

## YOUNG MAN, GO WEST.

NOT far from the Missouri River, in the northwestern corner of Iowa, is a colony of Englishmen who have undertaken, with moderate capital and infinite pluck, to build up their fortunes in this country. Their enterprise is new—just old enough, however, to furnish satisfactory evidence that agriculture is, when properly undertaken, one of the most profitable industries in this country. Their number at present is about three hundred, and many additional members are expected this spring.

This colony, often called the Close Colony, owes its origin to three enterprising brothers, respectively James, William, and Fred Close. One of these came out here in 1876 to row in the Cambridge boat crew at the Centennial Regatta. Some of the crew fell sick, however, and they were forced to leave Philadelphia and retire to Cape May to recuperate. There the young Englishman met his destiny, and closed his boating career by an engagement to marry. About this time the young lady's father advised young Close to take a trip West before returning to England, assuring him that if he should do so, he would be satisfied that this country offered stronger inducements to a young man than any across the water. Accordingly, he went West, and made up his mind to go into farming. He immediately drew his two brothers into the enterprise, and together they began on a large scale. At the same time they took steps to induce their friends in England to join them. Though the enterprise is not three years old, they control at present some two hundred thousand acres of land.

The young men who make up this community are, for the most part, graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. On one farm I met two tall and handsome young farmers whose uncle had been a distinguished member of Parliament. The last time I had seen them was in a London drawing-room. This time they tramped me through the mud and manure of the barn-yard to show me some newly bought stock. They were boarding with a Dutch farmer at three dollars per week in order to learn practical farming. Both were thoroughly contented, and looking forward to the future with pleasure.

Another young farmer whom I noticed on horseback with top-boots, flannel shirt,

sombrero, and belt-knife, was pointed out to me as the grandson of the author of *Paley's Theology*. He was attending a cattle auction at Lemars, Iowa.

There, too, was a son of Thomas Bayley Potter, the distinguished honorary secretary of the Cobden Club, and M.P. for Rochdale, who had come out only to take a look at the place, but who so fell in love with the life that he decided to invest. One had been an admiral in the royal navy, another had been connected with a Shanghai bank. There was a brother to Lord Ducie, not to speak of future baronets, viscounts, and honorables. These young men had all been attracted here by their love of a free, active life, and the knowledge that they would enter a society congenial to their tastes and early associations.

Although differing widely from "Tom" Hughes's Tennessee colony, this Iowa community has accomplished (without any special agreement between the members) an undertaking which combines the profits of farming with the out-door sports so dear to an Englishman.

They have the very best ground for fox-hunting in the world—a rolling prairie with a creek here and there. Every colonist makes it his chief care, after buying his farm, to breed a good hunter for the steeple-chases. They have regular meets for fox or "paper" hunts, as the case may be. They last year opened a racing track, and wound up the races with a grand ball. The event was a grand success, and partners were brought even from St. Paul, 270 miles to the north, to grace the occasion.

Their relations with the Close Brothers are very simple, and entirely of a business nature. After a desire has been expressed to join the colony, and the firm have decided that they are worthy to be admitted, they are required to pay \$250 as a species of initiation fee. This is about five per cent. on the first investment, and is a commission charged to each new colonist. In return, they contract for putting up houses, building wells, purchasing land and implements, etc., and furnishing advice whenever called upon. It is something in the nature of a lawyer's fee for future consultations. The tax is saved over and over again in the security the stranger obtains against all manner of exorbitant charges. Sharp as down-Easters are reputed to be, they are mere

beginners compared to a Western land agent.

Thus we have an example of co-operation on a large scale that works perfectly, and has grown up from the conditions of the colony without any previous theorizing on the subject. The head of the colony buys for all at wholesale with a large discount. He sells at retail without charging the colonists anything but a nominal commission for his service. Herein lies one secret of the power and prosperity of this colony. They can combine for purchase; they can combine for contracts in working their estates on a large scale; they can combine for special rates in the shipment of their produce to Chicago, St. Paul, or St. Louis. The single colonist has not these advantages so pronounced, and above all does not enjoy the social advantage of being among people of his own tastes and home associations.

Now, then, for the dollars and cents of the matter. First locate the place on the map, to see what facilities Lemars and the northwestern section of Iowa have as a railroad centre. Note the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad to St. Paul; note the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, the Chicago and Northwestern, and the Illinois Central competing for the traffic to Chicago; note the convenience to the Missouri and St. Louis; note that it is on the edge of the cattle country on the west, and the grain on the east, lying on the line of thoroughfare between the Atlantic and Pacific. The soil is rich and deep, and there are no stones or tree stumps. You can run your furrow from the Missouri to the Mississippi if you choose, and find few impediments, except a house, and now and then a stream. Then take into account that the population of the vicinity is thrifty and peaceable, the labor market reasonable, and the ordinary conveniences of life in every store.

Here is a practical example of what can be done to-day in this neighborhood. I shall take a high figure for the price of land, and average figures for yield per acre:

*Permanent Expenditure for Farm of 160 Acres, supposed to be started in 1880.*

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| New land, 160 acres, at \$5 per acre..... | \$800 |
| House, 16 by 22, complete .....           | 300   |
| Stabling, yards, and well .....           | 150   |
| Farm implements:                          |       |
| Two breaking ploughs.....                 | \$35  |
| Two stirring ploughs.....                 | 25    |
| Two corn cultivators .....                | 60    |

|                                |     |               |
|--------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Two harrows.....               | 20  |               |
| Mower and reaper .....         | 100 |               |
| Other implements .....         | 85  | 325           |
| Stove and other furniture..... | 100 |               |
| Six good farm-horses.....      | 600 |               |
| Two wagons and harnesses.....  | 200 |               |
|                                |     | <u>\$2475</u> |

This, then, is the first cost of equipping 160 acres of excellent prairie land, about five miles at the most from the railroad. I have seen just such a farm, and can vouch for the figures. The house that is put up for \$300 is a small frame one, with two rooms on the ground-floor, and two low-ceiling rooms up stairs. It is painted, and has, of course, windows and a chimney. I have made no charge for breaking land, because a man can break 140 acres for himself between May and July, and no doubt will do so.

Now, then, for the first year's expenses and returns:

*Expenditure.*

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Seed for 40 acres put in flax.....                  | \$60 00         |
| Seed for 20 acres put in corn .....                 | 2 50            |
| Labor and expense for sowing and reaping above..... | 100 00          |
| Taxes on 160 acres .....                            | 18 00           |
|   | <u>\$180 50</u> |

*Returns.*

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 40 acres flax, yielding 7 bushels per acre, at \$1 per bushel ..... | \$280 00        |
| 20 acres corn, yielding 35 bushels, at 18 cents per bushel.....     | 126 00          |
| Returns in 1880.....  | <u>\$406 00</u> |
| Expenditure in 1880.....  | 180 50          |
|   | <u>\$225 50</u> |

Corn has yielded more than 100 bushels to the acre on older ground, and averages frequently sixty bushels to the acre. Flax has yielded as much as thirteen bushels to the acre. It is an exhausting crop, as a rule, but does no harm to the soil when sown on new breaking. But to continue:

*Second Year (say 1881)—Expenditure.*

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 174 bushels seed, for 100 acres wheat, at 85 cents per bushel..... | \$147 90        |
| Seed for 20 acres corn.....  | 2 50            |
| 50 bushels seed for 20 acres oats, at 25 cents per bushel.....     | 12 50           |
| Labor .....  | 175 00          |
| Harvesting and threshing expenses.....                             | 170 00          |
| Taxes.....   | 18 00           |
|  | <u>\$525 90</u> |

*Returns.*

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| 100 acres wheat, yielding 17 bushels per acre, at 85 cents per bushel..... | \$1445 00        |
| 20 acres corn, yielding 60 bushels per acre, at 20 cents per bushel.....   | 240 00           |
| 20 acres oats, yielding 40 bushels per acre, at 25 cents per bushel.....   | 200 00           |
|  | <u>\$1885 00</u> |

At the end of the second year, the account stands thus:

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Returns .....                                       | \$1885 00        |
| Expenditure (without counting cost of living) ..... | 525 90           |
|   | <u>\$1359 10</u> |

—equivalent to 54 per cent. on the capital invested.

Now, then, you can go on putting in your wheat for the next year, and calculate your profits in the same way to five or ten years ahead. You must not be misled, however, by my figures, into supposing that any one can guarantee a big crop. I have taken average figures, neither very high nor very low, for yield and price. The profits, however, are so large, on an average crop, that a man can afford to suffer a bad harvest every ten years without feeling his loss very much. Then, again, crop or no crop, the value of his land is steadily increasing, so that in three years he may make enough from the sale of it to move somewhere else to advantage.

I have shown, in a rough way, the profit arising from farming in grain. The element of risk attending farming can be largely diminished by undertaking stock-raising at the same time. This is perhaps the most profitable business in the West today, and bids fair to become more so in the immediate future. There are two principal ways of making money in stock. The first is by raising the animal on your own account, and shipping it East; the other is by taking full-grown cattle from the plains, and fattening them for the market by contract. Both these methods are profitable, according to the surroundings.

The favorable conditions for stock-raising are as follows. The prairie grass is excellent in quality, being of the blue-joint species, and very abundant. I have driven through it when it has been higher than the heads of those sitting upon the seats of the wagon. It is cut, of course, when it is comparatively short, and you can have it stacked at one dollar a ton for winter use. There is plenty of free range for cattle all summer. There are no fences, and a boy with a pony and dogs can take care of 500 or 600 head, or 1500 sheep, for five dollars a month. There is absolutely no disease known among the herds of that region, as was well exhibited during the last year, when particular questioning upon that subject took place

all over the State. The estimate I give is based on actual experience, and includes all charges, such as rent for the use of farm, cost of keep and labor, salt, medicine, and interest at six per cent. on capital expended. I also make allowance for ordinary mortality. The profits deduced, therefore, are net.

*Estimate of Expenses.*

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 50 heifers, at \$18 75, bought in spring..                              | \$937 50         |
| 1 bull .....  | 105 00           |
| First year's expenses:  |                  |
| Keep of 51 head, at \$3 93 per head..                                   | 200 43           |
| Keep of 40 calves, at \$2 37 per head.                                  | 94 80            |
| Second year's expenses:   |                  |
| Keep of 51 head, at \$3 93 per head..                                   | 200 43           |
| Keep of 40 yearlings, at \$3 93 per head.                               | 157 20           |
| Keep of 40 calves, at \$2 37 per head.                                  | 94 80            |
| Third year's expenses:  |                  |
| Keep of 71 head, at \$3 93 per head..                                   | 279 03           |
| Keep of 20 two-year-old steers, at \$10 41 per head, fattened on grain. | 208 20           |
| Keep of 40 yearlings, at \$3 93 per head.                               | 157 20           |
| Keep of 70 calves, at \$2 37 per head.                                  | 166 25           |
|   | <u>\$2600 84</u> |

*Value of Stock on First Day of Fourth Year.*

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 70 cows, at \$26 .....  | \$1820 00        |
| 20 three-year-old steers, at \$62 50, fattened for market ..... | 1250 00          |
| 20 two-year-old steers, at \$22 50 .....                        | 450 00           |
| 20 heifers, at \$18 75 .....                                    | 375 00           |
| 70 yearlings, at \$12 50 .....                                  | 875 00           |
| 70 calves, at \$2 50 .....                                      | 175 00           |
| 1 bull .....  | 75 00            |
| Total value of stock .....                                      | <u>\$5020 00</u> |
| Expenses .....  | 2600 84          |
|   | <u>\$2419 16</u> |

This estimate takes no account of dairy produce, which of course forms an important factor in the problem. In the same way, while speaking of raising grain, I took no account of the enhanced value of land arising from cultivation and increasing immigration. The profits are so large that a large margin may be set aside for contingencies without materially affecting the result.

The freedom to pasture cattle on excellent grazing land, together with an accessible market, are the main reasons why at present stock-farming is particularly profitable. The first of these conditions is precarious, and it is evident that in ten years there will not be much good free range left east of the Missouri River. When immigration to that extent shall have shut him off from free pasturage, the stock man can either sell his farm at probably four times its present value, and move to Dakota or Montana, or else

turn his attention to fattening stock on grain for other parties, as I have already suggested.

For instance, as a practical case, there is a cattle man of Council Bluffs who is said to own 100,000 head of cattle in Idaho. He has a range of sixty square miles of land not worth one cent to the acre for agriculture, yet affording excellent pasture for cattle. He has ten men employed at wages varying from twenty-four dollars to forty dollars per month to look after the stock. These men require 200 ponies to handle the cattle. An overseer is hired at \$1200 a year. During the winter, however, four men can do all the work required, which is mainly breaking the ice in the streams that the cattle may have water. Streams serve as the great checks upon the cattle straying away, for they never will go far from water. In the spring of the year the cattle men of the plains have a grand "round up" (as it is called), the stock is picked out by means of the brand, and those cattle that are meant for the Eastern market are started for Omaha. They travel about ten miles a day, and generally take the whole season in the journey from the winter ground to the Missouri bottom. At Omaha the cattle are put on the train and shipped nominally to Chicago, but really to different points along the road, to be handed over to farmers for fattening. Mr. Stewart delivered over 1900 head to farmers last fall, and of these only eight were lost during the winter. The parties who receive the cattle agree to fatten them at the rate of five cents for every extra pound of weight they add to the animal. This seems small at first sight, but where cattle put on 250 extra pounds during a winter, and where two hogs are fed from the refuse of each ox, the farmer finds that the result to him is equivalent to selling his corn at 100 per cent. profit. The large cattle raisers, of course, have their inspectors, who travel from farm to farm to look after their property, and gather it together in the spring for shipment to Chicago, where they are either slaughtered or shipped to Europe. The cattle men have a great advantage over mere farmers, in that they are to a great extent independent of railways. If they are badly treated by one corporation, they have a simple remedy in driving their stock a few miles to the next road. The consequence is that east of Omaha rates for cat-

tle are as favorable as could be desired, while west of this point, where one line has a monopoly of the business, the charges are exorbitant. From Wyoming to Council Bluffs a car-load of twenty head of cattle is charged \$116. Consequently, cattle men will march their stock two thousand miles to Council Bluffs, and ship them from that point. They are allowed stop-over tickets, which give them the privilege of turning their stock out at any place for the winter, and then sending them on in the spring to market.

This northwestern section of Iowa is a good one on which to make studies in sheep-raising. There is a good run for sheep along the bluffs near the larger streams and rivers. Anybody who has seen the English "downs" will be reminded of them when he approaches the fine breezy bluffs of the Big Sioux River. I take some carefully prepared figures furnished by one of several Holstein farmers who have a settlement in this neighborhood. They came over here in 1874, most of them with very little ready money, but valuable experience as shepherds at home. They are now all well-to-do farmers. Their houses are far superior to those commonly seen on the prairies. They show their ancestry in the taste for flowers, and the care with which they breed their stock. The horses I saw in use among them were the best animals I have seen in this country for heavy work. I am told that they will not part with their stock at any price to strangers, and nobody who appreciates their circumstances will wonder at it. Here, then, is a

*Practical Estimate for Sheep-Farming.*

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1875, September:                         |        |
| Cost of 500 ewes at \$4 25 each.....     | \$2125 |
| 15 rams at \$20.....                     | 300    |
| Common prairie sheds for 1000 sheep..... | 225    |
| Grain and feed for winter.....           | 300    |
| Herding and attendance per annum.....    | 250    |
| Salt, medicine, etc.....                 | 50     |
|  | \$3250 |
| 1876, September:                         |        |
| Cost of grain and feed for winter....    | \$500  |
| Herding and attendance.....              | 250    |
| Salt, medicine, etc.....                 | 50     |
|  | 800    |
| 1877:                                    |        |
| Cost of grain and feed for winter....    | \$700  |
| Herding and attendance.....              | 250    |
| Salt, medicine, etc.....                 | 50     |
|  | 1000   |
| 1878:                                    |        |
| Cost of grain and feed for winter....    | \$700  |
| Attendance and herding.....              | 250    |
| Medicine, salt, etc.....                 | 50     |
|  | 1000   |
|  | \$6050 |

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Adding now the annual interest:        |        |
| 1875—\$3250 at 6 per cent.....         | \$195  |
| 1876—\$4050 " " .....                  | 243    |
| 1877—\$5050 " " .....                  | 303    |
| 1878—\$6050 " " .....                  | 363    |
| Total cost of investment and keep..... | \$7154 |

*Returns.*

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| May, 1876, sold 3348 pounds of wool at 20 cents per pound, clip of 515 sheep.  | \$669 60           |
| May, 1877, sold 6696 pounds of wool at 20 cents per pound, clip of 1030 sheep. | 1,339 20           |
| May, 1878, sold 6696 pounds of wool at 20 cents per pound, clip of 1030 sheep. | 1,339 20           |
| March, 1878, sold 515 fat sheep at \$8 ..                                      | 4,120 00           |
| May, 1879, sold 6696 pounds of wool at 20 cents per pound, clip of 1030 sheep. | 1,339 20           |
| March, 1879, sold 515 fat sheep at \$8 ..                                      | 4,120 00           |
|  | <u>\$12,927 20</u> |

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| May, 1879, on hand, 500 ewes with lambs, at \$4 ..... | \$2000 00       |
| May, 1879, on hand, 15 rams at \$20 .....             | 300 00          |
| May, 1879, on hand, 515 yearlings, at \$1 75 .....    | 901 25          |
|   | <u>3,201 25</u> |

|                                      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Add for annual interest account:     |                 |
| 1876—\$669 60 at 6 per cent.         | \$40 18         |
| 1877—\$2008 80 at 6 per cent. ....   | 120 53          |
| 1878—\$7468 00 at 6 per cent. ....   | 448 08          |
| 1879—\$12,927 00 at 6 per cent. .... | 775 62          |
|                                      | <u>1,384 41</u> |

|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Total returns.....             | \$17,512 86        |
| Total outlay.....              | 7,154 00           |
| Net profit in four years ..... | <u>\$10,358 86</u> |

This gives an idea of how profitable sheep-raising has been made to those who understand their business. While such large profits will not fall to the share of every tyro who experiments in shepherdizing, yet even to the most ignorant there will probably result a very much larger return for his money in this business than in any other for which he is not especially fitted.

As to wintering stock, this is a matter that costs very little. My estimate for sheds is small, for the reason that what out West is called a barn is merely a timber skeleton, over which is piled either the straw from the threshing machine or hay cut at one dollar a ton. Many farmers let their cattle go without winter shelter if they have any timber on the place, in which case the cattle take the lee side as a protection against the wind, and come out in the spring in good condition.

The last item in our money calculation is the ubiquitous hog. It would seem as though there were enough hogs in any one State out West to supply the world

with pork, and yet the hog-packing goes on, with no diminution in the demand, in spite of the tremendous supply. In the four months of the season of 1874-75, our packing houses disposed of five and a half million hogs. Last year they packed nearly seven million in the same time. Of these, Chicago alone appropriated two and a half million in the season of 1879-80. But to return to the hog in his natural condition, and as a subject for the capitalist.

Here is a carefully prepared estimate of what may be done with this invaluable adjunct of every farm. The profits are very great; but hogs are sometimes liable to an epidemic called lung disease, or hog cholera. Accordingly I have only allowed four pigs to each sow. These animals cost scarcely anything for keep. They fatten rapidly from the leavings about the barn-yard and the refuse of cattle. Two hogs can be counted to each head of cattle. I take a low figure in my estimate, including every expense, and allowing for the average mortality (including hog cholera):

*Hog-Raising.*

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 50 sows, averaging 75 pounds each, 25 young pigs, at three cents per pound... | \$175 77        |
| First year's expense:   |                 |
| Cost of grain, and milk from cows, for keeping 75 head.....                   | 100 20          |
| Second year's expense:  |                 |
| Cost of keep for above, with increase of 200 pigs .....                       | 183 33          |
| Third year's expense:   |                 |
| 75 old hogs, fattened from grain fed to cattle, and keep of 350 pigs .....    | 235 41          |
|   | <u>\$694 71</u> |

*Valuation, Third Year.*

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 75 old hogs, fattened for market, weighing 300 pounds each, at four cents per pound ..... | \$937 50        |
| 350 pigs, valued at.....  | 729 16          |
| Total return.....   | \$1666 66       |
| Total outlay.....   | 694 71          |
|   | <u>\$971 95</u> |

I have made these estimates apply to Northwestern Iowa. They are equally true for Southwestern Minnesota. The advantage which the section I have alluded to possesses is largely due to the fact that it is not dependent upon one railway system alone for shipment. This railroad question is so important a one out West that any one intending to buy land should carefully study the advantages of the place in connection with railroad facilities before even looking at the soil.