

Beyond Portage LaPrairie there was at that time practically nothing. In the regions beyond, where now there are such numbers of towns, bank offices, magnificent farms, cattle-ranches, coal mines, and thousands of miles of railway stretching on to, and through the Rocky Mountains, and where a hundred millions of bushels of grain were grown this year (1908), nothing was to be seen but herds of buffalo, Indians of numerous tribes, and the forts of the Great Company. Only thirty years have elapsed since my visit, yet in that short time a new world has been evolved from the wilderness.

The journey home was unattended by incident, but I could not fail to have realized what enormous stretches of country are contained in this Northwest, and formed some idea of its possibilities, when a convenient way to it was opened up.

THE MANITOBA BOOM.

Little, however, did I dream of the extraordinary developments that were to come. It was only three or four years after this that the first signs of the "Manitoba Boom" began to appear. The Pacific Railway was being pushed with extraordinary energy, and made it easy to traverse regions till then inaccessible and practically unknown. But the more the country was known, the more highly it was reported of. Yet the land could then be bought for one or two dollars an acre. An idea, however, soon arose in older Canada that these lands must largely increase in value. Reports of the condition of things were constantly sent to the older provinces, and gradually a heavy speculative demand sprung up from the East. Along with the stream of *bona-fide* settlers, which, however, was never a large one at that time, there came to the Province a number of speculators in land, with money in hand, who began to make purchases, more or less extensive, here and there, as more and more of the country was opened up. These early speculators all made money. Reports of their successes spread about. More and more men were led to invest money, and before long the "land fever" began to work. As is usual in such developments, men soon ceased to take a practical view of possibilities, and instead of this, "to dream dreams and see visions." Men began to say that instead of two or three dollars an acre prairie land was worth *ten or twenty*, and as to town lots, nobody could imagine how much they were worth. The ball gathered momentum rapidly. Swarms of

had an introduction to another customer who lived at the hotel. He proved an extraordinary fellow, one of those who have knocked about the world until they are tired; who know everybody and have seen everything. We talked far into the night—mostly about England. I mentioned that I was from Yorkshire. He knew the county well. I spoke of the great Fitzwilliam family of the neighborhood where I was born. Strange to say, he knew them, too, and told me a curious story about a blacksmith who owned a little freehold near their estates. A traveller calling one day to get his horse shod, enquired who owned most of the land thereabout, on which the blacksmith replied, "GH, IT ALL BELONGS TO ME AND LORD FITZWILLIAM."