

• Notices of Books.

Governor Christie aided us, by every means in his power, as well in procuring a fresh supply of provisions as in recommending to us the men best qualified to manage a canoe, and to guide us over the difficult and dangerous return route upon which we were about to enter.

While detained at the Assiniboin Colony by these preparations for our return, I had an opportunity of making a short visit, which interested me much, to a settlement of about five hundred Cree Indians, residing below the colony, at Prince Rupert's Landing. They are decidedly the most civilized tribe which I have seen or heard of in the North. These Indians support themselves mainly by the produce of their farms, which they cultivate with their own hands. They dwell in comfortable squared log buildings, erected, thatched and white-washed by themselves. They are acquainted with the use of the simpler farming utensils, and the mechanical operations necessary to keep their farms and houses in order. Each family cultivates from five to ten acres of land, which is kept well fenced. They mow their own hay, and feed their cattle on it in the winter. A few occasionally hunt during a month or more in the summer, or when their crops do not require much attention; but this is more for recreation than for support. Some of the men occasionally contract with the Hudson Bay Company to transport their goods to and from York Factory, on Hudson's Bay.

The remarkable change in the habits and customs of these Indians has been wrought mainly through the force of example, by Mr. Smithurst, who resides among them as missionary, and who is thoroughly conversant with their language. That gentleman is remarkable for his love of order and is devoted to agriculture and horticulture. His house is situated in the midst of a delightful little flower garden, kept in beautiful order, with flourishing fields of grain and meadows in the rear. The Indians, having continually before their eyes so pleasing and practical an example, of the comforts of a civilized life, as well as an illustration of the means by which, in a rigorous climate, they may be enabled to provide for themselves a support far more stable and certain than that derived from the chase, have gradually fallen into the habits of their instructor, and, by degrees have gathered around their permanent houses the implements and appurtenances, and even some of the comforts and luxuries belonging to the thrifty farmer. It is true they are sometimes accosted contemptuously by their neighbours, the Chippewas, and ridiculed as earth-worms and grubs: but they now retort upon them:—"Wait till the winter sets in, and then you will come to us, beggars for our surplus potatoes and indifferent peas."

The evening we were there, several young lads were engaged in sharpening their scythes, preparing to go out, next morning, in a party to mow.

The general agricultural character of the Red River country is excellent; the land is highly productive, especially in small grain. The principal drawbacks are occasional protracted droughts during the mid-summer months, and, during the spring, freshets, which from time to time, overflow large tracts of low prairie, especially near the "Great Bend." Its tenacious subsoil insures its durability.

The Lake Superior country presents four principal varieties of soil: a drift-soil, similar in its ingredients to that just mentioned; a red clay and marly soil, prevalent over the high plains bordering on the coast, and the corresponding lands on the adjacent islands; a trap soil of limited extent, near the foot of the igneous outbursts, and finally, alluvial bottoms, which are confined exclusively to a small body of land on the east fork of Bad River.

The drift-soil prevails through the highlands, six hundred to one thousand feet above the level of the lake; also over the high grounds of the promontory, west of Chegwomigon Bay, at a height of three hundred to six hundred feet, and the higher points of the neighbouring Apostle Islands. These lands, owing to their inferior siliceous soil, and the abundance of erratic blocks disseminated over them, are hardly fit for cultivation.

The trap soils, which support a growth of sugar maple, oak, and other hard woods, are next in richness to the alluvial lands. They are found chiefly on high ridges and slopes, which, at the east and west ends of the district, are only a short distance from the lake shore; but on the waters of Bad River and the Brulé, they recede three-fourths of the distance back, towards the sources of their various branches.

With these trap soils of the Lake Superior country, may be classed the lands in the vicinity of Big Bull Falls, and south of Beaulieu's Rapids, on Wisconsin River; the Pokegama country, bordering the

lake of the same name in Minnesota, the immediate vicinity of the Falls of St. Croix, and a portion of the Snake, Kettle, and Little Rock River countries: since the soil of these localities originates from rocks of similar composition.

The red clay and marl lands, occupying the high plains skirting Lake Superior, are characterized particularly by the predominance of oxide of iron, from which they derive their colour, and which amounts to four and a half per cent., or nearly one half of the weight of the saline matter; it is always a retentive soil, from the abundance of argillaceous earth which enters into its composition, hence these red clay and marl lands are often wet, particularly when defended from the direct rays of the sun, by the dense growth of cedar, balsam, spruce, birch and hemlock that usually covers them. Still these lands are not so wet, but that by clearing and a judicious system of husbandry, they would soon become sufficiently dry for most kinds of crops and garden vegetables.

Lake Superior has, at times, not only the varied interest, but the sublimity of a true ocean. Its blue, cold, transparent waters, undisturbed by tides, lie, during a calm, motionless and glassy as those of any small secluded lake, reflecting with perfect truth of form and colour, the inveterate landscape that slopes down to its smooth sandy beach. But when this inland sea is stirred by the rising tempest, the long sweep of its waves, and the curling-white caps that crest its surface, give warning not only to the light bark canoe, (still much used along its shores) but also to sloop and schooner and lake steamer, to seek some sheltering haven. At such times, craft of every description may be seen running before the wind, or beating up against it, all making for the most favourite harbour on the lake—the sheltered bay of Madeline Island.

As a site for a town, and especially as a place of resort for health and pleasure, La Pointe offers advantages beyond any portion of the mainland in Wisconsin. Its surface is sufficiently level and extensive for all purposes of agriculture; its soil, a retentive red marl, is capable, under a proper system of tillage, of returning to the husbandman a hundred-fold, and of producing fruits and vegetables in perfection. Its gently sloping and sandy beach, insures a secure footing to the bather. As a fishing station, it is unrivalled. The Bays and creeks of the numerous islands and main shore, distant only a few hours' run, are amongst the best fishing grounds on the whole lake, for trout, biscowet (*Percepsis Gulosus*), and white fish or lake shad (*Corregonus Albus*.)

Tempered as well in summer as in winter, by the vast expanse of water which surrounds it, and which, except at the immediate surface is almost always at 40° Fahrenheit, its climate is milder, at once, and more equable, than any part of Wisconsin, whether it be on the mainland of Lake Superior, or further south, on the Mississippi. Chiefly for this reason, but also on account of the bracing winds that sweep across the lake, Madeline island is probably not surpassed, in point of health, by any locality throughout the entire western country.

The prairie country, based on rocks belonging to the Devonian and Cambrian systems, extending up the valleys of the Red Cedar, Iowa and Des Moines, as high as latitude 42° or 42°31', presents a body of arable land, which taken as a whole, for richness in organic element, for amount of saline matter, and due admixture of earthy silicates, affords a combination that belongs only to the most fertile upland plains.

Throughout this district, the general levelness of the surface, interrupted only by gentle swells and moderate undulations, offers facilities for the introduction of all those aids which machinery is daily adding to diminish the labour of cultivation, and render easy and expeditious, the collection of an abundant harvest. There are, it is true, limited spots, less desirable for farming purposes, where the ground is liable to be overflowed by the adjacent streams, in times of freshets, and where local geological causes operate to alter the composition of the soil; or where, from too uniform a flatness of ground, near the sources of streams, water stagnates; these form, however, but a small fraction of the whole.

The greatest drawback to the settler in these portions of Iowa, is the limited extent of timber, which is chiefly found in belts and groves lining the borders of rivers, gradually diminishing in quantity, as a general rule, towards their heads. This disadvantage is in part counterbalanced by the ease with which a farm can be commenced and brought under cultivation.

Nevertheless, with proper economy and a little thought, an ample supply both of fuel and farming timber, may, in most instances, be insured. Again, the great extent of the coal district, throughout a large area of this prairie country, renders the consumption of timber for fuel unnecessary.