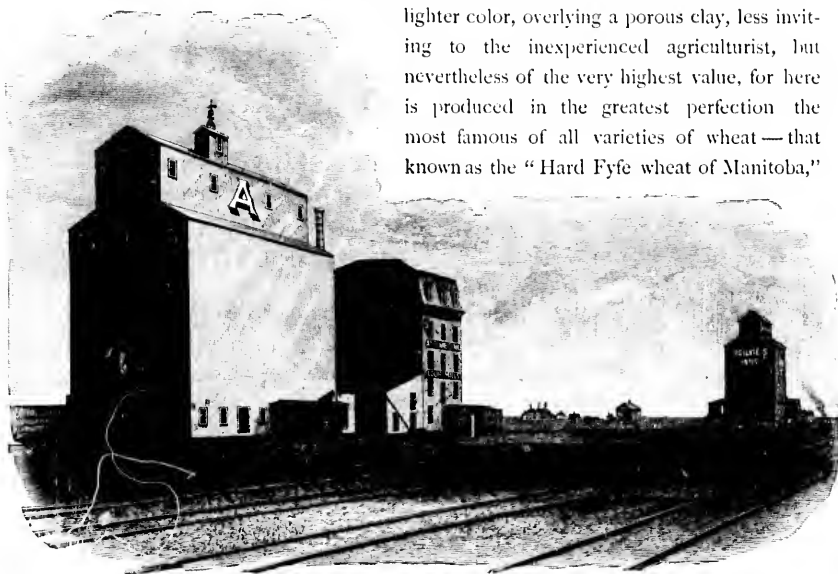


first of the great prairie *steppes*, that rise one after the other at long intervals to the Rocky Mountains; and now we are on the real prairie, not the monotonous, uninteresting plain your imagination has pictured, but a great billowy ocean of grass and flowers, now swelling into low hills, again dropping into broad basins with gleaming ponds, and broken here and there by valleys and by irregular lines of trees marking the water-courses. The horizon only limits the view; and, as far as the eye can reach, the prairie is dotted with newly made farms, with great black squares where the sod has just been turned by the plough, and with herds of cattle. The short, sweet grass, studded with brilliant flowers, covers the land as with a carpet, ever changing in color as the flowers of the different seasons and places give to it their predominating hue.

The deep black soil of the valley we left in the morning has given place to a soil of lighter color, overlying a porous clay, less inviting to the inexperienced agriculturist, but nevertheless of the very highest value, for here is produced in the greatest perfection the most famous of all varieties of wheat—that known as the “Hard Fye wheat of Manitoba,”



GRAIN ELEVATORS AND FLOUR MILL, PORTAGE-LA-PRAIRIE, MANITOBA.

—and oats as well, and rye, barley, and flax, and gigantic potatoes, and almost everything that can be grown in a temperate climate. All these flourish here without appreciable drain upon the soil. Once here, the British farmer soon forgets all about fertilizers. His children may have to look to such things, but he will not.

We pass station after station, nearly all alike, except as to the size of the villages surrounding them, some of which are of considerable importance. The railway buildings at these stations are uniform, and consist of an attractive station-house for passengers and goods, a great round water-tank, cottages for the section-men, and the never-ending grain elevators—tall, solid structures, always telling the same story. Every minute or two we see coveys of “prairie chickens” rising from the grass, startled by the passing train.