

The distance from Winnipeg Lake to Lac Hourbon, by the Mossy Portage, is 4 miles and 18 chains, and the difference of level 4 feet; the Winnipeg Lake being that much higher than Lac Hourbon. The Saskatchewan was, however, very low, at the time of our visit, and it is probable, that when it is at its usual height the difference of level between the two lakes is but very slight.

From Lac Hourbon upwards for 400 miles, the Saskatchewan presents an unbroken reach of navigable water. Above that, accounts differ as to whether it is navigable or not, some asserting that it is too much embarrassed by rapids and shoals, and others that it might be navigable for boats of light draught and great power to the base of the Rocky Mountains. From what I have learned, I incline to the latter opinion, but the truth can only be ascertained by examination. At all events, from the Red River Settlement to Carlton House, following Lake Winnipeg, the Little Saskatchewan, Lakes Winnipeg and Manitouba, Lac Hourbon and the Great Saskatchewan River, there is a navigable reach of 800 miles, broken only by the Mossy Portage. This one carrying place cannot be reckoned a great impediment in such a distance; steamers might be placed on the waters on either side, and a land road made across it, and this, I conceive, would be all that could be desired until settlement should have advanced so far as to render a more perfect means of communication necessary.

From what I have said, it will be seen that the Lakes, and the country bordering on the Great Saskatchewan, are easy of access.

In regard to the facilities for communication in the valley of the Assiniboine, wheeled carriages can already be driven over the whole territory, by the lines of route indicated on the plan, and it is only by such conveyances that settlers will, in the first instance, be able to supply their wants. The Assiniboine is only navigable for considerable vessels as far up as the Grand Portage; above that, indeed, canoes can be towed up, and batteaux can descend, except at extreme low water, but it has a very tortuous and rapid course, more especially among the sand hills, and it is in many places shallow, so that it could only be made navigable for vessels of any size at a great outlay. Everything considered, therefore, I am of opinion that transport could be more easily effected by land. The country is admirably adapted for railroads, but of course in an unsettled region these are out of the question.

On reference to the map, it will be seen that Lac Dauphin and a part of Winnipeg Lake approach within 70 or 75 miles of the Assiniboine. These places being accessible to steamers, land roads might be made across the country, which would afford all the accommodation required by a settlement in its first stage; indeed so obvious is this way of reaching the Assiniboine, that the Hudson's Bay Company supply their establishment at Fort Pelly by way of these lakes and Swan River, carrying their goods from the latter place across the country to the Assiniboine.

In speaking of navigable lines that might be made available, I should mention that at the Grand Portage, there is said to be an old water-course, by which the Assiniboine in all probability has at some period discharged its waters into the Manitouba Lake. Now, as the Assiniboine is navigable, or in a state that it might easily be made so, as far as the Grand Portage, it may yet be found advantageous to open a water communication between it and the Manitouba Lake. The advantages which this route would possess over that by Lake Winnipeg and the Little Saskatchewan, are, that it would be considerably shorter, and would be open somewhat earlier in the Spring.

In considering the project of colonizing a country so remote as this, and of which so little is, as yet, generally known, the question will naturally arise as to whether the native population would be likely to offer any opposition to settlement, or whether the country, if occupied, would be easily governed. Believing that any information which will enable the Government to judge of these important matters will be acceptable, I shall, before concluding, describe the present state of the country through which we passed, confining myself to what has come under my own observation.

At Manitouba, Lac Dauphin, and "Partridge Crop," there are small settlements of Indians and people of mixed origin. At the first and last named settlements, the people are rather industrious, and raise wheat, Indian corn, and a variety of articles. At Lac Dauphin the settlers simply grow potatoes and Indian corn. They are gradually acquiring habits of industry, but they can live so easily by fishing or hunting, as Mr. Wells says in his report, that they are slow to adopt the more laborious pursuits of civilized life. Ducks, geese, and aquatic fowl of all sorts frequent the waters in that quarter, in great numbers, and the lakes and rivers literally swarm with fish.

Near the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan, we saw about 15 families of Indians, from Swan River, who migrate there annually to catch sturgeon. They seemed to me to be a very quiet and orderly people, and I thought I could detect in their countenances that they were not wholly of Indian origin; and on enquiring as to this point, some of them were proud to boast of their descent from the Canadian Fur-traders who had occupied this country many years ago. At the upper end of Winnipeg Lake, we only saw one family, (those already mentioned as being engaged in making salt,) and from thence in a journey of five hundred miles by the valleys of Swan River and the Assiniboine, we saw not a living being, except the few people in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's establishments of Fort Pelly and Fort Ellice, until we got to the settlements in this neighborhood. At Fort Ellice we were told that the hunters were gone further west; but from all we could see or learn, there was no avoiding the conclusion that the population which once wandered over the vast plains of the Assiniboine had decreased to an unexampled extent. This I attribute partly to the indiscriminate slaughter of the Buffalo to supply the pemican required for the trade of the country, the introduction of horses having rendered these clumsy animals an easy prey to the hunter. And the Indian, so that he can supply his immediate wants in a profession however boundless, never troubles himself about the future. Numerous, therefore, as the buffalo still are, there can be little doubt but that they will soon be destroyed.

Large supplies of pemican used to be obtained at Fort Pelly and Fort Ellice, but these establishments can furnish little now. At many places we observed the plains furrowed with old tracks of the buffalo, and in some cases the banks of the Assiniboine were strewn with their bones, but there were none of these animals, we were informed, to be seen within several days' journey of any place we were at. This shews how fast they are being destroyed, and it leaves but the reflection, that as their staple article of food diminishes, the Indians must decrease in numbers, unless they can be induced to adopt the habits of civilized life. That with proper management they may be so, is fully shewn by the success which has attended the labors of the zealous Missionaries at the Grand Portage, Red River, "Partridge Crop" and elsewhere. As to the people of the Red River Settlement, they are an orderly and quiet community, I may safely say, as can be met with any where, and I believe there is nothing they desire more than to see the country opened up.

In leaving this part of the country I have much pleasure in saying that both from the people of this settlement and the officers of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Company, we have met with every kindness and civility. It may appear invidious to mention names; and yet I cannot omit those of Chief Factor McTavish at Fort Garry, who furnished us with many articles which we could not otherwise have obtained; and of Chief Trader Murray at Pembina, who always had his hospitable quarters open for any of the party that passed his way.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

S. J. DAWSON.

C. E. in charge Red River Expedition.

The Hon. Provincial Secretary,
Toronto, C. W.

P. S.—Both Mr. Wells and I made a cursory survey, taking the courses and correcting the distances by numerous observa-