

soil, and diminish the melancholy aspect of this vast exposed portion of the frame of nature.

I firmly believe that all the ground reclaimed from the Peace and Athabasca rivers is of the best quality, if the present conditions are maintained. But there is always the fear of some exceptional rise in the waters causing a sudden flood, of such a nature that the vast plains recently uncovered might be once more overrun by devastating currents washing away their soil and entirely re-modifying their surface.

I have travelled over the whole of the estuary of the Peace River* above referred to, and found it no less curious than that of the Athabasca. As before mentioned, its first or most eastern channel enters Lake Athabasca at the Four Forks, under the name of Egg River; and the maps are quite wrong in representing the Clear Lake River as another mouth of the Peace River. But between the Egg River and the Canard or Duck Portage, where there are unmistakable traces of an old western channel, this river has four other openings into the Slave River, without counting six creeks, originating in the same number of lakes formed by the overflow of the Peace River, but with no currents of their own directly its waters retire. Between the two last-named points, therefore, there is an immense plain, comparable in fertility with the delta of the Camargue in Provence, intersected by rivelets, and dotted with lakes and ponds. Forest trees have sprung up in it, and pine-crowned hillocks rising in a hundred different places show the position of former islands. Crops of the highest quality could be raised on this gigantic and well-watered delta, which contains prodigious quantities of timber deposited by the waters during past ages. I am firmly of opinion that the colonisation and cultivation of this portion of the Athabasca district deserve serious attention, and I have therefore done my best to prepare a map of those two great estuaries as accurately as possible, preserving the local names of the lakes and water-ways. This map is, indeed, the chief result of my labours.

Besides these vast deltas there are other lands, on the left bank of the Slave River, perfectly fit for cultivation; this is indeed proved by the old settlement of the Beaulien family on the banks of the Salt River; but the settler there would have to struggle against inextricable forests, and an entire want of roads or other communications, without mentioning other serious inconveniences.

But there is in the Athabasca district a belt not overrun by forest, and which has nothing to fear from periodical inundations; where timber only grows sufficiently for the needs of colonists, and is rarely a mechanical obstacle; well covered with undergrowth and grass, capable of cultivation, crossed by a waggon track, watered by streams, stocked with fish-bearing lakes, and offering every facility and advantage for

* On the Peace River district, see also Dawson, in Rep. Geol. Survey Canada, 1879-80, (B) p. 66 *et seq.*