

across the surface of the plains, which are generally from a hundred to three hundred feet in depth, and a mile to two miles or more in width. All the trails used as regular means of communication make for recognized crossing-places on these rivers, where the approaches are favourable, and where very generally the river may be forded at low water, though ferries of some kind have usually of late years been established for use at other seasons.

As above indicated, almost all the larger river-valleys hold more or less timber; and in the northern part of the region this is not confined to the bottom-land, groves and thickets spreading also into the lateral valleys ("coulées") and broken ground which is very generally to be found in the vicinity of these great river troughs. Should any serious opposition be offered to the expeditions now on their way to quell the present unfortunate disturbances, it will in all probability be at one or other of the "crossings" which naturally lend themselves to defence. The rivers, as might be expected from the considerable general inclination of the surface, are usually rapid and shallow, with numerous gravel-bars, and reefs of boulders, at low water. They are often, moreover, extremely tortuous; and in consequence of these peculiarities, and the considerable portion of each year during which they are icebound, they are not extensively utilized as means of communication; and trains of waggons or Red River carts are still generally employed in travelling, or in the transport of supplies and goods at a distance from the railways. The Hudson Bay Company has, however, for a number of years, used a couple of small stern-wheel steamers between the Grand Rapids, near Lake Winnipeg, and Edmonton, far up on the North Saskatchewan. Two or more steamers of the same class have quite lately

been placed on the South Saskatchewan; and it is proposed to employ these in the present emergency in carrying supplies from Medicine Hat, where this river is crossed by the Canadian Pacific Railway, to the vicinity of Prince Albert.

This portion of the interior of the Continent was reached in the days of the fur companies, either by the canoe route from Lake Superior, or by ascending the Nelson River from York Factory on Hudson Bay; and it was by the first-mentioned that Sir Garnett Wolseley, with his little force, penetrated to the valley of the Red River in 1870. When St. Paul had become a commercial centre, the Hudson Bay Company began to bring the greater part of its goods from the south; while in later years the police-posts, settlements, and cattle-ranches established in the Far West were supplied from Fort Benton, on the Missouri. The Canadian Pacific Railway, pushed with unexampled rapidity from Winnipeg across the plains, and completed to the summit of the Rocky Mountains about eighteen months ago, has, however, completely changed the old lines of travel. The time-honoured trail from the Red River by Forts Carleton and Pitt to Edmonton—a journey of nearly nine hundred miles, requiring, with loaded carts or waggons, under the most favourable circumstances, nearly forty days—need no longer be followed. The points above mentioned, with other isolated little settlements of more recent date along the North Saskatchewan, are now reached by new trails from the nearest stations to the south on the railway; and a system of telegraph lines, constructed and operated by the Government, unites the more important of them. After leaving the railway, however, the distances to be traversed in the old-fashioned way, before the more remote settlements are reached, are