

Our house consisted of a verandah, a kitchen, and a bedroom above the kitchen. There was no bed to sleep on, and until E—— manufactured one of rough boards we had to sleep on our buffalo-ropes. We had, of course, to do everything for ourselves, but E—— was well accustomed to this, and could bake and cook. He had built the house himself, bringing the timber one hundred and forty miles across the prairie, with the glass 40° below zero.

We were miles from any "stores," and had in great measure to depend for food on the prairie chickens and wild ducks, which abounded. The wild ducks were very shy, and E—— had to crawl stealthily through the high grass, followed by his faithful dog Carlo. On one occasion he brought home fourteen ducks and prairie chickens, which made soup worthy of any London dinner-party.

We looked out upon miles of prairie, with scarcely a house in view. I remember one day counting five prairie fires that were raging around us. These huge fires, which sweep for hundreds of miles over the vast plain, are very frequent in the autumn, when the grass is dry. They are sometimes started by the lighting of a pipe, or some trivial carelessness on the part of a settler. The only safeguard against these fires is to plough a broad belt round the homestead.

The soil is wonderfully productive, yielding in some parts fifty bushels to the acre; but owing to the expense of carriage, and the great distance the wheat has to be conveyed, farming does not pay as well as might be expected—in fact wheat is a drug in the market, and the supply greater than the demand.

The Indians in this part of Manitoba belong to the Sioux tribe, and are very clever. The men are of small stature, but wiry; they look very picturesque in their native dress of embroidered leather, with bright-coloured bead ornaments. The women wear a sort of blanket dress, fastened round the waist with a girdle. They carry their babies on their back in a kind of upright wooden crib, which is suspended from their shoulders.