

people here mistook for it, is abundant, and average two feet in diameter at five feet from the ground.

There is some tamarack also, tall and straight, from one foot six inches to two feet in diameter. The balsam and aspen poplars grow to a large size, and are everywhere to be had. The land for the most part is good sandy loam, and is traversed by numerous creeks. Snake Creek is about twelve feet wide, and one foot six inches deep, it yields plenty of fish, as also does one or two of those running into it.

Swan River is from 90 to 100 feet wide and four feet deep; its current is very rapid, being about three miles an hour. It is very winding here where the Snake Creek joins it, and I believe is so all along.

The valley, which is about one mile and a quarter wide, and from 80 to 100 feet below the general level of the country, is most rich and fertile, but almost altogether filled up with trees, such as poplars, balsam spruce, and willows.

The next day, August 4th, we left Fort Pelly and proceeded along the base of the Duck Mountain, a part of the chain of mountains called the Dauphine; properly speaking, it is a high ridge between the Assiniboine River and Lake Manitoba.

The ground rises gradually from the river towards the summit of the so-called mountain, which appeared about three miles distant, and is thickly covered with poplars, so thick that the forest is nearly impenetrable.

The land for a few miles is rather light, but then becomes much better, and for the whole way to the "Little Saskatchewan," or Oak River, the eastern limit, according to your letter of instruction, to this line of exploration, the land may be said to be good sandy loam.

In a short report, as this must necessarily be, I cannot give descriptions of the different portions into which this side of the valley of the Assiniboine may be divided, but taking it as a whole, I may say, that in fertility of soil, timber, and water power, it surpasses any other part of the country that I have seen.

I made several attempts to reach the summit of the mountain, particularly that part called the Riding Mountain, but was baffled each time by the extraordinary thickness of the woods of young poplars, among which there were lying the half-burnt remains of older trees, concealed by the long grass, vetches, convolvulus, and innumerable other plants.

I cannot pass by, however, the valley of the Little Saskatchewan without making a special note of it.

We reached it on August 11th, and the next day I was able fortunately to take observations for latitude, &c., for early in the afternoon the sky became cloudy and a thunder-storm came on.

Next morning, accompanied by Mr. Hime, who has been giving me great assistance in making the survey, I rode on horseback up the valley; we could only go, however fifteen miles, as the trees and underwood became then so marvellously dense as to make it quite impassable for horses.

The valley is about eighty feet below the general level of the country, the bottom of it is from half a mile to one mile wide, through which the river winds its way, flowing rapidly and uniformly; it is about forty feet wide, and at this time was five feet deep. There is no appearance of the valley ever being flooded, the willows which grow along its banks being green and luxuriant down to the ground.

There are large open flats occurring frequently on both sides of the river, when the richness of the grass and beauty of the many various flowers prove the great fertility of the soil, places marked out by nature to be cultivated and inhabited by man. There is abundance of good-sized poplars and balsam spruce sufficiently large for building and farming purposes.

I followed the course of the valley down to its junction with the valley of the Assiniboine; for the greater part of the way it is rich and fertile, as is also the land adjoining. Within a few miles of the Assiniboine the country changes considerably, the soil is much lighter, and the trees fewer and smaller, and at the junction of the valleys the country is very poor indeed, being sandy and gravelly clay abounding with granite boulders of various sizes. I returned then by the same way to the track called "the lower road from Red River to Fort Ellice," to where it crosses the Little Saskatchewan, and where I had left the greater number of my party.

From thence I proceeded by this track to Fort Ellice, stopping one day at Shoal Lake in order to make a survey of it. As this track joins the White Mud River road about eighteen miles from the Little Saskatchewan, which we travelled back on together from Fort Ellice to Red River, I need not give you any description of the country through which it passes.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) JAMES A. DICKINSON.

#### Enclosure 2 in. No. 2.

From the "Toronto Leader," October 28, 1858.

#### STEAM NAVIGATION UPON THE SASKATCHEWAN RIVER.

To the Editor of the New York Evening Post:

The river Saskatchewan, flowing from the Rocky Mountains eastwardly into Lake Winnipeg, is ascertained to embrace within its sources and tributaries an area of more than 300,000 square miles, as habitable as the adjacent state of Minnesota. This stream, if navigable for steamers, may bear an important relation to the development of British America. In a late article you quote the testimony of Sir George Simpson before the Parliamentary Committee, which implies rather than asserts, the innavigability of the Saskatchewan. He lays stress upon the swift current and occasional rapids. A hasty inference from similar facts would pronounce the Missouri innavigable.