

having travelled over the line, pronounced it to be one of the best-built roads in North America.

Returning, however, to history, this activity in railway matters was the key-note to the rapid development of the North-West. Winnipeg benefited in a remarkable degree. The trade of the city flourished, population increased by thousands, houses sprang up like mushrooms in every direction, people for a time went wild with speculation, and real estate in the city fetched fabulous prices. But this state of affairs could not in the nature of things be permanent. Other places along the line of railway soon rose to compete for the trade of Winnipeg. Emigrants hastened west over the railway to their prairie homes, without even stopping to purchase supplies at Winnipeg. Capitalists saw opportunities to invest in other rising places, and for a time the chief city of the North-West suffered what has been called a collapse, but which in reality was an ordeal, certain to result favourably in the end. The character of the city of Winnipeg is to-day undergoing a change which must ultimately increase its importance. Standing at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, and being, as it were, the doorway to the great prairie region beyond, its position as the chief distributing point is assured. It can boast of broad, well-laid-out streets. It has also horse tramways, an opera house, and many fine churches and public buildings, including the Parliament Houses recently erected. It is fast becoming a wholesale mart for the supply of the smaller merchants to the West, and its peculiarly favourable situation must make it in the future, as it is now, the chief city of the Canadian North-West.

As an instance of the wonderful growth, it may be mentioned that in 1874 the number of inhabitants was estimated at 2,000, and the assessment value of real and personal property at a little over 2½ million dollars, while in 1883 the population had increased to 30,000, and the assessment to over 32½ million dollars.

The rapid construction of the railway is undoubtedly the secret of the wonderful increase in the tide of emigration to this vast country. When you consider that at one time emigrants, after arriving at Winnipeg, had to depend on the slow, tedious means of travelling by oxen or horses and wagons to reach any point westward on the prairie, whereas to-day they can ride comfortably in a railway carriage to within a few miles of their destination, you will understand the impetus which the opening of the railway is giving to the development of the country, and why settlers are flocking there from all parts in such numbers. Isolation, the old curse of the land, has disappeared, and the value of the great fertile plains, so long dormant, is at last beginning to be understood.

The rapidity with which towns have sprung into existence along the line of railway is indeed marvellous. The time at my disposal will not permit me to give more than one or two instances. Portage la Prairie, fifty-six miles west of Winnipeg, though as old as the