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## THE NEW NORTH-WEST.

FIRST PAPER: THE DAKOTA WHEAT REGION, THE BAD LANDS, AND THE  
YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY.

THE Red River of the North is the frontier of what is commonly called the New Northwest. It separates the State of Minnesota from the Territory of Dakota. A queer, disappointing, contradictory stream it is, making off due northward when all its neighbors run south, finding an outlet in distant and frigid Lake Winnipeg, and in a highly unpatriotic fashion draining off the waters of one of the richest sections of Uncle Sam's farm into the dominions of the Queen. It is disappointing, because you expect from its imposing name and the great figure it cuts upon the map to find a stream of size and dignity, and discover when you cross it on the railroad bridge between Morehead and Fargo nothing but a dirty, narrow ditch, across which a small boy can pitch a stone. It looks more like a canal than a river, and is so narrow that coves are dug in the banks for the little steamboats to turn around in. Yet this sluggish drain carries off the surplus rainfall of a vast, rich plain, forty miles wide and nearly two hundred long, and has an uncomfortable way in the spring season of rising up to the top of its high banks in a few hours and spreading over the flat country. One day last April it rose thirty-eight feet in a single day and night, submerging the farms and villages. The people do not seem to mind these inundations much, however. There is scarcely any current in the widened stream, and if it lifts a settler's cabin off the ground it sets it down again not far from the original location, and no great harm is done. With the cheerful philosophy of all pioneers the inhabitants of the valley call the river the "Nile of America," and try to convince the new-comer, and themselves too, no doubt, that the overflows are good for the land, while deploring that they are due to the northward course of the river, which breaks up first on its upper waters and is dammed below by the ice in Manitoba.

The two smart towns of Fargo and Morehead look at each other across the muddy Red River ditch with jealous eyes. They will not bridge the stream, because each is afraid the other would profit by a convenient crossing. Vehicles ferry over on a rude flat-boat, worked by hand-power applied to a rope stretched from bank to bank, and pedestrians are beholden to the railroad company for the

use of its bridge. Morehead, the Minnesota town, has three thousand inhabitants; Fargo, the Dakota town, boasts of six thousand, and styles itself the Red River metropolis. Both welter in a sea of black mud in the season of thaws and rains; both are largely devoted to speculation in lots and lands, and both are equally unattractive to the eye. They are in reality a single town, commercially speaking, and a remarkably prosperous one too. The railroad system has made them the business center and distributing-point for the entire Red River Valley, and out of their present jumble of muddy streets, cheap-pine cottages and shanties, vacant lots, saloons, stores, and lumber-piles, will grow up a handsome city of fifty thousand inhabitants within the present generation. Already there is a handsome hotel, rejoicing in the architectural oddities of the Queen Anne craze, a street railway, an electric light company, water-works, half a dozen banks, a daily newspaper, a number of creditable churches and school buildings, and a few pretty dwellings. Real estate speculation runs wild. Visions of a second change have turned the heads of the inhabitants. The talk is all about lots and values—how much this or that corner is worth, what Jones paid for his strip of mud, or what Smith holds his at. The real-estate agents have their offices in the hotels, in order to watch the arrival of guests and seize upon the supposed capitalist seeking investments, or the immigrant looking for a farm. No well-dressed stranger need wait long for the offer of a free ride about the future city and a valuable guide to explain the many choice openings waiting for him and his money.

The spirit of all these far western towns seems essentially sordid. One wearies of the never-ending talk of speculation and schemes for money-getting, but on further acquaintance with these eager, pushing pioneers, each with his exaggerated estimates of his own particular town, he finds that they have as much heart and generosity as the people of old communities, and a great deal more public spirit. Much of their boasting of lucky investments and the rapid growth of values is not altogether in their own selfish interest. They are on the skirmish line of civilization, and they feel bound to make a noise to attract