

There are those, however, who would prefer a mountainous and diversified region of this kind, to the level areas which are spread out like oceans, a little further to the west. Among the Laurentian hills, and on the borders of lakes studded with wooded islands, there are situations of surpassing beauty and magnificence. The forests abound in game, and the rivers and lakes are teeming with fish, water power is unlimited, and timber, which will yet find a market in the prairies of the West, is abundant.

A farmer who should establish himself on any of the carrying places with horses and waggons, would soon realize an independence, as many have done in similar situations on the Ottawa. The first to locate themselves would have the advantage, and might hope soon to see villages growing up around them. No more advantageous situations could be desired than Jourdain's Rapids, the Prairie Portage where there is an abundance of grass, or the French or Deux Rivières Portages, all of which, until a canal is made, must be places of land carriage and trans-shipment. Here then, in the event of communication being opened, would be a field of enterprise, to steady and industrious farmers, who could combine the cultivation of the land with the profitable employment of carrying freight over the portages.

In such situations, too, the growing wants of a new settlement would soon create a demand for various branches of industry. Boat builders, blacksmiths and carpenters would find ready employment where small craft had to be provided for such a length of inland navigation, and saw mills would be required to supply them with material.

But, to proceed in regard to the capacity of the country for agriculture, on getting to Sturgeon Lake, the climate is improved, but the ground is still rough and broken as it is also, at Nequaquon and Nameukan Lakes. Rainy Lake is so much indented with bays, that in passing through it only head lands and islands can be seen, and these are often rocky, but I have heard it reported by the Indians that there are areas of very fine land about Rainy Lake.

#### *Lake of the Woods and Fort Garry Sections.*

Arrived at Fort Frances, one hundred and ninety miles in an air line from Thunder Bay, the mountainous region is passed and, commencing here, a beautiful tract of land extends along the bank of Rainy River to the Lake of the Woods. The tract of the very richest alluvial soil, and in the whole distance there is not apparently an acre unsusceptible of cultivation. Old Indian gardens, growing vetches and wild grass, are met with at intervals on the banks, and the forests present basswood, oak and elm, with occasional white pines of gigantic proportions.

To this succeeds the Lake of the Woods, with fifty miles of navigation among islands varying in character, some fertile and others barren, but on some of which the Indians have grown maize from time immemorial. The section which comes next, that between the Northwest Angle and the Prairie, as already described, is swampy. There are, nevertheless, occasional portions of it well adapted for settlement.

The wooded region ends with the section just referred to, and, from this point westward to the Rocky Mountains and north-westward to Peace River, the prevailing characteristic is prairie. These prairies are, for the most part, of rich alluvial loam, but they are in some places sandy as on the upper portion of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan. So vast is the region, and the soil throughout the greater part of its extent so good, that it is no exaggeration to say the *cultivable areas may be reckoned by hundreds of millions of acres.*

The country is intersected by rivers, one of which, the Saskatchewan, drains an area greater than does the St. Lawrence, and is navigable for seven hundred miles of its course. From the South Branch of this great river, north-west to Peace River, the climate is adapted to the growth of wheat. Coal, salt, iron, gold and bitumen, are among the minerals to be found. Over the untilled fields which nature has spread out, the wild cattle of the plains roam in countless herds, and for hundreds of miles together may be seen grazing like domestic cattle in a field of pasture. A region which thus, in a state of nature, supports animal life in profusion, must be naturally rich, as regards its soil and climate. It is, in fact, fitted to sustain as dense an agricultural population as any area of equal extent on the face of the globe.

Such in a brief view, is the country with which it is proposed to open communication, but to describe it further is beyond the scope of this Report.