

Although this is not the largest, it is by far the most important river in this portion of the British territories, on account of the great extent of arable land which the lower portion of its valley affords for agricultural development, and much of which is already under cultivation by the inhabitants of the Selkirk Settlement.

Red River has its source in the same district of marshes and lakes, from which flows also the Mississippi. This district is situated in about lat. $46\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$, long. 95° W., and is elevated 800 feet above the sea level. The course of Red River is slightly west of north to where it falls into Lake Winnipeg, in lat. $50\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ N. and long. 97° W. After crossing the frontier at Pembina, in lat. 49° , it flows with a very serpentine course for about 140 miles through British territory. At 8 or 10 miles from the lake the land on the banks of the river becomes sufficiently elevated to be available for agriculture; it stretches back for many miles on either hand in fine rich savannahs or lightly timbered country. Indeed, the valley of Red River being rarely confined by lofty banks in any portion of its course, is valuable for settlement the whole way up stream and for a considerable distance south of the international line.

Of the prairies along Red River only narrow strips on the top of the banks have been yet brought under cultivation by the colonist, as there the land is naturally rather higher and better drained than that lying further in the rear, both from its proximity to the river and also from the frequent gullies cut in the soft clay soil by the numerous small creeks that carry off the surface water. These gulleys at present reach but a very short distance back from the river, but were they artificially extended so as to serve as main drains, much land at present covered by swamps and marsh would be reclaimed. As it is, however, these marshes are of considerable value to the colonist from the abundant supply of natural hay which they yield. The channel of Red River is from 50 to 60 feet in depth, but occasionally the floods in spring are so high as to raise the river above that level, and to inundate the prairies to a great distance on either hand, devastating the property of the settlers. These floods seem to occur at intervals of 8 or 10 years, the last having occurred in 1852, previous to one which has again damaged the settlement this summer (1861).

It is not improbable that these floods could to a great extent be prevented by attention to the state of the river channel, especially towards its mouth. Both Red River and its large tributary the Assiniboine, bring down an excessive quantity of fine sediment that gradually fills up the channels wherever the force of the current is checked.

From this cause these rivers apparently increase in size for a course of years, till at last a flood in the upper country towards their sources happens at the same time that Lake Winnipeg is at a high level, or that its south end is blocked by ice in early spring. The result of this is, that the river, from the sluggishness of its current at its mouth, overflows the lip-like ridges which bound the channel, and submerges the lower country in their rear on either hand. During the remainder of the season in which the overflow occurs, the great body of water which thus accumulates only slowly escapes to the lake, and by keeping the river in high flood for a much longer term than usual, and until the level of the lake has fallen with the advancing summer, the channel is thus scoured out and a second flood is averted, until the river-bed has again been blocked up by the accumulation of sediment. Were this cleansing of the river channel effected artificially, so that there should be always a sufficient depth to allow the flood water to escape with the requisite velocity under all circumstances, the great calamity of periodic floods might be averted from this settlement, especially if these labours were combined with works for raising the banks of the river in a few places where they are below the general level.

Full details and statistics of the Red River Settlement have been recently published, and from the study of these, as well as from my own more limited opportunities for examination, I can entirely coincide in the hopeful views which have been expressed regarding the future development of this settlement as a British Colony.

Its position is, however, too much isolated for it to progress rapidly, unless some arrangement be made to allow of a secure system of traffic through or with the north-western United States, for there can be no question that the natural line of ingress to the country is from the south, by way of St. Pauls, Crow Wing, and Pembina. There are two routes from Crow Wing to Pembina, which is a distance of 310 miles; one of which can only be used in winter when the swamps are frozen. The other is somewhat longer, but as it passes out into the plains along the border of the Sioux Indians' country, it is sometimes dangerous for travellers unless they form a strong party.

A few years ago these roads were in a very bad state, being nothing more than trails, without any attempt at grading or constructing bridges where necessary.

The Hudson Bay Company have however now commenced to bring their goods for the fur trade into the country by this route, and a steamer plies on Red River as high as Grahams Point, which is about 230 miles above Pembina, in connexion with stage waggons