

Edmonton, the Capital of Alberta

BY VICTOR ROSS.

THIS wonderful town of the north country has become a real centre of commerce and culture. Possessing in some degree the same history of intermittent sudden growth and commercial set-back as many of its thriving rivals on the plains, Edmonton is still strangely apart from all of the others. It is no disparagement to the bustling towns of the prairies to say, that any traveller, after a trip across the continent, invariably admits a thrill of enjoyment at the surprising beauty of Edmonton and its environments. One catches in it the spirit of the mountains. Edmonton to-day, they say, is putting on airs, and there are few places in the whole West more justified.

The gradual, but steady shifting of this centre of the grain-growing area of the continent towards the north and north-west, a change every year becoming more marked, is making good a certain old claim put forward by believers in the Edmonton district. The claim is that, so far from being the northern outpost of the agricultural and commercial interests of the West, it is really the gateway to a region of surpassing produc-

even one railroad cutting through it and opening up communication with a new ocean port can scarcely be estimated. The first railroad will find over sixty thousand people already in the district, and the last hundred miles into Edmonton district will be built through a settled country. On the strength of the hope in the ultimate development of the country, settlement has spread far east, and west and north. Villages and hamlets have been founded and have passed through their infancy miles away from the existing railway. They are prosperous in spite of the hampered communication with a market. A railway which will create new industries in northern British Columbia, which will reduce the distance to a Pacific port to five or six hundred miles, and will open a new route to the markets of the east, will find this great district of Alberta ready to begin business with the first train that passes through. The preliminary development of northern Alberta is completed.

The condition which allowed and still permits farmers to succeed in a country considerably removed from a railway,



EDMONTON, FROM DOWLER'S HILL: SHOWING THE SASKATCHEWAN IN THE FOREGROUND

Population about 8,000; assessment, 1904, \$2,928,000.

tiveness and natural wealth, reaching far beyond what even a few years ago were presumed to be the climatic limits of wheat production. Edmonton is some three hundred and fifty miles from the international boundary, and has been for almost a century the chief trading post and town of the north country; but the trader and settler have gone far past it. The district has ceased to look for support to the comparatively small territory below it, but now seeks its future as a great commercial centre to the fertile reaches of the Athabasca and the richness of northern British Columbia and the Mackenzie district. The distance of three hundred and fifty miles from the boundary which made Edmonton a northern point is beginning to lose its significance on the consideration of the two thousand miles beyond and subsidiary to it. Judged from the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, it is still to the north, but every new transcontinental railway company has Edmonton marked on its map, and these projected lines are more and more tracing to the real centre of the country.

What the condition of the Edmonton district will be with

has been the possibility of securing from within the district itself all of the necessities of life. The lack of water and fuel in sufficient quantities, which has hampered the progress of other districts is here unknown. In addition to being a well-wooded country, it is said that the Edmonton country has more good coal immediately available than any other coal area in the known world. The Saskatchewan River and its tributaries have cut a path through the seams and left the coal exposed for the farmer to dig out. Again, at points the seams show themselves on the surface of the plains, and the coal is simply quarried; and the farmer who has none on his farm secures the fuel at \$1 per ton at the pit mouth. Coal is found at frequent intervals from the mountains to eighty miles east of Edmonton. Farmers mine the coal on their own properties individually, and it is not an uncommon thing for a settler, before driving into town to secure supplies, to throw a ton of coal into the wagon with which to settle his hotel bill.

Edmonton's fur trade has been, and will probably continue to be for many years, a source of great wealth, and it is the