

THE MUCH DISCUSSED QUESTION OF SETTLEMENT

In reference to the recent correspondence in The Northland Post on the question of the Settler in Northern Ontario, we have received a reply from Dr. Munro of Cobalt to "Bona Fide Settler."

This reply is of very considerable length owing to which we were unable to publish it before. As it stands now even we will be compelled, owing to pressure of space to divide the letter up into three parts and commencing this week, have pleasure in publishing the first section of the letter. As indicated at the end of the first instalment a continuation will be made next week.

Dear Sir,—There is a saying, "It takes all sorts of people to make a world," so we have another specimen under the nom-de-plume of "A Bona Fide settler of less than four years,"—a signature indicative, I take it, of his character and style. He gives his view with the assurance and arrogance of a youthful expert in farming, or as an apologist of the Government, or both,—in any case with possibly an unpaid portfolio. Nevertheless, his contribution is the above subject is very welcome and his lengthy letter deserves credit. It will excite thought. We ought to get something profitable out of a letter containing from 1,800 to 2,000 words. However, there is one serious drawback in this case, in that he is afraid or ashamed to affix his name to his views. He has evidently a purpose and probably means to stab in the dark. Your readers would doubtless appreciate the acquaintanceship of one with such charming ideas as he expresses on the sweetness of "home" in contradiction to that other condition so eloquently portrayed by him thus, "no land-

lord or bailiff to demand or distraint for rent, no fuel to pay, and every improvement they make is for themselves and every day's work is an investment of value which will increase in a like manner to a deposit in a saving bank." No doubt this comes from a person who has passed through the fire of experience — passed through the mill of bitterness of being distrained for rent and exults as were the independence of a "sweet home!" Anonymity has its merits as well as its demerits, but in this case there does not seem any real reason for concealing his personality. But, Mr. Editor, I do not wish to draw upon myself the wrath of this modern Salan, and therefore, I will try to send a soft answer to assuage his anger. In doing so I willingly embrace the opportunity to bid for his support to the cause and I confidently affirm that I can easily answer and meet the objections he has raised to the satisfaction of any ordinary, impartial, and fair-minded person, even though I may fail with him—he will not, for he may be a law unto himself. If I cannot answer even more formidable difficulties than he has raised, then my project or suggestion is not worth considering.

"None So Blind."

Apparently, your correspondent does not approve of Mr. Woods' ideas nor of mine. If we could locate him, it would possibly be found that he is either an apologist or hanger-on of the Government (or hopes to be), or, are who acts like "a dog in the manger" and not such a "bona fide" settler as he affirms. I do not believe any bonafide settler could act as he does. "There is none so blind as those who will not see."

I need not repeat what has been said in my former letters (Oct. 5 and 23) as it is a long story to go into over again. Only three days ago Sir Thomas G. Shaughnessy has directed attention of Canada to the immense importance of this subject whereby it is considered that Canada can in three years increase its population by 50 per cent! He brings prominently into the limelight what every person knows, viz., that Canada has immense potential wealth in her natural resources of land, forest, and mineral, but these must remain merely "potential" till developed, and development requires labor, and labor necessitates wages, and credit of the country must be got from outside capital. This capital must carry interest, and before capital can be obtained the credit of the country must be good and its business put on a thrifty, sound and honest basis. He also enlarges upon the historic fact that during the past century European wars have been followed by a greatly increased immigration to the North American Continent caused probably by the increased heavy taxation that resulted from the war. The present war is far greater than any or perhaps all its predecessors and it will be no exception to the usual rule. He, therefore, urges to get busy and prepare now. For the benefit of your readers (if they are interested and all should be) I may in answer say:—

A Wrong System.

1. I do not attack, nor do I hold any brief for the present Government who are not responsible for the Homestead Act. The present Act existed before any or most of them were born. But, inasmuch as the present Government or their supporters maintain that men who are possessed of "hands and shoulders" can go into the bush of the Clay Belt without a dollar, take up a homestead of

160 acres, and make good on the conditions as they exist, I say it is so untrue and deceptive in the main, that it is my opinion, the system is wrong and the practice is almost a complete failure. That, sir, I submit, is a clear issue and I challenge your correspondent to disprove it if he can. That there may be a few exceptions (which may be counted on the fingers of your two hands) is proof of the general rule. There are exceptions to every rule and proverbially 'exceptions prove the rule.' Settlement has been going on in this district for more than 30 years. What is the result? The affirmation and invective of any occult, anonymous, and self-styled "Bona Fide settlers, etc." is no proof without facts to back up his assertion. And the cowardly cheer or the compliment of the unknown man in a clump of trees when he shouts, "stay with it" will not satisfy the responsible heads of a family when the cupboard is very bare. It is easy to find fault and even to contradict—any arrogant, impudent, and inexperienced person can do that, but it is rather more mean and cowardly to do so at a distance, concealed among the trees of the forest, and without a tittle of evidence to support his opinions.

An Impossible Task.

Moreover, I think, I can call your correspondent himself to bear me witness that my contention as above expressed is correct and true. Let us see, he says, "He, the settler is his own judge, he knows what he has undertaken and he cannot do much if he has no money." Just so, with his own words (those nine words I have underlined) I completely prove my case, namely, that it is impossible to go into the bush without a dollar and make good, even if you have "hands and shoulders" and all that these words stand for! But passing from that let

us examine the phraseology. "He is his own judge," what a curious and ridiculous expression. The settler is not judging himself, he was selecting only a piece of ground which he thought might be adopted or made suitable for tillage. In arriving at this decision he might be right or wrong in his judgment. He might be mistaken. There are well-known sources of error. The proof of the quality of the pudding is in the eating of it. "He knows what he has undertaken"—I do not think settlers always or even frequently do know. He may do so, but very, very, rarely. Further, your correspondent repeats that "experience and capital" are necessary. On this account we have so many failures and many leave their holdings.

The Government induce people to take up land—a homestead of 160 acres—at a cost of 50 cents an acre which it is believed is the price, but which I maintain is not the real or actual price. The price is 50 cents an acre with conditions, and before a settler can get the land into a suitable state for tillage these "conditions" will mean on an average cost of \$45 an acre—not 50 cents. The people are being fooled and deceived intentionally or unintentionally. The land cannot be cleared without money and hard-work, but if a man had a limited amount of land cleared by which he could put it directly to use and produce enough for the household requirements for the year (which I think he could do with 10 acres—instead of 20 as the Nugget advocated) to enable him, by degrees, to clear the remaining 150 acres, when, the peace of praise and triumph, as typhiled by your correspondent could well be raised, but not till then, unless he has money behind him. The Homestead Act has been tried in this North Country for more than 30 years, the present Government has amended the Act to this extent that now a settler becomes the owner of all that is above and below he surface (a very important amendment), but it is not enough and practically settlement has not prospered. That the Act has been amended ought to prove to your correspondent that it was "defective." But I maintain it is practically obsolete and that it should be substituted by a new and up-to-date Act. If not, emigrants will go elsewhere, rather than attempt the impossible conditions in the Clay Belt of Northern Ontario. Compare are decade of colonization in Argentina with three decades in the Clay Belt and the disparity between the two becomes apparent and striking.

(To be Continued next week)