

The great natural features of this magnificent territory are often of surpassing beauty, and sometimes of grand sublimity. The prairies spreading like a shoreless ocean, and starred with vari-coloured flowers—flashing dew-crowned in the rosy light of dawn, sleeping beneath the fervid blaze of noon, or crimson-dyed in the ruddy glow of sunset—are exquisitely beautiful. At night, when the rolling waves of grass gleam in the pallid moonlight, like foam crests on the sea, or when the far horizon flares with lurid flames, and dun-rolling smoke-clouds mount the sky, they become sublime. So pure and dry and bracing is the atmosphere, that the range of vision is vastly increased, all the senses seem exalted, and new life is poured through every vein. For eight hundred miles, from Red River to the Rocky Mountains, stretches this vast expanse—the celebrated Fertile Belt of the North-West—as rich a soil as any on the earth; and through it rolls the mighty flood of the Saskatchewan to the inland sea of Winnipeg.

Eastward of this prairie region stretches for four hundred miles a rough, broken country, dotted with lakes, and intersected by narrow streams, which are often fretted into foaming cascades, and clothed with luxuriant forests of pine, spruce, poplar, and mountain-birch.

The scenery of Lake Superior is generally of a stern and savage character, and everything is on too vast a scale to be called beautiful. For days one may sail out of sight of land upon its surface, as if on the sea; and its heaving billows do not lessen the illusion. The whole of Ireland might be buried in its depths. The fifteen hundred miles of shore presents almost everywhere a bold and rocky front. Thunder Cape, a palisaded cliff eight hundred feet high, guards, like a mighty warder rising from the sullen deep, the entrance to the magnificent Thunder Bay. At the foot of Mackay's Mountain, which rises to the height of one thousand feet, nestles Fort William, like a babe in its mother's lap. At the mouth of the river Nipigon, the outlet of a vast lake in the interior, the mountains gather round on every side in a great amphitheatre, like ancient Titans sitting in solemn conclave on their solitary thrones. A sense of utter loneliness is felt in traversing these almost unknown waters. One may sail a hundred miles along the shore and not behold a single form of life.