

EDMONTON AND PEACE RIVER.

Extraordinary Growth of the Far Northwest.

RAILWAYS KEENLY ALIVE.

Finer Climate Than Much Farther South.

Character of the Settlers—Interview With Rev. D. G. McQueen — Work of Presbyterian Missions.

In view of the present demand for railway charters through the Northwest Territories it is most interesting to know something more of the development upon which such expectations are based. As far as the Edmonton and Peace River districts are concerned, there are few better qualified to speak than Rev. D. G. McQueen, who has been in Montreal for the past week attending the meetings of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church.

After leaving college in 1887, Mr. McQueen set out for mission work at Edmonton. It was four years before the construction of the Calgary & Edmonton Railway, and the journey north from Calgary required four wearisome days of stage coaching. There was then no settlement between those points except at Red Deer River Crossing. There are now nearly twenty thriving towns. Wetaskiwin, forty miles south of Edmonton, for example, has a population of 1,500, largely since 1897. The population in the whole district is mixed, including a large number of Americans who came over after 1891. The only large proportion of foreigners is composed of Scandinavians, who centre around Wetaskiwin, and this town has the distinction of possessing the first Presbyterian Scandinavian church

& Mann have gone to the expense of shipping over the Calgary & Edmonton road a partial construction equipment in order to grade east and west, so as to have no delay in laying rails when their own line reaches the eastern end, 100 miles from Edmonton. The town has given them 68 acres in order that the Canadian Northern may erect workshops and make it a divisional point. Then the G.T.R., Mr. McQueen said, had sent 50 surveyors from Port Simpson, and this indicated that they were heading for Pine River Pass. If this is so, the Grand Trunk Pacific will pass through that magnificent triangle in the Peace River Valley already described, and known as the Grand Prairie. In his opinion there was ample room for three railways. There would be plenty of traffic, and if only twenty miles apart it was questionable whether they could carry out all the wheat the country is capable of growing.

Presbyterian Missions.

Rev. Mr. McQueen, as already stated, was here on home mission work, and it is noteworthy that from the character of the men sent there the Presbyterian church is fully aware of the importance of sharing in the early development of the country. The pioneer was Rev. A. B. Baird, M. A. of Toronto University, Ph.D. of Edinburgh University, who founded the first congregation in Edmonton in 1881, and is now a professor in Manitoba University. His successor in 1887 was Mr. McQueen, who took the degree of B.A. in Toronto University in 1884, and graduated from Knox Theological College in 1887. At the start he held services at four points from five to eighteen miles outside of Edmonton, and by ceaseless travelling was able to give a fortnightly service in each of these five places. After the advent of the railway in 1891, he obtained an assistant. To show that Edmonton is well provided intellectually as well as in other respects, Mr. McQueen states that there are seven Toronto University graduates, one of Queen's and one of Manitoba. He will spend about eight days here and hereabouts visiting friends before returning to Edmonton, which, in his opinion, is the gateway to the north and northwest, and likely to remain so.



REV. D. G. McQUEEN.

erected in Canada. The missionary, Rev. N. P. Grose, who is a Dane, preaches in Swedish. Most of these Scandinavians come from the western States and from the Eastern Townships of Quebec and speak English. The religious services are conducted in their own language, largely for sentimental reasons, and in order to avoid arousing any prejudices. The other foreign elements who are flooding into some parts of the Northwest have not reached this district to any large extent, and, therefore, the apprehensions which are felt elsewhere are not felt there to the same extent. There is one colony of 6,000 to 8,000 Galicians about fifty miles from Edmonton, but they are very good settlers, are doing well materially, are very anxious to learn English, and in time will turn out all right. One very great advantage is that their daughters have solved the servant girl problem so far as Edmonton is concerned.

Edmonton's Great Growth.

Of Edmonton itself Mr. McQueen speaks in glowing terms. Since his arrival in 1887 the population has increased from 300 or 400 to over 4,000. Property on the Main street is selling for \$300 per foot, and the Bank of Montreal paid \$15,000 for its site of 50 feet frontage. The site for Mr. McQueen's church was bought for \$1,800 two years ago, and now the land alone could be sold for \$20,000. The church building, opened last July, cost \$21,000, and the number of communicants has increased from 25 or 30 to 232. Commercial travellers say that they secure more business at Edmonton than at any place west of Winnipeg. It is the largest fur market on the continent, one firm clearing \$40,000 a couple of years ago, and prices have since advanced. This is altogether independent of the business done by the Hudson's Bay Company. As showing the extraordinary growth up towards Edmonton, it may be stated that the demand for land has become so great that one Indian reserve south of Ponoka has been thrown open for settlement, and two other reserves between Ponoka and Wetaskiwin also probably will soon be. The climate near Edmonton is better than at Winnipeg, 300 miles farther south, and the vegetation is better than in Ontario, though Toronto is 700 miles farther south. To show the productiveness of the Edmonton district, Mr. McQueen states there are five roller flour mills and an oatmeal mill at Stratheona. Then, northwest of Edmonton, is the Peace River Valley, extending for over 500 miles. The gem is perhaps the great triangle about 200 miles on each side, at the junction of the Peace and Smoky Rivers, known as the Grand Prairie. The climate is even better than at Edmonton. There are grist mills at Dunvegan and Peace River Crossings, showing that a considerable amount of wheat is grown in spite of the sparsity of population. Even farther north, 200 to 500 miles from Edmonton, the Hudson's Bay Company has a flour mill, and 1,000 sacks will be ground from wheat grown there to be forwarded on to the Mackenzie Basin.

Railway Men Attracted.

It is no wonder that the attention of railway men has been directed to a region of such fertility and capable of such development. The C.P.R. and Grand Trunk Pacific, the Canadian Northern and other companies are all aiming towards it. In order to be early in the field, Messrs. Mackenzie