

"picturesque lakes and aspen groves, possessing land of the best quality and covered with most luxuriant herbage. From a small hill I counted forty-seven lakes, and so rich and abundant is the vegetation that the horses remain in the open glades all winter, and always find plenty of forage to keep them in good condition."

A fine country, dotted with innumerable lakes, annually replenished by summer rains, extends from Touchwood Hills due East to Riding Mountains, a distance of upwards of two hundred miles. North of the Touchwood Hills, the fertile plateau, with an increasing proportion of forest in its northern and western parts, extends from the Duck Mountains westward to the Saskatchewan, two hundred and twenty miles; and beyond, up to the valley of the North Branch, four hundred miles further.

The north and south branches of the River Saskatchewan have their sources in the Rocky Mountains, and at a distance of five hundred and fifty miles eastward they meet at what is called "the Forks." The North Branch diverges, starting from the base of the Rocky Mountains, North-eastward, and the South Branch, or Bow River, South-eastward, till at two hundred and fifty miles due eastward, they attain a distance of about three hundred miles from each other.

The total length of the Saskatchewan, taking the North Branch from the Rocky Mountains to Lake Winnipeg, is a thousand and fifty-four and-a-half miles. From "the Forks," where the two branches meet, the country to the South-eastward is mixed woodland and prairie, the soil with slight exceptions being a rich black mould. On the slopes of the valleys, the grass is long and luxuriant, affording fine pasturage, and the general aspect of the country is gently undulating and highly favourable for agriculture, the soil being deep and uniformly rich, rivalling the low prairies of Red River and Assiniboine.

This tract of country extends South-easterly through the wooded region of Root River to the Assiniboine, opposite the mouth of the Souris, a distance of three hundred and twenty miles, of fertile prairie, interspersed with woodlands. The Root River rises about sixty miles South-west from "the Forks," and runs parallel with the Saskatchewan, about thirty to forty miles South, a distance of over two hundred miles.