

## Calgary to Edmonton.

WRITTEN FOR THE COLONIST.

Calgary is invariably a resting point for the traveller in the Northwest, not merely because it is the second city of the Northwest, and second only to the City of Winnipeg in importance, both as a centre of population and in a trade sense; but because it is the gateway so to speak, through which the traveller enters the prairie land from the mountains, if he is travelling eastward, or the mountains from the prairie if he is going westward. It is a beautiful place as well, with the distant peaks of the Rockies in one direction, and the broad, boundless prairie in the other. Yet nestling as it does in a natural amphitheatre, scooped out by the wash of the Bow and Elbow Rivers, few who have not made enquiry would imagine that it lies at an altitude of nearly 4,000 feet above the sea level, or almost as high as the peaks of the highest mountains of Scotland. It is the stepping stone into the mountains, and less than four hours ride westward, sends the traveller right into the wildest grandeur of the Rockies.

Going westward from the Red River Valley, the traveller is liable to fall into the mistaken idea, that the further he goes the higher he ascends on this side of the Rocky Mountains, and in fact until Calgary is reached, the idea is to some extent correct. When, however, he starts northward on the new Calgary and Edmonton road, the order of things is reversed, and he starts on the down grade until he reaches the valley of the Saskatchewan, a valley which for a wide stretch of fertile land, has no equal in the whole world. He has not travelled fifty miles before he realizes, that he is entering a country different entirely from that of the near approaches to the mountains. He enters a beautiful rolling prairie country. He sees no more mountain pine or spruce trees, but every few miles he travels onward through little natural groves of poplar, and other woods peculiar to a land with deep rich soil, which greatly relieve the monotony of travel, and make the passing scenery ever changing and interesting. Streams by the dozen are crossed, some only little meandering creeks, and others seemingly broad enough for light draft navigation. The alkali lake and the sage brush growth is not to be seen, and each stream is a flow of pure water, some of the larger ones being cold and clear, as they come from the sides of the mountains, one hundred to two hundred miles further westward. By the time Innisfail station is reached, the conviction is complete that an entry has been made into a rich country of mixed wood and prairie, and if there should be any doubt about its fertility, from its surface view, the cuts on the line of railway prove its wealth beyond dispute. Where excavations have been made in the work of construction, there can be seen at the surface a dark loamy soil varying from one and a half to three feet in thickness, and below that a lighter colored subsoil, gravelly at some points, sandy at others, but in all just the kind of a warm subsoil which forces a rapid growth, and makes the process of crop raising so phenomenally rapid, as it is in the best portions of the prairie lands of the Canadian Northwest.

From Innisfail northward to Red Deer, the country presents the same aspect, and although settlement has only made itself apparent in dots along the line of railway, each cluster of farms show the growth under cultivation

to be as luxuriant as it is where rule nature holds sway. The hand of industry produces the golden grain in abundance, while nature has supplied a plethora of wild succulent hay and short grasses, besides wood for fuel and building purposes, which add a comfort to the early days of the pioneer settler, such as cannot be secured in even the richest treeless prairie districts of this continent. The abundance of pure sweet water alone is an advantage seldom to be had in the prairie lands further south, and presents a advantage for stock raising and other branches of mixed farming which should prove a great attraction to the seeker of a new prairie home.

From Red Deer northward there is no change in the appearance or soil of the country, with the exception of a swampy district of a number of miles through which the railway runs before reaching the banks of the Great Saskatchewan, and the growth of brush and grasses on this swampy land shows, that a rich soil lies beneath, and under a system of drainage, into the great river near by, a veritable land of Goshen awaits development.

When the traveller reaches the Saskatchewan River at Edmonton, he beholds a scene of true grandeur. The high banks of the river rising over two hundred feet from the water, impresses him with the fact that he has reached a land where no floods can trouble him. Then the view up and down the river with its steep embankments, crowned with woodland in every direction, and the deep, clear and majestic stream flowing onward in its course to Lake Winnipeg, all combine to make up a view such as is not likely soon to leave the memory. The scattered but thriving town of Edmonton, on the north bank of the river, appears from the opposite bank like fragments of quite a large city, peeping through the growth of timbers, and they are doubtless fragments, which ere many years will be united in one populous and important city.

Away north of the Saskatchewan River, far beyond the reach of settlement, or the influences of civilization the same rich belt of land stretches to districts known only to the Hudson's Bay Company's employees and the wandering traders. Millions of acres await settlement, and the land is free to whoever will come and possess it. Besides these free lands offered by the Dominion, the Calgary and Edmonton railway have millions of acres of a land grant, along the line of their road, and these lands they offer at nominal prices to actual settlers, who will make their homes upon them and cultivate them. There is no reserve lands, unless those used for Indian reservations, and the settlers can in every case select for himself.

Although this stretch of country in the upper valley of the North Saskatchewan is only newly opened up, and settlement has as yet made but little progress, enough has been done to show the grand results which can be reached. At St. Albert and Sturgeon River districts, outside of Edmonton, and in the settlement around Red Deer, crops have been produced during the past year, which equal in quality and yield the best figures ever reached in any portion of this continent. Thirty to forty bushels of wheat is the common report, and in other grains and root crops correspondingly large yields can be secured. But outside of grain raising the advantages in mixed farming are such as can be met with in few if any other districts. The settler has a hay growth

unbounded, provided by nature, and containing a succulence and nutrition, such as is not possessed by the finest cultivated hay in the Atlantic slopes of this continent. Brush and timber are to be found in every locality, furnishing excellent winter shelter for live stock, and fuel for the settler, if he wishes to burn wood. In this matter he has a valuable alternative, for coal is abundant all along the banks of the North Saskatchewan, and is now dug out of the river banks with the most primitive appliances, and sold in the town of Edmonton at the low figure of \$2.50 a load, which means as much as a team can haul on a wagon. In the two elements of fuel and pure water, the North Saskatchewan valley has undoubtedly greater advantages than any rich agricultural district on the continent of North America. The farmer near the river at Edmonton can cut down logs for his own millings, or he can dig the coal for his own use from the banks beside him. There is another profitable employment for him and his family when his farm allows days of leisure, and of this many pioneers take advantage, namely, washing out gold from the sand of the river, an occupation at which with the most primitive appliances a novice can make from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a day, and parties of experience can in a similar manner take out \$3 to \$5 a day. Even a few days of such profitable work, is often a God-send to the pioneer of limited means in the days when he is only breaking up his farm, and he feels the need of a few dollars of ready money. Altogether this country is a grand one for the settler of limited means, and at the same time in no other country can be found greater natural advantages to the man who wishes to go into mixed farming or live stock raising on a large scale.

The question of climate and the imaginary horrors of a cold northwestern winter is frequently advanced as an argument against settlement of that country by those who are interested in hindering its settlement. To people who have lived in the Northwest the horrors are so purely imaginary that the argument is to them only a subject for laughter. But the outside immigrant cannot judge from experience, and such tales are liable to mislead him. A land such as those obstructionists say this is, could not under any circumstances produce as the Canadian Northwest has in 1891 the heaviest yield per acre of grain ever produced in any country in America. Nor could such a country produce a healthy population such as this country has, and year after year record the lowest death rate of any country in the world. Further proof of the absurdities of those calumnies are unnecessary.

But admitting, as we must, that the whole Northwest, which means the country west of the Mississippi River and Lake Superior, and north of the 40th parallel of north latitude, has extremes of cold in the winter, the power of winter in the North Saskatchewan is wonderfully mitigated in this respect. West of Edmonton district the Rocky Mountains are much lower, and the valleys through them much wider and deeper than at any other part of the range further south. The consequence is the frequent sweeping through in winter of the warm breezes known as the "chinook winds," before which snow and ice vanish noiselessly but surely. Thus it is, that during a great portion of many a severe winter, when Montana, Dakota, Manitoba, Minnesota and even Iowa,