

We are now entering a very paradise for sportsmen. The lakes become more frequent. Some are salt, some are alkaline, but most of them are clear and fresh. Wild geese, cranes, ducks — a dozen varieties — snipe, plover, and curlew, all common enough throughout the prairies, are found here in myriads. Water fowl blacken the surface of the lakes and ponds, long white lines of pelicans disport themselves along the shores, and we hear the notes and cries of many strange birds whose names I cannot tell you. "Prairie chickens" are abundant on the high ground, and antelopes are common in the hills.

The country is reticulated with buffalo trails, and pitted with their wallows. A buffalo is a rare sight now, and he must be looked for farther north, where he is known as the "wood buffalo." Hour after hour we roll along, with little change in the aspect of the country. The geese and ducks have ceased to interest us, and even a coyote no longer attracts attention; but the beautiful antelope has never-ending charms for us, and as, startled by our approach, he bounds away, we watch the white tuft which serves him for a tail until it disappears in the distance.

We have crossed the high broken country known here as the Coteau, and far away to the southwest we see the Cypress Hills appearing as a deep blue line, and, for want of anything else, we watch these gradually rising as we draw near to them. The railway skirts their base for many miles, following what seems to be a broad valley, and crossing many clear little streams making their way from the hills northward to the Saskatchewan. At Maple Creek, a little town with extensive yards for the shipment of cattle, some of which are driven here from Montana, feeding and fattening on the way, we see the red coats of the mounted police, who are looking after a large encampment of Indians near by. The Indians are represented on the station platform by braves of high and low degree, squaws and papposes, mostly bent on trading pipes and trinkets for tobacco and silver — a picturesque looking lot, but dirty withal. Leaving the station we catch sight of their encampment, a mile or so away — tall, conical "tepees" of well-smoked cloths or skins; Indians in blankets of brilliant colors; hundreds of ponies feeding in the rich grasses; a line of graceful trees in the background, seemingly more beautiful than ever because of their rarity; — all making, with the dark Cypress Hills rising in the distance, a picture most novel and striking.

Two hours later we descend to the valley of the South Saskatchewan, and soon arrive at Medicine Hat, a finely situated and rapidly-growing town, a thousand miles from Lake Superior. Hereabouts are extensive coal mines, from which came the coals we saw moving eastward on the railway; and from near this place the Alberta Railway extends to the Lethbridge coal mines, more than a hundred miles to the southwest, and from there southward into Montana to the head-waters of the Missouri. The broad and beautiful Saskatchewan River affords steamboat navigation a long way above, and for a thousand miles or more below; and Western enterprise has been quick to seize upon the advantages offered here.

Crossing the river on a long iron bridge, we ascend again to the high prairie, now a rich pasture dotted with lakelets. Everywhere the flower-sprinkled sward is marked by