next township south of it (township one, range one, east). These people seem to cultivate more land on an average than is done in any other settlement that I have yet seen in the North-West; the quantity ranging from sixty to one hundred and fifty acres to each farmer, and their grain crops looked remarkably fine. They have also a neat little frame Methodist Episcopal Church, in which week day and Sunday-schools have been started the present season. There is a complaint that the lands surrounding the farms here have been reserved for Mennonites and French-Canadians, which will prevent the English settlement from growing larger. Very few cattle seem to be kept in this part, as some of the grainfields remain unfenced, while others are enclosed by wire fences, which cost here from 40c to 60c per rod.

Several bands of Mennonites who located four or five years ago on the Rat River Reserve, east of Red River, finding their lands too wet for profitable cultivation, are preparing to settle near the Marais River on the east end of the large Mennonite reserve, reaching almost from Emerson to the Pembina Mountains.

Some ten or twelve miles north of Emer-

to beautify the landscape, and its fragrant perfume, wafted across the river as the boat steams past, reminds the old Canadian farmer who may be on board of scenes and odors perhaps too familiar to him in his youthful days. Above the mouth of Stinking River, the houses on the banks of the river become few and far between, with very little cultivated land to be seen, and this wilderness state continues along the eastern bank until within a few miles of Emerson. On the west bank of the river a number of Canadian farmers have settled in several places, and some of them have erected neat dwelling-houses, and have brought a considerable quantity of land under cultivation; but I am sorry to say that these settlements are almost exclusively confined to the banks of the Red River, with small settlements extending back a short distance on the banks of Scratching River, Plum Coulie, and the Marais River. Except at the three places named I believe that there are not a score of inhabited houses to be found at present west of Red River, which are more than one mile and less than twelve miles distant from its banks, in the fifty miles between Stinking River and the boundary of Dakota; yet this tract is all excellent land, and most of it very easily drained, where it is not already dry enough, and I believe that nearly the whole of this tract is claimed by private individuals.

At the mouth of the Scratching River there is a small

## VILLAGE CALLED MORRIS,

which contains about two dozen dwelling-houses with several stores and taverns, and two churches built and another being erected. As this place is at the most western point on the Red River it is probable that it will secure railway connection with Winnipeg before many years, when it will likely become of considerable importance.

There are two villages of Mennonites located four and six miles from here, up the Scratching River. I did not visit these villages, but was informed by several people here that these Mennonites are far outstripping their Canadian neighbors in the raising of grain. Poplar is the chief kind of timber growing on the banks of the Red River from Lake Winnipeg up to near the mouth of the Scratching River, but above this the character of the timber changes, and oak is the principal wood, with a considerable sprinkling of elm, ash and bass-wood. It is a great pity to see the way that this small belt of timber is being destroyed to furnish firewood for the steamboats navigating Red River, as well as for other purposes. If the present consumption of firewood continues for half a dozen years longer these will

## SCARCELY BE A TREE LEFT

between Winnipeg and Emerson—yet some of the French natives are quite reckless about their woodlands. I was told that several of these people were last winter paying one dollar per cord for getting their oak trees chopped into cordwood, which they afterwards drew from four to six miles to Morris, and sold at \$2 per cord.

Although the Scratching River is not much over a dozen miles in length, yet there is about as much water discharged by it into the Red River as is discharged by the Pembina River, which is several hundred miles long, but as

son a pretty large stream, called the Roseau River empties into Red River from the east. The land near the mouth of this river is very wet, and is held as an Indian reserve, but a few miles up the stream, where the Pembina Branch Railway crosses, there is a thrifty Canadian settlement with a village springing up, with a church, school, post-office, two stores, a blacksmith's forge and a fanning-mill manufactory. The farms on the banks of the Roseau are dry and easily tilled, but a short distance back from the river the land is exceedingly wet, except where drained by the ditches made on each side of the railway track. Some farmers who homesteaded land here five or six years ago have been compelled to leave their homesteads and remove back to "the ridge" (townships 1 and 2, range 4, east) which had been kept for several years as a French reserve, but was opened for general settlement nearly two years ago, and is all taken up by English-speaking farmers. The soil in these two townships is a sandy loam, and the surface is moderately rolling, and seems to be

#### SUPERIOR FARMING LAND.

A number of small creeks cross these townships, coming from the swamps which lie towards the east, but they all get lost in the wet lands in townships one and two in third range east. One of these creeks is of considerable size, and is called the Jordan, on the banks of which, some three or four miles back, there is a small Mormon settlement, but as they do not practice polygamy, their customs do not seem to be much different from their neighbors. My journey of seven miles made when returning from "the ridge" to the Red River, was over the wettest road on which I had yet travelled, and as a good deal of rain has fallen since—to-day being about the wettest day I have seen since coming to this province—the depth of water must be considerably greater now.  
Winnipeg July 24.

#### THE NEW LAND POLICY, ITS DISADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS—BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR MANITOBA—CHANGES NEEDED.

SIR.—The most interesting subject of conversation in the country, except the wet state of the meadow lands, is the new regulations regarding the lands reserved for some distance on each side of the line of the Canada Pacific Railway. This new land policy, which has some good features about it, seems to be almost universally condemned here, as tending to drive immigration into Dakota, which is true to a certain extent, as Dakota will absorb nearly all the people coming to the North-West, for some time to come, whose attachment to the British Government is not very genuine; but the quantity of desirable lands open for homesteading in Dakota is getting used up rapidly, after which this country will have nearly a monopoly of the good land on this continent remaining unoccupied, and where the climate is all that could be desired.

I left Winnipeg too early after the new regulations were issued to see what the eastern papers had to say about the matter, but I saw a copy of the Toronto *Globe*, in which it is stated that parties homesteading land in that portion of

#### THE RAILWAY RESERVE

open for homesteading, will have to pay for

their homesteads at the same rate as for their pre-emptions. I was very much surprised to see such a statement in the *Globe*, as I saw nothing to justify such a statement in the new regulations as published in the Manitoba papers, and also in the *Globe* itself. The new land policy is bad enough in itself without the *Globe* charging it with faults which do not exist.

I have seen so many cases where the former land laws in this province have been

#### PRODUCTIVE OF CHEATING,

false swearing and other offences against good morals that I would not regret to see them annulled or greatly changed. I have always thought that it was unjust for the whole people of the Dominion to be taxed to build a railway which will increase the value of a few persons' lands four-fold, while these persons are not charged with the cost of constructing such railway any more than if their lands were in Prince Edward's Island, where the increase in price caused by the building of the Canada Pacific Railway is very small, if increased at all. It seems to me that if the land, lying on each side of the railway, and more directly benefited by its construction, were charged with the full cost of making the road, the farmers living on such lands would find the money paid for constructing the railway to be profitably invested; for if the adjacent lands paid the original cost of construction, Government would scarcely venture to charge more for carrying passengers and freight than would pay for running expenses, and keeping the road in repair, and the difference would more than pay the interest on the money paid for the land at first. I think, however, that the Government is trying to raise too much money, and more than is needed for making the road. As the readers of the *WITNESS* have all seen the new regulations (I suppose) I will not here repeat them, but if any person will add up

#### THE TOTAL AMOUNT TO BE CHARGED

for the land for every mile in length of railway he will find that it amounts to \$246,000, which is made up as follows:

In belt A. 6,400 acres at \$6.....	\$38,400
In belt B. railway lands, 9,600 acres at \$5.....	48,000
Pre-emptions, 4,800 acres at \$2.50.....	12,000
In belt C. railway lands, 12,800 acres at \$3.50.....	44,800
Pre-emptions, 6,400 acres at \$2.50.....	16,000
In belt D. railway lands, 12,800 acres at \$2.....	25,600
Pre-emptions, 6,400 acres at \$2.....	12,800
In belt E. railway lands, 32,000 acres at \$1.....	32,000
Pre-emptions, 16,000 acres at \$1.....	16,000
Total.....	\$246,000

As a very large proportion of the good lands in the railway reserve (in the 500 miles length between the Red River and the south branch of the Saskatchewan) has already passed from the hands of the Government, it may be safely estimated that for this distance not over one-third the amount estimated above will be realized, or say \$81,866 per mile, and as a good part of the land will remain unsold for several years, it will diminish this sum by one-third more, say \$27,288, leaving the sum of \$54,578 per mile of road, which is about twice as much as is re-

quired to build it. Consequently, the Government might reduce their prices by one-half, and still realize enough to build the road, and this would be considered fair by most fair-minded men. If intending emigrants to the North-West get the idea into their minds that the Government is going to squeeze more money out of them than is absolutely needed to make the road through the Rocky Mountains, many of them will be shaken in their loyalty and go over to Uncle Sam's territory.

But immigrants coming to this country under the new regulations are in a

#### BETTER POSITION TO GET ALONG

than was the case with those who came here six or eight years ago. Not to count the very great extra-cost and inconvenience which they had to endure some years ago, above what would be the case were the Canada Pacific Railway opened from Thunder Bay, the very low price realized for wheat here has scarcely paid the cost of its production; but with a railway open the price will be increased fully twenty cents per bushel, and a farmer who at the end of three years is able to sell 1,000 bushels of wheat annually, and at an increased rate of twenty cents per bushel, will have money enough from this source alone to make the payment required on his eighty acres pre-emption land, and also the payments on more than twice as many more acres of railway land bought by him.

To make this appear more plain let us suppose that the immigrant has nothing to sell during the first year, although he has saved a large sum owing to cheaper freight paid on what he requires to make a start on his farm. The second year (if his farm is good and his industrious) he will have 400 bushels of wheat for sale, which at an increase of twenty cents per bushel in price would amount to \$80. The third year he will have 1,000 bushels to sell, which at an increase in price of twenty cents per bushel is \$200, or \$280 saved in the three years. Out of this he has to pay on his 80 acres pre-emption, four-tenths of \$200 and three years' interest on the same amount, or in all \$116, leaving \$164 to make the first payment on a half section of railway land which he is now able to buy at \$5 per acre, paying one-tenth down. The circumstances of our farmer will be improved very much the following year, as he will have much more grain to sell, and the payment on the 80 acres pre-emption will only be \$27.20; and so on his payments will be diminishing, while his ability to pay them will be always increasing.

A change (in the interests of morality alone) is

#### MUCH NEEDED

in the present law of homesteading. I know of many cases where a farmer with two or three sons over eighteen years of age has had homesteads taken up for each, which requires that each of them should swear that he will forsake his father's house within six months, and, failing to get a wife, begin to "back" it on his own homestead. Now the young men, when taking this oath, seldom intend to keep it, nor would it be desirable for a young man only eighteen or twenty years of age to leave his father's home to live alone as a bachelor for several years, since he would be much more likely to fall into evil habits, from which he would in a great measure be protected if still under his father's roof. It would be much better to

#### HAVE THE LAW CHANGED,

so as to coincide with what is nearly always the custom here, and let the young unmarried man secure a homestead on condition of making certain improvements on it without being compelled to leave his father's house before he can get a wife (or is even old enough to marry), and begin the demoralizing practice of "backing it alone." Many other suggestions might be made, but I have not time at present.  
Burnside, Aug. 1st.

#### WESTWARD HO—GOOD CROPS, AND GOOD WATER—POST OFFICE ACCOMMODATION NEEDED.

SIR.—I left Winnipeg on Tuesday, July 30th, to visit the new settlements in that part of the North-West Territory lying west of Manitoba. I had not gone three miles when I came to a wagon stuck in a quagmire, which occupied the whole breadth of the road, a thing by no means rare in this country. The weather had hitherto been showery and this afternoon a smart shower of rain fell, which I am glad to say was the last rain of any consequence that has fallen to the present. The road from Winnipeg to Poplar Point (about fifty miles as the trail has to pass round north of Long Lake) had in it frequent mud-holes, and

#### THE CROPS

in this part of the country were generally considerably damaged by the wet weather, and will not be over half a crop. A good many of the farmers were working at haying, but their best meadows were still too wet to cut, and some of the farmers had not cut any hay yet as it was all too wet.

From Poplar Point westward to the Portage the land is dryer and the crops, with a few exceptions, look magnificent; I

#### NEVER SAW SUCH CROPS

in my life. From the Portage to Burnside, eight miles, the land is wetter, but as there are a good many dry fields, the crops on these were good. The road had, however, many bad mud-holes through which the teams of travellers found it very difficult to drag their loads. I observed here several bad specimens of selfishness only too frequent in this country, where the new settlers have fenced across the old trails, which had hitherto kept along the crest of the dry ridges, and compelled travellers to drive their teams through muddy places which would be considered impassable in almost any other country. Often the enclosed patch is very small, yet the loss and injury to teams in having to pass around it in a season like this, is much greater in value than would be the produce of the whole farm. As the dry ridges in this country run nearly always from north-west to south-west, a long stretch of good road might often be secured to the western traveller, were new settlers prevented from putting fences across old trails which had been travelled for many years before the land in this country was surveyed.

Another peculiarity of this country is

#### THE TOLLS

which Western travellers have to pay for the privilege of passing over some piece of dry road, or for crossing some creek on a bridge. Travellers passing through Bois St. Paul are obliged to pay twenty-five cents for every wagon taken



across a small patch of dry land belonging to a French-Canadian, as the adjacent quagmire is too bad for any team to drive a load through. If the traveller passes round north of Long Lake he then meets with another tollman who owns a bridge and twenty-five cents is exacted for every double team passing over. About twenty-five miles west of Burnside, on the south trail, there is a bridge over a pretty little stream, for the privilege of crossing which twenty-five cents is charged to double teams and fifteen cents for single teams, and although this bridge did not cost over \$30 or \$40 for its construction, yet its owner (a Mr. McKinnon) realizes about \$2,000 annually from the tolls collected from travellers.

From Burnside, on Rat Creek, westward to Big Plain there are very few settlers. From a place four miles west of Burnside the traveller by the south trail sees only four or five houses in a distance of about thirty-five miles. The first twenty miles of this journey is over a very wet, low country, dotted all over with willow bushes and small poplar bluffs, with numerous alkali ponds, around which the trail has to wriggle, being as crooked in many places as is the course of the River Assiniboine. Nearly all this land is still owned by the Government, but I think it will become year by year more of it is sold at \$5 per acre. At McKinnon's the trail reaches the sand hills, and, except in a few places, the westward bound traveller has no more mud to contend with. When I came over the road between Burnside and McKinnon's it was pretty good, as the muddy places were mostly dried up, but I saw ample evidence of the sufferings which travellers had to endure while passing over this track in wet weather. Most of the settlers west of this with whom I have conversed have very vivid recollections of the sufferings endured while passing over this part of the road. The sand hills are from fifty to one hundred feet high, run in a north-west direction, and are evidently the border of what was once an immense lake, which at one time covered a good portion of the Red River valley. The sand hills are in some places nearly all covered with bushes, and in these places the soil is pretty good, being a deep sandy loam, and at some future time will be occupied by farmers, but not for a long time if

#### \$5 PER ACRE

is the price to be paid for it. In other places, where the soil is more sandy, the hills are covered with grass, with a few scrub oak scattered here and there. These sand hills are generally a succession of small peaks of almost every form imaginable. About fifteen miles west of McKinnon's, Pine Creek is crossed, which is a beautiful little stream of clear, cold water, running in a valley about eighty feet deep, and fed by numerous springs from the sand hills. On the east side of Pine Creek the land is of fair quality, and several lots of land have been here located, and some breaking ground done, and also the walls of two houses put up, but we saw no signs of the inhabitants. The sand hills continue for about two miles west of Pine Creek, which latter is crossed by a bridge made by the settlers on

#### BIG PLAIN.

Big Plain consists of townships 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, in ranges 14, 15 and 16 west. This large tract is nearly all level or slightly rolling, and the land generally of good quality, being a

sandy loam. It is nearly all settled, although the houses are not very numerous, as from two to four families occupy a good many of the houses. I saw the walls of a good many more houses which will be roofed in this fall, and although timber is so scarce in this country, there is a great deal of valuable spruce wasted in "siding down." Large spruce logs, which were from two to two and a half feet in diameter, were sided down and made into house timber, seven inches thick. As this timber is got on Government lands and will all be required this waste should be stopped, as much smaller timber could be flatted for good building timber at less expense.

#### THE CROPS

here, where the ploughing was done last summer, and even on places that were broken up for the first time this spring were pretty fair. The soil here is a sandy loam, with a subsoil of four to six feet of clay when the sand is again reached; and in some cases wells have been dug twenty-four feet without reaching the bottom of the sand, but plenty of good water is found. The settlers here (about two hundred in all) are badly off for post office accommodation, as their nearest post office, Burnside, is from forty-five to sixty miles distant. Several petitions have been forwarded to the authorities at Ottawa to get

#### POST OFFICE ACCOMMODATION,

but they have been hitherto unsuccessful. A great injustice will be done to a large body of settlers here if better post office accommodation is not given soon, for the people lose many of their letters, and most of their papers which are sent here by post, beside the great delays which have to be endured. As there is a weekly mail to be started on the 1st of next October, between Palestine and Rapid City, and which will cross the north end of Big Plain, a post-office should at once be established there, and another twelve miles further south and a third at the south trail, which is about twelve miles still further southward, and there are still numerous settlers from six to eight miles south of the south trail. The establishing of these post-offices should be done immediately, as there are more families located in this quarter than are in the local county of Woodlands, Manitoba, yet there are three or four post-offices in that county and applications are being made for more. I know that often the establishment of post-offices are asked from the Ottawa authorities in places where they are not needed; but this case of the people on the Big Plain should be attended to at once.

Taking the trail towards the rapids of the Assiniboine, the road for four or five miles winds among the peaks of the sand hills, then emerges on to a dry plain, and for several miles crosses a sandy county not fit for farming, although generally nearly level. At Boggy Creek (which is the first stream crossed since Pine Creek), some twenty-four miles away, the soil improves and there are a good many lots taken up here, and five or six settlers have dwelling-houses erected. Boggy Creek is the first stream crossed, since leaving Poplar Point, that runs southward to the Assiniboine, and between this place and the rapids of the Assiniboine, or a distance of eight miles, several beautiful little streams of running water are crossed which have a few boulders on their banks, which latter is

#### A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES,

as I don't remember having seen any boulders since leaving Long Lake. There is a considerable amount of good land along here, which is mostly all taken up, and several of the settlers (who all came in this summer) have little mud-covered huts erected, while others dwell in tents. More or less breaking of the prairie is also being done. The scenery here is much more pleasant than in Manitoba, as the Deer Head Mountains are plainly visible some twelve miles south of this; also, the valley of the Assiniboine is within a mile or two towards the south. The water in the little creeks is pleasing to the taste, and where wells have been dug the water is first rate, which to me was a great treat after being so often sickened by drinking the waters of Manitoba. I purpose this evening going across the Assiniboine and south to Deer Head Mountains, where the Rev. Mr. Roddick and a number of Nova Scotians are located.

Rapids of Assiniboine, Aug. 5th.

#### A DIGRESSION—"RUSTICUS" VISITS DAKOTA—RAPID GROWTH—CANADIANS IN DAKOTA—THE GRASSHOPPER.

SIR,—Having often seen, while travelling through this province, signs of a considerable emigration of Canadians into the United States Territory of Dakota, which lies to the westward of Red River, and south of the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, which separates it from Canadian territory, I thought it best to make a short trip into Dakota and see what it is like for myself. Possibly some of the readers of the WITNESS may think, as a good many people here seem to think, that it were better to keep quiet about the exodus of Canadians to Dakota; yet I believe it is best that the truth should be fully known on this, as on all other matters pertaining to this country. I have often met with people who came from the eastern provinces of Canada this season, and after exploring a considerable portion of Manitoba and some of the country westward of the province without finding locations to suit them on British territory, had taken land in Dakota, and were about removing there with all their effects. I likewise on several occasions saw small parties of Icelanders who had bidden farewell to their wet surroundings at Gimli, on Lake Winnipeg, and were on their journey to join many more of their brethren in Dakota. I was also told that many of the

#### EXPATRIATED FRENCH-CANADIAN YANKEES,

who had received Government aid towards paying their passage here, and their maintenance while here, after sporting around the Government buildings at Dufferin for several months, had re-expatriated themselves by settling upon land on the Dakota side of the boundary line. All this I naturally expected, for when more convenient fertile lands are placed in the balance they generally weigh down the loyalty of a great many people who may almost be said to have no country since they removed from the land of their birth. But when I found that Canadian farmers who have been living here for several years and were doing well, having become the owners of first class farms with considerable improvement made on them, yet had recently taken land in Dakota and had

been were anxious to sell, their farms in Manitoba, I felt considerable surprise, and determined to investigate the matter for myself.

I arrived at Pembina, a village situated at the junction of the Pembina with the Red River, on the afternoon of July 10th, and observed that considerable progress had been made in the erection of new buildings since my visit to this place on the 2nd of last April. Across the Red River eastward, in the State of Minnesota, a considerable village had sprung up in a locality which a little over three months ago was in a state of nature, being then nearly all covered over with brushwood, which has since been cleared away, leaving a number of the larger trees to beautify the surroundings of the many houses which have been built there lately. The St. Paul and Manitoba Railway Company have laid a track along the bank of the river, where also they are erecting a large grain elevator. Three steamboats and numerous barges were lying in the river, receiving or delivering freight.

Nearly all that I met with had formerly been Canadians who had become American citizens. Many of these Cannuck Yankees still retained their former simple plain style of conversation, but a few of them had adopted the

#### VAPORING, SPREAD-EAGLE JARGON

so prevalent among Western American pioneers, and seemed to take special pride in telling that they "were once Canadians but were now American citizens." I called at the land office for Pembina County and was courteously received by the Deputy Agent, who is also a Canadian American named Ewing. He showed me maps of all the surveyed townships in Pembina County, with the names of the persons written on the lands they had taken, with the date of entry, also whether the lands were taken as homestead, pre-emptions, tree-planting claims, or had been bought with scrip. I observed among these the names of several persons whom I had known in Manitoba, also that a goodly number of ladies were homesteaders, while the number of quarter sections taken up for tree-planting claims was considerable. I also observed that nearly all the lands lying within several miles of the banks of the Red, Pembina and Tongue rivers were already located, while out in the open prairie, at considerable distance from the streams of water, there are still large tracts of unoccupied lands. I was told that no person was allowed to take more than 320 acres in his own or her own name, but additional land could be bought with half-breed scrip; but this scrip is now very scarce and dear. Mr. Ewing also told me that over fifty re-expatriated French-Canadians had taken lands in Pembina County within the last eighteen months.

On the morning of July 11th I accepted the proffer of a ride up the

SOUTH-EASTERN BANK OF THE TONGUE RIVER, which flows into the Pembina River, about four miles above its outlet into Red River. My companion on this trip was a well-informed and obliging, naturalized American citizen, who was taking a waggon load of lumber eighteen miles to his home on the Tongue River. He told me that his name is Beachy, and that he was born and brought up in the County of Peterborough, Ont., but some nine or ten years ago had returned with his family to the State of Missouri.

where he settled with a number of other Canadians. The climate of Missouri proving to be very unhealthy, some of them had visited Manitoba five years ago for the purpose of securing a home in a more salubrious climate. After visiting a number of places they chose one of the townships (now in the Mennonite reserve) at the foot of the Pembina Mountains. They next applied to the authorities at Ottawa to get this township reserved for a number of Canadians who wished to leave Missouri and settle in Manitoba. After some correspondence with Ottawa, they were assured that the township in question would be granted to them, provided a sufficient number came forward to occupy it. Trusting to this promise, sixteen families left Missouri in the spring of 1875 bound for Manitoba, and taking with them \$40,000 worth of stock, cash, and farming implements. The journey to Manitoba being all done on waggons, took a considerable time, and when the party reached Manitoba they were mortified to find that their promised reserve was reserved for the Mennonites. Under such circumstances it was not surprising that the party of expatriated British-Canadians turned across the boundary line and located on land in Dakota equally as good as the land they had failed to secure in Manitoba with the additional advantage of having an abundant supply of wood and water.

While travelling up the Tongue River I observed several small houses recently erected, and preparations being made for the erection of more, but in nearly all cases they were near the river banks. I saw

#### ONE MUD HUT,

which I was told is occupied by an Icelandic. I was also told that some of these Icelanders when coming over to Dakota had their live stock taken from them by Government agents in Manitoba on account of moneys advanced to them when they first came to the province. After a drive of twelve miles with Mr. Beachy, I left him at the place where we stopped to take dinner. At this place (also taking their dinner) were a party of five Canadians, who had hired a team in Pembina, and were out on the hunt after land. I afterwards called at several houses, and had numerous conversations about the prospects of the Canadian settlers in Dakota. Numerous and various excuses were made for their having to dwell in Dakota and become American citizens, in preference to remaining under the benignant sway of Queen Victoria. The large amount of good lands locked up as reserves in Manitoba was pointed at as proof that English-speaking Canadians were not welcome there. The very great consideration given by Government agents to Mennonites and French-Canadians, while English-Canadians were often treated with incivility, if not rudeness, was also brought forward to show that Canadians from Ontario were

#### NOT WANTED AS SETTLERS IN MANITOBA.

The unjust exactions of the National Policy were also described at full length, by which the new settler was compelled to pay so much higher prices in Manitoba than in Dakota for everything needed in making a commencement on a new farm, such as live stock, waggons, ploughs, and all other farming implements, as well as lumber for building. Good lands were also much more convenient in Dakota than in

British territory, and as there was really little or no difference in the form of government on either side of the line, why should people settle on poor or inconveniently situated lands with lower prices received for their grain on the north side of the boundary, rather than settle in American territory? This last excuse, although not put forward so frequently as the others, seemed to be the chief one. Indeed in a country like Manitoba, where land-speculating seems to pervade (I almost said demoralize) all classes in the community, it seems strange that speculating in Dakota lands did not begin sooner. The timbered lands in Dakota consist of small strips along the banks of the rivers, and as the Government does not reserve any timbered lands, "the first to come is first served," and some sharp parties secured the greater part of their claims in timbered lands. As all the timbered lands are now appropriated, persons taking lands on the treeless prairie are paying very high prices for a few acres of timbered land.

Although all the wooded lands which I saw on the banks of the Pembina and Tongue rivers have been badly culled of their firewood, which was taken to supply the Red River boats with fuel, and also the American military post at Pembina, yet some small sales of these culled timber lands were made recently at \$10 per acre, which is a pretty fair price when it is considered that they were got for nothing about a year ago.

It is probable that when in a few years, the splendid country near the head of the Big Saskatchewan river will be opened for settlement, many of the Canadians who have recently settled in Dakota will be found selling out their farms there at a large profit (as some of them have already done with their farms in Manitoba), and removing with all their effects to the great Canadian North-West territory. There is some comfort in knowing that

#### ALL THE BEST LANDS IN DAKOTA ARE ALREADY APPROPRIATED,

and that succeeding settlers in that territory will have to make their homes on treeless prairies, with the chances of having to pay pretty high for their fuel and fencing. I might say that very little fencing is required here except a man goes into stock-raising, as every man has to take care of his own live stock and the fields of grain are left without fences. There seems also to have been much less rain in Dakota the present season than has fallen in Manitoba, consequently, the ground is much drier at present; but this state of things is sometimes reversed, when the Dakota lands suffer from excessive rain-falls which have availed Manitoba. The two days which I spent in Dakota were extremely hot, the thermometer being above ninety in the shade, making travelling in the open prairie at mid-day very exhausting. I reached Pembina on my return on the afternoon of July 12th, and found the people there in a somewhat excited state about the flight of a few grasshoppers, which could be seen like thistle-down passing in the air northwards, by looking towards the sun from behind some object which shielded the sight from its direct rays. A south wind had been blowing lightly for several days. Some of these hoppers fell on the streets, seemingly considerably exhausted by their flight. I caught one of these tryrell, and other persons

also secured specimens which they all pronounced to be the genuine grasshopper which causes so much destruction in the countries west of the Mississippi.

Winnipeg, July 21st.

#### A GLIMPSE TO THE WESTWARD.

SIR.—On the afternoon of Aug. 5th I crossed to the south side of the Assiniboine, there being a ferry here kept by a man named McVicar, who charges twenty-five cents for ferrying a horse across the river. As this is on the regular western trail to the Cypress hills, a good deal of trade passes over the Assiniboine at this place. Before Mr. McVicar built his scow here, the traders used to have great trouble, and sometimes loss in crossing over the Assiniboine at this place. When the water is low there is not much difficulty in fording the stream, but this cannot be done in high water, and traders were compelled to make

#### TEMPORARY BOATS

with poles covered with cowhides to convey themselves and their goods over the river, while the ponies and oxen had to swim. I met here a man who lives at Deer Head mountain and was taking a cow to Big Plains, thirty-five miles, to the bull. I used to think it no joke to take a cow two or three miles to the bull, but here was a settler who, in order to perform this necessary part of farm-work, had to travel seventy miles and lose four days doing it, also pay fifty cents for crossing and re-crossing the Assiniboine.

South of the Assiniboine the land is light and stony for several miles, but begins to improve as you approach the Little Souris River, which runs at the northern base of

#### DEER HEAD MOUNTAINS.

Here the Rev. Mr. Roddick and a number of Nova Scotians are located; there are also several Canadian and three men who came here from Connecticut. There is a considerable amount of good land here in patches, but there is a great deal of inferior quality, being either too light and sandy, or else alkali, wet land. As this land has not yet been surveyed, the settlers are in great trouble about the new land regulations, and they all declare that they will leave the country and go to Dakota, if their homesteads are confined to eighty acres in extent. It seems to me to be utter folly to try to enforce the new regulations in this part of the country, as a person would require half a section of land before he would have enough of good land to make a fair farm. Settlement in this part of the country will cease until the new land regulations are changed, and no sane man would ever think of paying \$5 or \$3.50 per acre for land in this part of the country.

The scenery is very fine around the

#### DEER HEAD MOUNTAINS,

which are from two to three hundred feet high, and although not rocky are pretty stony, and nearly all covered with poplar bush and scrub oak. A good deal of the poplar is fit for fencing, but very little of it is large enough for building purposes. There is a beautiful lake south-west of these mountains. It is about three-quarters of a mile long, and over a quarter of a mile wide, with beautiful gravelly beach on the north side, while the south side has a good deal of

bullrushes in it, which swarms with ducks. This is the only lake that I have seen west of Manitoba, although I have seen scores of ponds. There is no stream running out of it at present, but in wet weather it overflows its banks. This pretty little lake is called Lake McPherson (I suppose after the pamphlet-writing senator), and would be a pretty place to live near, as the water is very clear, but slightly alkaline in taste. The land around it is not very good, although one or two farmers might get enough good land to grow wheat provisions they would require for home use, and stock-raising and dairying could be profitably followed. There are several other mountains south of this, with apparently plenty of wood for ordinary farming purposes.

Away towards the west extends an

#### IMMENSE TREELESS PLAIN,

slightly rolling; and I am told that there are some pretty good spots of land on it. I could not see its western limit from the top of Deer Head Mountains, although I could with my glass see plainly from twenty to thirty miles away. The people here also suffer for want of postal accommodation, as they get their mail matter by way of Rapid City, which is twenty-eight miles distant, and a man on horseback loses two days going to the post-office, and has to pay fifty cents for crossing and re-crossing the Assiniboine; but then the mail only comes to Rapid City once in three weeks. A post-office established at the crossing of the Assiniboine would greatly oblige some fifty or sixty settlers in these parts. The people here all come here this season, and are yet mostly living in tents. They are very anxious to get hold of a newspaper, and read it eagerly, although it may be a month old.

I returned to the ferry on the evening of Aug. 6th, and the following day went some eighteen or nineteen miles north-west, to

#### RAPID CITY,

on the Little Saskatchewan, situated on section 20, township 13, range 19, west. For about nine miles north-west from the Assiniboine, the land is pretty level, but a good deal of it is alkali, and only a few of the best lots are taken up. There are trees on this part and very few willow bushes, all the high ridges being stony. At about the south-east corner of township 12, range 20, the land improves very much, and has numerous bluffs of poplar and scrub oak, but is considerably broken by small ponds, most of which could easily be drained. This land is nearly all taken up, and will be a fine farming country in a few years, as the land is very rich and generally dry enough for profitable cultivation in any wet season, and not too dry for any dry weather which will probably take place. The

#### VALLEY OF THE LITTLE SASKATCHEWAN

is very wide at Rapid City, with gradually sloping banks, while immediately north of this the valley gets narrow and the banks steep. I suppose that the bed of the river is about one hundred and fifty feet below the adjacent prairie. The river is a pretty, rapid stream, about sixty feet wide, and there are about a dozen dwelling-houses in the city with two stores and a saw-mill in operation; there is also a grist mill, which will be running in a short time. As I propose going westward from here to Oak River, thence

to Shoal Lake, Bird-tail Creek, and perhaps to Fort Ellice, it may be some time before I will have a chance to write again.

Rapid City, Little Saskatchewan, Aug. 8.

FARTHER WESTWARD—THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CANADA PACIFIC—A NIGHT WITH THE MOSQUITOES—AN EDUCATED INDIAN—THE COUNTRY WEST.

SIR.—I did not expect when I last wrote to the WITNESS that four weeks would pass before writing again; but the postal facilities in the North-West are so defective that there is little inducement to write letters or subscribe for newspapers when the chances are largely in favor of their going astray. The amount of profane language which

#### A DEFECTIVE POSTAL SYSTEM

(or want of system) draws out of the people inhabiting this country is painful to contemplate; but as I intend referring more at length to this subject at another time, I will say no more about it at present.

When I was at Rapid City the first time its inhabitants were in a state of considerable excitement about

#### THE LOCATION OF THE CANADA PACIFIC RAILWAY.

as an engineering party under the direction of Mr. W. D. Barclay was approaching the city from the west, having located the Canada Pacific Railway line from the mouth of the Qu'Appelle River to within a few miles west of Rapid City; and as the latter place is some four miles north of the fourth base line, fears were felt lest Rapid City would be left out in the cold. These fears were, however, changed to rejoicing as the line was afterwards made to cross the Little Saskatchewan at the south part of the ambitious little city, the engineer in charge believing it to be the most favorable point for crossing the stream. The banks of the river at this point slope gently down from the higher country on each side, and on these banks there are many stony spots, many of the boulders being limestone, which will come handy in building the foundations of houses and paving the streets in Rapid City. General dry goods and groceries, as well as farming implements, can be bought here at moderate prices (considering the difficulties of transportation), but in some other articles high prices with large profits prevail. There is a small steam saw-mill here, which is supplied with spruce logs brought down the Little Saskatchewan at a cost of only six dollars per thousand feet board measure; yet the proprietor of the saw-mill charges from \$25 to \$35 per 1,000 feet for the lumber sawn out of these logs. Farmers who have to buy this lumber complain of such extortion, but there is no help for it at present. Although the Government owns the timbered lands here, I believe they get very little cash receipts for the saw-logs taken off it.

#### I MET THE CANADA PACIFIC RAILWAY SURVEYING PARTY

a few miles west of Rapid City, and among them were some persons from the Ottawa Valley with whom I had formerly a slight acquaintance; but

distance from the old homestead now made us friends. From their description of the country over which they had passed in coming from Fort Ellice I was induced to resolve to travel over it, although for nearly forty miles of the distance there was no probability of my meeting with any human being, white or red. I stopped the following night at the house of Mr. Wm. Shanks, an old Scotchman of good repute in these parts, where he is well known and highly spoken of by all who know him. This man, with his three sons and two daughters, reside in a snug house about six miles west from Rapid City. Two of the sons came here last fall from Ontario and secured a section of land and got out some house timber and fencing last fall, and were followed this spring by their father and younger brother and their two sisters, who arrived at Emerson on the day following that of my arrival there in the spring. Being possessed of considerable capital as well as help, they were able to farm much more largely than their neighbors, having over thirty acres under crop, besides a large quantity of breaking done for next year. Although the grain was sown on land first ploughed this spring, it looked remarkably well, which was the case with

#### ALMOST ALL THE GRAIN

In this part of the country.

On the morning of Saturday, July 9th, I procured from the family of Mr. Shanks cooking utensils and provisions for my intended journey to Fort Ellice, after which I proceeded about eight miles further west to Oak River and took dinner with an old acquaintance named W. B. Currao, who came here from Montreal last March. Although he had never worked on a farm before, yet he has twenty acres of land under crop, and the logs brought out for the walls of a house. This man is a subscriber to the WITNESS, but I can scarcely call him a reader of that paper, as, owing to defective postal arrangements, only four copies of it have reached him during the five months he has been here.

During the afternoon I went up the river three miles, to the homestead of a Mr. Little, on section 4, township 14, range 22, west, near to which the Canada Pacific Railway line crosses Oak River. Mr. Little is at the present time the settler furthest west in these parts, and I staid with him over Sunday. As Mr. Little with his wife and four children had only a small tent to lodge in, there was no room for me to pass the night in the tent along with them; but they kindly lent me a couple of quilts, and I vainly sought repose in a building they had erected for a stable. This building is close to the river, and is also sheltered from the evening breezes by a little bluff, but the mosquitoes had taken possession before my arrival, and seemed determined to permit no one to sleep there. Having adjusted my mosquito veil to the best advantage, I lay down to sleep, or rather to listen to how much noise could be made by

#### MY LITTLE ESSENTIALS.

I kept my hands carefully covered with the folds of a quilt, yet some of the skeeters would somehow gain admission and begin their surgical operations on them. Having no gloves, I felt puzzled what to do, but I thought me of a spare pair of socks, which I now took from my bag and drew over my hands, and thus protected

#### THE INDIANS

here are camped along the high banks of the Bird Tail creek (here some 250 feet high.) They have ploughed considerable land here this spring and put it under crops of various kinds, all of which looked pretty well, considering the dry nature of the soil; but in dry seasons I fear the poor Sioux will raise very little here, except Indian corn. If they were supplied with seed rye and buckwheat, they might raise enough of these to feed them in dry seasons. I reached the Sioux settlement at noon on Tuesday, August 12th, and

#### THE FIRST SIGHT OF CIVILIZATION

was two yoke of oxen ploughing (breaking), with two Indians to each team, one to guide the oxen and another to guide the plough; and I must confess they did better work than many white people do. When I rode up to them they stopped their ploughing and came up and shook hands with me, grinning and talking in Indian, while I spoke in English. After some vain attempts at conversation, I, enquiring if anyone here spoke English, was directed by signs to where I found the son of Chief Enoch, who with his father speaks English pretty well. Chief Enoch himself was not at home, but I am told that he is rather a superior man and can read the Indian as well as the English languages, and employs his leisure time in teaching his subjects to read in the Dakota language. After a short delay here, being anxious to reach Fort Ellice that evening, I enquired for a place where I might cross Bird Tail Creek, which has nearly as much water running in it as in the Little Saskatchewan. By the Indian's directions I went up the creek about two miles and descended by a very steep pathway to the bottom of the valley, and squeezed through an exceedingly thick brushwood to the edge of the stream, where there was a small log canoe tied to the bank. I took the paddle and went out to the further end of the canoe and found that the water was four feet deep, but I could not find any bottom to the mud beneath. As the banks were nearly perpendicular I had serious fear that if I got my pony into the stream I might not get him out again, so I concluded to go up the south-east bank of the stream some eight miles to where the trail from Shoal Lake crosses. The first three miles of this journey was performed quite easily, as it was an open, dry prairie, though very stony in some places. I then crossed a wet coulee and travelled through a very superior farming country, nearly half covered by scrub and bluff. In the interesting spaces the vetches and peavines were so high and so matted that it was very difficult to ride or walk through them, which made our progress very slow. The evening came on before we reached the bridge at St. Clair City, and I had to again camp out, although the evening threatened rain and the mosquitoes assailed me with their wonted vigor. My supply of bread had become exhausted, but as I had plenty of tea and sugar, I made the most of them. During this night it was very difficult to keep my now

#### TOO FRIENDLY PONY

from tramping on me in his eagerness to get near the fire. Having no bed-clothes of any kind nor tent, with so many mosquitoes to con-

tried to sleep. But it was in vain, as my veil would occasionally rest on the top of my nose or ears, and although the mosquitoes could not come through it themselves, they could bite through it, so I was obliged to leave them in quiet possession of the stable and retire to the smudge near the tent, and there slept on the grass.

Early on Monday morning, August 11th—I rode the forty-fifth anniversary of my birthday—I rode across Oak River on the back of my little two-year-old Indian pony, the water coming well up on his sides, compelling me to gather up my legs pretty well to keep them from being wetted. This little pony, which I bought in Winnipeg for \$40, would scarcely allow any one to put a hand on him when he came into my possession, but now has become as tame as a dog, because I treated him kindly, which is rather exceptional usage for ponies in this country. Indeed, I have often felt as if

#### GUILTY OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

when riding this little two-year old through some bad sloughs with mud and water up to his belly; yet he has gained in flesh since he came into my possession, although he is hobbled every night, and the mosquitoes have been extracting so much blood from him that it is rather a wonder he survives.

The course of the Canada Pacific Railway westward from Oak River for seven or eight miles is over one of the most beautiful as well as fertile tracts that I have seen in the North-West, being gently undulating, like the ocean swell, with frequent little bluffs of poplar sufficient for fencing and fuel, but not large enough for building purposes. The growth of grass and weeds, here was wonderful, indicating a rich soil. I believe that some of this land may be sold for six dollars per acre, but the amount so sold will not pay for building many miles of railway. In fact the more I see of this country the greater is my conviction of the utter folly of the new regulations regarding the lands adjacent to the Canada Pacific Railway. It seems to me that the whole scheme was concocted by, and in the interest of, a few persons in Manitoba who own from 20,000 to 60,000 acres of land each, which they bought at from twenty-five cents to one dollar per acre, and which they hope to sell at from two to six dollars per acre owing to the new regulations regarding Government lands in this country—but more of this at another time.

About eight or nine miles west of Oak River, the country gets drier with very little timber, or even bushes, and this continues until five or six miles beyond Arrow river, which is only a moderately sized creek in a deep gully, the stream being about eight feet wide and two feet deep. There are a

#### GOOD MANY DRY COULERS

in this part, but in none of them did I meet with water although grassy ponds with plenty of water in them are numerous. As the railway track near Ten-Mile Creek, the small bluffs of timber increase in number and the land improves; but after crossing the creek, which has a larger stream of water running in it than there is in Arrow river, but a much shallower valley, the land becomes worthless, being very stony with a subsoil of pure gravel. This inferior land continues into the Indian reserve at the mouth of the Bird Tail Creek.

tend with, my rest was not of the most refreshing kind, yet it was quite as good as on the previous or following nights.

Portage du Prairie, Sept 2nd.

**TREE DESTRUCTION, AND INDUCEMENTS TO GROW TREES—SUGGESTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT—LAND SPECULATORS—HOW ABSENTEES MAY OBTAIN LAND.**

SIR,—To every one interested in the future prosperity of this country the rapid diminution in the supply of wood for fuel and fencing purposes in the North-West must be a source of considerable anxiety. Some people who have been carefully watching the progress of events in this country state that should the consumption of wood continue and increase for half a dozen years more as it has done in the past six years, there will be very little timber of any kind left in Manitoba, and in many parts of the country fuel will command exceedingly high prices, causing a great deal of suffering, especially during the cold winters.

**TREE CULTURE**

has hitherto been almost a complete failure in the north-western prairies of Canada and the United States, although liberal inducements are given by Federal and State Governments to such as will engage in it. Under the "Timber Culture Act" of the United States any citizen, or those who have declared their intention to become such, can make an entry, not exceeding 160 acres of prairie lands, either within or without the limits of a railway grant, on condition that one-sixteenth of the land so taken shall be planted with trees, four feet apart each way, and cultivated and protected for eight years, when final proof can be made and the patent secured. This liberal law of the Federal Government is supplemented by a law in the Territory of Dakota, which provides that for every five acres of timber cultivated, forty acres, with all the improvements thereon, not exceeding one thousand dollars in value, shall be exempt from taxation for a period of ten years from the time of planting, and further that no land shall be deemed increased in value for assessment purposes by reason of such timber culture, no matter how much its real value may be enhanced thereby. In Minnesota, by legislative enactment, the grower of forest trees on the prairie, is given \$2 for every acre planted with trees, payment commencing the third year after planting, and continuing ten years; that is, the grower of forty acres of timber on the prairie will be given

**A BONUS OF \$800**

from the State, besides owning the wood. In the Canadian North-West a person can secure 160 acres of prairie land on his undertaking to plant twenty acres of it with trees within ten years from the date of entry. Notwithstanding these liberal inducements to tree-culture, and although a great many persons have taken up land as tree claims on both sides of the line, yet, so far as I could learn, not a single case has occurred on the Canadian side where the person owning a tree-claim has made any attempt to fulfil his obligations by planting with trees even half an acre of land. I am informed that in the United States a number of persons have

made an attempt at tree-planting, but none of them, so far as I could learn, have fulfilled their engagements on this head. I believe that with the exception of the trees planted on the farm of Mr. Thomas Scissions, at Portage la Prairie, fewer trees have been planted by the hand of man in the Canadian North-West than have been planted within the limits of the city of Montreal; and were all the trees hitherto planted in this country permitted to grow unmolested for twenty years they would not be sufficient to furnish wood to meet the present consumption of the country for one week. Yet most people here, including Government officials, seem as careless about the preservation of growing timber as if the supply were inexhaustible.

It is generally supposed that all timbered lands are reserved by the Government for the purpose of supplying small wood lots to the settlers on prairie lands, and were this plan faithfully followed from the commencement of settlement very few sections in this part of the country would remain without a sufficient supply of timber for ordinary purposes within a distance of twelve miles at most, yet, I believe, that fully one-third of the fertile lands in this province have no bush lots reserved to meet the requirements of the future tillers of these large tracts of agricultural lands. It is very annoying to a person about to settle on a prairie lot to be told that there is no wood lot to be had for love or money, while within sight of his homestead there are, perhaps, hundreds of acres of excellent timbered lands, owned, it may be, by one individual who has secured them at less than one dollar per acre; and it is still more annoying when this prairie farmer is compelled to pay his more fortunate neighbor from

**ONE TO TWO DOLLARS PER TREE**

for the larger sticks required in building his house. I have seen cases where from one to six hundred acres of well-wooded lands have been scripped by one man, while many farmers within a few miles of this timber are unable to obtain a wood lot at all, except at exorbitant rates.

My reason for writing about this condition of things at present is with the hope that the Government may take immediate steps to secure the small portion of favorably situated bush lands which have not yet been grabbed by land speculators, so that the cultivators of the adjacent prairies may each have a chance to get a small wood lot.

Extending over townships one, two and three on over a dozen of the ranges west of the twelfth range west, extending from the Cypress creek to the Souris river, there is the most extensive open prairie country that I have yet seen in the Canadian North-West—most of it excellent farming lands—yet there are only two comparatively small tracts of wooded lands within reasonable distance, from which the future settlers on this extensive prairie can draw their supply of wood. One of these wooded tracts is at the Turtle Mountains. It is being surveyed at present and will shortly be open, the even numbered sections for homesteading and the odd numbered sections for sale at one dollar per acre, and which will, without doubt, be speedily appropriated by speculators, leaving tens of thousands of acres of prairie land within sight of it for which there will be no wood lots, except the Government officials should turn over a new leaf and attend to

their business as they ought. The other tract of wood-land lies north-east of Pelican Lake in townships four and five, ranges fifteen and sixteen west, and I believe that it is shortly to be surveyed and thrown on the market; but it would be greatly to the advantage of the whole country that this wooded land should be sold only in small lots and to actual settlers on the adjacent prairie.

In the vicinity of the Turtle Mountains there are considerable tracts of

**LAND PARTIALLY WOODED,**

the bluffs of timber being interspersed with patches of scrub or open prairie. Nearly all this tract would soon become a forest if protected from the ravages of prairie fires, and since it has been found so difficult to raise trees on the open prairie, it would seem to be wise policy on the part of the Government to reserve the greater portion of these partially timbered lands so that they might be afterwards sold in small wood lots to settlers on the prairie, who would often be glad to get even these. Some of the settlers who have already gone to the Turtle Mountains seem anxious to secure for themselves large tracts of these partially wooded lands, one party having already fenced in 1,200 acres of it, using about 20,000 fence rails, which were cut from Government lands. It would certainly be a great benefit to the general settlement of the country were the Government to prevent all further monopolizing of its timbered or partially timbered lands by sharp speculators.

The new land regulations are also likely to operate injuriously with the settlement of the two rows of townships next to the international boundary, as these townships are included in belt E, and the railway lands can be bought for \$1 per acre, payable in ten annual instalments, with interest at six per cent on the unpaid balance. Mr. Landerkin, the land agent in Pembina Mountains, told me that almost the entire business done at his office since the first of last August was in disposing of these railway lands, and I know personally that a considerable number of land speculators are watching to secure the lands which are now being surveyed as soon as they are open for sale, which will be early in the coming winter; and should there be no change in the land policy all the good railway lands in belt E, the two ranges of townships next to the international boundary, will be secured by speculators, to the great hindrance of the settlement in this part of the country. To show how easily

**LAND CAN BE SECURED BY ABSENTEES**

I may state that a person dwelling in Montreal—or any other place—may become owner of a square mile of first-class land by paying down \$64, and at the end of the year paying another \$64 of the principal, and \$34.56 interest. At the end of the second year another payment of \$64 has to be made, and \$30.72 paid in interest, and the yearly payment will continue, the interest diminishing at the rate of \$3.94 each year, until at the end of nine years the whole payments (principal and interest) are completed, and the purchaser gets his patent.

The greatest hindrance to the growth of timber in this country are the frequent prairie fires, yet scarcely any attempt has thus far been made to

enact laws to prevent their frequent occurrence; but as I intend to treat this subject more largely at another time I will say no more about it at present.

Low's Farm, Manitoba, Oct. 1st.

**PRAIRIE FIRES—THEIR CAUSE AND MEANS FOR THEIR PREVENTION.**

SIR,—It is probable that all the dry lands in Manitoba, if not in the whole North-West, were at not a very remote period covered with forests, just as the eastern provinces were previous to their settlement by white men. Some of your readers will be ready to ask, "How did it come to pass that the forests disappeared from the western plains, while the trees in the east continued to grow and flourish until cut down by the axe of man?" Prairie fires are no doubt the cause of this difference, but

**THE ORIGIN OF THESE FIRES**

is perhaps not so easily accounted for, nor why fires should be so destructive to the forests in the West, while they were comparatively harmless to the timber growing further east. I believe that this difference can be accounted for by the presence of so many great tracts of marshy land in the West which were too wet for trees to grow upon, but which produced large quantities of wild grass, reeds and rushes, which in very dry seasons supplied immense quantities of combustible matter, giving strength to the fires, which would thus extend to the adjacent woodland, and in process of time change them into prairies. The absence of such extensive marshes in the eastern provinces, together with a moister climate, helped to prevent the spread of fires; thus the forests continued to grow until disturbed by the inroads of settlers. It is also probable that the greater intensity of the electrical discharges in the North-West has helped to make fires more numerous in that quarter. Even during the memory of some of the older inhabitants, pretty extensive tracts of wooded lands in Manitoba have become almost open prairies; but this continued diminution in the area of the forests gave no cause of uneasiness to the minds of the few early settlers as there seemed no danger of a scarcity of timber. The late rapid increase in the population, as well as the greater destructiveness of recent prairie fires, has changed the aspect of affairs, requiring that speedy and effectual means be adopted to prevent the very serious losses which are yearly caused by them. I believe that

**OVER \$200,000 WORTH OF PROPERTY,**

in the form of hay, grain, fences, buildings, live stock and growing timber, has been destroyed during the past few weeks by prairie fires in Manitoba alone, or at the rate of over \$4 per head of the entire population. Since there is a probability of this serious loss recurring annually until more effective measures are adopted to prevent the kindling and spread of fires, let it be a high time for those in authority to bestir themselves in order to prevent so much needless waste!

Perhaps some one will be ready to say that \$200,000 is not a very serious loss for a whole province to sustain by fires in one season, but this loss will appear greater when the smallness

of the population is considered, also that nearly all this loss falls on new settlers who are mostly in straitened circumstances and cannot well spare any portion of their substance to feed the rapacious fire-beast.

So far as I have been able to learn, few or no precautionary measures by legal enactments or otherwise, have yet been taken in the Canadian North-West to prevent the spread of these fires, and before suggesting means for their prevention, I would first refer to a few of the principal

#### CAUSES WHICH LEAD TO THEIR FREQUENT OCCURRENCE.

On the 17th of last April I was returning across an extensive prairie called White Horse Plains in the parish of St. Francois Xavier, and met three men in a wagon going westward, leaving behind them a fiery trail by lighting bits of paper and throwing them among the dry grass, just for the fun of seeing it burn without apparently thinking of the danger to fences and buildings caused by such wanton sport. A little further on I came to where several French natives were actively engaged in preventing this prairie fire from destroying their fences, and one of them told me in broken English how "the bad Canadian man in the wagon, he burn my fence." I believe that a good many prairie fires are kindled to gratify wicked sport, and were such "phunny phellows" sent for a few months to sport themselves at hard labor in some prison, it would tend to make them more cautious about sporting themselves at other people's expense. Another fruitful source of prairie fires is the custom of smoking tobacco, which prevails largely in this country. A very disastrous prairie fire was recently started in Pembina Mountains by a rev. gentleman while lighting his pipe (I hope the churches will have the good sense to cease sending

#### "SMOKING MISSIONARIES"

to the North-West), and no doubt many conflagrations have a similar origin. Another source of prairie fires is from the smouldering embers of camp fires, or where travellers have halted to warm their dinners. It is a very easy matter to quench such embers with water, or else cover them with earth, and thus prevent all danger of their igniting the adjacent dry grass, and this would no doubt be done were every person (travellers or others) compelled to foot the bill of costs which might result from their carelessness in leaving live coals where they may do harm. The chief cause of prairie fires is the custom of burning the dry grass in the vicinity of stacks, fences and buildings in order to protect them from danger by running fires. These fires are usually kindled in the evening and during calm weather; but often the wind rises, and the fires are driven out to the open prairie and perhaps extend for many miles, doing a large amount of damage in their course. This kind of fire seems in some places to be a necessity, because if the long dry grass is allowed to stand in the vicinity of buildings, should a large prairie fire, fanned by a strong wind, approach, it would be almost impossible to prevent the whole from being consumed.

When I was at Mr. Lowe's farm, ten miles west of Morris on the trail to Tobacco Creek, prairie fires had been burning in various places for some days, and on the afternoon of the day I was there (Sept. 30) a high wind prevailed, and an im-

mense cloud of smoke arose in the direction of Tobacco Creek, and very soon a furious prairie fire came swooping down towards us, travelling at a rate which would have put horses to their utmost speed to escape out of its track.

#### COOL WESTOVER,

who is in charge of Mr. Lowe's farm, had previously taken the precaution to burn all the dry grass near the buildings and stacks, and had this not been done, no human power could have saved them from total destruction. I went out to the border of the burnt grass to see the fire approaching, but could scarcely see anything, being almost blinded and suffocated by the smoke and heat even before the fire reached where I was. It strongly reminded me of the scenes which I had witnessed during the great fire near Ottawa in August, 1870. In many places the settlers are in the habit of ploughing a strip of land around their buildings and stacks, and this is sufficient protection from ordinary fires; but it sometimes happens that

#### THE FIRE, FANNED BY A GALE,

leaps across the strip of ploughed land and consumes the stacks or buildings which it was intended to protect. Prairie fires (and some very mischievous ones) are often started in the spring by persons desirous of clearing the old withered grass from off meadow lands where they intend to cut their hay in the following summer. This mode of clearing meadow lands of their last season's crop should be prohibited, for although it may save a little present labor, it often causes the destruction of large numbers of young trees which would in a few years be of great value to their owners.

I believe also that the burning of the old grass on the land is injurious to the succeeding crop, more especially in places where there is already too much alkali. I have also often observed places in a portion of the field where the old grass had not been burnt last year, that the young grass showed a much more vigorous growth than in places where it had been burnt off. This might be partly accounted for by the old grass holding the snow during the severe cold weather of winter, while in places where the grass had been burnt the wind blew the snow all away, leaving the roots of the grass too much exposed.

#### What I would propose

#### IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE REPEATED LOSSES

from prairie fires is a statute prohibiting the burning of grass on the fields from the middle of September to the first of June following. From the first of June until the grass is killed by frost, fires will not run, owing to the grass and weeds being too green to burn. "Fire brakes," to protect buildings, stacks, fences and forests, should be made about the beginning of September by cutting with a mowing machine a strip of grass several rods in breadth, around the places requiring protection, and then burning this mown grass where it lay, and thus securing a strip of burnt land all around the farmer's premises while there was no danger of the fire spreading owing to the green condition of the adjacent grass. It would also be well for the local authorities to cause to be cut and burnt numerous strips of grass across the open prairies and around timbered lands, which would have the effect of confining fires to a small

space should they chance to be started by accident or otherwise. I believe that the prevention of prairie fires is one of primary importance to the people of the North-West, and should secure the early attention of those in authority.

#### CENT PER CENT—AN ATTACK BY A MOSQUITO HORDE—AN EFFICIENT SERVANT—WAITING FOR PAYMENT.

SIR.—Early on the morning of Wednesday, August 13th, after riding about a mile over a most beautiful and fertile rolling and partially wooded country, I reached the house of Mr. Alfred Morton, near to the site of the future St. Clair City. Being wearied as well as hungry, I waited here for breakfast, and also purchased a fresh supply of cooked provisions, which I got at very reasonable rates, considering the high prices paid here for raw material. Fort Ellice, distant thirteen miles, is the nearest place where supplies can be got, but the prices charged at the Hudson Bay Company's stores (where they have no competition, as is the case here) are such as tend to lighten your pocket without over-weighting your travelling bag. One of the settlers here went to Fort Ellice to purchase common salt and had to pay \$2 for twenty pound weight; I paid myself twenty-five cents for a pound of sugar which I bought there on the afternoon of that day. The price of flour is \$8 per 100 pounds, which cost the Company but \$3.25 delivered at their store by the steamboats from the portage, 100 per cent. profit on sales here seeming to be considered

#### ABOUT THE FAIR THING,

but in some other places larger profits are sought and obtained.

After breakfast Mr. Morton took me around to see his growing crops, which were very fine, although mostly growing on land ploughed for the first time last spring. He stated his intention of abandoning in future the custom of ploughing land nearly a year before it is sown with grain, which has hitherto been almost the universal custom on prairie lands, as it was a needless waste of time and labor, especially in this part of the country. The valley of the Bird Tail Creek here is about 200 feet deep, but the banks are not nearly so steep as they are eight miles further down, in the Sioux Reserve.

#### ST. CLAIR CITY

at this time consisted of three houses, all unfinished, the walls of several others, and a few tents. The Bird Tail is very rapid here, and having a considerable volume of water, furnishes the best water power that I have seen in the North-West, except on the Winnipeg river in Kewatin. There are also on its banks numerous springs of the best water I have tasted in this country, and equal to any I have seen in the Ottawa valley.

After a short delay at St. Clair City, I started for Fort Ellice, accompanied by an army of

#### THE MOST FEROCIOUS MOSQUITOES

I have yet seen, whose appetites seemed to be whetted by the warm, murky weather, and which, out of spite apparently, wrenched their vengeance on my little mustang because my net

prevented them from bleeding myself. Their tortures made him very restless, and to assist in driving away his tormentors, I got a willow bush and with it brushed his sides, shoulders and neck, but could not reach those that attacked the under part of his belly. The poor animal in trying to drive these away by a forward fling with his hind feet, struck my heel twice with his hoofs and to prevent further damage I dismounted, preferring to walk rather than be kicked in this manner. I had not gone far when he, after several trials, succeeded in placing his hind foot in the stirrup and nearly threw himself on the ground.

About seven miles from Bird Tail Creek I crossed the dry bed of what is sometimes a considerable stream, flowing in a deep valley called Snake Creek. The quality of the soil had hitherto been very good, although in some places rather stony, but after this the stony patches became much too frequent, with occasional patches of poor sandy or gravelly land. When within less than four miles from

#### FORT ELLICE,

the ground begins to decline towards the Assiniboine, and the Fort is seen in the distance, seemingly in the bottom of a wide valley; but when you get nearer you discover that a very large valley intervenes, which is about a mile wide and 200 feet below the level on which Fort Ellice is built. Both banks of this lower valley are almost precipitous, and the west bank well wooded. The road up and down these banks had to be made in a zig-zag fashion at considerable cost by the Hudson Bay Company, yet the work of drawing a load up these hills is very trying on horses and oxen. The bottom of this valley is quite level and exceedingly fertile, but all covered over with brushwood, except where the officers of the Hudson Bay Company have a considerable farm. The sun had begun to shine out resplendently before I reached this valley, which had a most lovely appearance when viewed from the high lands on either side. The tortuous course of the Assiniboine as it winds about in this valley is seen for several miles up and down, and the first bridge across that river occurs at this place, and is the best bridge I have seen in this country; yet, no toll is collected from passengers or teams crossing over it.

When crossing over this bridge I met with an Englishman named Thomas Froot, whose tent was pitched on the banks of the river. After a short conversation with this man, I learned that he was

#### A GOVERNMENT DETECTIVE,

sent out by Sir John A. Macdonald to keep him informed how Government officials deport themselves when far from the seat of Government. He read to me several extracts from communications which he had forwarded to headquarters, but although they contained a great deal that was true regarding the failings of his master's servants, yet it was often too highly colored. He was also acting as a correspondent to two papers published in England, and if the readers of these papers place much reliance on the statements of this man their loyalty will be undoubtedly if any of them will in future settle on the Canadian side of the boundary line. I afterwards heard rather curious stories about this individual, and if the Government have many more such employees in



the North-West the sooner there is a change the better it will be for all honest people. Government officials in this portion of the Dominion should be men of undoubted integrity as well as loyalty, and those who are otherwise should be sent to some older settlement, where they cannot do so much harm, and where their misdeeds will more readily reach the ears of their superiors. By the way, the American Government ought to reward Mr. Frost for his exertions in their behalf.

There were, at the time of my visit to this place, about 100 "tepees," or Indian huts, within sight of Fort Ellice. These Indians had come here to receive their annuities; but, although the date when the payments should be made had already been passed twelve days ago, there was no word or sign of the Government agent with the money. Captain Herchimer and a squad of North-West Mounted Police, from Shoal Lake, were camped here to keep watch over the doings of

#### "POOR HUNGRY LO,"

who showed no signs of causing trouble if supplied with food, which the officers of the Hudson Bay Company had been doing since the date when the yearly payment should have been made, and no doubt their profits will be large on these transactions when the Government comes to settle with them. These Indians had come to Fort Ellice some time before the date fixed for receiving their annuities, and being on the border of starvation they helped themselves to four head of fat cattle belonging to the Hon. Mr. McKay, but which they thought were Government stock. This act of appropriation was done civilly but determinedly, and gave a great deal of uneasiness to Capt. Herchimer, but that officer did not like to interpose his authority between starving Indians and fat beef critters.

The country around and beyond this point has ample supplies of wood, but the soil is mostly of inferior quality and in some cases is a bare sandy waste. Except in the immediate vicinity of the river, I don't believe there will be much settlement done here for several years, although the land on the whole is equal to many settled portions of the eastern provinces.

Having gone as far as I wanted towards the west I turned back across the Assiniboine and tried to find an old trail, which was said to lead from this point to the Pelly Crossing on the Bird Tail Creek, near the Riding Mountains, but after considerable search, had to give it up and return by the way I came. When I reached the valley of Snake Creek it was getting dark, and being cloudy and warm, the mosquito army renewed their attack of the forenoon, which put my pony nearly wild, so I thought it best to camp here rather than prosecute my journey seven miles further under such circumstances.

Montreal, Nov. 21st, 1879.

#### AN ORDINARY EVENING AT THE WINNIPEG POST-OFFICE—NEEDED POSTAL REFORMS.

SIR.—While reading in the *WITNESSES* of last Saturday how speedily mail matter is distributed, delivered, or despatched in the Montreal Post-office, I was reminded of the very different way they do these things in Manitoba, especially at the Winnipeg Post-office, where the delays are very trying to the patience, and frequently cause considerable loss to the people of that pro-

vince. The mails from the East generally reach Winnipeg about midnight, and when the Post-office opens at eight o'clock the following morning a number of people enter it to get their letters before going to their ordinary avocations, but often they find that the general delivery wicket remains closed until near nine, as the clerks are too busily engaged in sorting the previous night's mail. When the wicket is opened there is such a crowd pressing around it as to resemble the window of a polling-place during elections twenty years ago. Two clerks are usually placed to serve the general public until the first crush is over, but sometimes there is only one to serve.

#### THE PAGER CROWD.

The person standing next to the wicket calls out his name, and the clerk pulls a handful of letters from a pigeon-hole and looks them over. Perhaps the waiting individual gets all his letters, but sometimes he does not get them until two or three days afterwards, or it may be not at all (as I have found by experience). When the handful of letters is examined the clerk goes to another and larger pigeon-hole, and takes out of it an armful of newspapers and looks them over one by one, returns them to their place, and informs the waiting individual that there is nothing more for him. The latter is not, however, to be put off so readily, as he has been deputed by several of his neighbors to ask for their mail, and the clerk has again to go over the same process of searching for letters and papers for each of these. The first person retires from the wicket (sometimes a difficult task, owing to the eagerness of the crowd behind him), and another takes his place, while the post-office man goes through the same tedious process as before. I have sometimes waited half an hour before I could get near enough to the wicket to receive my letters and papers. Often the eastern papers were not all sorted until noon; so I had to return again in the afternoon, or leave the city without them. The mechanics and laborers generally call at the post-office between the hours of twelve and one o'clock, when there is another jam at the wicket, but only one clerk to attend to all their wants, which often includes selling postage stamps, and receiving or delivering registered letters. I have on several occasions remained to watch the eagerness of the poor workmen to get away to their dinner or work, but in some cases they are detained over fifteen minutes before getting their turn. I believe that during the greater part of the summer an average of five or six persons were kept waiting in Winnipeg post-office during the hours it was kept open.

The weekly mails for many places in Manitoba and the North-West Territory are dispatched from Winnipeg and Emerson, on Monday morning, but do not contain letters and papers which may have reached there from thirty to forty hours previously, and such letters have to lay over for another week before being forwarded to their destination. For example, the *WEEKLY WITNESSES* for Manitoba, leaves Montreal on Tuesday evenings, and generally reaches Emerson on Saturday evenings at six o'clock, and Winnipeg about midnight, and might easily be forwarded to the West on Monday morning, in which case they would reach most of their readers by Wednesday, or eight days after publication, but instead of that they are delayed seven days more.

Of course people generally do not care for subscribing for papers that do not reach them until fifteen to twenty days after publication, if at all. At the time of my visit, there were

#### ONLY TWO REGULAR POST-OFFICES

in that part of the North-West Territory immediately joining Manitoba; these were at Shoal Lake and at Tanners Crossing on the Little Saskatchewan. From these two offices, over two thousand families, scattered over as many square miles of territory, had to get their letters and papers. The mail reached these offices only once in three weeks, and was often a bulky affair. Mr. Tanner told me that often 250 pounds of mail matter was left at his office. Mr. Tanner is in the habit of remaining at home the day after the mail arrives to sort it, and also deliver the letters and papers to whoever may call. Afterwards he attends to his farm, and the post-office is generally left in charge of his family, who, I am informed, cannot read the writing or the addresses, and when a person calls for his mail he is pointed to the place where the letters and papers are kept and told to "go and look for himself." Acting upon such an invitation people sometimes take more than properly belong to them, especially when they are deputed to bring home all the letters and papers belonging to a whole neighborhood, twenty or thirty miles distant. To illustrate this better, let us suppose that Farmer Jones, residing at the Big Bend of the Saskatchewan, comes to the Little Saskatchewan Post-Office to get his own letters and papers, as well as those belonging to his immediate neighbors. He examines over the pile of mail matter, and finds that some of it is directed to H. Brown. Mr. Jones has

#### A NEIGHBOR NAMED BROWN,

but he does not know his first name, and to make certain he takes Mr. Brown's letters and papers along with the rest. Mr. Jones' neighbor's name is not H. Brown, but R. Brown, and when he looks at the papers which Jones brought him he finds that he is not the owner at all, as they belong to Mr. H. Brown, who lives south-east from Rapid City, distant some forty or fifty miles. The stray letters and papers are laid away to be returned at the first opportunity, but often have to wait several months before sent back to the post-office, there to take their chances of being again sent off in the wrong direction. There is generally some chance of the letters reaching their proper destination at last, but I have heard of several cases where it took six months to do it. Some half-dozen or more letters posted in Montreal last summer, and addressed to "David Currie, Winnipeg, Man.," never reached that person, but remain somewhere in the North-West, although the person to whom they belong has made a good deal of enquiries about them. Newspapers which make a wrong start are seldom returned, and when returned to the post-office, are perhaps sent back to the publishers' office instead of to the person to whom directed. Mr. Tanner innocently informed me "that he had sent a number of *WEEKLY WITNESSES* back to Montreal, which had been returned to his office by the person to whom they were addressed." I afterwards learned that these papers had never reached the person to whom they belonged, but had gone to the wrong place, and when returned to the office were sent back to Montreal instead of to their rightful owners.

I have reason to believe that the postal business was much more carelessly done at the Shoal Lake office, where the complaints from people who get their letters and papers there were much worse than in any other place I visited; but I have very little personal knowledge of the irregularities complained of.

I believe that Mr. Dewe, the Dominion Post-office Inspector, who was in Manitoba when I left it, has had a good many of these irregularities removed, but I fear that there is ample room for a good deal more in that line.

#### CAMPING OUT EXPERIENCES—SOME FARMERS—AN INDIAN COUNCIL—THE MISSIONARY AND THE GOVERNMENT AGENT.

The night of August 13th was the third night in succession that I had to camp out on the lone prairie without either blanket or tent, and a short account of how it was done may be amusing if not instructive to your readers. Finding that night was coming on while there was still seven miles of an indifferent trail to be passed over before reaching St. Clair city, where the accommodation for travellers was none of the best, and knowing that the passage over every rod of the way there would be contested by innumerable hosts of mosquitoes,

#### I THOUGHT IT PRUDENT

to halt for the night, and so looked around to see if there were signs of dead timber in any of the adjacent bluffs with which to make a fire. I had to be more particular in selecting my camping place where there were ample supplies of dry wood, than most other travellers, since I had no axe with me, nor anything larger than a small jack-knife with which to prepare the night's firewood.

When a suitable place was found I unsaddled and hobbled my pony and turned him out to feed, while I kindled a fire with which to warm my supper and drive away the mosquito battalions. But first of all I had to gather a store of fuel to last the whole night, as on the preceding evening I neglected to gather enough of wood until after dark, when I found it was no easy task groping around among a thick bluff of small poplars until I met with a dry tree, not too large for me to pull down. By starting wood-gathering while there was still sufficient daylight to look around me, I generally got plenty of fallen timber, which I drew out in lengths of sometimes more than twenty feet, and placing several of these across each other kindled a fire at the point of contact which soon burned each of them through, when I again placed the longer pieces across the fire, and before I went to sleep they were all cut into convenient lengths by means of the fire. My next work was to prepare tea for supper, using water which I had taken with me in a tin flask from a spring which issued out of the banks of the Assiniboine, near Fort Ellice. The immediate vicinity of water is generally chosen by travellers for camping ground, but I found that where other people were in the habit of camping they used up all the dry wood, so I carried my tea-water with me often for half a day before using it. After supper

#### I PREPARED A RED

by gathering an armful of bushes or weeds and spreading them on the ground to leeward of the

fire, using my travelling bag for a pillow. I would then remove from my pants and drawers any grains of wild oats which might have intruded their unwelcome presence there, and which they were not slow to make known by a pricking sensation on some part of my legs. By the way, I may here state that I have known several persons who were laid up from work for a longer or shorter period, owing to the intrusion of a wild oat (they strongly resemble porcupine quills) through a hole in the boot, into and through the skin of their feet. Having gathered the burning brands closer together, then wrapping around me a waterproof coat, and adjusting the mosquito net, also drawing a pair of socks over my hands to guard against the "Akeeters," I would lie down to sleep.

On some other nights while camping out, I heard the prairie-wolves singing their sweetest carole, but on this occasion there was nothing unusual to disturb my rest except Stutt (the pony) and his tormentors, both of which kept in closer proximity to my bed than was conducive to slumber. It also rained some during the night, and on such occasions I had to assume the perpendicular instead of the horizontal position in order to avoid being drenched too much. This mode of sleeping is not very refreshing, and when frequently repeated becomes wearisome.

At break of day I started for the Bird Tail, and reached the dwelling of Mr. Chambers, one of the Hamiltonian colonists, in time for breakfast. Upon remarking

#### THE ABSENCE OF MILK.

Mr. Chambers told me that they owned the only cow in the colony, but she had wandered away two days before and had not returned, leaving the whole settlement to drink their tea and sup their porridge without the coloring of milk. I afterwards found several new settlements without a supply of milk, caused chiefly by the operations of the N. P. and cattle prohibition. On former years the new settlers used to get cows from passing Montana drovers, at very low prices, but not a single cow, so far as I could learn, was brought from Montana this season. Any of the settlers who wanted a cow had to go down to The Portage, and some times to Winnipeg, from one to two hundred miles distant, and there pay nearly twice as much for bossy as they used to pay to the Montana drovers.

From St. Clair city I took the old trail eastward to Shoal Lake, distant more than twenty miles. For the first seven or eight miles the land was very fine, with plenty of timber and slightly rolling. Near Ten Mile Creek there was a good deal of wet land, and in some places the timber was rather scarce, but there is a plentiful supply a few miles to the northward from the trail. As you approach Shoal Lake there are also numerous alkali spots, but they are not so bad as in some other parts of the country.

When about to cross the stream connecting Shoal with Raven Lake I met a young man named John Brodie, from Paris, Ont., where his father is an elder in the Presbyterian Church. I had met with him twice before, first at Long Lake and afterwards at Pine Creek, and now gladly accepted his invitation to come and lodge within his tent, as it was drawing towards evening, and I was both weary and sick. Before going to bed we smudged the tent, and

#### MADE THE MOSQUITOES SO DRUNK:

that they did not molest us again before morning. Mr. Brodie and his two companions had made three journeys with ox teams between Winnipeg and Shoal Lake, in all more than six hundred miles, since the 22nd of last June; yet on no occasion did they travel on Sunday, but rested in their tent wherever they chanced to be. I mention this fact because such conduct is not common, even among Presbyterians, in this country, and should the Church in the eastern provinces continue to neglect its poor scattered members out West, it is reasonable to expect that more of them will become Sunday travellers. Indeed, it has almost become a custom to start on a long journey on Saturday in order to get one, and perhaps two Sundays, for travelling.

In the morning, after visiting the barracks of the North-West Mounted Police, I started northward along the west side of Shoal Lake, passing over very rich but mostly low lands, nearly all of which have been homesteaded by members of the police force stationed at Shoal Lake. One of these men, whose time will expire next April, had a "bee" the day I passed, putting up a horse on his place. He was well pleased with his land, but complained that the Government had permitted all the good building timber in the neighborhood (more than one hundred acres), to be taken by one man who was also a non-resident.

The lake here is a very

#### BEAUTIFUL SKEET OF CLEAR WATER:

with beautiful farm sites along the eastern shore, where the land is higher than on the western side. A pretty large stream called Oak Creek empties into the lake at the northern extremity. This creek has its source in the Riding Mountains, and for the greater part of its course passes through a well-wooded country, abounding in lakes, ponds and marshy sloughs. After crossing Oak Creek I went northeastward for about seven miles, without meeting any signs of civilization, except traces of the work lately done here by a surveying party, who had just completed subdividing this township into sections and quarter sections.

About the centre of township 17, range 22, west, I came into an older settlement than any I had seen since leaving Manitoba. Several of these farmers had been here more than two years, and were already

#### IN FAIRLY COMFORTABLE CIRCUMSTANCES,

having pretty large fields of splendid grain almost ready for harvesting.

On the following morning I continued my course to the Big Bend, on the Little Saskatchewan. The land here is excellent, but has very few settlers located on it, as some twelve sections here have been bought by an English nobleman, Lord Elphinstone, who purposes to make it an immense cattle farm. The people in the vicinity would, however, much rather have people than cattle for neighbors, as there would then be greater likelihood of their early securing schools, churches and good roads. A few miles northward from here there is a somewhat eccentric individual in good circumstances, who owns a good deal of land in this neighborhood and some sixty or seventy head of cattle.

A little after midday I reached the Indian Reserve near the Riding Mountain House and

found the Indians all congregated in one place holding

#### A "BIG TALK" WITH MR. MARTINEAU.

the Government agent, who was to pay the Indians their annuities the following Monday. After listening a while to Cree eloquence and its English translation, I left to visit some settlers living south-west from here, promising the Rev. George Flett, the Presbyterian missionary, that I would return on the afternoon of the next day (Sunday) to see the Indian children at their Sunday-school exercises. At the appointed time, 4 p.m. Sunday, in company with Mr. Flett and his wife, we came to the place of meeting—a small log dwelling-house enclosed in a field of barley, potatoes, Indian corn and other garden vegetables. The building and crops belong to a young Cree who has shown considerable aptitude in adopting the customs of civilization. The Indians at first began to gather round the house in considerable numbers from the adjacent encampment, but unfortunately at this juncture Mr. Martineau called at the "teepee" of the chief, wanting to have another "big talk." The interpreter (a young Indian in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company, who speaks English, French and Indian fluently) was at the house where Mr. Flett was about beginning religious services, but a messenger came requiring his presence at headquarters, and he had to go, while a number of the other Indians followed from curiosity. Mr. Flett and I began to fear that the religious services of the day would suffer for lack of an audience, but as a few of the better-disposed young men and women remained, we gathered in front of the house and started to sing some of Sankey's hymns, they singing in Cree and I in English; but there was no discord, as the tunes were the ones usually sung to these hymns. We had not sung through one hymn when nearly all the women and children in the camp came up to our place of meeting, followed soon after by all the younger men, leaving only about half a dozen of the older Indians to continue the conference with Agent Martineau. I counted in all about eighty persons, old and young, at our meeting. Several more hymns were then sung, and the Rev. Mr. Flett, after reading a chapter in the Cree language, from an English Bible, preached a short sermon, but as I did not understand a word of it, I employed my leisure in scanning the personal appearance of the audience, by no means a very pleasing spectacle, owing to the amount of squalor and dirt visible. Most of the children were literally in rags, though some of them had a scanty supply of even those. After the sermon the younger persons in the company were divided into classes and teachers put in charge of each. Some of the teachers were more youthful than some members of their class, yet with a card in hand on which the Cree alphabet had been written by Mr. Flett, they pointed out with a short stick each character and called out its proper name. Mr. and Mrs. Flett had each of them classes of the smaller children gathered around them, to whom they were teaching the English alphabet and also to spell little words in that language. Mrs. Flett seemed to enter into the work most heartily, although her pupils were in such a condition that few of the lady teachers in Montreal Sunday-schools would care to touch their clothing or persons with a pair of tongs.

AN INDIAN MISSION—BEAVERS AS A CAUSE OF PONDS AND MARSHES.

The night of August 17th was spent by me in the house of the Rev. George Flett, a short distance north from the Riding Mountain House. Mr. Flett's house is one of the best that I have seen west of Manitoba, yet it was built entirely by

#### INDIAN LABOR.

The doors, windows, flooring and part of the shingles were brought up from Winnipeg, but the logs were hewed and put together by Indians, who also sawed with a whip-saw all the rough lumber needed, and a made considerable portion of the shingles, besides doing all the joiner work requisite in putting up the rafters, boarding and shingling the roof, laying the floors, making the door and window cases, &c.

On Monday morning I walked around the Reserve gathering wild flowers, (which I brought with me to Montreal,) and observing the buildings, fences, and crops belonging to the Indians. The two latter were much less than I was led to expect from the civilized appearance of many of these people, but there were several houses already built, and the (log) walls for six or seven more were up (the cornering being remarkably well done,) and will probably be occupied by this time, at least I hope so, as the supply of clothing belonging to the Indians, especially the children, is altogether too scanty to permit of their dwelling in "Teepees" through the cold weather. When fur-bearing animals were plentiful, and their pelts brought high prices, many of these Indians and their squaws were clothed in broadcloth; but the two past seasons have been very disappointing to Indian hunters, and as the demands of the belly are more pressing than the wants of the back, the latter will have to bear the brunt of "hard times" as best it may.

I was informed that much more land would have been cultivated by the Indians, but for lack of oxen to do the ploughing. It appears that the Government supplied a number of ploughs and harrows (which I saw piled up beside one of the Indian houses,) but they got only one pair of oxen to furnish the motive power required to put them to good use, besides hauling out of the bush an unusual quantity of building and fencing timber, consequently but little ploughing could be done.

At eleven o'clock I returned to the Manse to witness a marriage ceremony, whereby two Crees were made one, (that is, if they were not such already, as they had for some time been living as man and wife, but wished the knot to be further tied in a Christian manner.)

The happy pair were under thirty years of age and decently dressed, and in appearance compared favorably with many couples that are married within sight of Montreal.

After dinner I went down to see the Indians

#### RECEIVE THEIR ANNUITIES,

a somewhat tedious affair, since Indians, like so many of their white brethren, are generally willing to accept more than is lawfully due to them. I was sorry to learn that only three or four out of this large band of Indians had any money really coming to them after their debts were paid. It is true that the money was paid to each Indian who touched the pen by way of giving a receipt, but the payments were made in

the presence of an agent of the Hudson Bay Company to whom the cash was, in all but three or four cases, transferred in payment of goods already received, so that in case the Indian wishes to make any fresh purchases he has to do so on credit. I have been informed that the officers of the Hudson Bay Company are in the habit of giving the Indians credit to the amount of their next annual payment to be received from the Government; thus poor Lo is kept almost constantly in debt, and is unable to use his annuity moneys in purchasing from any other traders who may have wares for sale. I do not pretend to say that this is altogether to his disadvantage, for, although the Hudson Bay Company charge enormously high prices for the goods they supply, yet they are generally of excellent quality, and good measure is always given, while occasional traders are not very particular as to the quality or amount of goods given even when the Indians are paying twice its value. It seems a great pity that the Indians whose annuities are so small (\$5 per head) could not have an opportunity of giving it in exchange for nearly its worth of such articles as he really requires.

At about 4 p.m. I bid good-bye to Mr. Flett and his Indian mission, and turned Stutt's head towards Winnipeg, an arrangement which did not meet with his approval as he seemed to prefer waiting where he was, to enjoy the company of a number of other ponies like himself. As I rode away from this Indian reserve meditating on the scenes I had lately witnessed, I was very much impressed with the sense of the large debt of gratitude which the government and people of this Dominion owe to

#### THE MISSIONARIES IN THE NORTH WEST

for the civilizing effect of their presence among the Indians, who all seem to have great regard for the advice given by the missionaries, even while they continue to cling to many of their ancient ideas about religion. I believe that were the Government to supplement the work of the missionaries by paying a number of trustworthy persons as teachers to impart to the Indian youths and maidens a rudimentary knowledge of the three R's, the services of the North-West Mounted Police might be dispensed with, in a few years, at least in so far as the Indians are personally concerned. The plan of doing the teaching at or near to the Indians' homes is much better than the plan proposed in the States of taking a number of Indian youths east and placing them in some educational institution, there to get a liberal training. Such a course would, I fear, do as much harm as good to the young Indians, as their surroundings while at school would be so totally different to what they would find when they returned home that they would not remain there long, or if they did remain, they would return to their former mode of life in preference to trying the apparently hopeless task of ingrafting eastern customs into the every day life of a Western Indian. The very presence of the teacher would also have a most beneficial effect on the industrial habits of the whole tribe where he dwelt. I also think that during the present winter, when many of the Indians will require a little extra Government aid, it might be given most advantageously through the hands of the missionaries.

From the Big Bend in the Little Saskat-

chewan down to within a few miles of Tanners' Crossing, the country south-west of that stream is a beautiful rolling prairie, with occasional small bluffs of poplar, which are altogether too small and too few in number to supply all the timber needed by the future settlers, but there is an abundant supply of timber across on the north-east side of the river, where the country is nearly all wooded, with a large portion of it lately overrun by fire and is at present a "brulle," but if protected for a few years will be covered with a second crop of timber. There are here numerous small lakes and grassy ponds, especially among the timber, many of which are evidently the work of beavers at some former period, and a few hours work with a spade would drain a good many of them. One of these lakes which I saw in township sixteen, range seventeen, covered an area of more than fifty acres, with as much more in a marshy condition, yet it could be drained by an ordinary Irish spade-man in about a week. There are no settlements that I heard of on the north-east side of the Saskatchewan, and westward from the Rolling River, except two houses and a sawmill on the banks of the latter stream. Eastward from the Rolling River the country is more open, and there are a few settlers located on what appears to be nearly all excellent soil—but mostly covered with scrub.

#### THE ROLLING RIVER

strongly resembles many of the creeks in the Gâtineau country. The valley is very deep and narrow, while the stream for miles is a succession of rapids over a bed of boulders. The banks are chiefly clay, with occasional layers of sand and gravel. A short distance up the east bank of this stream there is a comfortable-looking farm house, with several outhouses around it. It belongs to a French native, and is marked on the last maps, and I am informed that a few years ago the main trail to the Big Saskatchewan passed near this place. There is a small sawmill near the outlet of this river, but it had been idle for some time previous to my visit, because the mill-dam had burst. There is also a plentiful supply of spruce timber about twelve miles up stream, from which logs can be brought readily during the high water in spring.

#### THE PROSPECTS OF WINNIPEG AND RAPID CITY COMPARED—A MENTIO WITH MESSRS. THOMAS WHITE, M.P., AND C. J. BEYDGER.

On the afternoon of August 21st I left the vicinity of Rolling River and, taking a southern direction reached Rapid City the following day at noon. The country through which I passed had rather more timber growing on it than is the case further westward, but it was also wetter in parts and more or less rolling. In one of the largest settlements here the people are all Presbyterians, and I was informed that all the land in that vicinity was owned by the professed followers of Knox and Calvin. After careful enquiries made, I believe that fully half of the English speaking white inhabitants of Manitoba and more than two-thirds of the settlers in the North-West Territory are

#### PRESBYTERIANS,

yet the Board of Home Missions in the eastern provinces propose to reduce by \$1,300, the grant

given to support the Presbyterian missionaries in the North-West this year, although the field has been enlarged since last year by the addition of about 5,000 Presbyterians, settled over 2,000 square miles of new territory. What would the late Drs. Chalmers, Burns, and Duff say of such conduct were they still living? I have been thinking that the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions must either have an overweening confidence in their creed under the most trying circumstances, or else have altogether too low an estimate of the enterprise and pluck of their Methodist and Baptist brethren, or they would not be so slow to occupy the most promising Presbyterian field on this continent, if not on the globe.

When I reached Rapid City the second time, I saw at once an evidence of its progress in the form of four new dwelling houses, which had been commenced since my former visit, a little over two weeks before. Since returning to Montreal I have received numerous letters of enquiry about

#### RAPID CITY AND ITS PROSPECTS

of becoming a large city compared with Winnipeg. Should the more southern (which I believe to be much the best) of the two surveyed routes for the Canada Pacific Railway be chosen, it will run for about five miles in the valley of the Little Saskatchewan at Rapid City.

This place strongly reminds me of the valley of the Gâtineau at Kirk's Ferry, except that the Gâtineau river is about twelve times as large as the Little Saskatchewan, and also has about twelve times more timber on its high banks.

There is a descent of about twenty-five feet in the bed of the river in about two miles of its course here, and a considerable water power could be developed by the construction of two or three dams across the stream; but any mills or manufactories erected here, would require to have steam engines in addition to water-wheels, as in times of drought, the water in the river would be too low to supply the motive power, except in the form of steam.

As compared with Winnipeg, Rapid city possesses the following advantages—it has a much more beautiful and healthy site, it has an abundant supply of stone and gravel for paving its streets and building its cellars. Timber for fuel and building purposes can be had at a much less cost by floating it down from the Riding Mountains. Its high banks give it a great advantage in the construction of water-works, when the city becomes large enough to require them. There is no danger of its suffering from floods, while the very existence of Winnipeg is yearly menaced by a spring flood, and her municipal debt is already assuming alarming dimensions, causing high taxes, which with other high prices will prevent the possibility of large manufactories being established in Winnipeg. Besides, Rapid City is much nearer the immense coal field of the Saskatchewan. The advantages which Winnipeg has over Rapid City are: The possession of a good start both in buildings and trade. The unscrupulous cleverness of some of the largest proprietors, who, in addition to large worldly possessions, have a rare amount of the cat like ability of light ing on their feet after every turn of the political kaleidoscope (and the more turns the better for them). It does not require very careful

search to discover traces of the handiwork of these out gentlemen in the various reserve and land policies which help to enrich speculators at the expense of the whole country. I fear that Rapid City will yet suffer severely by the intrigues of such men at Ottawa in determining the route of the Canada Pacific Railway.

From Rapid City I went up the southeast banks of the river some eighteen miles to Prairie City, calling at several places on the way, and among others at the farm of John Ralston, where I found the proprietor looking as well as when I saw him last at his house on the Gâtineau, while taking the census in the spring of 1871. His residence is in Winnipeg, but he owns some twelve sections of land hereabouts (more good land than there is in any township on the Gâtineau above Hull). Mr. Ralston is one of the many persons who have benefited by the ignorance of Northwestern matters which prevailed at Ottawa, but I believe that he secured his lands by less objectionable measures than were resorted to by numerous parties who have followed him, until the Government put a stop to this mode of public plunder. I hope that the Government will yet cause an investigation into these and other ways by which the public lands were secured by cunning speculators.

#### PRAIRIE CITY

contains three or four houses, located on the north bank of the river, and as I wished to visit the Dominion Land Office, I had to leave Stutt on the south banks of the stream (here about sixty feet wide and from three to four feet deep), and paid twenty-five cents to the ferryman who took me over and back. A bridge has since been built at this point.

About three-quarters of a mile east from here is Tanner's Crossing, at the farthest east point on the Little Saskatchewan river. I had hoped that the mail which was then due would bring me some news from the east, as I had got none since leaving Winnipeg, but as it had not yet arrived, on the following day I went some eight or nine miles north from this along the banks of a beautiful stream which flows in a deep broken valley. Some of the land here is very fertile and there is an abundance of good wood, water and mosquitoes. Most of the good land here is already secured by settlers and others, but some of the land is rather gravelly for profitable culture in dry seasons.

Returning to Tanner's Crossing the following day I found that the mail had not arrived, so I started eastward. Only three or four houses were seen for a distance of about twenty miles when the trail crossed Stony Creek, about three miles above the junction with the White Mud River. From Tanner's Crossing to Stony Creek the land appears to be good, but mostly covered with scrub, and is all, or nearly all, owned by private persons. After crossing Stony Creek the land gets more level, and also the soil is of lighter quality (and in some places altogether too sandy for profitable cropping); the country is also much more open.

While riding along here leisurely taking a look a every object in sight, I saw, coming to meet me

#### TWO DOUBLE BUGGIES

(a rather unusual sight in these parts). When the strange teams drew near, I was both surprised and pleased to see the well known, cheer-

ful face of Thomas White, Esq., M.P., in the rear carriage, and to get a warm shake of his hand. My pleasure was somewhat alloyed, however, at the sight of Mr. White's companion in travel. Not but Mr. Brydges is a nice gentleman to meet with in any place; but as he is the chief agent of a great landed company, I thought that if Mr. White had been accompanied in his travels only by some intelligent native, who was well posted in all the wants, &c., of the settlers, what a store of useful information he would have drawn out, to be used afterwards with great advantage in his newspaper and also in the House of Commons at Ottawa.

I stayed the two following nights and intervening Sunday at the house of Mr. William Campbell on the banks of White Mud River which is here a beautiful stream of clear water running on a sandy bottom. The land about here is sandy loam with sand for the subsoil, yet pretty good crops are grown on it; but it will not stand to be cropped so often without manuring as would the land near the Little Saskatchewan. On Monday I went northward some 18 miles over loamy land, rather wet in some places, to the house of John Stephenson, near the Riding Mountains, and the day following I made a journeying of some eight or nine miles on foot along an old trail leading across the mountains towards the North-West. The mountains rise very gradually and are closely timbered with poplar, so that I could not get a view out on the Big Plains towards the south, although the altitude was considerable. The land here is pretty stony in some places, but is much better than in many of the settlements not far from Montreal.

#### AN UNCOMFORTABLE JOURNEY.

SIR.—While staying at the farm of Mr. John Stephenson, south-east of the Riding Mountains, I observed among his cattle two very fine grade cows, which he said were Montanas that he had bought from a drover in the Spring of 1877 for \$30. One of them was only a calf at that time, but now she is nearly as large as her mother, and the amount of milk which I saw taken from that heifer would surprise most of the milkmen around Montreal, very few of whom own a more valuable cow than Mr. Stephenson's two-and-a-half-year-old Montana. I have seen a number of these Montana cows in different parts of the country, and with a few exceptions, they were the best cows that I saw in the North-West, yet certain newspaper writers, not far from Montreal, have lately been blaming the Mackenzie Government for supplying

#### MONTANA CATTLE

to the Indians, seeming to forget the fact that a large number of the settlers in the North-West would be thankful to the present Government, if they would only permit them to get Montana cows as they used to do a couple of years ago.

There are several long narrow gravel ridges running southward from opposite the east end of the Riding Mountain. One of these is called the

#### BEAUTIFUL PLAIN;

but why it should be called a plain seems strange, as it is a narrow ridge about eighteen miles long

and from one hundred and fifty to two hundred yards wide, with low wet land on each side, especially towards the east, which seems to be an immense marsh without a single settler, on about one hundred square miles of country. There are a number of streams running out from the east end of the Riding Mountains which lose their waters in this marsh, but a few miles further eastward these waters gather into a little river, which is again lost in the big grass marsh.

On the evening of August 26th I rode southward on the Beautiful Plain ridge, for a distance of about fifteen miles to the Government depot at the White Mud River. The land towards the West was more or less wooded, and although rather wet is all, or nearly all, taken up by settlers and others. Towards the east, although there were numerous bluffs of timber, yet most of the land seemed to be covered with water and wild grass, where wild geese find a convenient feeding place, some of which I heard calling to their fellows. The land here seems to be a sandy loam, not nearly so rich as the wet lands further east, nor so easily drained. The farm of Adam McKenzie, Esq., adjoins the Government Depot at the south end of the Beautiful Plains, on which were about two hundred and sixty acres of grain, wheat and oats, most of it in the stack, while two reaping machines with about a dozen men were at work on the standing grain. I believe that more wheat was grown on this farm during the past season than

#### THE WHOLE COUNTY OF ROCHELAGA,

and fully one-quarter the quantity of oats. The following morning I started eastward across a very wet country, some fourteen miles to Gladstone, having passed only one house on the way. The country here is pretty well timbered, and as there is a gradual decline towards the east, I think it would not be difficult to drain. I observed in one place where the cart wheels had cut through the sod, that the running water had formed a pretty large ditch, carrying the fine sand and depositing it in the next slough where it helped to improve the road. While passing along here I met a cayote on the road, but he obligingly gave me the whole way, and going aside a short distance he stood glowering at me, but as I turned towards him he moved off, and Stutt seeming very unwilling to follow him up, I turned toward Gladstone again, and after crossing a number of wet sloughs reached that village a little after one o'clock p.m.

Before leaving Winnipeg I directed the Post Office authorities there to forward my letters and papers to Gladstone, as that was the furthest west point in the North-West where they had a weekly mail. I had now been a month without getting any letters from home and was getting homesick and quite fidrety, although otherwise in much better health than when I left Winnipeg, but I was providing myself a literary feast and a day's rest when I would reach Gladstone. It would be difficult, at least for bachelors, to imagine my disappointment when calling at the Post Office, to find that there was nothing for me. In some of the houses here I found late copies of the WITNESS and other papers, from which I learned something about what had been done in the eastern world lately, but even this news

seemed insipid while I was unable to hear from my family. I at once despatched a postal card to the Winnipeg postmaster, directing him to forward to Portage in Prairie all letters and papers directed to David Currie, which might be in the Winnipeg post office; but this reasonable request was not complied with.

On the morning of August 28th, I proceeded eastward from Gladstone for more than two miles, to the borders of the "Big Grass" where I got a good view of this

#### MONSTER MEADOW

with its seemingly unlimited supply of uncut hay. If this marsh could be drained (a rather difficult job) it would produce more hay than could be grown on one-third of the State of Kansas. Turning southward I came to the trail between Westbourne and Gladstone, but found it to be "a hard road to travel," especially for poor Stutt, for I had become so careful about keeping my feet dry in leaky boots that I always rode over sloughs and wet places, although often travelling considerable distances on foot when the roads were good. After riding for several miles through mud and water, varying in depth, from four to twenty-four inches, Stutt stumbled and fell while going through one of the worst spots, which compelled me to dismount in water and mud knee deep, through which I had to walk until drier ground was reached at Woodside. Here I crossed on a ferry to the north side of White Mud River, which is at this place a pretty large stream of black water, about eighty feet wide and five or six feet deep (a bridge has been built here since I passed). There are a number of small farms, prettily located on the banks of the river here, but there is not much land dry enough for profitable cropping in wet season; but stock raising and dairying can be carried on cheaply and extensively.

A few miles

#### EAST FROM WOODSIDE

there are very beautiful plains of alkali land (I have brought with me to Montreal some of the surface alkali taken from this plain). There is also a salt spring here from the water of which salt has been made; but there was too much foreign matter in it to permit of its being used for domestic purposes. From this point I went some seven or eight miles north-east to Totogan, near the mouth of the White Mud River. For about half the distance the trail led across wet meadow land, with the water about half way up to my knees and the hay up to my waist. There are no settlers here until Totogan is reached, the land being a half-breed reserve. I was hurrying to reach Totogan before dark, and walking through so much water my feet suffered the loss of more or less skin, which made it very uncomfortable travelling.

I reached the river and was ferried over just before dark, and put up at the only hotel in the place, where drinking and gambling were being extensively carried on, as a number of workmen were in Totogan at that time, building a mill and a steamboat. As I had supper before reaching here (cooked and ate on the prairie in the usual fashion) I hobbled Stutt and turned him out to look for his supper, while I was shown to an unfinished garret furnished with half a dozen beds, in one of which the landlord kindly

intended that I should rest my weary body during the night. The bed-clothes consisted of a coarse linen tick filled with long wild grass, quite compact and hard, and rounded in the middle like a camel's back. At one end of this there was a pillow, and above all was spread a double blanket, without sheet or counterpane, or any other luxuries or conveniences, so essential to comfortable lodgings in the eastern provinces. By a good deal of labor I flattened

#### THE HUMP IN THE BED-TICK

considerably, but not sufficiently to allow of my sleeping without rolling to one side on the rather sharp surface of the sideboard of the bedstead. Towards midnight some ten or twelve workmen, who had been carousing in the bar-room below, came up-stairs and took possession of the other beds, but it was some time before they got quiet enough to allow of my sleeping. The following morning we got for breakfast, boiled potatoes and fried salt pork with bread and tea and some stewed pumpkins. As the pork was too fat to agree with my stomach, and the bread was spoiled and burnt in the baking, and there being no butter to assist in making it palatable, I had to breakfast on the potatoes and pumpkins. Our landlord in apologizing for the absence of butter from the table, stated that he could not get any to purchase in the neighborhood, but this I afterwards found was not the case, as the next neighbor told me that only two days before he tried to sell a tub of butter to the hotel-keeper, but that gentleman would not purchase it as the price asked was not much less than could be got for the butter at the Portage. When I came to settle for my bed and breakfast, I had to pay twenty-five cents for the former and forty cents for the latter, which I grudged more than any board bill that I paid in the North-West; for although I had formerly paid as much for a meal, they were both palatable and wholesome. I may say here that in no place west of Manitoba was I charged more than twenty-five cents for a meal, although provisions were much dearer than in Manitoba.

#### LAKE MANITOBA AND ITS FUTURE—FREE PLANTING—POSTAL INCONVENIENCES.

The village of Totogan is situated on a tongue of land extending between the White Mud River and Lake Manitoba, which is some five or six feet in the highest part above the ordinary level of the water in the lake. It is probable that in time this place may be of considerable importance as it seems to be

#### THE ONLY GOOD HARBOR

on the south end of the lake. Lake Manitoba itself seems to be a kind of over-grown pond, with the water not over six feet deep on more than half of its area, while in but a very small portion it is more than fifteen feet deep. As the surface of the lake is about forty feet higher than Lake Winnipeg, the draining of its waters into the latter would be a comparatively easy matter, and I believe that many of the present inhabitants of Manitoba will live to see the lake from which their province takes its name, reduced to very limited size, or perhaps entirely transformed, along with the extensive marshes which

surround it, into large grain and pasture fields and extensive meadow lands.

On the morning of August 29 I set out from Totogan to try and get a view of the lake (which on a former occasion I had unsuccessfully tried to do), and after travelling about a mile towards the northeast, I reached a farm house on the borders of the marshy land. Being still a mile from the open water of the lake, and the intervening space being covered with a rank growth of wild grass, reeds and rushes, with more or less water, I almost gave up hopes of seeing the lake at all; but, after thinking what was best to be done, I obtained permission of the farmer to allow me to climb upon the roof of his house, from which, aided by my glass, I got

#### A FAIR VIEW OF LAKE MANITOBA.

After this I turned up along the south-east banks of the White Mud River to Westbourne, passing numerous farms on which considerable grain had been sown; but the blackbirds seemed to get the greater part of the grain here, indeed in some fields they took all the grain and left the straw to the farmers. I have seen a good many blackbirds in this country and also in the Ottawa district, but I never saw such wholesale damage done by birds of any kind or color as was done on the farms on the banks of the White Mud River between the Big Grass and Lake Manitoba, where the loss of grain by the blackbirds was fully fifty per cent. the past season. I may remark here that the blackbirds in the North-West are rather variegated, having often white, yellow, orange and red heads and wings, some of them strongly resembling the "red-headed" woodpeckers of the Ottawa region. This County of Westbourne is a splendid place for stock-raising and dairying, but is too wet and the blackbirds are too numerous for successful grain-raising. This place was first settled by English-speaking natives, but a good many of them have sold out their farms to Canadians and have gone to push their fortunes elsewhere. Among the recently arrived farmers is a Montreal merchant, who has introduced drain digging and is being followed by some of his neighbors.

After going up along the south-east banks of the river several miles past the village of Westbourne, and seeing no dry road across the large marsh which occupies nearly the whole distance to Rat Creek, I turned back and the next day crossed that stream, near its junction with the White Mud River, a few miles from Totogan, and travelled about twenty miles south-east to the thickly settled country near Portage la Prairie, passing very few houses for over half the distance. It being Saturday evening, and having learned that Red River fever was very prevalent at the Portage, I preferred to spend Sunday with the farmers a few miles out from the village, but even here I soon found that the fever was more prevalent than I had ever known it to be in a country place. Having formerly had a severe attack of fever when a young man, I scarcely anticipated any danger of another attack, but thinking prudence the best kind of valor, I kept away as much as possible from the houses where the

#### FEVER-STRICKEN PATIENTS

were residing; but on some occasions, so anxious are people in this country to prevent the spread of any information about fevers, I did not learn

of the presence of fever until after I had remained in the house and dined, or perhaps slept over night in it. I had heard more or less about fevers prevailing before I left Winnipeg, but kept from writing about it lest my family should become anxious for my safety. I believe that more than twenty per cent of the people living in the vicinity of Portage la Prairie had fever last summer—the disease prevailing chiefly among those lately arrived in the country—and numerous deaths took place, while the four village doctors were kept busy attending on the sick. In conversation with one of these doctors, he stated that the fever arose entirely from preventable causes, such as water lodged in the cellars, wells cribbed up with timber instead of stone or brick, and the large amount of stagnant water in the sloughs.

While waiting for the mail to arrive from Winnipeg, I visited numerous large fields of remarkably fine grain, and witnessed the various operations of harvesting, such as reaping, binding and stacking. Some of the reaping machines bound the grain with wire as fast as it was cut, but the greater number only cut the grain, leaving it to be bound by hand, which required a large force of laborers, many of them being Sioux Indians, male and female. I was informed that, were it not for these

#### SIoux HARVESTERS'

the immense crops around the Portage could not have been gathered in the proper season, owing to the prevalence of fever among the white folk.

I also visited the farm of Mr. Thomas Scissions, near the Portage, and was shown his

#### TREE-PLANTATION,

which is by far the most extensive of the kind in this country. This plantation is in the form of a capital E with the opening, in which are the buildings and garden, being towards the south. There are over five acres already planted with trees, east, west and north of the buildings, and although the seeds of the oldest trees were sown in the spring of 1873, some of them were over twelve feet high and two and a half inches in diameter near the ground, and already form a complete shelter from the winds, besides being both ornamental and useful. It is strange that Mr. Scissions has not many more followers in the tree-planting business. Mr. Scissions explained his process as follows:

The prairie sod was first broken in 1871, and the following year a crop of grain was raised from it. In the spring of 1873 a portion of the land was carefully ploughed and harrowed and the seeds of the ash-leaf maple sown in rows four feet apart, and between each of these there was planted a drill of potatoes which yielded enormously. The following year a drill of potatoes or turnips was again planted between the rows of young trees which were still too small to require all the land, the land in the meantime being carefully cultivated. The cultivation was continued the third and fourth season without any other crops occupying the space between the rows, after which the trees were large enough to keep down the weeds and only required thinning and pruning. Mr. Scissions is in the habit of planting about an acre in trees each year, the kind mostly used being maple with a few oaks and white ash; but these latter are very slow growers. In about twelve or fifteen years more, this

plantation will become an extensive sugar bush and the timber alone will be worth from \$50 to \$100 per acre for firewood.

It was after dark on the evening of Monday, Sept. 1st, when the mail from Winnipeg reached Portage la Prairie, when a good many others as well as myself went to the post office, where we waited for about two hours while the mail was being sorted. On my enquiring for letters or papers I was told that there were none for me, which bit of information did not help me to sleep better during the rest of the night. On the following morning I again visited the post office, hoping that perhaps there might be some letters for me which the postmaster on the previous evening had overlooked in his hurry, but was again doomed to disappointment. I scarcely knew what to do, but as a journey to Winnipeg and back would require my travelling over 140 miles of road, with which I was already too well acquainted, I concluded not to go there, but wrote several letters to friends, one of which was directed to the Rev. Mr. Robertson, of Winnipeg, asking him to oblige me by visiting the post-office authorities and see if they would forward my letters and papers to Alexandria post-office on the Pembina Mountains, which would be the next post office in my proposed route of travel. Three weeks afterwards, when I visited Alexandria post office, I got the greater part of the papers sent to me and also two registered letters and one letter from my family; but all the other letters had gone to parts unknown, and I have not been able to get on their track since.

#### FEVERS—CROSSING A FERRY—FOLLOWING AN OLD TRAIL.

On the afternoon of September 2nd, I left the beautiful district of Portage la Prairie, going south-west along the old Indian trail up the Assiniboine. After going about two miles I reached the sand hills, and heard no more about fevers for nearly four weeks, when I again found traces of them on the low lands east of the Pembina Mountains. I may say here that I have not heard of any cases of Red River fever west of the Pembina Mountains and the Sand Hills ranges, which run in a north-west direction from fifty to one hundred miles west from the Red River. I have no doubt there will be cases of fever in some parts of the country west of Manitoba, as there are in many places by far too much stagnant water in lakes and ponds which have no visible outlet; but, taking the whole country west of the sand hills, I believe it to be one of the most healthy on the globe, and especially favorable to such as are troubled with lung complaints or rheumatism. After going about four miles among the Sand Hills, which are here pretty well-wooded, I came to the house of an Irishman named Nichol, and put up here for the night, as the next white settler was fourteen miles further on. The next morning I again started south-west along the well-wooded banks of the Assiniboine, the land seeming to improve the further I went, and soon reached the Indian Reserve, which belongs to

#### A TREE CALLED BUNGATS,

a branch of the Cree. I passed a good many houses with gardens attached, but these had a

neglected appearance, and most of the Indians seemed absent (I was told they were helping at harvest work).

Towards noon I reached Fortney's ferry and was considerably disappointed to find it consisted of only a rough canoe-like scow, capable of carrying over only four or five persons at most. One of the settlers on the Cypress River, who chanced to be travelling along with me, told me that all the settlers in that section had to take their teams, carts, waggons, furniture, farm implements, and provisions across the Assiniboine by means of this little scow. A waggon or cart is always taken to pieces and conveyed across the river in fragments, and the same process is gone through with the load, after which the teams are compelled to swim across after the boat, for which privilege they are charged twenty-five cents per head. Some loaded waggons have cost near two dollars fare for this inconvenient mode of crossing, and this man Fortney has been known to make as much as ten dollars in one day with his little scow, which could not be sold in Montreal for more than four dollars. I had to unsaddle Stutt, and drive him into the river, while I, still holding the bridle took possession of the only seat in the craft, and my fellow traveller got down on his knees in

#### THE TOTTELISH CONCERN

while Mr. Fortney stood in the stern to paddle us all across. While the water was deep enough for Stutt to swim in, he was for going much faster than the scow, and asailed to drag it ahead, but after going about one hundred feet he took bottom, and for the rest of the distance the water was from three to four feet deep, through which he walked much slower than if swimming.

My companion and myself had each to pay twenty-five cents for the kind of accommodations we received and I had to pay another twenty-five cents for Stutt, although he had to swim and wade the whole way. I was informed that there is a large scow capable of taking a loaded team, being built at a place about four miles above this point so that this species of robbery will not be continued another season.

Although the banks of the river are here more than one hundred feet high, yet a very short distance south from the river, the land is very wet, with the water-shed in the direction of the Boyne river, which is here about five miles distant towards the south. This wet land is chiefly covered with a growth of willows, with occasional bluffs of poplar. The trail southward to the Boyne I found to be still very wet in some places, and from appearances this must have been a hard (or rather soft) road to travel in the early part of the season. The land on

#### THE BANKS OF THE BOYNE

(which are here some twenty feet high) is of good quality, and is all taken up as far south as the range of Tiger Hills, which are distant from one to three miles south-east of the Boyne and Cypress Rivers, until the western boundary of the province is reached. I was surprised to find such a large settlement in this part of the Province, some of the settlers being here for over a year, and have already built comfortable houses and have considerable fields of grain. I was informed that about one



hundred and fifty persons have taken up land here, the settlement extending for a distance of about twenty-five miles from the middle of township eight, range eight west, to beyond the boundary of the Province in township seven, range thirteen west. Although there was a large adult Protestant population here nearly all summer, yet the only person who had ever preached in this district belonged to the Montreal WITNESS. The land here is mostly a deep sandy loam, resting chiefly on a subsoil of sand, but in some places there is clay. A considerable portion of this land is very fertile, and will produce as heavy crops as are grown near the Portage. One of the nights I spent in this settlement was in a tent with two young men from Montreal, who have each taken up half a section of land; and although they have had considerable difficulty in moving in here, they have gained considerable in weight since leaving Montreal. This settlement is in a kind of valley from five to eight miles wide, with the Tiger Hills on one side and the Sand Hills on the other, and will be a splendid place for stock-raising and dairying, as the cattle will have ample pasture ranges for many years to come among the hills on each side.

When I reached the Cypress River, near the north border of township seven, range twelve west, I found it to be a moderately sized stream running in a valley some 70 or 80 feet deep; but about eight miles further towards the south-west at the bend the land on the banks is quite low, and is largely overflowed when the water in the river is high. Being anxious to reach the settlement at Rock Lake before Sunday I enquired of several of the most western settlers if they knew of any trail in that direction, but could get no information about the twenty-five or thirty miles of intervening country. I could see across the large marshy track the Tiger Hills rise in fantastic shapes some eight or nine miles distant, but none of the people here had as yet managed to cross the low lands which intervened. I was told that there was an old trail running westward along the foot of the Sand Hills, north-west from the settlement, but no person knew where it led to. On Saturday, 6th September, I started west along this trail until past the surveyed lands, or into township seven, range fifteen west, but finding that it continued to lead directly west, and it being Saturday afternoon, I did not care to continue my explorations into

#### AN UNKNOWN COUNTRY

on Sunday. Still, wanting to see all there was to be seen, I climbed to the top of the highest sand hill to view the country and was rather surprised to see the valley of the Assiniboine a little over a mile to the north, while south of me there was a considerable extent of level land, which turned into an extensive marsh near the foot of the Tiger Hills, which seemed to extend about fourteen or fifteen miles further towards the south west, and then abruptly sink down out of sight, at what I afterwards found to be the north west point of Pelican Lake. I returned to the settlement near the Cypress River, and spent the next day (Sunday) with them, and on Monday morning started south-west, steering by my own and Stutt's noses, to find a track across the marsh in the direction of Rock Lake. By an error in the Government maps I was led to go further west than I should, and came to the northern edge of

a long, narrow marsh, close to the foot of the Tiger Hills. This marsh swarmed with ducks, which found a large field for sport and feed among the tall reeds. I went a considerable way along the north border of the marsh, hoping to reach some place where I could cross over to the hills which looked so temptingly near, but my efforts in this direction were vain and I had to return back to within a few feet of the west bend of the Cypress River, at the dividing line between townships seven and eight, in range thirteen, before I found land dry enough to cross over to the high lands towards the south. The creek which here comes out from the Tiger Hills, parallel with the Cypress River, and about a mile west from it empties into this long marsh and the water flows westward until beyond the surveyed lands, where it again assumes the creek form and flows north into the Assiniboine. Large quantities of hay grow in the vicinity of these marshes, which will at some future time serve to feed in the winter time the immense flock, which will find splendid pasture lands among the adjacent hills in summer. About four o'clock in the afternoon I crossed the nameless creek at the foot of the Tiger Hills and started south among the hills, where I found the land to be of fair quality, although rather broken. There was also a considerable quantity of oak scrub, and a good many bluffs of poplar timber. I camped for the night at a little stream near the centre of Township five, range thirteen, and went to sleep lulled by the mid-night carols of the prairie wolves.

#### NOMENCLATURE—THE COUNTRY OF THE LAKES—THE SOUTH WEST LIMIT.

On the morning of September 9th I left my camping ground among the Tiger Hills, and, after travelling south a short distance, came to a beautiful stream of clear, sweet water, running eastward in a valley about twenty feet deep. This is about the centre of township 5, range 13, west, and would be a

#### BEAUTIFUL PLACE FOR A SETTLEMENT,

the range of hills nearly surrounding it on the north and east side, with a large open prairie towards the south and west. The soil is of excellent quality, although not nearly so deep as near the Red River; but the water is delicious, and there is plenty of small timber. From this creek south to the alkaline lakes the land is an open, slightly rolling prairie, with timbered hills towards the east, north and south, but west and northwest there is an extensive open prairie. Some of the so-called alkaline lakes are very beautiful, with timbered banks and flocks of wild geese feeding on the shores—I counted twenty-seven in one flock. South of the lakes the country again becomes hilly, and covered with scrub oak and poplar. After vainly trying for nearly an hour to force my way through the scrub, I was compelled to turn westward and skirt the border of the prairie land which gradually turned southward towards the north-west end of Rock Lake. When within a little more than a mile from the lake, I came to a well beaten wagon trail running south-east across the timbered hills. This trail was a most welcome sight to me, as I did not know that there were any settlers north of Rock

Lake. I took this trail crossing the hills which are pretty well timbered, and the land is of excellent quality. In some of the more open places, there are lovely farm sites, and I am sure that hardy varieties of

#### APPLE TREES

would do well here. After less than an hour's ride I came to a large open plain with several huts and tents in view. The soil in this plain is different from anything I had yet seen in this country, being a black loam to a depth of about a foot, beneath which there is a hard bed of gravel, so compact that I could not dig it with a spade. This kind of soil is rather dry and I fear the crops will not amount to much in seasons of great drought. I remained over night at the hut of a man named Walsh, who belonged to Chateaugay County (I saw several people here who came from near Montreal).

During the evening I went down to see Rock Lake and found the water in it to be very shallow and muddy from the action of the wind and waves on the clayey bottom and sides. The banks are nearly precipitous and about two hundred feet high and well wooded with a large growth of timber, such as oak, Balm of Gilead, poplar and ash. There are also numerous beautiful springs flowing out from the banks. The following morning I set out for the Turtle Mountains, going about five miles north-west, back along the trail I had come on the previous day—which trail leads to several haystacks belonging to the people whom I stayed with the previous night. I then turned south-west and crossed a good sized creek, which flows into the north-west end of Rock Lake. I proceeded on still, towards the south-west steering by my nose for several miles, until I came to the Pembina River near two lakes, each about a mile square, called by the surveyors Lorne and Louise.

There appears to be no system in the naming of lakes and rivers in this country. The chain of lakes along the Upper Pembina are called Swan, Rock, Lorne, Louise, Pelican and White Water, which is rather a strange mixture. Below I give what I believe to be a much better system of nomenclature, with the dimensions of each lake.

Swan Lake, 5 miles long, 1 mile wide.		
Goose Lake, 7 do,	1 do	
Snipe Lake, 1 do,	1 do	
Duck Lake, 1 do,	1 do	
Pelican Lake, 15 do,	1 do	
Crane Lake, 13 do,	6 do	

All these lakes, except the last, are situated in a valley about 200 feet below the surrounding country. The country north-east of Pelican Lake, and the two small lakes below it, is very beautiful, with plenty of good land, wood and water; but the only persons living here yet are two families of French natives who live by hunting and fishing. As it was threatening to rain, and the Turtle Mountains were still thirty miles distant, I accepted the kind invitation of one of these men (who spoke pretty good English) to lodge with him over night. During the evening I walked around a good deal, and must say that I do not know of a place in the North-West which took my fancy so much as this quarter.

The following morning, before starting on my journey, I got all the information I could regarding the way to the Turtle Mountains, also from my obliging entertainer, who also consoled

me by stating that the last man who sought to reach Turtle Mountain by this route had lost his way, and after wandering about for some time managed to get back to Pelican Lake, having in the meantime lost all desire to go further westward. After descending the steep banks of the valley here and crossing the sluggish stream of bitter water which issues out of Pelican Lake—the water in this lake is so bad that fish won't or can't live in it—I ascended the opposite bank just above the mouth of the Little Pembina, which is a considerable stream coming in from the west in a large gully. I here found traces of surveyors' work in running the line between townships three and four in range fifteen, and going west along their trail for nearly a mile came to the corner post of these townships and those immediately adjoining them in range sixteen west. This post stands about a mile south from Pelican Lake, and about 200 yards north from the Little Pembina River. I followed this line westerly for seven or eight miles more; and during the first three or four miles of this route travelled over good land, but the latter half, was over a good deal of dry, arid, gravelly hills of moderate altitude, with fair soil in the lower places.

From the top of one of these elevations I got the first sight of Turtle Mountain, lying a little west of south. I turned Stutt's head in that direction, and soon crossed a considerable creek, a branch of the Little Pembina. After cooking and eating my dinner in the usual fashion, I proceeded southward over an extensive tract of excellent land which is nearly level, with occasional ponds swarming with ducks. I also saw a good many sandhill cranes, both gray and white. These latter are

#### NOBLE-LOOKING BIRDS,

and stand between four and five feet high, and at a distance remind you of the processions of white robed girls which may be seen in Montreal streets in the spring. When I would come too near them, they would spread their immense wings and fly away, uttering a loud call, which seems to be half-way between that of a gander and a turkey gobbler, and sounds like "kat-er-bone," with the emphasis on the last syllable. When within three or four miles from Turtle Mountain the land got more rolling, some of the knolls being rather stony, with the soil not so good as it is further north. About two miles from the Mountains there is a good deal of low alkali land, but near the timber the land is slightly rolling and dry enough, but has not such deep soil as in Manitoba—yet it produces good crops at present, and is as good, if not better, than the average soil along the north shore of Lake Ontario. A French-Canadian named Lapierre has lived here for the past five years, and has considerable land under cultivation and keeps a store to supply goods to the Indians at exorbitant prices. I am told that he sometimes gives his customers "fire-water," but the North-Western Police nabbed him last year, and it cost him about \$400. This man comes from Ottawa, where he formerly kept a hotel. I stayed that night at the house of Mr. Finley Young, formerly from Chateaugay, but more recently from Montreal, who, with a man named Philip Scott, also from Montreal, are "backing" it together.

The following morning was wet, so I did not

travel much, but shot half a dozen ducks in the numerous ponds which abound here. The next morning (Saturday, September 13) I was anxious to visit a very large lake, distant some 18 or 20 miles towards the north-west, which some of the settlers said was nearly as large as Lake Manitoba, but although some of them had seen part of it in the distance, none of them had ever reached its shores. It is called White Water lake, from the white or rather sky-blue appearance of the water in the lake when seen from a distance. As Mr. Scott wished to accompany me, we borrowed an old cart and shagnappi harness from Mr. Lapierre, and after considerable trouble managed to break in Stutt sufficiently to draw the rig, and so started on our journey, but could travel no faster than a walk for fear of wrecking both cart and harness. We also took two guns with us, but as we expected to return that night, we did not take as much provisions with us as we ought. After travelling about fourteen miles we got a sight of the lake, still distant about ten miles and probably four hundred feet lower than we then were. For two hours more we travelled over a rolling prairie and when about four miles from the lake came to a steep descent to what was evidently at one time the border of the lake, which has since retreated several miles over a gravelly plain. From the highest point here I got a good view of the lake with my glass and could distinctly trace its border all round, although with the naked eye it seemed to be boundless towards the west. There is not a bush or tree to be seen within several miles of this remarkable lake, except on an island near the north shore. The greater part of the eastern end seems to be very shallow, as bullrushes could be seen growing in places here and there. I think that this lake is about thirteen or fourteen miles long, and from five to six miles wide, and from the north-east end there extends a long, marshy track, which, I believe, to be its outlet into the head of Pelican Lake. When we got down to the low land we almost lost sight of the lake, and after travelling for about an hour over dry, gravelly, poor land, we came to the borders of the marshy land, yet were a long distance from the open water. As the sun was near setting we had to give up all hopes of getting nearer the lake, and returned about three miles to where we saw a bluff of timber in a gully, where we camped for the night, feeling rather cheap that we could not continue our explorations on the following day, it being Sunday.

**UNCOMFORTABLE WEATHER—COAL PROSPECTS—A MODEL POSTMASTER—THE LAND IN THE PEMBINA MOUNTAIN REGION—THE MENNONITES.**

On Sunday morning, Sept. 14th, we rose from our prairie bed not much refreshed by the broken sleep of the previous night. A cold wind blew hard the whole night and as we had no bed-clothes, we were rather too cold to sleep soundly. We had still sufficient provisions left for a good breakfast which we ate with a zest, little known to dyspeptic people in the Eastern Provinces, then started on our journey homeward, and about one o'clock came to where a surveying party were camped at a small lake near the northwest corner of township one, range twenty,

west. There we refreshed ourselves with an excellent dinner of bread and tea, with pork and beans, which was kindly given to us by the surveyors, who all seem to be a very hospitable lot of men. The surveyor himself, Mr. Cloata, was absent, but that made no difference so far as the food was concerned. We reached Mr. Young's house in the evening and found there an English miner named Norton, who had just returned from examining the coal fields on the Souris. He showed us specimens of the coal found on the surface there, and spoke very hopefully of

**THE COAL PROSPECTS**

in that vicinity, but wished us to say nothing about it until his employers could secure their title to the land where the coal abounds. To my unpracticed eye, the coal seemed to be rather light colored and dull looking, like some of the inferior coal brought from Nova Scotia, but Mr. Norton said that while camping at the Souris, he piled a lot of the surface coal on his camp-fire in the evening and was able to cook his breakfast on it the following morning without the addition of any more fuel.

The following morning (Monday) I had intended to start east along with Mr. Norton, but Stutt (who had for some time past been taught to observe the Sabbath day as a day of rest) entered his silent protest against the previous day's doing and slunk off with himself during the night, and we did not find him until noon of the following Thursday. While searching for Stutt I had ample opportunities for observing the face of the country here, some of my journeys extending into Dakota. The land on the Turtle Mountains is of better quality than prevails generally in the Eastern Townships, but as it is well wooded, I hope that the government will see the necessity of protecting it carefully from speculators, or even settlers who may claim more timbered lands than they actually need, as this tract of timbered land will all be needed to supply the wants of the numerous settlers who will soon occupy the immense open prairie country lying east, north and west of it. On Friday morning I bid good bye to my kind friends at Turtle Mountains, and started east along the Boundary Commission Trail. As I expected to find lodgings at a settler's house near Badger Creek the following night, I did not make an early start. After a journey of thirty miles I reached Badger Creek at sunset to find an unoccupied house, its owner having gone to Emerson, so I had again to camp out in an adjacent bluff of timber, where I slept soundly, although there was a considerable frost during the night. A good deal of the land about Badger Creek (in townships 1 and 2, near the dividing line between ranges 14 and 15, west) has already been taken up, and considerable ploughing done, with preparations for building in several places. The next day at eleven o'clock I reached the Cypress Creek near the west side of township 2, range 12, west. I may here remark that I observed more or less slaty gravel mixed with the gray clay subsoil through all the land I had passed over since leaving the Cypress River on the 8th of September at a point about thirty miles north of where the trail crosses Cypress Creek; eastward from here to where the trail crosses the Pembina River near the east boundary of township 2, range 9, west, the subsoil is nearly pure slate to a great depth, with a

few feet of clay above it in many places. The surface soil

**IS A HIGH LOAM**

and will produce excellent crops in damp seasons, but I fear that the crops will be light in seasons of drought. Sunday Sept. 21st I spent in the Paisley settlement four miles east from Crystal City, to which place I returned in the afternoon to attend religious services held by Rev. Mr. Greenway, Bible Christian Minister, a brother of Mr. Thomas Greenway, ex-M.P.P., for Huron, Ont., and now a member of the Provincial Parliament of Manitoba. At this place I met with several people whose acquaintance I had first made while helping them to take their effects across the ice on the Red River near Emerson on the first of last April. I was considerably surprised to see so little progress made by these people during the past summer although they seemed to be well supplied with teams and farming implements. I don't think that the amount ploughed would average over

**FIVE ACRES TO EACH FAMILY.**

Some few had put in a little crop on their ploughing, and I think there were four or five wooden houses within sight of the trail in a distance of near forty miles between Badger Creek and Pembina Crossing, yet most of this land has been taken up and a good many mud huts have been constructed on the homesteads; still I believe that over half of the homesteads had, at the time of my visit, neither buildings or crops, only a few acres ploughed and perhaps a stock or two of prairie hay erected on them. Except at the Badger and Cypress Creek I saw no timber, nor even bush near the trail from Turtle Mountain to Pembina Crossing, a distance of near seventy miles. Early in the spring, just after I first arrived in Winnipeg, I went to the hospital there and found one of the patients, named Johnston Fenton, from near Ottawa suffering with his feet, which he got badly frozen while travelling from Turtle Mountain to Pembina Crossing about the middle of last March, at which date there were no houses to be met with for the whole distance. Eastward from Pembina Crossing there are a good many bluffs of timber scattered here and there until the Manitoba settlement is reached, at the eastern base of the Pembina Mountains. This country is

**A MOST DESIRABLE PLACE**

to live in, with very fertile soil and bracing mountain air, with plenty of good water and wood, and is more densely settled than almost any other of the new settlements in Manitoba. The farmers here also seem to be very prosperous, and, although only from two to four years in the country, have a large area of land cultivated, and most of them have good comfortable dwelling houses erected. On the night of September 16, I stopped at the house of Mr. John Thompson, of Alexandria, who has kept the post office there for several years, but last fall it has been removed to a country store about a mile west. Mr. Thompson appears to be a very fine man, and one of the few postmasters in this province who has had no complaints made about the way he attended to Her Majesty's mails, although he has a pretty large farm to look after. His dwelling house is situated in a pretty extensive grove of oak, which abounds to a con-

siderable extent on the eastern slopes of the Pembina Mountains. Some of these

**OAK GROVES ARE BEING KILLED BY CATERPILLARS**

which eat the young leaves as fast as they grow, and have already killed many acres of excellent oak timber. From Alexandria I went about four miles south-east to Mountain City, where there are four or five houses and a small saw and grist-mill. From here I went a little north of east for three or four miles more to the Mennonite village of Waltham, where I stopped the rest of that day and the following night enjoying the hospitality of this peculiar people and learning a good deal about their habits, customs and religious opinions. The reason why I preferred lodging with the Mennonites, when there were English-speaking Canadians living within two miles of them, was, that I might find out more about them, for there seems to be a strange and unaccountable antipathy held by many Canadians here against the Mennonites, whom they blame for being slovenly in their habits, although they cannot but allow that they are honest, peaceable and industrious. I had formerly visited the Mennonite villages of Blumenhoff and Steinbach, in the Rat River Settlement, near Clear Springs, where the people appeared to be

**MORE TIDY IN THEIR HABITS**

than most new Canadian settlers, but when speaking to many Canadians about the neat appearance of these Mennonites and their surroundings, they would answer that the Mennonites among whom I had been were the more wealthy ones, but if I would go into some of the poorer villages, I would find things different. Consequently, I visited Waltham, as it was one of the newest and poorest villages, and I also found the people here both neat and cleanly. There is one custom, however, which I think the Mennonites would do well to abandon, that is, the rather common practice of building the stable against the end of the dwelling house so that a person can pass out of the kitchen into the stable without exposing himself to the cold of winter, or the rain of the summer. In several cases I found that the wells were situated in the end of the stable next to the kitchen, and although it was carefully boxed over, I fear that the water will become more or less saturated with unwholesome juices. The reason that they keep their wells in the stable is for convenience in watering their stock in winter time, and also to prevent the wells from freezing. I saw no plank floors in the houses in this village, but the hard baked clay floors which are kept well swept and clean, and seem to stand a great deal of wetting without forming a muddy surface. I also examined their ovens, or straw burners, and had the process of heating fully explained. These ovens (a picture of one of them appeared in the WITNESS a few years ago), are built with sun-dried bricks (the process of manufacturing these bricks was also explained and exhibited), and form part of the partition about the centre of the house, (many of the partitions are also built of sun-dried brick). It requires the consumption of about two large armfuls of straw to heat the house properly for twelve hours in winter. The straw is brought into the kitchen and laid in a pile in front of the oven door, and one of the little folk, or women, is set to put this straw into the

oven in handfuls where a small wood fire has been kindled, and so soon as one handful is consumed another is put in its place, and this process continues for about half an hour, when the walls of the oven have become so heated that they keep the whole temperature of the house

#### WARM ENOUGH TO DO WITHOUT FURTHER HEATING

for twelve hours, when another "firing up" takes place. Bread, meat, potatoes &c. are generally cooked in the ovens during the time when the firing is being done.

I believe that these ovens are seldom used except in winter, when the houses require extra heat, and that common cooking stoves are used in summer time. As the stables are nearly all connected with the houses by a door, they receive a good deal of heat from them in very cold weather. The hens also, which inhabit the stables, lay plenty of eggs in cold weather, and the Mennonites derive a considerable income from the large amount of eggs they supply to Winnipeg. They also make a good deal of the butter which is sold in that market, for they are wide awake to the great advantage of stock raising and dairying in the Northwest.

I had intended to write about the religious beliefs and customs of these Mennonites, but I don't think that many Canadians will follow their example in this respect, so I need not spend time and paper over it.

#### THE MENNONITES AND THEIR VILLAGE—THE FUTURE OF THE NORTH-WEST AS A DAIRYING COUNTRY—BOYNE RIVER SETTLEMENT—A SMALL PRAIRIE FIRE.

The house in which I stayed over night in Walthine belonged to a widow who with her husband and children had come here from Russia a little more than two years ago, but the good man only lived a few weeks in his new home when he was removed by death. As the family were very poor, the oldest girl and the second oldest boy were sent to hire out with the Canadians, and by this means learned to speak pretty good English, and the young man seems to take quite naturally to various English customs including many of their slang phrases. I have been informed that the elder Mennonites look with disfavor on their younger brethren and sisters, for hiring out with Canadians, and means are being used to prevent it as much as possible. The old folk have a rather sad expression of countenance, but the young people are about as jolly and laugh as heartily as most other young folk do. The villages of Walthine and Sheindoff which I passed through on this occasion, consist each of a very wide street with about ten or eleven houses on each side of it, extending about a quarter of a mile in length. In rear of each house, and less than one acre in breadth, the cultivated farm of each family extends back to a greater or less distance, according to the working force at the command of its occupant. As timber is very scarce here, there are no fences except along on each side of the street through the length of the village and also a small enclosure or yard in the rear of each house to keep the cattle in at night, and some of the gardens were also fenced. In the village of Bloominshoff, near Clear Springs, the houses (some 18 or 19 in all) are

#### ALL ON ONE SIDE OF THE WIDE STREET,

and directly across the street there is a large field fenced all around, and containing 320 acres of tillage land, each family owning an equal share in this field. In addition to this every one has more or less cultivated land elsewhere, where it is most convenient, or the soil suitable, amounting to three or four hundred acres more. The herdman of each village is paid in various ways. When he has no family he boards around with his employer the way the country schoolmaster used to do in Lower Canada. The herdman at Bloominshoff being married had a free house and ten acres of ploughed land allotted to him, and each man in the village gave him two days' work, either in spring or harvest time, and also assisted to draw home his fuel in winter time. In addition to this he got one hundred dollars in cash, which I think was very good pay for a little more than five months' work. Every morning he passes through the village taking each man's cattle from the yard and driving them out to the open prairie, where he keeps them from doing mischief or straggling, and at evening he returns all these cattle to their different owners, each of whom contribute to the pay and board of the herd in preparation to the number of cattle they own. On the following morning as I left Walthine I passed through their herd about half a mile from the village, and counted in all 127 head which included only three oxen, the rest of the oxen being absent at work. By far the greater number were less than three years old and a very large percentage were calves of last spring, from which I inferred that these Mennonites have not eaten much veal since coming to Manitoba, and in addition have been purchasing calves from Canadian settlers, and thus unduly raising the price of veal to the people in Winnipeg. The Mennonites seem fully alive to the superior advantages which the North-West possesses for stock-raising and dairying, but in their anxiety to get cattle they have apparently overlooked the advantage of raising only superior breeds, consequently their stock resembles very much the general run of beef-critters in the Province of Quebec. There was

#### MORE HAY BURNT

by the prairie fires last fall, on that low tract of land lying north from the Mennonite settlement to the Assiniboine, than would have sufficed to feed, through the winter, every cow in the whole Dominion from which the milk supplied to the various cheese factories and creameries was taken last summer, and this is comparatively a very small portion of the fertile land in the North-West; but until the hay grows on this and the other extensive meadows in that country has been nearly all utilized, the cost of feeding cattle there, will be only a fraction of the cost of cattle feeding in the Eastern Provinces. The cool nights and dry air of the north western summers are very favorable for making superior butter that will keep good long, and I would not be surprised if, within a quarter of a century, the butter made in that portion of the Dominion will nearly monopolize the foreign butter trade of Britain. When passing through Sheindoff I saw a new steam thrashing machine which had just arrived in the village, and was informed that the Mennonites had purchased a number of these machines the past season. From here I went some eight or nine miles north-west to Nel-

sonville over a very flat but rich farming country. There is a considerable quantity of timber here on the banks of several creeks which issues out from the Pembina Mountains. Nelsonville is a thrifty looking place with a number of good buildings in it and a considerable local trade. I feel sure that the buildings erected in this village were more valuable than the total value of all the buildings erected in the five cities through which I had last passed. From Nelsonville I went north-east about fifteen miles to Pomroy on Tobacco Creek, nearly the whole distance being an open prairie with very few houses erected on it, although all the land has been taken up. Crossing Tobacco Creek I followed the old Missouri trail seven miles more to the Boyne River, where there is

#### A PRETTY LARGE SETTLEMENT

of Canadians, some of whom have been here for seven or eight years. This is a pretty place owing to the large groves of oak which abound on the banks of the stream. The Government seem to have made a serious mistake in permitting so much valuable timber to be appropriated by a few individuals who now charge exorbitant rates for building timber sold to the later settlers on the open prairie, who have not a single acre of bush land. I spent the two following days (Saturday and Sunday) in the Boyne settlement, and on the afternoon of the latter day drove out some ten miles south-west along with Rev. W. A. Ross, to one of his preaching stations near the foot of the Pembina range at Miami Post Office (by the way, post offices seem to be rather thick in this thinly settled part of the country; in other larger and more thickly settled parts they have no post offices at all). The services were held in the house of two young Scotch gentlemen named Riddle, who have lately taken up 9000 acres of land in this vicinity and have started to farm it vigorously. On Monday afternoon I started in company with the Rev. Mr. Ross to cross the large uninhabited tract of wet land—some twenty miles wide—lying between the Boyne Settlement and the Scratching River at Morris. Although there had been no rain to signify for nearly two months, yet we had to travel across nearly two miles of water-covered marsh, the soil in which was so soft in many places that I preferred to walk through it on foot rather than be guilty of such gross cruelty to Stutz as to ride on his back. Mr. Ross' nag seemed to have all it could do to draw the buckboard with Mr. Ross on it through the mud and water. It was almost dark before we got across the marsh and we were still ten miles from Morris, but as Mr. Lowe's farm buildings could be seen about six miles distant to the right of the trail, I left the Rev. Mr. Ross to continue his journey to Morris while I turned Stutz's head towards Lowe's farm, where they had just begun to light fires in the prairie grass around their buildings and stacks. The night was unusually dark, and as I rode towards the fire it seemed an exceedingly beautiful sight, at first appearing merely as a red streak, but as I came closer I could distinctly see the red tongues of flame as they leaped upwards in the still night air. When within a mile of the fire it

#### BOAN BROMES QUITE AUDIBLE.

although it was a very small affair compared with the conflagration which swept over this

part of the country on the afternoon of the following day. I got a hearty reception and a good supper and bed that night from Col. Westover who was in charge of the farm and felt elated that I had no more wet marshes to cross, and might now get back to Montreal dry shod, although my boots were out at the toes and the legs of my trousers were worn off half way up to the knees while travelling through wet grass and scrub, especially while searching for Stutz in the vicinity of Turtle Mount.

#### SHOOTING PRAIRIE CHICKENS—A PRAIRIE FIRE—HORRIS FROM ONTARIO—TROUBLESOME COMPANIONS.

On the morning of Tuesday, Sept. 30th, I went with Colonel Westover to shoot prairie chickens, he using a rifle, while I had a shot gun belonging to one of the men. Our hunting ground was a ploughed field about 450 acres in extent, which seemed to offer considerable attraction to the prairie chickens. Perhaps they had some presentiment of the storm of fire which was that afternoon to sweep over the surrounding prairies. They were very wild, however, and would not let me near enough to shoot them with a shot gun; but Colonel Westover could spot them at longer distances with his rifle. I fired unsuccessfully at several when flying past, and men tried a new trick. Observing that a good many of the birds flew from the ploughed land to the long grass on the adjacent prairie, I used to mark the spot where they alighted and, going straight towards it, would come up quite close before they would fly, and thus I got time to fire before they got too far distant for the shot to take effect. I soon got pretty expert in this mode of

#### "SHOOTING ON THE WING,"

and bagged ten fine birds, and wound up the sport by shooting a very large skunk.

On the afternoon of that day I began to write a letter for the WITNESS and while thus engaged, observed that the sky became darkened and the air full of smoke which was furiously driven by a gale from the west. Going out of the house I observed a monster prairie fire approaching rapidly from the direction of Tobacco Creek, but as a considerable extent of ploughed land intervened between the farm buildings and the long dry grass through which the fire was approaching at a two-forty rate, we were not apprehensive for our safety; but had not the dry grass around the hay stacks been buried the previous evening, no human power could have saved them from destruction. I went out to the western border of the ploughed land to

#### SEE THE FIREKID APPROACH,

but was obliged to keep at a respectful distance owing to the heat and smoke. I have seen nothing comparable to this fire, except the great fire near Ottawa on August 17th, 1870. The fire swept past in a few minutes going on towards Scratching River. Early on the following morning I climbed on the roof of Mr. Lowe's house and took a survey of the horizon all around—the whole country seeming as black as ink, except towards the north-west, where the marsh was too wet for the grass to burn.

The land around here is almost a dead level with exceedingly rich soil of which Mr. Lowe

owns about sixteen thousand acres. Part of it is very wet, but can all be drained at a moderate cost. His buildings are situated near the corner of townships four and five, between ranges one and two, west. The chief drawbacks of this farm are the scarcity of wood and water, for, although there is water all around, there is scarcely a drop fit to drink without first being filtered or boiled to remove or destroy the animalcules and vegetable substances which abound. Col. Westover has had four holes bored in different places in the farm, ninety feet deep to the rock, but the water produced is nearly

#### AS STRONG AS BRINE

I had two quarts of this water evaporated in a tin dish on the stove from which there was produced over a heaped tablespoonful of salt, but it was too impure for using in the household. I also brought a pint of this water with me to Montreal, and it is now in the Witness office. This water has a very active effect on the bowels of coative persons, and perhaps it may be medicinal. Horses and cattle take very little of it after the first time. An attempt was made to drill into the rock by means of a large drill suspended by a rope, but it would not work, as the drill would not revolve with regularity. The water to supply the household and live stock had to be drawn several miles from the big marsh.

I might here mention that out of a carload of horses shipped from Ottawa last spring by Mr. Lowe, eleven had died before the time of my visit, while five or six more were unable to work but were getting round again. I believe that from one-third to one-half of the horses shipped from Ontario to Manitoba die during the first season, and it seems folly to continue the importation of such horses. French-Canadian ponies, and some of the smaller, more hardy and tough horses from Ontario do very well; but the large, looflanked, narrow-cheeked horses might as well be shot at once as be sent to work on the muddy trails in the North-West. The advantage of

#### SMALL HARDY HORSES

over large soft brutes was exemplified on this farm by the work done by one pair of little hardy horses, which had broken up more than one hundred acres of prairie land alone, besides doing a good deal of other work; yet they were in good working condition. The following causes seem to operate against horses brought from Ontario. Drawing loaded waggon over judding mud is very straining on a team, and much more so on large horses than on small ones. Next, the mosquitoes prevent them from taking rest in the stable at night. I once tried to sleep in an unoccupied stable at Oak River, but could not succeed, although with my hat and mosquito net on my head, a couple of pairs of socks drawn over my hands, and my body wrapped in a couple of quilts. The way that the mosquitoes on that occasion danced about on my net and sung party tunes would surprise the members of any national society, and, at last, I had to leave the building and pass the rest of the night at a smudge with the horses, although it was threatening rain. The mud and mosquitoes I believe to be the chief cause of the mortality among big horses; but it is probable that the food and water helps to a greater or less degree.

On Wednesday morning I started for Morris, accompanied, for a short distance, by Mr. Lowe, jr., who had returned from Emerson the previous day. After going some distance, he proposed to buy Sturt, not that he needed him, but fearing that I might have some difficulty, and perhaps delay, at Winnipeg if I took him there for sale, owing to the dullness in the horse market, caused by the notorious land regulations that had come into force on August 1st, which deterred immigrants from settling in the country. This kind offer of Mr. Lowe I gladly accepted and returned with him to his farm and left Sturt with his new owner. The following morning Colonel Westover took me to Morris in his buggy and I parted with him at the house of the Rev. James Douglas where we had dinner. As the boat from Emerson had not yet arrived, and there being considerable uncertainty about her movements, owing to the lowness of the water in Red River, in the afternoon I shouldered my knapsack and

#### STARTED ON FOOT

for Winnipeg, walking nearly twenty miles before stopping for the night, which I did at the house of a French native who keeps a kind of stopping place about two miles north of St. Agathe Church, where I spent an uncomfortable night with four or five species of vermin as bed fellows. One kind in particular I had never seen but once before in my life, and I hope never to see again, for they seemed to be proof against soap and hot water or the fine tooth comb, and I did not get entirely rid of their company until I reached Montreal. I would much rather spend another night in a bluff among the Tiger Hills, with lizards and prairie wolves to disturb my dreams, than in that stopping-place in St. Agathe.

The next morning at break of day I started on my journey, and reached Stinking River a little before noon. This appears to be a pretty place, although it has such an offensive name; but the water in the river is bad-tasted owing to the water received from several pretty large salt springs. The soil here seems to be very rich, but except on the banks of the river, is very wet. I reached Winnipeg at about two o'clock, having come from Morris in about twenty-four hours, carrying some twenty-five or thirty pounds on my back. Having arranged my business here, I purchased

#### A TICKET TO MONTREAL

having to pay ten dollars more for it than if I were going the other way, viz.: from Montreal to Winnipeg.

Having heard a good deal about the bad usage which second class passengers have to endure when travelling by the boats of the Beatty Line from Sarnia to Duluth, I determined to return by that route and see for myself, although a fall voyage on the lakes is not generally desirable.

On Monday, September 6th, I bade good-by to my friends in Winnipeg and crossed the Red River to St. Boniface, and on Tuesday morning sometime before daylight embarked in a box car to make the tedious journey to St. Vincent. The reason we had to travel in a box car was because there were no passenger cars at the station, they having been prevented from coming north the previous evening by damage done to the road by prairie fires.

As we moved slowly southward we saw that a good deal of the country had been burnt over lately and that several houses, as well as a large amount of fencing, haystacks and young timber had been destroyed. It seemed a great pity that so much destruction had been done when it could have been so easily prevented. While the train was moving along at its usual slow pace, we were suddenly startled by violent backward jerks which brought the train to a halt and some of our party to a horizontal position on the floor of the car. As soon as we could we hastened to the car door and found that the two cars in rear of us had got off the track, the farthest back one having turned over, but the one next to us was still right side up, a very lucky arrangement for the twenty-five or thirty passengers who were boxed up in it and were generally

#### MORE SCARED THAN HURT

After considerable delay the passengers in this car were transferred to the car in which we were, and to a platform car in front of us, and we proceeded on to St. Vincent to find that we were too late for that day's train for Duluth and St. Paul. Had it not been for the detention on the Pembina branch, I would have reached Montreal a whole week sooner.

#### SOME ROUGH EXPERIENCES ON A VESSEL OF THE BEATTY LINE—HOME AGAIN.

After twenty four hours detention at the boundary line, during which time I again visited the four cities (in prospect) of Emerson, West Lynn, Pembina, and St. Vincent, I started south on the St. Paul and Manitoba Railway, passing a good many prairie fires by the way. Owing to the smoky condition of the atmosphere, I did not see much of the country until Crookstown was reached.

#### WHERE THE RAILWAY CROSSES RED LAKE RIVER

a short distance above Fishers Landing. This place has developed wonderfully since spring and the country around seems to be pretty well settled, but the soil is rather shallow, resting upon a whitish gravelly clay. The light crop of prairie grass in places where it had not been burnt by the recent fires, showed plainly that the land here is not nearly so fertile as in the greater part of Manitoba. The country here is nearly a dead level, the well water not desirable, and fevers are said to prevail.

We reached Glyndon a little after dark and transferred ourselves to the cars of the Northern Pacific Railway, and soon started eastward, reaching Brainerd about three o'clock the following morning. The train was delayed here for some time and I walked around some, although it was yet dark. This place is prettily situated amongst pine and spruce trees, the white pine trees being especially attractive to me, as I had not seen any for over six months. The country about here seems to be rather low and wet, and I was informed that fevers prevail to some extent. The road from here to Thompson is through a rather uninviting wooded country, where there is no lack of sand or water.

From Thompson to Duluth the railway passes down along the banks of a very rapid river, very beautiful to behold. The journey over this part of the road is rather exciting, and some adventu-

rous lady travellers got on the locomotive to get

#### THE FULL BENEFIT FROM THE SHOCK.

given to their nerves as the train turns sharply round some protruding point on the bank, or glides rapidly across yawning chasms on frill-looking trestle work, more than one hundred feet high.

Duluth shows signs of having seen much better times, and at present contains about 2,500 inhabitants. It is built chiefly on the sloping sides of a rather rugged mountain, and some of the houses are several hundred feet above the lake. I had been recommended by several persons in Manitoba, to put up at the Wakelin House if I was detained in Duluth, as good board and accommodations could be had at very moderate rates, and I found the place fully up to my anticipations in every way.

As the Dominion Government have very extensive and well appointed buildings rented from the Northern Pacific Railway Company, specially for the accommodation of Canadian immigrants passing through here, I thought it best to try

#### HOW I COULD GET ALONG AS AN IMMIGRANT.

This building would accommodate over 200 persons in a pinch, but 100 people could live in it very comfortably. I went up town and purchased a supply of bread, beef, butter, tea and sugar, and returned to the Government buildings and got the beef roasted by the caretaker of the building, without any charge to me as the Government supplies the fuel, stoves and cooking utensils. I made my own tea as I still had the dishes with me which I found so convenient while travelling in the North-West. There was ample room for sleeping, but as I had no blankets I preferred sleeping at night in the Wakelin House. The Government agent here seems to keep a large supply of Western States literature with which to tempt Canadian immigrants from their loyalty to their Queen and country. In addition to this I saw several copies of a local paper scattered around the building, containing the most disgusting blasphemy which I ever have seen in print. I took one of these papers with me in order to show any one in Montreal who may have a curiosity that way, the kind of reading that some government agents supply to Her Majesty's subjects when on their travels.

On Sunday evening, Oct. 12th, the steamer "Asia" of the "Beatty Line" reached Duluth and began unloading her cargo. I had intended sailing in her the following day, but some of the passengers who came up on her advised me to wait for another boat as the "Asia" had no accommodations at all for second class passengers, who were compelled to "den up" on the main deck among bales of goods, cattle, or whatever else there might be around. She was also said to be a rather small boat for the heavy seas which we might expect at this season of the year. On Monday morning the "Quebec" arrived and as she is one of the finest boats on the line I embarked on her and a little before noon on Tuesday

#### SAILED FROM DULUTH.

having sojourned six days at that place. The following morning at break of day we reached Prince Arthur's Landing, where we took on board several passengers, one of whom was

formerly a lawyer, who had died at this place and was now being taken to Toronto for burial. The coffin was placed on the main deck on the top of a large quantity of flour which was being shipped eastward. From here we sailed for Silver Islet, passing some grand mountain scenery. Several hundred bags of flour and feed were landed here, during which time I paid a visit to the crushing mill and witnessed the operations of quartz crushing and washing. About noon the "Quebec" turned her bow towards Sault St. Marie, and for about twenty hours the engines never ceased their monotonous throb, and some of the passengers got a little experience of seasickness, brought on by a pretty strong wind blowing from the south-west. Our accommodations were in the stern of the vessel, beneath one of the water-closets and in close proximity to the other, which I found to be in a very filthy state when I came on board, and no attempt was made to cleanse it until we were near Barnia. There were about twenty second-class passengers, comprising men, women and children, cooped up in a small apartment scarcely twenty feet square, and the light was so bad that I could not see to read during the day-time. At night we had some sort of a lamp which gave a dull light, but not good enough to read by, and we could not increase the light without soiling our fingers poking up the wick with our jack-knives.—It being of the kind used before coal oil was discovered. This lamp was not always to be depended on, and we had to spend one night

#### IN TOTAL DARKNESS.

A French half-breed who, with his wife and one child, came on board at Silver Islet, refused to take his quarters in our cabin, preferring to sleep on the deck. The next morning there was a considerable fuss caused by the half-breed discovering that his trunk had been broken open during the night and some things stolen from it. Although considerable searching was made the lost articles were never found by their owner.

During the early part of Friday, when opposite Saginaw Bay, we encountered a strong gale and heavy sea from the south-west which set a number of the passengers to "cast up accounts," and further helped to make our quarters unbearable. Being too sick to stand upright, I turned into my bunk, but soon had to leave as the water came dashing in through some cracks about the small glass light beside my berth. I managed to scramble up on deck and get forward to the middle of the boat among the cargo and found that it made little difference here how the boat rocked or tossed as I was seated near her axis of motion.

Towards evening, as we neared the south end of Lake Huron, the wind and waves abated, and we were comforting ourselves in prospect of soon leaving the "Quebec" and her many unpleasant associations. I engaged in conversation with

#### A YOUNG ENGLISHMAN.

who told me that his name was Bishop, and that he had gone aboard the "Quebec" at Prince Arthur's Landing, on her upward voyage, to work his passage back to Barnia. He stated that he had been kept at work nearly all the time since last Saturday at noon, either loading or unloading the boat or forwarding coal in the fire-hold, and had been forty-eight hours with-

out sleep at one time. While we were talking together one of the firemen came up out of the hold and ordered my companion to go down and forward more coal. He replied that he would not do it until some of the other men had taken their turn. The fireman then drew his fist hitting poor Bishop a violent blow on the nose and before we had time to interfere he also gave him a violent kick in the stomach which nearly doubled him up. We pulled him away before he could repeat the dose, but the noise made brought along the mate, who began to swear at us for daring to interfere. Two other passengers who had seen the whole fray came along and began to "speak up" to the mate for his ungentlemanly conduct, but several of the boat hands came along and we began to realize that we were

#### IN DANGEROUS COMPANY.

and I had some fears that we would all get a good thrashing, but as young Bishop's nose was bleeding profusely the boatmen seemed to relent a little and I took the wounded man away to wash the blood from his face. He asked me to wait at Barnia a day or two as he intended to have his assailant arrested and he wanted me for a witness, but I was sorry that I could not comply. When we reached Barnia the mate refused to take our luggage to the Grand Trunk Railway depot, although it was not a quarter of a mile from the steamboat wharf, so I had to go and get a man to help me, and had to pay thirty cents for his services. The journey from Barnia to Montreal was very pleasant, there being a decided improvement in the second class car, which we now occupied, as compared with the one in which we went over the same road in the spring. I reached home on the evening of Oct. 20th, after an absence of nearly seven months.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF THE CANADIAN NORTH-WEST AND HOW THEY MAY BE REMOVED.

SIR.—I propose in this communication to refer to the principal drawbacks in the North-West, in the order in which I believe they affect, or are likely to affect, the settlement of the country. They are as follows: The scarcity of wood for fuel, fencing and building purposes; land reserves of all kinds; mosquitoes; distance from markets and manufacturing; prairie fires; grasshoppers; alkali lands; adhesive mud; hard frosts; wild oats, &c.

#### THE WATER DIFFICULTY

I place at the head of the list as being the greatest drawback, if not greater than all the others taken together, as it will continue to be a vexed question when the others have nearly all disappeared; but the greater part of the country is but slightly affected by it. A system of drainage carried out by the Government may remove the surface water and possibly the fever, but nothing, so far as I know, will remove the bad taste and quality of the water in wells dug in the white clay subsoil of a considerable portion of the Red River Valley. This strata of white clay is usually only a few feet in thickness, and the greyish blue clay beneath it does not affect the taste of the water much, and some people are in the habit of halting out their wells frequently to keep the surface of the water below the white

clay, for, as a farmer's wife said to me once, "When the water in the well rises up to the

#### WHITE SOAPY CLAY.

It gets unfit for beast or body to drink." If the walls of the wells were made water-tight to some distance below the white clay, and packed around with puddle, I believe that its evil effects on the water would be removed in a great measure. The water in the streams is generally good, although rather muddy in some places, and I have noticed that the water in wells dug near the banks of a stream, or in a grove of timber, is pretty good, while the water in a well dug a short distance out in the open prairie, is sometimes scarcely fit for use. In some places where the water is too salty, cisterns will be required by the settlers. In seasons of great drought, water will be scarce in some parts of the country.

Wood for fuel and fencing is already scarce in many parts of the country, and unless energetic measures be taken to protect what remains, and to plant more, great suffering will result. Mr. Thomas Schomms, of Portage La Prairie, deserves the thanks of his countrymen for having demonstrated how speedily and cheaply large

#### QUANTITIES OF TREES CAN BE GROWN

on the open prairie, and there are very many places where timber would soon grow up if it were protected from prairie fires. It may be some consolation for loyal Canadians to know that so far as the supply of wood and water are concerned, the prairie lands of the Western States are much worse off than the Canadian North-West; but timber for building purposes, especially pine timber, is much more plentiful and cheaper in the former country than in the latter, thanks to the promoters of the National Policy. But when the railway is opened to Thunder Bay on Lake Superior, lumber can then be supplied much cheaper to Canadian settlers in the North-West, and several of the older farmers there stated in my hearing that they were waiting for the opening of that railway to supply cheaper lumber before they would build more commodious dwellings; in the meantime they live in rather small huts, and I think their decision is a wise one.

#### THE EVIL EFFECTS OF THE LAND RESERVES

are felt over the whole country, and are the more aggravating when we consider that they might have been easily avoided had our Canadian rulers known a little more about the value of the country when it was annexed to the rest of the Dominion. The giving of between two and three million acres of land to the Hudson Bay Company in part payment of their supposed rights to the country, and then undertaking to build a railway to these lands, thereby increasing their value tenfold, shows a too great amount of sharpness somewhere and a lack of sharpness somewhere else, by no means creditable to Canadian statesmen. The Hudson Bay Company are now selling some of this land at ten dollars per acre, which ten years ago could not have been sold for ten cents an acre. The granting of more than a million acres of land to half-breed misers was more than a blunder—it was a crime, not only against the new settlers, but against the poor half-breeds themselves, who were remorselessly plundered and also demoralized by land sharks, who seen in nearly all cases

to have got the oyster while the half-breeds have

#### THE EMPTY SHELLS.

The land scrip issued to the older half-breeds as well as to all the white natives of the country, was a little better both to those to whom it was granted and to the country generally, but a few rich speculators have reaped the lion's share of the profits and by its means secured from twenty to fifty thousand acres of land each, which they are holding over until its value is increased many fold at the expense of all the other inhabitants of the Dominion. The railway reserve was in a certain sense the crowning act of

#### KENNETH POLLY.

but there is some comfort in the thought that it can and will be repealed before it has time to fully develop its bad qualities. Although I am not enamored with the so-called statesmanship displayed by some of those who rule at Ottawa, yet I believe that the least knowing among them, were they possessed of any practical knowledge of the country, would have seen the folly of the present railway reserve system as a means of raising any considerable sums of money within the next ten or a dozen years. Except a comparatively small tract of country west of Oak River, the Government own almost no first-class land in the railway belts A, B and C for a distance of more than seven hundred miles from the Orario boundary, to where the railway crosses the South Saskatchewan. I believe that it would be an over-estimate to place the amount of first-class railway lands in the above-named belts between the place named, at a quarter of a section per mile, and good second-class railway lands at three sections per mile. I would not have it supposed that the rest of the railway lands in these belts is entirely worthless, but it will be a good many years before any quantity of lands fit only for grazing purposes, will be sold at from \$3 to \$5 per acre. Even should these poorer lands find purchasers within the next ten years I ask is it fair that the settlers on inferior lands should be taxed for the whole cost of the railway, while their neighbors, who own nine-tenths of the choicest lands, have nothing to pay at all, while they derive by far the largest share of the benefit from the construction of the Canada Pacific Railway? A much more equitable way would be to levy a small annual tax on all the lands to be benefited by the railway, to be increased or diminished in proportion to the benefit which such land receives, or is increased in value by the opening of the railway. Such a tax would lead to a much more dense settlement of the country, as the large land speculators would sell the greater part of their lands instead of holding them vacant to be increased in value by the labor of others. I firmly believe that these

#### LARGE LAND SPECULATORS

were the chief concoctors of that railway reserve policy, which, with the other reserves, makes it very difficult to make roads, open schools and maintain churches in the North-West.

The other drawbacks to which I will refer are of comparatively minor importance, and their evil effect will before long be scarcely felt, or disappear entirely.

#### MOSQUITOES

are a considerable annoyance to travellers and



new settlers, especially in wet seasons, but when the marshes are drained and ploughed, the mosquito will have to remove to more congenial quarters. At present they are a serious annoyance, especially in warm, murky weather, but the least breeze drives them away. I have sat in some of the farm houses in Manitoba during the evenings when the mosquitoes were at their worst, yet the windows were open without any screens, and scarcely a "skeeter" was to be heard or seen. The cause of this freedom from a pest which were so annoying elsewhere, was explained by the proprietor of the house stating that the land for a short distance around the house had all been cultivated, but before the wild grass had been ploughed up it would have been almost impossible to remain in the house without mosquito nets being over the open windows nearly all of the time, in warm calm weather. Consequently the mosquito-persecuted new settler can drive away his enemies by cultivating the land around his dwelling.

Distance from markets and manufactories is severely felt at present, but will yearly become of less consequence as manufacturing towns spring up in the country and railway connections are opened through Canadian territory. In the meantime, I think it would be wisdom on the part of North-Western Canadians to refrain from raising more wheat than can be consumed in the country, for the American railways will absorb all the profits on exported grain until the Canada Pacific Railway is opened to Thunder Bay.

#### CATTLE-RAISING FOR DAIRYING PURPOSES

should be largely engaged in by all farmers in that country, as the profits in this department are certain to be many fold greater than for exported grain, since the freight charges, which would absorb all the profits on a bushel of wheat, would scarcely be felt on a box of cheese or a tub of butter, and the cost of cattle feeding is a mere trifle compared with the cost in other countries. But (and here comes the pinch) those who would engage in cattle raising are placed in peculiarly difficult circumstances in Manitoba and the North-West. Our Government, for reasons which I never could comprehend, prohibited the importation of American cattle into that country last summer, still considerable numbers of cattle continued to be imported from Ontario at a cost of about \$12 per head for railway freight. Now the American authorities will not allow Canadian cattle to be transported through this territory, and as very few good cattle are to be found in Manitoba, its prospective cattle raisers must make their selections from herds of scrubby cattle which should never be raised in any country but the province of Quebec, and dealing in them should, if possible, be confined to Viger Market. I may have said some hard things, and also thought harder things about Government blundering in the North-West, but I shall willingly forgive them if they will only relent and permit good cows and heifers to be brought freely from Montana to the North-West Territory for breeding and dairying purposes.

Prairie fires are at present a source of very great loss to the country, but the prevention of them is so very easy that it seems almost incomprehensible to me that they have been allowed

to continue their ravages so long unchecked. As I stated in a former communication, if each settler would only spend one day with

#### A TEAM AND MOWING MACHINES

about the beginning of September in each year, cutting narrow strips through the grass and weeds around their buildings and stacks, and also in places where fires are likely to run across the open prairie, and as soon as the mown grass in these strips is sufficiently dry, but before the adjacent grass loses its greenness, set fire to these strips, and thus form fire-wards which would effectually prevent fires from spreading to any distance if it should chance to get caught in any dry grass, little damage would be done by prairie fires. A law strictly prohibiting the setting out of fires in any exposed places, between September 15 and May 30, should also be passed. Having treated the subject of prairie fires at considerable length in a former article, I will say no more about it now.

Grasshoppers, like the Indian scarab, in the Canadian North-West, appear the more formidable the greater the distance they are from us, but much of their importance disappears when viewed more closely. In the first place, their raids take place only about

#### ONCE IN THIRTY OR FORTY YEARS,

and as the climate is not congenial to them, they continue but one or two seasons. On former occasions when the fields of grain were few and of small size, the hoppers did a considerable damage, but many parts of the country were not visited by them at all. I have been told by farmers who had forty to fifty acres of grain in one field, that after the grasshoppers had eaten all they choose to, and had pretty well cleaned out all the grain within several rods of the borders of the field, that the interior portion of the field remained almost untouched and the yield on the whole field was from sixteen to twenty bushels per acre. Some of the owners of small grain fields, especially the Mennonites, disputed with the hoppers their right to the grain. A young man named Anderson, from near Ottawa, told me that he had a small field of wheat which the grasshoppers seemed about to devour, but he and his wife armed themselves with bushes determined to contest to the last their rights to the wheat field. Observing that the grasshoppers when disturbed always flew towards the south-east Mr. and Mrs. Anderson commenced operations on the north-west side of the field, going backwards and forwards waving their bushy weapons, and starting the intruders from the grain next to them, and continued to pursue them until they had all been driven out of the field. This process of warfare was resumed each time a fresh band of marauders came that way; and the young farmer and his wife had the satisfaction of

#### EATING THEIR OWN WHEAT.

It is probable that grasshoppers will not return again for a good many years to come, by which time the quantity of grain grown in the country will be so large that the hoppers will be able to make but very little impression on it.

Alkali lands are not very extensive, and in most cases the effects of the alkali can be effectually removed by the application of a heavy coating of manure. There are some considerable tracts of alkali lands, and also a few spots of

"spouty" lands, which it would be well for settlers to avoid, although I believe that even these can be made to yield excellent crops.

Adhesive mud seems to belong almost exclusively to the vicinity of the Red River, but its effects are only felt in wet weather.

Hard frost, were it not for its destructive effects upon fruit trees, can hardly be considered as a drawback, as every person whom I met with that had spent a winter in the North-West, declared that the winters were much more pleasant than those in Ontario. The 24th of last December was the coldest day ever known in Manitoba, the thermometer reaching 54 degrees below zero. I have since received several letters from persons in that country, in which they stated that they attended to their ordinary duties as usual on that day, some of them being out on the open prairie or in the bush all day, yet did not feel the cold to be uncomfortable, and were indeed surprised to learn afterwards that the thermometer indicated such unusual cold. I used to hear, long ago, about the danger of

#### SOWING WILD OATS.

but in the North-West wild oats grow without being sowed, where the land is not too wet. Its grain strongly resembles a porcupine's quill, with a slight enlargement near the butt end. Between the middle of July and the middle of August this barbed grain is very annoying to a traveller over the plains, as they manage somehow to stick themselves in the legs of pants and drawers, and begin pricking the more sensitive skin beneath, and when not attended to in time they sometimes go deeper than the skin. It is said that they sometimes get stuck in the throats of cattle, but I scarcely believe it, as Stutz was very fond of eating these oats, and they seemed to go down all right. Their greatest danger is to sheep, as they get stuck in the wool, and from that find their way inside the skin, otherwise than by the mouth, and cause inflammation and death. Cattle, horses and sheep are very fond of eating them while green, and if the pasturage were not so extensive they would be prevented from maturing their dangerous seed, and sheep would be all right if confined to a moderately-sized pasture, and not permitted to range at large, especially during the month when the wild oat seed is in a condition to do harm.

Blackbirds in some parts of the country cause a considerable loss when the grain is about ripe, especially in the vicinity of an abundance of trees and water, as they seem to want frequent drinks while feeding. A boy armed with a shot gun and a few pounds of powder and shot would serve to protect a large field of grain from their depredations, and most boys would consider such work almost equal to play. I have been surprised to see some fields of grain nearly devoured by blackbirds when a couple of weeks herding could have saved the whole.

#### THE ADVANTAGES OF THE GREAT NORTH-WEST—WHAT KIND OF SETTLERS ARE WANTED.

SIR.—As others have written so glowingly of the beauties and natural advantages of the North-West, the readers of the WITNESS might excuse me if I said nothing more than I have already said on this subject; but, having given a detailed statement of the drawbacks of the

country, I think it but fair to give the other side of the picture. The advantages which the North-West possesses over Eastern Canada are as follows: Greater fertility of soil; a more healthy climate; cheaper lands in abundance; the smaller cost and greater speed with which the land can be brought into a state of cultivation; the immense natural advantages for feeding stock; the trifling cost for opening roads.

A considerable portion of the soil is so fertile that there is

#### NOTHING TO COMPARE WITH IT

In any other portion of the globe that I have seen or heard of, and in classifying it I have adopted a new grade, or rather advanced the old grade one degree. What is called first-class land has nothing to correspond with it in the Eastern provinces, except a few spots of small extent, which for ages have been receiving vegetable deposits from adjacent higher lands. The nearest approach that I have seen to the quality of Manitoba lands in the Eastern provinces, is in the valley of the Carp, near Ottawa; but the Manitoba lands are as much ahead of the Carp lands, as the latter are ahead of the ordinary clayey lands of Nepean, which would be considered poor, second class land in the North-West. I have seen on several occasions wheat that would yield from fifty to sixty bushels to the acre, and such pretty bright wheat! Oats often produce

#### OVER EIGHTY BUSHELS TO THE ACRE,

and both oats and wheat grow to a greater height without "lodging" than in the eastern provinces. Barley produces fine crops, but the heavy heads seem to hang down more than do the other kinds of grain. Peas grow plenty of straw, but not many peas on the rich soils; but I think they will do better on the lighter lands towards the west. Indian corn seems to do tolerably well where the land is dry enough. In the Indian reserves there is cultivated a diminutive kind of corn, with stalks from three to four feet high, bearing chabby ears from five to seven inches long, which ripen early. I did not see any rye or buckwheat growing, but am sure that they would produce well in the dry rolling prairies near the sand hills, and westward from Grand Valley. Vetches, flax and hops grow wild in abundance, and could not be distinguished from the cultivated plants. There is also a kind of pea growing wild, but it is somewhat different from the cultivated. Timothy hay and Hungarian grass produce enormous crops, and white clover seems to thrive well, but where red clover has been tried on the low lands it was water-killed; yet I am satisfied that it will grow on the rolling lands farther west. Wild grasses grow in profusion and yield an abundance of nutritive feed for live stock. Beans produce abundantly, and in some cases good crops of beans have been raised by sowing the seed broadcast like peas, and harrowing them in with a common harrow, after which nothing more was done with them until they were ready for harvesting. Root crops of all kinds and also cabbages produce enormously and

#### GROW TO A SIZE ALMOST UNKNOWN ELSEWHERE.

After what has been said about grain crops, let none of the readers of the WITNESS run away with the idea that from

fifty to sixty bushels of wheat and eighty bushels of oats are average crop here, as I think that from twenty to twenty-five bushels of the former and fifty bushels of the latter, per acre, would be a fair average for last season's crops. Strawberries, raspberries, currants, cranberries and plums grow wild, and in some localities produce an abundant supply of fruit. Apple trees imported from Ontario and the United States have not done well, as in most cases they die after producing their first crop of fruit. They have not yet been tried on the more suitable lands westward, where in some of the more sheltered spots hardy varieties of apple trees will, I am sure, do well.

The second advantage which the North-West has over Eastern Canada is a more

#### HEALTHY CLIMATE.

Fever and ague is unknown here, although in the vicinity of Winnipeg and in some other places in the low parts of Manitoba, paludal fevers prevail to a greater extent in midsummer than in at all pleasant or profitable to the inhabitants; but the suffering caused by it is like a mere drop in the bucket when compared with the sufferings which the early settlers in the Western States and also in Ontario had to endure from that most aggravating, foolish looking disease called fever and ague. The high lands westward from the Red River are about the most healthy on the globe, and people troubled with lung, liver or limb complaints would find a short residence here of much greater benefit than all the patent medicines in the world. Several people who had formerly been troubled with

#### PULMONARY DISEASES,

or from the effects of a sluggish liver when living in Ontario, have recovered good health since coming here, with no vestige remaining of their former complaints. That this climate has a very beneficial effect on rheumatic complaints, as well as liver complaints, I know by personal experience during my short tour through the high lands of the North-West, my chief regret being that I could not continue there longer. Owing to its proximity to the dry arid plains of the Upper Missouri and South Saskatchewan, the air has a peculiar dry buoyant feeling—even a few hours after a wet spell—that is almost unknown further east. Although last summer was an unusually wet one, yet with the exception of a few wet days in April and a large portion of the months of June and July, the weather was most delightful during the more than six months spent by me in the North-West.

One of the greatest advantages of the North-West is the abundance and variety of

#### ITS CHEAP LANDS.

Although the various reserves have monopolized a very large amount of good lands, yet there is plenty left for the most fastidious settler to choose from. Those who prefer a level open prairie can get it here without any perceptible unevenness; so also if a rolling prairie, a brushy prairie, a partially wooded or entirely wooded lands are wanted, there is an abundant supply of each from which to select a homestead costing only \$10 for 160 acres of better land than can be got in the Eastern provinces for love or money.

The smaller cost and greater speed with which

the land can be brought into a state of cultivation is a most important advantage which the new settler in the North-West has over his *confrères* in the Eastern provinces. Having cleared with my own hands some sixty or seventy acres of bush land in the Province of Quebec, I know something of the enormous amount of chopping, logging, burning, stumping, and often draining and gathering stones required to transform a bush farm into grain or pasture fields and meadows; and if strong native Canadians, who were trained from childhood to this sort of work, find it so difficult, how much more difficult must it be for those who never saw such work done before in their lives? How often have I seen smart young men become prematurely old and stooped in the shoulders while endeavoring to bring their farm into such a state of cultivation that they might live comfortably on it, but had these farmers begun their operations upon a prairie farm (or better still, part prairie and part wooded) they could have brought it into a similar condition in three or four years, with much lighter work, and it makes but little difference to them if they

#### NEVER DID A DAY'S WORK

on a farm before in their lives, as the work is so different from what the eastern farmers are used to. I could give numerous instances in the North-West where settlers—some of whom had very little capital, and had never previously worked on a farm—had in two or three years' labor with their own hands and one team of oxen, besides building a comfortable house and stables, brought into cultivation and fenced forty or fifty acres of land, which is more cultivated land than is on a majority of the farms in the Provinces of Quebec or Ontario, the pasture and meadow lands being excluded as the North-Western farmer has a larger amount of these without any labor at all. I will refer to one case only as

#### AN ILLUSTRATION

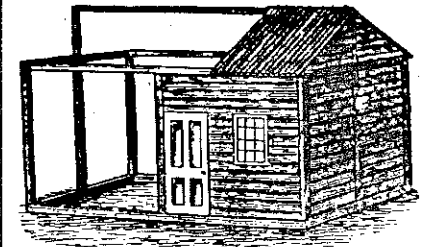
of what may be easily done by anyone who is possessed of an ordinary share of muscular ability and some \$300 or \$400 in cash. Mr. J. B. Curran, a clerk from Montreal, went to Winnipeg in the fall of 1878 and in the month of March following bought a yoke of oxen and sleigh, also, a tent, stove, cooking utensils, plough and harrow. With these he started to Oak River, and there selected 320 acres of excellent land, most beautifully situated on the banks of that stream. When I visited him on the 8th August following he had over twenty acres in crop, which promised a larger return than very many old farms in Quebec. He also had the timber cut for a house, and had several of his neighbors helping him to raise it the day of my visit. Beside the work done on his farm, he had to bake his own bread, cook his own meals, and wash his own clothes. As the Oak River Station on the line of the Canada Pacific Railway will be located within two miles of Mr. Curran's farm it will be a valuable property in three or four years. I am sorry to say that a great many of the farmers' sons who went to the North-West last spring have not done half as well as the Montreal clerk did, not but they had ability enough, but they frittered away their time and spent their money, looking over the whole country before they would settle down, and even then, many of them did not seem inclined to

#### VERY GOOD SANDSTONE QUARRIES

on the shores and islands of Lake Winnipeg from which the future city of Selkirk can secure an abundant supply of building and paving stones. The rock which underlies the whole country consists of white limestone, but it seems to be so shaly in most places as to be unfit for building purposes. There are only a few stone buildings in the country, and, excepting the Penitentiary at Rockwood, they are all rough built. Excellent white brick is made from the clay which abounds in nearly the whole country, and at some future time brick will be used extensively both in towns and country places in the construction of buildings, but hitherto scarcely any brick buildings have been erected, except in Winnipeg, and even here there are not more than thirty or forty brick houses, although there is probably twice that number of "bricked" houses, or buildings lined on the outside with one thickness of brick. Were it not for the unnecessarily high prices of brick and the very high charges of brick-layers for their work, brick houses would be the cheapest and best buildings in the greater part of the country. Much the greater number of houses in Winnipeg are small frame houses, clap-boarded and painted white on the outside, which, with the white brick and white stone, gives them a white appearance, strongly contrasting with the black mud pavements. Except in the parish of Kildonan, nearly all the houses in the country places are of rude construction and rather small in size. In many cases the farmers are

#### WELL ABLE TO ERRECT BETTER BUILDINGS,

but are waiting until the railway is opened eastward to Lake Superior, when lumber will be much cheaper than hitherto. In the parts of the country where moderately large poplar timber is found, the walls of the houses are built much on the same plan as log buildings are in the eastern



take much improvement, but having secured a homestead and pre-emption, they are loitering around, putting in their time until they can secure the patent of their claims, which they then hope to sell at largely enhanced prices. I believe that it was a serious mistake to allow unmarried men to pre-empt land at all, as one hundred and sixty acres of a homestead was quite sufficient for their occupation.

As I have previously referred to the immense

#### NATURAL ADVANTAGES FOR STOCK RAISING

in this country, I need not say much about it now; but a farmer who has worked hard for eight or ten years to clear sufficient meadow and pasture lands to feed an ordinary number of live stock, can appreciate the advantage of having all this and much more ready to his hand without any labor on his part; and a family that has plenty of cows to milk evenings and mornings, will scarcely suffer the pangs of hunger, even when there is little else in the larder. I am sorry to say that I have seen numbers of families living from 150 to 200 miles west from Winnipeg who had not a drop of milk to whiten their black tea, or a bit of butter to eat with their bread, because forsooth, somebody thought that the N. P. was a good thing to encourage settlement in the North-West, even if it entirely prevented Montana drovers from bringing good grade cows to the settlers' doors and selling them at about half the price that they now cost in Winnipeg.

The trifling cost of road-making in the North-West, where at certain seasons you can drive a loaded team almost anywhere you please, may seem of not much advantage to some people who have not had this difficulty to contend with; but

#### ROADMAKING

used to be quite an item in the bill of fare provided for new settlers in the other provinces. When I was a boy I assisted my father to make a corduroy road nearly half a mile long leading from his farm to the main road, and I have no hesitation in saying that there was more work performed in making that bit of road, than was performed in opening and making the more than 2,000 miles of trails travelled over by me last summer in the North-West, excepting the Pembina Branch Railway and a few miles in and around Winnipeg.

The good class of settlers, especially in the Western settlements, is a considerable advantage to those who may wish to locate in that country; but I may refer to this more at length at some other time.

#### HOUSE BUILDING AND FENCE MAKING IN THE NORTH WEST—A NOVEL METHOD OF SINKING POSTS.

SIR.—In a country where timber is scarce the erection of houses and fences will always be an important consideration, especially to the first settlers; and perhaps some readers of the WIRESS may have a curiosity to learn something more about the way houses and fences are built in Manitoba and the North-West Territory. Except at the Stony Mountains, south of Rockwood, and in the bed of the Red River at St. Andrews, I did not see in the whole country anything like a quarry from which large quantities of limestone could be got for building purposes. I saw some

provinces; but in a great many places sufficient large timber cannot be got, except at very great expense, and the houses are built on the plan shown in the accompanying cut, which represents a partly completed house of the most common size, twenty-four by twenty feet. The frame consists of two sills and two plates, each twenty-four feet long, and as many more of twenty feet long; also eight posts ten feet long—sills, plates and posts being squared to about six inches. There are also square posts about seven feet long, standing upright above the centre of the end plates to support the ridge-pole, which is usually a round stick of the same length as the building, and five or six inches in diameter. Near each end of the ridge-pole there is

placed a brace (the only brace in the whole building) to prevent it sagging out or in, and ways, the building logs when put in their place brace it sufficiently towards the sides. All the posts have grooves, about two inches wide and nearly as many deep, mortised along the centre

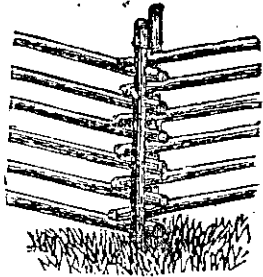


FIG. 1.

of two of their sides the entire length, to receive a two inch tenon made on the ends of the logs which form the walls of the building. These filling logs are, when large enough, hewed on two sides, but in some cases they are merely round poles, with the cracks between them plastered with lime mortar, or clay if lime is scarce. The logs forming the gable ends have a tenon only on the end next to the centre posts, the other ends being cut slanting to suit the pitch of the roof; and these slanting ends are always pinned together, and to the end plates, with wooden pins. The roof consists of small round poles, considerably smaller than rafters, and placed like rafters, but close together, from the side plates to the ridge-pole, as shown in the cut, where a few of these poles are placed in position. Sometimes the roof is completed by placing a layer of wild hay over the rafters, and above all a layer of sods, for the double purpose of keeping out the cold in winter and preventing the wind from blowing the hay covering away. These soddy hay roofs are un-

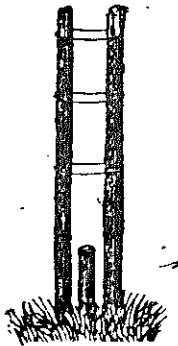


FIG. 2.

comfortable in wet weather, as they leak far more than is good for the health or happiness of the inhabitants. Most of the roofing in the country places is done with thatch, either straw or long wild grass being used for this purpose.

## THE THATCHING IS DONE

as follows: All the larger crevices between the rafters are filled up with small splits of wood, kept in position with nails. The fissures are then all filled with mortar, when the thatch is placed in position, each layer receiving a coating of mortar on the upper end as the work proceeds to hold it fast in its place, and the whole is topped with a heavy layer of mortar in place of the ridge-board. Clay is often used instead of the mortar but it is not nearly so good, as when it gets dry it keeps dusting down through the rafters, especially when there is high winds, making it very uncomfortable for the people beneath, especially for those who sleep with their mouths open.

In some of the large open prairies towards the south-west corner of Manitoba, there are a good many

## DWELLING-HOUSES BUILT WITH SODS.

A frame, resembling the one in the cut, is first made, only there are no sills required, the

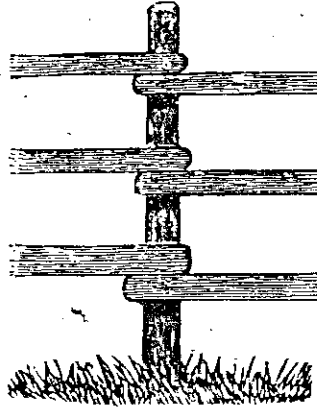


FIG. 3.



FIG. 4.

ends of the posts being inserted about two feet into the ground. There is no attempt made at squaring the posts or plates, which do not require to be so large as in a log building. A piece of prairie land is then ploughed with a "breaking plough," the furrows being ten inches wide and three inches thick. These are next cut into proper lengths (from twenty to twenty-four inches) with a spade and used like bricks in building up the walls of the house, and the roof is covered with sods as before described. I have seen a few houses built on the following plan, which I think to be a very good one for structures in which to spend a few years after arriving in the country, especially where timber is scarce. A "balloon frame" is first made with poles and boarded on the outside (or inside if you prefer it) with rough boards, which by rights ought to be grooved and tongued. The roof, which need not be steep, is made of the same material, and the walls are built around the outside up to the roof with sods to keep out the cold in winter. The roof is lined on the inside with

thick paper-like pasteboard, the seams between the sheets being pasted to make the whole air tight. A floor of boards can be laid if desired, but the greater number of the houses in the new settlements have no wooden floors, and the partitions, where there are any, are made of cotton sheets. The Mennonites make

## VERY NICE PARTITIONS

with sun-dried brick and whitewashed with lime. The cost of the kind of house which I have been just describing and of the ordinary size, twenty by twenty-four feet inside, with side walls eight feet high, and four feet pitch of roof, is about as follows:

Boards for walls, 850 feet, at \$28 per M.....	\$23.80
Ro-floor boards, 850 feet, at \$30 per M.....	19.50
Boards for flooring, 500 feet, at \$28 per M.....	14.00
Paper lining, windows and door.....	12.00
Cost of frame.....	5 00
Twenty days' labor in building, at \$2 per day.....	40.00
Nails and hinges.....	6.00
Total cost.....	\$120.30

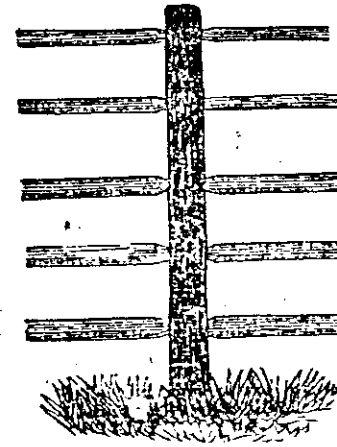


FIG. 5.

In some parts of the country and at some seasons of the year, the cost of drawing the material to the place needed would probably exceed \$50 more, while if the settler wished to have more accommodations he could make his house two or three feet higher and floor his garret, putting a small window in each end and partition the lower story into three parts at an additional cost of about \$50, making a total of about \$220 in all.

In parts of the country where timber is plentiful, the houses have been built with very little oak outlay by their owners. The houses in Winnipeg are nearly all shingled, the shingles costing about \$6 per 1,000. The stables are often very temporary affairs with four walls built with poles and plastered with mud. The roof is also formed of poles on the top of which a large quantity of wild hay or straw has been piled. Sometimes straw in large quantities is piled all over and around the stables, so that they resemble large straw stacks with a door placed on one side.

## THE FENCES IN THE NORTH-WEST

are more varied than even the houses, but the most common kind is the zig-zag rail fence, like the greater part of the fences in the eastern provinces, but with the angles more obtuse, and having upright pickets at each corner (see figure 1). For the cost of this kind of fence see a former letter dated May 2. The pickets are usually of tamarac or oak, as poplar rots too readily near the ground. The pickets are bound together in two or three places with withes, (Fig. 2) which also serve to hold up the ends of the fence poles to the proper height, when they are very small, or when less than six poles are used in each panel.

In figure 3 a post about five inches in diameter is used having three notches cut in the side (see figure 4), to support the ends of the fence poles, which are also flattened at the ends and nailed to the post with very large nails; sometimes they are pinned with oak pins. This fence keeps out cattle very well, but pigs and sheep have no difficulty in passing such a barrier.

In some places east of Red River I saw fences as represented in figure 5, the upright posts being of tamarac five or six inches in diameter, having five two-inch auger holes bored through them, into which are fitted the ends of small tamarac or spruce poles. This forms a good fence and very symmetrical, but can only be used to advantage in places where small tamarac or spruce is plentiful. All these fences have panels of about twelve feet in length, but in tight-strung wire fences the posts are from twenty to thirty feet apart, with from two to six strands of wire fastened to their sides.

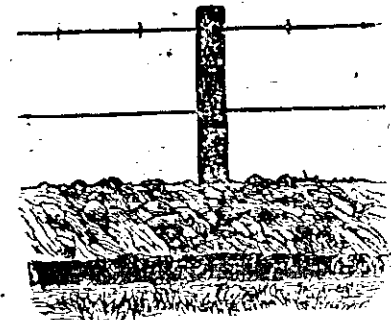


FIG. 6.

Figure 6 represents the kind of wire fence which I believe to be the cheapest as well as the best kind of wire fence. The posts are first placed in their proper position, then two or three furrows are turned up with a plough on each side and the furrows thrown up in the line of fence, and on the outside a moderately-sized ditch is made, the earth from which is also piled up in the line of fence. Two or three wires (one of them barbed) are then strung on the posts and the whole is completed at a total cost of about four cents per running foot or sixty-five cents per rod. Wire fences without any ditch are dangerous to young horses, which sometimes run against them and are badly hurt.

Before leaving this subject let me state how

pickets and posts are driven into the clayey soil of the North-West. The end of the post or picket is first sharpened as in figure 5. If the ground is soft, the operator raises it up about a foot or more and brings it down with all his force on the spot where it is destined to stand. It is then pulled out and forcibly stuck into the same hole until it has reached a depth of about a foot and a half when it is allowed to remain, undisturbed by frosts, which do not upheave posts at all, as in the eastern provinces, so that a line of pickets if put in the ground in a straight row, will continue just as they were left at first, until they rot down. When the ground has become dry and hard, the post planter carries with him a pail of water and a cup. The sharp end of the post is first stuck into the spot where it is to stand and then withdrawn, leaving a small square sharp pointed hole, into which a small cup of water is poured to be immediately absorbed by the dry earth, which at once becomes soft. Another prod with the sharp pointed post is followed by another cup of water, and the watering prodding process is continued until the post has got down to its proper depth without the aid of a spade or post auger.

**IN CONCLUSION—ADVICE TO NEW SETTLERS—WHO SHOULD STAY AT HOME—WHO SHOULD GO TO THE NORTH WEST—WHEN TO GO—HOW TO GO.**

SIR,—I know there is great difficulty in giving advice which will not lead to disappointment, if not ill-will, on the part of some who may take it. The dispositions and circumstances of people are so varied that what might lead to the very best results in one case might lead to disappointment and disaster in another; or, to apply to an old proverb, "What may be sauce for the goose, may not be sauce for the gander." As I like always to treat the worst cases first, I will now briefly refer to the classes and conditions of men who should not settle in the Canadian North-West, at least for some years to come.

#### OFFICE-SEEKERS

should remain at Ottawa until their appointments have been gazetted, before going to the North-West, for their chances of securing situations will diminish in about the inverse ratio of the square of their distance from the Capital, because of the extreme selfishness of most of Manitoba's representatives at Ottawa, who have so many of their own axes to sharpen on the Government grinders that they cannot attend to the axes of their constituents.

Strong party men need not go West unless they are prepared to make "Manitoba First" their chief cry, no matter what their thoughts may be on that subject.

Clerks and genteel people generally, who hate manual labor and everything else they supposed to be tainted with vulgarity, will find nothing congenial in the North-West.

Gregariously disposed persons will be come lonesome when separated so far from their neighbors, as is generally the case, especially in the new settlements in the North-West.

People who have passed the middle of life, whose habits and modes of living have become fixed, had better remain where they are, except in some exceptional cases, to which I will refer more at length further on.

Parents who have large families of small children had better not go West until some of their children be grown up, unless they have also a competent portion of the good things of this life in the form of \$1,000 or upward in cash, to enable them to settle down comfortably at once.

People of a fickle-minded, changeable disposition, should not waste money by a trip to Manitoba, for they will not continue there long enough to get fully recovered from the first severe attack of "North-West blues," which nearly all new settlers feel after their arrival in that country, and which leads them to secretly wish that they had never come to the country at all, although within less than a year afterward they would on almost no account return to live at the old homestead.

Young men, whose moral character is not already fully established, should avoid Winnipeg as they would a den of rattlesnakes, for, although there are a good many excellent people living there, yet their influence is not so potent for good as to counteract the prevailing intemperance and lasciviousness, which prevails to an alarming extent, even among persons in high positions. I have reason to fear that many young men have been sent by their fond parents to push their fortunes in this country, but never went beyond Winnipeg, where they fell among

#### A WORSE CLASS OF THIEVES

than those who, of old, robbed and wounded the traveller who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and, after losing their money and morals, and learning a lot of Western stories and slang phrases, returned to tell of their imaginary adventures, and bring an evil report about the whole country, although they saw very little more than the banks of the Red River.

I need scarcely advise those who think themselves to be well enough where they are to remain where they are so well off, for they will do so without being told; but the number of such contented people in English-speaking countries is so small, that it matters little whether they go or stay.

Having said so much about the classes of persons who ought not to go to the North-West, permit me to say a few words to those who are likely to be benefited by making their homes in that country. First—Young men whose patrimony is small, except in brain or muscular development, are more likely to succeed in the North-West than in any other place that I know of, if they are willing to work hard and "rough it" for a few years, which latter term means being deprived of a commodious house, dainty food, and social enjoyments of various kinds which can be had in old, settled countries. If such a young man has a wife, like-minded and like-bodied with himself (and if he is not married he should lose no time before getting a suitable mate), the roughing part of the business will seem a very easy matter. I may add that it matters very little whether a man has a previous knowledge of farm work or not, as the mode of farming is so different in this country that

#### SKETCH IMMIGRANTS GENERALLY DO BETTER AT FIRST

than the sons of Ontario farmers.

A farmer or laborer who has a family of grown children, be they male or female, can start them on their own hook much more expeditiously and

cheaply in the Canadian North-West than in any other part of the globe that I have heard of, and this can be done without their being separated far apart from each other.

There are a great many farmers in the Eastern Provinces who own small or poor farms, where their courage has become low, owing to their having no prospects of anything but hard work and hard times while they continue in their present situation, whose courage would rise and whose prospects would brighten by their "rising" at once from out of their present locations, and taking the most direct and speedy route to any of the following places, viz., Oak River, Bird Tail Creek, Pelican Lake, or Turtle Mountain.

Persons troubled with rheumatism, liver or lung complaints, will find that a residence on the high lands west of the Red River valley will do them more good in relieving their complaints and restoring them to good health again, than if they used any or

#### ALL OF THE PATENT MEDICINES

advertised in religious weekly papers in the United States and Canada.

Persons having an inclination to speculate in real estate will find ample scope to exercise their talents, and grow rich, too, at the expense of Eastern taxpayers, by dealing in land scrip, half-breed reserves, railway reserves, &c. If their means and their aspirations are not large, they can do a good business in a small way, by homesteading and pre-empting lands, which they have no intention of settling upon, and afterward selling their "claims" to others at a good profit, as certain eminent divines have already done, to my certain knowledge. But allow me to say a quiet word or two by way of caution:—

First,—Don't invest largely in real estate in and around Winnipeg, as it is already overdone there, and you might awaken some spring morning to find that a considerable portion of your property, and nearly all your bright prospects, were floating toward the North Pole.

Second,—Be careful and avoid purchasing property from professional gentlemen, such as doctors, ministers and lawyers. The well authenticated stories which I heard about the speculative doings of professional gentlemen in the North-West, would surprise the stock and land speculators about Montreal, and it so happens, especially in the case of a well-known doctor, that the victim finds out that he is fleeced before he really knows whose hands guide the shears. For the sake of our common Christianity, and the honor of His name, who said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," I hope that no more speculatively disposed misdoers will be sent to this part of our Dominion.

Now for a few words about the best time for going to the North-West, preparations for the journey, &c. Except when some of the members of the family are not very strong,

#### THE MIDDLE OF MARCH

is about the best time to start, as you can proceed westward from Winnipeg to your destination before the breaking up of sleighing, and even should the snow be gone, the frost and ice will continue in the soft places until about the 10th of April, greatly facilitating the passage of loaded vehicles over them. If the women and children are not very rugged, perhaps it would be better for them to remain at their old homes until

about the beginning of August, or later if they wish, when the Western journey can be made with greater ease and pleasure, and with considerable less expense, the husband and father in the meanwhile going ahead to make preparations to receive them.

Except in cases where a number of persons go together, so that their extra luggage can be loaded in one or more cars and sent directly through to Manitoba, it is not good to take much extra luggage. Have it also put into strong boxes, not over 150 lbs. in weight, and have them so secured that they can be readily opened for inspection by Custom House officials. Take a good supply of clothing and bedding, and also a few carpenter's tools. As traveling through wet grass is very severe on the toes of boots, get your shoemaker to make you a pair of long boots, with long, broad and thick soles, and if afterwards they show signs of giving way at the toes, tack on a toe-cap of abacauppi, as the surveyors do. I have also seen toe-caps of tin tacked on boots out West.

Get the following dishes for use by the way, even if you have other dishes packed among your luggage: A tin can for carrying good water along with you for drinking and cooking purposes, in places where good water is scarce; a small tin pail, with a lid on it, for boiling tea-water; one or more tin drinking cups; a small tin can or two for holding preserves or butter, or both; a bag for holding bread and other provisions, which might include boiled or roasted ham, &c.

It is not best to take

#### LIVE STOCK

except there are sufficient to make up a carload. I have known some persons, who took half a carload of horses and the rest of the load consisted of farming implements and other luggage boxed up; but they had some difficulty in passing the frontiers.

I would not advise any one to take horses along with them, except they are moderate sized, very hardy horses. When there are a number of persons going in company, it might be a good move to buy a carload of working oxen in some part of the lumber districts of Minnesota or Wisconsin, although the N. P. is not favorable to such transactions. After Winnipeg or Emerson is reached, no time should be lost in securing a pair of oxen and wagon, or better still, two Red River carts, as a much heavier load can be drawn over soft roads by a pair of oxen when each is harnessed in a cart, than if they were hitched together to a wagon. Take a long rope along with you if there are soft places to be crossed, and when your team gets stuck in the worst places, unhitch the whipple trees and drive the team ahead until solid footing is reached, and then with the long rope join in the whipple trees to the end of the wagon-pole, when your team will draw out a much heavier load than they otherwise could, and with much less risk of straining themselves. A good many horses were permanently injured last summer by drawing loaded wagons through Manitoba mud, for lack of this precaution. If the roads are bad, leave at Emerson or Winnipeg, all your baggage that can be spared, and take only such things as are likely to be required for immediate use. Afterward, when the roads are good, you can return and bring up the rest of your stuff. Some people are in the habit of renting farms

near the Red River, or Portage LaPrairie for the first year after coming to the North-West; but I do not think it a good plan, unless you intend buying some farm in that locality, in which case it will give you ample time to look around.

There are some very pretty farms having extremely rich soil, which can be bought on the river fronts, but for myself, I would prefer going to the

#### HIGHER AND MORE HEALTHY LANDS

toward the west. A person who prefers timbered land can get what he wants near the Riding Mountain. If part timbered and part prairie is wanted, near Oak River or Bird Tail Creek will be the best and most convenient place to go to, although there is a large amount of this kind of land near Pelican Lake and the Turtle Mounts; but it is likely that it will be some time before railway communication is opened to these places. There is also a large amount of bare prairie lands of good quality lying between Pelican Lake and Turtle Mounts. There are some very suitable places for stock-raising at various points along the Assiniboine, from the boundary of Manitoba westward, but the best localities for producing hay are in the Province of Manitoba, especially near Lake Manitoba, Boyne, Sole and Roseau rivers.

If you choose to go to Manitoba in summer time I think

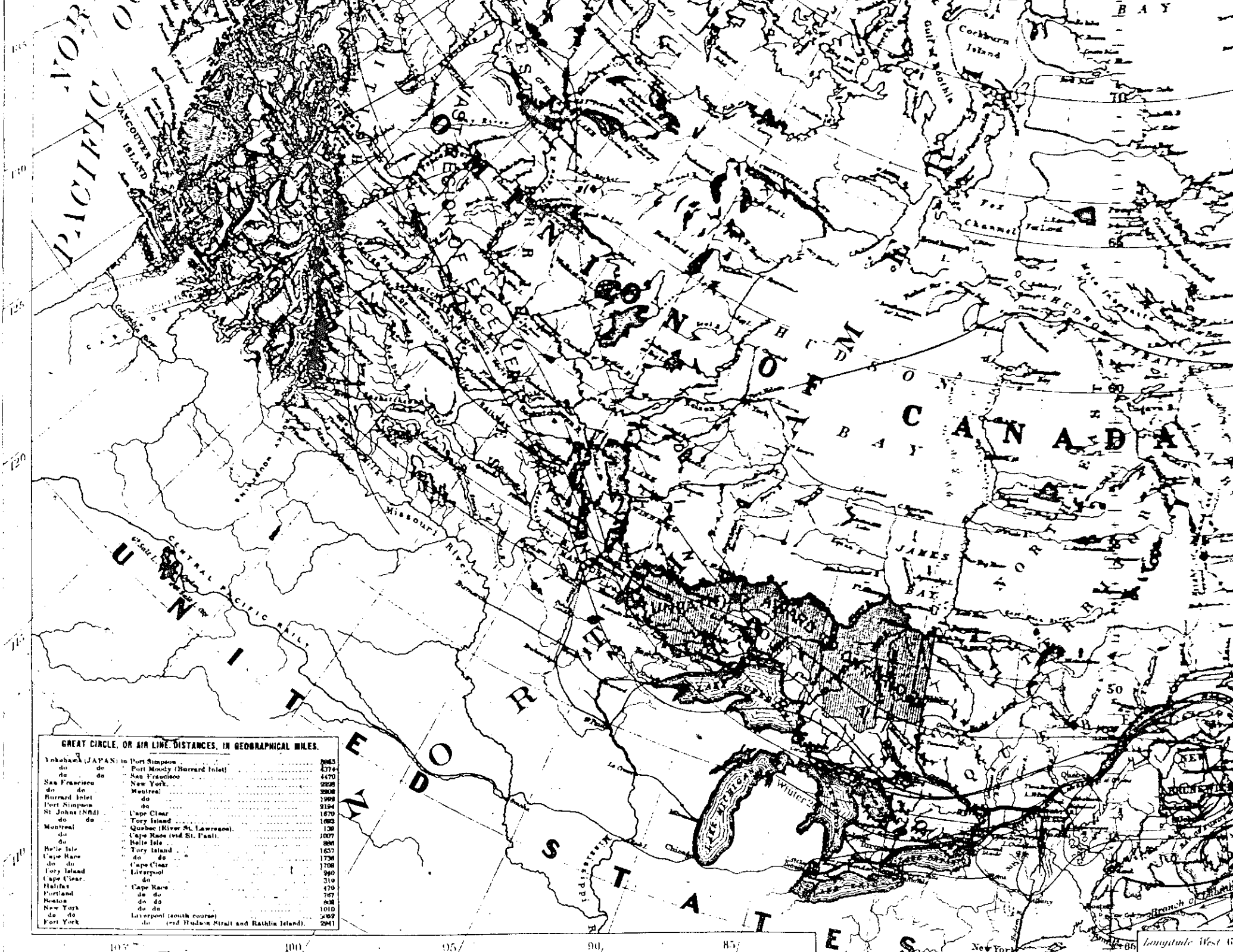
#### THE LAKE ROUTE IS CHEAPEST AND BEST;

but if you take my advice, and the advice of a good many others, you will avoid the boats of the Beatty Line, between Sarnia and Duluth, until the proprietors think fit to provide better accommodation for second-class passengers, and also employ respectable officers to maintain proper order on board. The "Quebec," on which I came from Duluth to Sarnia, is a safe boat to sail on, so far as storms are concerned, and I believe Captain Anderson to be a good navigator, and a gentleman, but his time, in stormy weather, is taken up too much in sailing the boat, leaving the passengers to the care of the other officers, whose conduct and conversation on some occasions were far from proper, where unprotected females were among the passengers, and I might add, scarcely fit to be repeated in a respectable paper. The accommodation for second class passengers is not of the kind which should prevail in a civilized community, and much behind the rival American lines, which I would patronize if I were going with my family to the North-West, which I hope to do before many years.

THE END.

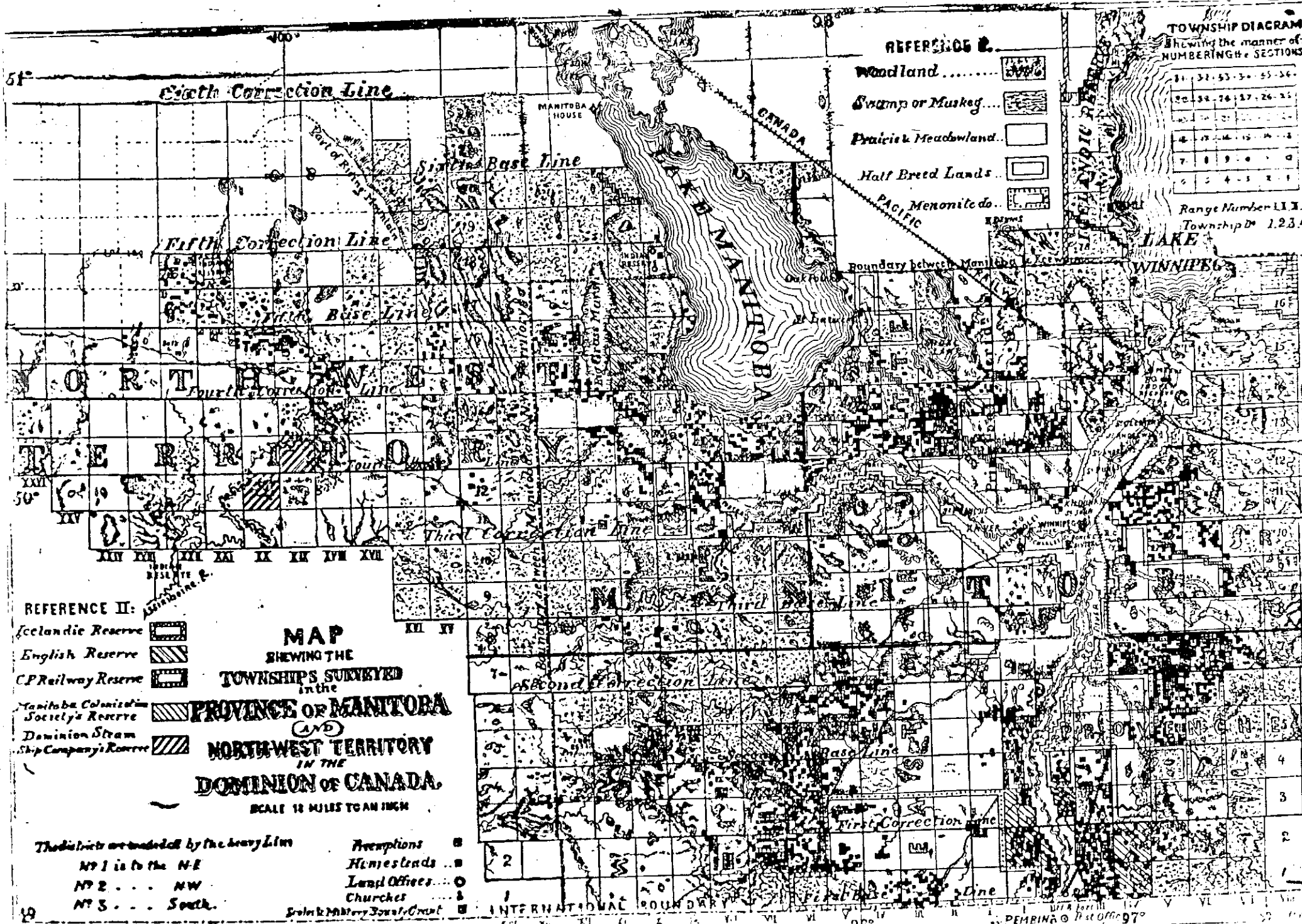






GREAT CIRCLE, OR AIR LINE DISTANCES, IN GEOGRAPHICAL MILES.

Yokohama (JAPAN) to	Port Simpson	2065
do do	Port Moody (Burrard Inlet)	4774
do do	Nan Francisco	4470
San Francisco	New York	2928
do do	Montreal	2308
Burrard Inlet	do	1998
Port Simpson	do	2194
St. Johns (Nfld)	Cape Clear	1670
do do	Tory Island	1693
Montreal	Quebec (River St. Lawrence)	120
do do	Cape Race (isd. St. Paul)	1007
do do	Halle Isle	880
Halle Isle	Tory Island	1637
Cape Race	do do	1736
do do	Cape Clear	1706
Tory Island	Liverpool	360
Cape Clear	do	319
do do	Cape Race	479
Portland	do do	767
Newton	do do	638
New York	do do	1010
do do	Liverpool (south course)	2469
Port York	do (isd Hudson Strait and Rathlin Island)	2941



**REFERENCE I.**

- Woodland .....
- Swamp or Muskeg .....
- Prairie & Meadowland .....
- Half Breed Lands .....
- Pacific Menonite do. ....

**TOWNSHIP DIAGRAM**  
Showing the manner of  
NUMBERING SECTIONS

31	32	33	34	35	36
20	21	22	23	24	25
10	11	12	13	14	15
1	2	3	4	5	6

Range Number 113  
Township No. 1234

**REFERENCE II:**

- Ice Land Reserve
- English Reserve
- C.P. Railway Reserve
- Manitoba Colonization Society's Reserve
- Dominion Stream
- Ship Company's Reserve

**MAP**  
SHOWING THE  
**TOWNSHIPS SURVEYED**  
in the  
**PROVINCE OF MANITOBA**  
(AND)  
**NORTHWEST TERRITORY**  
IN THE  
**DOMINION OF CANADA.**

SCALE 10 MILES TO AN INCH

The districts are bounded off by the heavy lines  
 No 1 is to the N-E  
 No 2 . . . NW  
 No 3 . . . South.

- Reservations
- Homesteads
- Land Offices
- Churches
- British Military Reserves

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY

PEMBINA Dist Office 97