

efforts of man. But, once arrived at Lake St. John, nothing wild, even in the solitary depths of the bush, appears; the aspect, always sweet, smiling and serene, of this singular country bears the signs of being predestinated for a happy lot.

The Canadian parishes are already more or less developed towards the south, the east, and the west of the little land locked ocean; the north, north-east, and the north-west await the colonist. This latter part is by far the finest, the land is better and more open.

The circumference of the lake would be a pretty regular circle, were it not for a great indentation towards the north-west, a sort of gulf, which, from Pointe Bleue, on one side, to Pointe à Lavoine, on the other, thrusting itself deeply and then curving lightly into the land, goes to meet the three majestic Ottawas that carry into it the waters of the north: the Chamouchouine, flowing from the north-west, the Mistassini from the north, and the Peribonka, from the north-east. It is at the mouth of the last that lies the land you asked me to explore.

II

At a few leagues from its mouth the course of the Peribonka, making a half-turn to the right, no longer directs itself, after leaving this bend, in any other direction but from east to west, running almost parallel to the north bank of the lake, so as to form a lovely peninsula, about 16 to 17 miles long, and, in breadth, from an arpent at its lower extremity, to 6 or 7 miles, at the other end. This peninsula now constitutes the *Canton Taillon*.

Then, at its very mouth, the Peribonka receives the waters of a lesser stream to which it gives its own name, it is called the little Peribonka. And as this younger branch flows also from the north, but in a straight course, it concurs, by its junction with its elder sister, in forming, in enclosing another piece of land, a more or less regular square, which it bounds on the west, while the right bank of the greater Peribonka bounds it on the east and the south. At this spot, opposite Taillon on the other bank, is the *canton Dalmas*, ten miles long by nine broad, the finest *canton* not only of the counties of Chicoutimi and Lake St. John, but of the whole province. Were it not for the forest with which it is covered, the eye, at a glance, could embrace its entire surface so level and unbroken is its appearance. The richness of its mould cannot be exceeded; it is inexhaustible; here, a yellow clay, there, a loam; there, stronger soil, rarely sandy, but always friable and granular, fat and unctuous, easily kneaded into a lumpy texture. The arable soil every where rests, immediately or otherwise, on an unfathomable deposit of either blue clay or of clay-marl. All along the Greater Peribonka, the banks, usually 15 to 20 feet high, show this blue clay, this marl, whose sedimentary superposed layers sink into the water, and under the sandy shallows that cover the bed of the river.

With the same subsoil, the plough surface is of still finer quality on the banks of the little Peribonka, whose shores, though in some places low enough to be covered by the spring freshets, after the waters have fallen, yield abundant crops of an excellent wild-hay, much to be appreciated by the cattle of the future colonist.

La Morot, an affluent of the Little Peribonka, flows out of, as nearly out of, the division-line of the 2nd and 3rd range, after having cut aslant the 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc., ranges of this *canton*, which it completely drains, thanks to its forks, its arms, and its brooks,

which are almost infinite in number, and whose network extends in all directions. It never floods. Its bed is a layer of stiff clay that the current has polished like a mirror, and whose sides crowned with a thick bed of loam mixed with alluvial detritus and humus rise from 5 to 10 or even 15 feet above the river. Nothing more lovely than the vegetation that covers them can be seen.

Our canoe managed to ascend this little river for about 3 miles, and then penetrated into the very heart of the *canton*. Here, are the trees we saw from afar: great, lofty white birch, black birch, elms, ash, spruce, fir, a few pines, cypresses, etc. The under-wood is often impenetrable: trees, wild-cherries and gooseberries, sumacs, horn-beam (*abeury*) oak wood, dwarf box perennially green, wild hops, etc., a shrubbery of bushes. In the midst of all this grows the wild hay.

Beside the Morot and its family of hydraulic collectors, little streams that assist in the drainage of Dalmas, it happens that this *canton* is so well drained that, in spite of its level surface, very few marshes or wet lands are met with, such as occupy the interior of the other *cantons* of the same region, that are almost as highly favoured as to their soil: as level as Dalmas, but not provided with as many natural conduits. The only two marshes of Dalmas extend, one towards lots 42 and 43 of the IInd range, the other, on lots or part of lots 7, 8, 9 and 16 of the VIIth range. They can be easily drained. Their soil consists of a couch of black earth over pretty strong soil resting on the immense bank of clay already mentioned.

In the IVth range, not far from the Morot, between lots 26 and 33, extends a beaver-meadow, nearly 2 miles square, in which wild-hay as high as the shoulder is mown by armfuls.

The Vth, VIth, VIIth and IXth ranges are probably those which will please the settler most. His plough will work there easily in a deep loamy soil, without meeting any impediments, and there is not a stone; not even the tiniest one.

Almost as much may be said of the other parts of this *canton*. The only rocks that there are in Dalmas, are met with in the south-east angle of the township, at the spot where the Great Peribonka, six miles from its mouth and navigable up to that point, crosses the last falls. The parts of the lots that enclose this angle are naturally sandy.

Four miles below the falls, the shores (*écors*) that are higher here, display another sandy spot, of slight extent, occupying a width of six or seven lots, behind which is situated the small marsh of the second range. Between the bed of sand and the great couch of clay on which it rests, burst forth tiny subterranean streams that can have their source in no other place than the marsh. Pray do not fancy that these two sandy lots in a sea of loamy soil are sterile. They are just as fit for cropping as the same kind of soil, which in this province often composes whole parishes. Are not the Belgian farms, so fertile because they are so well cultivated, in great part composed of sand, too?

So the *canton* of Dalmas comprises nearly 600 lots, all low-lying without exception, and nineteen-twentieths of them are of superior quality—extra good.

III.

As you are aware, only three of these lots are occupied by resident settlers. These are: in the south-west corner of the township, on the banks of the Peribonka, and near the mouth

of the Little Peribonka and not far from the side of the lake, lots 9 and 10 occupied by Mr. B. A. Scott's farmer, and lot 11, the residence of the enterprising M. Milot.

On the Scott farm, this season, the third of an arpent yielded 300 bushels of potatoes, all big ones, too! (1063 bushels, - 28 tons to the acre!!!) Last October, while the crop was being got in, Mr. Beemer went to see the farm, and when he saw this monstrous crop of tubers filling the drills, he fancied they were trying to play a trick on him. In order to convince him, and to prove that they had not previously poured pailsful of potatoes into a few drills, they were obliged to open other parts of the piece that were as yet undug, and make him prove for his own satisfaction how wonderful the fertility of the soil was.

Every crop sown by MM. Scott and Milot grew and ripened as in "the promised land", wheat, oats, and barley, maize, beans, beets, melons, cucumbers, &c. As for hay the north shore of Lake St. John may be said to be its mother country.

IV.

THE CLIMATE.—You saw yourself dear Mr. Barnard, that, on 17th October last, cucumbers in the open air, at Mr. Milot's, were still green. You are also aware that wheat and maize mature well all round the lake.

After the 26th of that month, I, in my turn, observed there long stalks of clover, with the sap still fresh in them, and which Mr. Scott might have mown for a second crop. During the same week, I passed several nights in the bush, sleeping in the open air, and suffered no inconvenience from the exposure, though the season was so far advanced. My couch was composed of a few armfuls of soft wild-hay, which had not been turned yellow by the frost.

Besides, it is now a recognised fact that the farmers' position is more secure in the temperature of Lake St. John than in that of Quebec or Three Rivers. Earnest observers have already likened it to the temperature of Montreal. That fearful N.-E. wind, the dire enemy of the banks of the St. Lawrence, is hardly ever felt here, and when it does blow, it is as soothing as an anodyne; there are no chilly granite rocks to attract the hoar-frost; the softening influence of the great lake, which is shallow and easily warmed, prolongs the season of autumn, and converts it into a kind of spring. Added to this, the country is only about 30 feet above tide-water, just the same as the citadel of Quebec.

V.

Canton Taillon—Opposite Dalmas, between the left bank of the Peribonka and the north-bank of the lake, nature has extended a township to which man has assigned the named of Taillon: a long peninsula running from east to west. Every spring, the lower part is overflowed, only about 400 arpents being exempt out of 3,000 or 4,000 acres. (1) which smaller tract then becomes a temporary island. The waters having subsided, part of these low lands become natural meadows, especially by the side of the lake. One of these I traversed that measured at least a thousand arpents. The bottom soil is a clay-loam of strong character. Beyond this point and the shore, the rest of the township is not subject to inundations, and contains land that need hardly fear comparison with that of Dalmas. The lots bordering on the river are even better than the corresponding ones on the other bank.

(1) Arpents and acres are not synonymous. 11 acres make 13 arpents, nearly. Ed

and they are situated at a less elevation. The banks of the lake seemed to me much inferior, the surface being light there, the timber feeble in growth, and the bed of sand which covers this clay perhaps rather too deep. The interior, thanks to the absolute level of this spot not being conveniently drainable, has on it neither timber nor hay, and looks like what the Russian call a "steppe," the people of Lake St. John call it the savanne, i. e., marsh. It is a large space covered with a soft, thick

carpet of rudimentary plants, cryptogams, probably of the family of the *lycopodium*, actually hiding the soil, in which the foot sinks and gets so soaked, that it seems as if one were walking over sponges full of cool water. Its subsoil is sandy and firm. This, so called, marsh is at most two miles long, and full of scattered shrubberies that the people call *oasis*. The drainage of this marsh could be done easily and cheaply. But when done, would it pay the farmer? I cannot say.

After leaving the point where this sort of *toundras* ends towards the east, the land rises, becomes more rolling, and is well drained. There, begins the most important part of the township, which widening more and more, encloses in itself alone the assured future of two parishes; the one facing towards the Peribonka, the other towards the lake. No pioneer has yet settled on the former. The latter, under the name of St-Henri de Peribonka, is already inhabited by from 20 to 25 families which have been there for three or four years, on a space three miles long, and in the vicinity of the lake, from the river *la Pipe* as far as the river *les Cochons*.

The houses are full of children; a school board has just been established. Not far from the river *la Pipe*, a chapel has been erected, on lot 14 of the range, where the people go to mass and sermon twice a month. A new road unites the young settlement, to the establishments of the Saguenay and to Chicoutimi, as well as to Hébertville and Chambord, stations on the railroad. This road, which leaves the township of Déglise and abuts on the river *aux Cochons*, only goes three miles through Taillon, and is still the only road that this neglected township possesses in the world.

The land is strong and marvellously productive. Last August, a settler was showing me his splendid wheat-crop. To him I remarked: "In your country, not satisfied with ploughing the land badly, you do not even take the trouble to harrow it." I could have sworn the piece had never been harrowed. But it had been, and with a harrow with wooden teeth! Fancy: a wooden toothed harrow on strong clay-soil! But wherein served argument with my host, who had his reply ready? "Find, if you can, a finer crop of wheat in the whole province."

II

To conclude this short description of the district visited by me, I must be allowed to add that the township, of Dalmas, Taillon, as well as Dolbeau and Racine, west of the little Peribonka, are only a part of an immense plain that extends, till the eye can carry it no further, to the north of Lake St. John. It is supposed to be at least equal in area to the counties of Richelieu, Yamaska, Verchères, Bagot, St. Hyacinthe, Rouville, St. Jean, Napierreville, and Laprairie, collectively. Its surface is as level, and the soil equally fertile.

It remains for me to tell you about the great dairy in connection with the settlement of this district.

Yours, F. X. BOILEAU.
(From the French.)