

Peace river
to Vermilion.

vation. At eight or ten places in the 280 miles between Peace River Landing and Vermilion there are points where the country is prairie or partly open and level, and so is ready for immediate cultivation; in all, there would not be more than 5,000 acres, probably not nearly so much. There are, of course, wooded flats, which will be ultimately cleared and cultivated. No land is at present cultivated in the valley, except at Wolverine point, where half a dozen half-breeds have a few acres under cultivation. Except as noted above, the valley is heavily wooded until Prairie point is reached, 25 miles above Vermilion. There is much fine spruce on the islands in the river, but not much on the banks.

Country about
Vermilion.

Twelve days were spent in the vicinity of Vermilion, when every farm was visited and expeditions were made into the country, both to the north and south of the river. At Vermilion there is no very well defined valley, the land rising by gentle slopes and steps until the general level of the country is reached, perhaps 100 feet above the river. The soil varies somewhat in character, that on the lower levels near the river being a rich alluvium of great depth, while at higher levels it is sandy or clay loam, from one to two feet deep, generally on a gravelly subsoil. South of the river there is a strip of prairie about fifteen miles long and of varying width, and a great deal of bluff country broken by thickets of willow and young poplar. North of the river there is, near the settlement, much open prairie, and on the route to Hay river the trail runs for at least forty miles through prairie country, broken only by narrow patches of thicket and forest. Time did not permit of a thorough examination of this region, but its appearance from the trail indicated that this strip of prairie was everywhere narrow, seldom more than a mile in width; but I was told by those who knew the country that similar stretches of prairie ran parallel with the one I travelled over, and that on both sides of the Paddle river, for its whole length, there was much prairie. The country seems to be everywhere open, and the soil, wherever I examined it, of the same general character. Where the season is short and the drainage of vital importance, such soil as is found in the vicinity of Vermilion is of far greater value than that of the upper Peace River plateau, where water lies for a long time after heavy rains, causing growth to continue longer than is necessary or beneficial to growing grain. No estimate can be given here of the land about Vermilion that is ready for settlement, but there are at least 100,000 acres of prairie and bluff land, and the wooded portions can be very easily cleared.