

the stream winding among green meadows, it seemed as if it wanted but the presence of human habitations to give it the appearance of a highly cultivated country. The Hudson's Bay Company keep a guard here to take care of the numerous horses attached to their establishment of Fort Pelly.

Arrived at Fort Pelly we spent the greater part of a day, the 10th of June, there to refit our canoe and prepare for the journey down the Assiniboine. And here I should mention, that we were much indebted to Mr. McDonald, the gentleman in charge of the establishment, who kindly furnished us with horses and carts to convey our canoes and articles across from Swan River to the Assiniboine, and was otherwise most attentive and obliging.

Leaving Fort Pelly early on the morning of the 17th of June, we proceeded on our journey. For 18 miles or so downward (from Fort Pelly,) the Assiniboine is very narrow, crooked, and much embarrassed by shoals and rapids. It is then joined by a stream appropriately named the White Mud River, which flows from the westward, and seems to be the main branch. This river drains a considerable portion of the great alluvial prairies which travellers pass on their way to Carlton House, and which have excited such general admiration on account of their great fertility.

From the White Mud River to Fort Ellice, a distance of about a hundred miles, the Assiniboine winds about in a deep valley, varying from a mile to two miles or so in width. At the White Mud River the banks of this valley rise only to a moderate elevation. Near Fort Ellice they attain a height of about 250 feet. On ascending these heights a view is obtained of a rolling prairie, stretching away on either side of the Assiniboine as far as the eye can reach. It would seem as if the whole of this vast region were a sort of level plateau, and that the greater height of the banks at Fort Ellice indicated the descent which the river had made in its course.

With regard to the quality of the soil; on going inland a little we found it to be of an alluvial character, differing in no respect from the soil in the prairie lands at Red River.

The smallest brook that flows from the prairie has cut itself a valley almost as deep as that of the Assiniboine itself; and from the latter stream a fine view is often obtained of glens stretching far inland, with winding banks, covered in some cases with green herbage, and in others with forests which ascend to the level of the plain above.

The course of the Assiniboine is remarkably crooked. Occasionally it crosses the valley as much as three times in a direct distance of one mile. The margin of the stream is in general wooded; sometimes the woods extend across the whole valley; in other cases the green banks slope down from the prairie level to the water's edge. Where the river runs close by some steep promontory, it occasionally happens that half the hill has slipped down, disclosing a face of yellow loam or drift clay, resting on crumbling slate or shale, which again is curiously interstratified with other substances as soft as itself, some of which show the presence of iron ore. The immediate banks of the river are of soft alluvial earth, and are constantly tumbling in. As might be supposed, the water is muddy, and yet it is not unpleasant to the taste. Besides the White Mud River, two considerable tributaries join the Assiniboine from the west, above Fort Ellice. These are the Broken-arm and the Qu'appelle Rivers. The latter stream drains a great extent of alluvial prairie land; and at the Touchwood Hills, near its sources, it is said that coal is to be found in abundance.

From Fort Ellice to the Rapid River the country is much of the same character that I have described it as being above that place; but on passing the Rapid River a change is perceptible: the high banks of the valley disappear, and the prairie slopes more gently to the river. A little above the Souris River a still greater change occurs; the alluvial banks giving place to sand-hills, which run in ridges from north-west to south-east. Through these the river cuts its way in an extremely tortuous course, sometimes running south-east, in a direction parallel to the ridges; then cutting across a ridge, and suddenly turning in an opposite course. These ridges, where the river has cut through them, expose sand resting on stiff blue clay.

In several places the limestone rock is seen beneath the clay in horizontal strata, full of organic remains, with sandstone resting on the top of it.

This comparatively barren tract may be about 40 or 50 miles in width. It is evidently a continuation of the high lands at the Duck Mountain, and here forms the south-western embankment of the great alluvial valley of Red River. But even this tract, which is the poorest to be met with in the country, is not all barren; for those who have travelled inland say that the valleys between the sand-hills are very fertile, and the whole tract would at least afford excellent pasturage.

Leaving the sand-hills the Assiniboine winds by the Grand Portage, where the venerable Archdeacon Corcoran has formed a settlement of half breeds and Indians. The soil here is of the same character as at Red River, and superior to it in so far that it is never subject to be overflowed. But with regard to this part of the country, it has been so often described, and it is so near the well known settlements at Red River, that I need not detain you by alluding further to it. I shall therefore only refer to the tracts which appear to me to be most valuable for settlement in the region I have visited, and then describe the manner in which I conceive they would be most easily rendered accessible.

By far the greater portion of the lands bordering on the Manitoba and Winnipeg Lakes is unquestionably well adapted for settlement. Experience already shows that wheat yields an abundant return on Manitoba, and at the little Saskatchewan. At the latter place even Indian corn is said to be a sure crop. This being the case, it is reasonable to conclude that wheat would thrive also at Sanguisippi Lake, and at Lac Dauphin, and along the western coast of Winnipeg Lake. The valley of Swan River, in point of fertility of soil, is perhaps unsurpassed in any country; and, as regards climate, it cannot, I think, be inferior to the valley of Red River, inasmuch as, if further north, it is also much further west, and removed from the influence of the cold winds of Lake Winnipeg, which sometimes have a prejudicial effect on the crops at Red River.

The country bordering on Red Deer River is said to be very fertile; and the fact that maple is to be found there in considerable quantities would confirm the belief that the climate cannot be very unfavorable. Throughout this region wood is in sufficient abundance to ensure a supply of fuel for a long time to come, or until such time as the coal mines may be developed.

It is said that coal is to be found in various places on the Porcupine Hills, and on the Duck Mountain. I found some specimens of lignite on going up Swan River, which fully confirm the fact, but whether it is to be found in available quantities can only be ascertained through time.

The great alluvial valley drained by the Assiniboine and its tributaries above the Souris River, will no doubt become, at some period, one of the finest wheat-growing countries in the world. No one in this part of the country even pretends that, in point of soil or climate, it is unfavorable to the growth of agricultural produce.

In regard to the means of communication that could be most easily made available, the country bordering on the lakes so often mentioned might be reached by steamers or other craft. There is nothing to prevent a steamer of light draft running from Red River Settlement to the end of Winnipeg Lake.

On reference to Mr. Wells' Report, it will be seen that the Little Saskatchewan River is navigable from Lake Winnipeg to Manitoba Lake. The latter lake is not deep, but there are not many shoals to be met with, and the bottom is in general as level as the surrounding country. I sounded wherever I went, and found an uniform depth of from 15 to 18 feet, after passing a few hundred feet from the shore. The Winnipeg Lake is on a higher level by about 5 feet than the Manitoba, and the sounding line showed that it was by so much deeper except at the upper end, where it attains the depth of from 36 to 50 feet.

The Sanguisippi River, which connects the Winnipeg Lakes and the Manitoba Lakes, has a general depth of from 6 to 8 feet, except at one place, near the middle of its course, where there is a very swift run, with a depth scarcely amounting to 5 ft.