

News of the Week.

From the St. Paul Daily Times.

FRAZER RIVER GOLD MINES. OVERLAND ROUTE THROUGH MINNESOTA AND THE SASKATCHEWAN VALLEY—PUBLIC MEET- ING AT ST. PAUL.

AN adjourned meeting of citizens of St. Paul, and of citizens of Minnesota sojourning in St. Paul, was held at the Fuller House on Wednesday, July 7, at 8 o'clock P. M. Colonel Wm. H. Noble, of St. Paul, resumed the chair, and Hon. E. Pierce, of St. Peter, was appointed secretary.

Mr James W. Taylor, from the committee previously appointed, presented the following report upon the general subject of an overland route and the natural features of the region connected with it:—

GEOGRAPHICAL REPORT.

It is now established that a district of British Oregon, holding a relation to Puget's Sound similar to that of the Sacramento valley to the Bay of San Francisco, contains rich and extensive gold placers.

The upper waters of Frazer river, including its principal tributary, Thompson river, are eagerly sought by adventurers from Oregon and California, and all accounts concur that the surface minings are as successful as those of California and Australia have been. Geologists have anticipated such a discovery, and Governor Stevens, in his last message to the Legislative Assembly of Washington Territory, claims that a district south of the international boundary is equally auriferous.

The Frazer river mines have already been mentioned in the British Parliament as not less valuable and important than the gold fields of Australia; and it is in view of the influence of these events upon overland emigration that the present report is submitted.

The southern boundary of Minnesota is in latitude 43½ degrees north. St. Paul and the Falls of St. Anthony are about 45 degrees, and our northern boundary, coterminous with the international line, is partly on the parallel of 49 degrees. The Frazer river mines will probably be explored from latitude 49 degrees to 55 degrees; therefore, if an overland emigrant route thither is practicable, from Minnesota, it will be an important consideration in favor of such a route, that the valleys of the upper Mississippi and the Red river of the North are on the most direct line of communication from Canada and the States north of latitude 40 degrees to the Frazer river district.

An overland route through Minnesota, ascending the course of the Saskatchewan and crossing the Rocky Mountains in latitude 54 deg. to British Oregon, would traverse a region of North America hitherto withheld from colonization, but soon to be surrendered by the Hudson's Bay Company for civilized settlements. West of the Rocky Mountains that company claim no chartered rights, and their license of Indian trade will expire in May, 1859. The British Parliament have just published a "Report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons," which exhibits a disposition on the part of the Company to withdraw from an immense district, reaching west of Lake Winnipeg to the Pacific. If thereby a recognition of the exclusive privileges hitherto enjoyed by them within the remainder of their chartered limits can be obtained. Even such a compromise is vigorously opposed by the people of Canada, but the citizens of Minnesota would have reason to be satisfied if our northwestern connection with Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and British Oregon should be placed on the footing of such an adjustment. In this respect our interests are identical with the inevitable policy of Great Britain. Henceforth no other relation than 'reciprocity' is possible between British America and the adjacent States of the American Union. Minnesota especially welcomes the assurance that Victoria, the capital of Vancouver's Island, is to be selected as the naval station of England in the Pacific, perhaps to become, under the influence of an international railroad, the Liverpool of the Pacific coast.

As to the 'adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay,' (so the stockholders of the company are technically called in the charter of incorporation,) they can turn their partial defeat into a victory. The map of Arrowsmith exhibits their posts at every advantageous locality between the lakes and the Pacific, and between latitudes 49 degrees and 56 degrees. Open that immense belt of country to European and American colonization—extend over it the benefits of reciprocity—adopt the American system of land surveys and land bounties to settlers, and the members of the Hudson's Bay Company would receive more advantage in ten years as proprietors of cities and towns, than would be possible for them as fur traders in a century.

The press and citizens of St. Paul have observed with much satisfaction the progress of public opinion in England on this important subject. Encouraged by the London Geographical Society, if not by the government, Capt. Palliser leads an exploring party to the sources of the South Saskatchewan, and the passes westward through the Rocky Mountains. Col. El-

liott, at the head of fifty engineers and as many soldiers, has recently arrived at Vancouver's Island, and, accompanied by a hundred voyagers, will thence move eastward through British territory, definitely locating a railroad route as he advances. Simultaneously, a joint commission of the American and English governments are engaged in running the international boundary from Puget's Sound to Lake Superior, commencing at the Pacific terminus. And now comes the gold discovery of the Northwest, which will probably renew, in that direction, the wonderful history of California and Australia.

An overland route from St. Paul, on American territory to Puget's Sound, or through the Saskatchewan basin to Frazer's river and Vancouver's Island, is central to an immense and fertile area, which, at no remote day, must connect with the channels of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, within the limits of Minnesota. From latitude 44 to 54, and from longitude 92 to 112 (west of Greenwich,) or between Lake Superior and Winnipeg on the east, and the Rocky Mountains, there is comprised an area of 631,050 square miles. Extend these lines of latitude to the Pacific, in longitude 124, and we have a further area of 378,636 square miles, or an aggregate of 1,009,686 square miles, equal in extent to France, Germany, Prussia, Austria, and that portion of Russia which lies south of St. Petersburg and west of Moscow. A district 10 degrees of latitude wide by 32 of longitude in length, would comprise twenty-four States of the size of Ohio.

Our present inquiry, however, is confined to the upper half of this vast region, or exclusively north of the boundary of 49 degrees; and since an emigrant route to Frazer river is under consideration, a general view of the districts to be traversed by such a route, or closely connected with it, will first be presented. Those districts of British America west of the lakes, which by soil and climate are suitable for settlement, may be thus enumerated:

Vancouver's Island	16,000 sq. miles.
Frazer and Thompson rivers	60,000 " "
Sources of the Upper Columbia	20,000 " "
Athabasca District	50,000 " "
Saskatchewan, Red River, Assiniboine, &c.	360,000 " "
	506,200

Under these geographical divisions—whose area would constitute twelve States of the size of Ohio—we propose to give the results of a parliamentary investigation, just published, into the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company, so far as they are descriptive of the foregoing districts:

VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

This island is fertile, well timbered, finely diversified by intersecting mountain ranges and small prairies, with extensive coal fields, compared by one witness to the West Riding of Yorkshire coal, and fortunate in its harbors. Esquimaux Harbor, on which Victoria is situated, is equal to San Francisco. The salmon and other fisheries are excellent; but this advantage is shared by every stream and inlet of the adjacent coast. The climate is frequently compared with England, except that it is even warmer. The winter is stormy, with heavy rains in November and December; frosts occur in the lowlands in January, but seldom interrupt agriculture; vegetation starts in February, rapidly progressing in March, and fostered by alternate warm showers and sunshine in April and May—while intense heat and drought are often experienced during June, July and August. As already remarked, the island has an area of 16,200 square miles, and is as large as Vermont and New Hampshire.

FRAZER AND THOMPSON RIVERS.

Northward of Vancouver's Island, the coast range of mountains trends so near the Pacific as to obstruct intercourse with the interior, but 'inside,' in the language of a witness, 'it is a fine open country.' This is the valley of Frazer river. Ascending this river, near Fort Langley, 'a large tract of land' is represented as 'adapted to colonists'; while of Thompson river, the same witness says that it is 'one of the most beautiful countries in the world'—climate capable of producing all the crops of England, and much milder than Canada. The sources of Frazer river, in latitude fifty-five degrees, are separated from those of Peace river, (which flows through the Rocky Mountains eastwardly, into the Athabasca,) by the distance of only 317 yards.

SOURCES OF THE COLUMBIA.

A glance at the map will show how considerable a district of British Oregon is watered by the Upper Columbia and its tributary, the McGillivray or Flat-bow river. It is estimated above as 20,000 square miles, and has been described in enthusiastic terms by the Catholic Bishop of Oregon—DeSmet—in his 'Oregon Missions.' The territory of the Kootenais Indians would seem, from his glowing description, to be divided in favorable proportion between forests and prairies. Of timber, he names birch, pine of different species, cedar and cypress. He remarked specimens of coal, and 'great quantities of lead,' apparently mixed with silver. The source of the Columbia seemed to

impress him as 'a very important point.' He observes that 'the climate is delightful'—that the extremes of heat and cold are seldom known, the snow disappearing as it falls. He reiterates the opinion 'that the advantages nature seemed to have bestowed on the Columbia, will render its geographical position very important at some future day, and that the hand of civilized man would transform it into a terrestrial paradise.'

It is an interesting coincidence that Father De Smet published in a St. Louis paper a few months since, a similar description of this region, adding that it could be reached from Salt Lake City along the western base of the Rocky Mountains with wagons, and that Brigham Young proposed to lead his next Mormon exodus to the sources of the Columbia river. Such a movement is not improbable, and would exhibit far greater sagacity than an emigration to Sonora.

Already the Mormons have established a flourishing half-way post on the Salmon river, (a branch of the Columbia,) and as De Smet has had many opportunities for ascertaining the designs of the Mormon hierarchy, the next scene of their zeal and industry may be under the protection of the British crown.

THE ATHABASCA DISTRICT.

The valleys of the Peace and Athabasca rivers, which occupy the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains, from lat. 55 deg. to 59 deg., share the Pacific climate in a remarkable degree.—The Rocky Mountains are greatly reduced in breadth and mean elevation, and through the numerous passes between their lofty peaks, the winds of the Pacific reach the district in question. Hence it is that Sir Alexander Mackenzie, under date of May 10, mentions the 'exuberant verdure of the whole country,'—trees about to blossom, and buffalo attended by their young. During the late Parliamentary investigation, similar statements were elicited. Dr. Richard King, who accompanied an expedition in search of Sir John Ross, as surgeon and naturalist, was asked what portion of the country he saw was available for the purpose of settlement. In reply, he described as a 'very fertile valley,' a 'square piece of country,' bounded on the south by Cumberland House, and by the Athabasca lake on the north. His own words are as follows: 'The sources of the Athabasca and the source of the Saskatchewan, include an enormous area of country. It is, in fact, a vast piece of land surrounded by water. When I heard Dr. Livingstone's description of that splendid country which he found in the interior of Africa, within the equator, it appeared to me to be precisely the kind of country which I am now describing.' * * * It is a rich soil interspersed with well wooded country, there being growth of every kind and the whole vegetable kingdom alive! When asked concerning mineral productions, his reply was, 'I do not know of any other mineral except limestone, this is apparent in all directions.' * * * The birch, the beech and the maple are in abundance, and there is every sort of fruit.' When questioned further as to the growth of trees, Dr. King replied by a comparison with the 'magnificent trees round Kensington Park, London.' He described a farm near Cumberland House under very successful cultivation—'luxuriant wheat, potatoes, barley, pigs, cows and horses.'

THE SASKATCHEWAN, ASSINIBOIN, AND RED RIVER DISTRICT.

The area of this continent, northwest of Minnesota, and known as the Saskatchewan district, is estimated, by English authorities, to comprise 368,000 square miles. Northwest from Otter Tail Lake, the geographical centre of Minnesota, extends a vast silurian formation, bounded on the west along the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains by coal measures. Such a predominance of limestone implies fertility of soil, as in the northwestern States, and the speedy colonization of Saskatchewan would be assured, if the current objection to the severity of climate was removed. On this point a few facts will be presented.

The sea of Azof, which empties into the Black Sea, forming the Eastern border of the Crimean peninsula, freezes about the beginning of November, and is seldom open before the beginning of April. A point less than one hundred miles North, but far down in Southern Russia, namely, Catherineopol, has been found, from the observation of many years, to be identical in summer and winter climate with Fort Snelling. Nine-tenths of European Russia, therefore—the main seat of population and resources—is further north than St. Paul. In fact, Pembina is the climate equivalent of Moscow, and for that of St. Petersburg, which is sixty deg. north, we may reasonably go to latitude fifty-five deg. on the American continent.

Like European Russia, also, the Saskatchewan district has a climate of extremes, the thermometer having a wide range; but it is well understood that the growth of the cereals and of the most useful vegetables depends chiefly on the intensity and duration of the summer heats, and is comparatively little influenced by the severity of winter cold, or the lowness of the mean temperature during the year. Therefore it is important to observe that the northern shore of Lake Huron has the mean summer heat of Bordeaux, in southern France, or 70 deg. Fahrenheit, while Cumberland House, in latitude fifty-four

deg., longitude one hundred and two deg. on the Saskatchewan, exceeds in this respect Brussels and Paris.

The U. States Army Meteorological Register has ascertained that the line of 79 deg. mean summer heat crosses the Hudson River at West Point, thence descends to the latitude of Pittsburgh, but westward is traced through Sandusky, Chicago, Fort Snelling and Fort Union, near lat. 49 deg., into British America. The average annual heat at Quebec is experienced as far north as latitude 52 deg. in the Saskatchewan country.

Mr Blodget claims that not only all the vicinity of the south branch of the Saskatchewan is as mild in climate as St. Paul, but that the north branch of that river is almost equally favourable, and that the ameliorating influence of the Pacific, through the gorges of the Rocky Mountains, is so far felt on McKenzie's River that wheat may be grown in its valley nearly to the 65th parallel.

The foregoing details have been produced to exhibit the general features and advantages of the country which extends between Minnesota and the gold regions of the North Pacific. It now remains to arrange the facts relative to the journey thither by the route of Pembina and the Saskatchewan. To do so, the Committee propose to compile from an overland journey of Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, which was published in 1847, whatever facts may throw light upon the experience of a traveller over the same route.

The journey from St. Paul to Pembina, is familiar to all. From Pembina to the junction of Moose river with the Assiniboine there is a well defined track over a plain, such as Sir Geo. Simpson, describes on the way to the same point from Fort Garry. Under date of July 3, he says: 'On the east, north and south there was not a mound or a tree to vary the vast expanse of greensward, while to the west (it would be to the north of our advancing party) were the gleaming bays of the Assiniboine, separated from each other by wooded points of considerable depth.'

Gov. Simpson, with relays of horses, made the journey to Carlton house in thirteen days, about forty-six miles per day. Commencing with his diary of the third day from Fort Garry (at the point where a party from Pembina would intersect his trail), such extracts will be made as seem to embody useful information.

July 5.—On resuming our journey, we passed among tolerably well wooded hills, while on either side of us lay a constant succession of small lakes—some of them salt—which abounded in wild fowl. In the neighbourhood of these waters, the pasture was rich and luxuriant, and we traversed two fields (for so they might be termed) of the rose and sweet briar. On reaching the summit of the hills that bounded the pretty valley of the Rapid river, we descried an encampment, which proved lodges of Saulteaux Indians. We spent an hour in fording the stream. No assistance from the Indians, but unmolested by them.

July 6.—A good supper of wild fowl, which were very numerous in the small lakes still along the route—a large salt lake—hilly and well wooded district—complaints of mosquitoes.

July 7.—Passed Birds' Tail Creek, a rapidly flowing tributary of the Assiniboine—beyond this stream an undulating prairie of vast extent, bands of antelopes—ferried over the Assiniboine to Fort Ellice in a batteau, swimming the horses—leaving the fort, passed through a swampy wood, forded the Qu Appelle or Calling river, and surmounting a steep hill, encamped on a level meadow of several thousand acres in extent.

July 8.—Extensive prairies, studded with trees—considerable inconvenience with regard to provisions from heat of the weather, antelopes in sight—in the afternoon the country swampy and beset with underwood.

July 9.—Prairie harder and more open, grass withering under recent drought—more antelopes—circuit of a swamp near Broken Arm river, losing a few hours.

July 10.—Forded White Sand river with the mud up to bellies of the horses—hitherto weather dry, clear and warm, but a cool rain fell afternoon and night—saw a red deer.

July 11.—During the night a serenade by wolves and foxes, an early start, and a glimpse of an object eagerly looked for—the Butte aux Chiens; towering with a height of about four hundred feet over a boundless prairie as level and smooth as a pond—evidently once the bed of a lake, with the Dog Knoll as an islet in the centre, and which was covered with an alluvial soil of great fertility. On leaving the Dog Knoll the party traversed about twenty miles of prairie among several large and beautiful lakes. The cavalcade now consisted in all of nineteen persons, fifty horses and six carts, with the following order of march:—The guide was followed by four or five horsemen to beat a track; then came the carts, each with a driver, and followed by unmounted animals under the charge of the rest of the party.

July 12.—Followed for twenty miles the shores of 'Lac Sale,' having water as briny as the Atlantic. The most curious circumstance with respect to these saline lakes, is that they are often separated from fresh water only by a narrow belt of land. For three or four days the soil had been absolutely manured with the dung