

Saskatchewan Valley

Its Soil.

Northern Alberta, which contains the most northerly settlements in the North-West, has practically no danger of grasshoppers, no danger of drouth, and little danger from frost, while the other wheat pests prevalent in more southern latitudes are unknown. Owing to the greater moisture in this part of the country, there is a better growth of richer grass than elsewhere in the Territories, therefore cattle can be raised more easily, cheaply, and of better quality than further south.

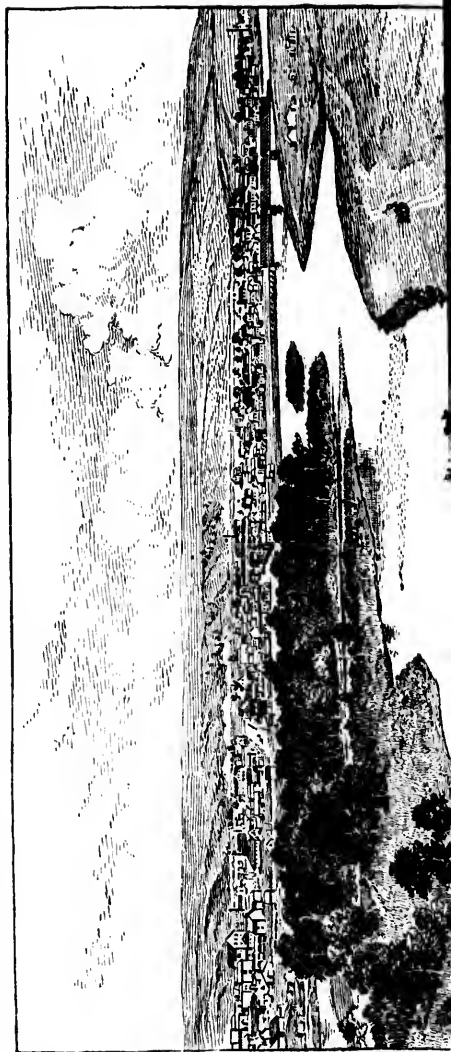
The surface of the country is gently undulating, and through the centre of the district the Saskatchewan River flows in a bed 200 feet below the level. On top is a layer of from one to three feet of black vegetable mould, with little or no mixture of sand or gravel, bearing a growth of wild vegetation of a luxuriance seen in no other part of the Territories, and indeed seldom seen anywhere outside of the tropics. It is peculiar to this section of the country that the black mould is deeper on its knolls and ridges than in the hollows. With a soil of such depth and fertility, it is not wonderful that in ordinarily good seasons a yield of oats of 100 to 114 weighed bushels to the acre has not been uncommon, and that less than 60 bushels is considered a poor crop; that

Barley will yield 60 bushels and wheat over 40.

and that potatoes of from three to four pounds weight are not a rarity. Of course, these yields have not been attained every year nor in any year by every farmer, but they have been attained without extraordinary exertions, and prove that the capacity is in the soil if the tillage is given to bring it out. Underneath the mould lies whitish marly clay of a depth of about twelve feet. This clay, unlike the subsoil of Ontario, contains the elements of fertility, and a mixture of it with the black loam adds to the productiveness of the latter in the case of wheat. Such a soil is not only exceptionally fertile to commence with, but has practically an inexhaustible fertility. This is not to say that the land is not the better of good tillage and manure as well; but it is to say that instead of there being a continued battle, as even in the best parts of England or Ontario, to keep up the fertility of the soil, necessitating the bringing in of manure from the outside, this land can be kept at the highest pitch of fertility for ever, merely by good cultivation and returning to it the refuse of what is taken from it. The difference that the staying powers of the fertility of the soil makes to the farmer cannot be over-estimated.

It is the difference between wealth and poverty, between a gold mine and one of iron pyrites, between a profitable and an unprofitable occupation. This is a kind of land that the district has to offer to settlers to a degree that no other part of the Territories has, where a man may take up a farm and be satisfied that his children's children will find it as fertile as he did, where a man having once driven his stakes need never require to pull them up.

Alberta.



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