

In this same section is found coal, sulphur, copper, asbestos and other valuable minerals. A letter just issued from that quarter, dated January 1st, says: "We have abundance of milk and cream, two of our cows having already calved, and some of our hens, of which we have thirty, have begun to lay already and give us from six to eight eggs daily. We have fresh ducks and geese, deer meat, moose meat, fresh tongue, beet, also delicious whitefish and trout. Not a bad bill of fare if we add to it the wild fruits with which the region abounds, and the vegetables which cultivation produces. Amongst the wild fruits that I know of are raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, gooseberry, currants, salmon berry, etc., and rhubarb, turnips, carrots and cabbages grow luxuriantly. At the H. B. Co.'s post here and at Churchill, which is on nearly the same parallel, they raise cattle in sufficient numbers to supply them with beef, butter and milk. I do not know if any attempt has yet been made to raise wheat at Athabasca, but the Peace River is close by and nearly in the same parallel, and we all know that the finest wheat grown on the continent comes from the valley of Peace River, a river whose outlet is at the Athabasca Lake. That this region with its vast wealth will much longer remain unnoticed and unknown is not to be dreamed of." The Athabasca River region is also similarly described in various reports made by Professors Macoun and Bell of the geological survey as well as by the explorers for the C. P. Railway, when the northern line was proposed. By the Athabasca River access can be had as well to the great lake of the same name, which extends its waters in an easterly direction for over two hundred miles, with a width of from fifteen to thirty, and while its fisheries are likely to prove of great value, its northern shores are said to be like those of Lake Huron, rich in copper and other metals; besides all this its outlet, the Slave River, will afford by its navigation easy access to the mighty Mackenzie River, which flows from the Great Slave Lake to the Arctic sea, traversing an immense district suitable for agriculture, grazing and lumbering, for this vast country is not Arctic in its character, but is a region where the cereals, wheat, oats, rye, etc., come to their greatest perfection, in proof of which we have only to note that wheat grown at Fort Laird, on the river of the Mountains some hundreds of miles north of Dunvegan, has been pronounced the finest grown in America, and all that is needed is human enterprise to demand of the virgin soil a surrender of its latent wealth to ensure a favorable answer and an ample reward. The basin of the Mackenzie, which includes in it the valleys of the Athabasca, Peace and many other large rivers, has an area of 550,000 square miles, and of this vast extent fully 9-10 is suitable for the occupation of civilized man, the climate being similar to that of Eastern Ontario. Dr. King, naturalist to the expedition in search of Sir John Franklin, stated to the committee of the British House of Commons, "Speaking of the very vast region of which the Athabasca is the southern boundary, I believe the temperature to be about the same as Montreal in Canada." And in 1874 Mr. Horetsky, in the C.P.R. exploration reports, says: "The climate of this region and of the Peace River valley generally is somewhat similar to that of Red River, but the extremes of heat and cold are not so great, and the climate is dry and salubrious, and is tempered by the westerly winds which here prevail and are mild. This is the region which extends, bound on the west by the Rocky Mountains, far to the north where the Great Slave Lake expands its lonely waters, swarming with fish, and whose shores are known to be rich in flowing wells of petroleum and large deposits of excellent salt, while the vast Mackenzie River, a second St. Lawrence, flows north some 1,200 miles to where it debouches into the Arctic Ocean, and makes easy of access what is said to be the best whale fishing ground of that far off region. I have, however, said enough to show that without going so far north there is in the valley of the river and Lake Athabasca ample attraction to tempt the agriculturist, the capitalist and the miner, and only the construction of a railway is required to develop the vast wealth now lying dormant and useless to mankind, so will proceed westward from the crossing of the Athabasca over a slightly more elevated country, eminently adapted for grazing, when the Lesser Slave Lake is reached. This fine sheet of water, about 75 miles long and 6 or 7 wide, is lined for miles, specially on its southern shores, with immense fields of blue joint grass, which, we are told, is frequently higher than a man's head, and of which quantities are cut to serve as fodder for the cattle kept at the H.B. Co.'s post at the western end of the lake. Passing on from this lake a fertile prairie is followed either through the valley of the Heart or Little Smoky River, till the Great Peace River is reached. This grand stream rises on the west side of the Rocky Mountains and flows across them, and flowing northwards, finally enters the Slave River close to Lake Athabasca. This river, whose great valley is often called the "Garden of the North," comprising, as Professor Macoun estimated in 1880, about 16,352,000 square acres of good land, requires a more extended notice, as it is valuable not only for its vast rich prairies, its wide, deep navigable stream, which will carry steamers 900