

syenite, porphyry, serpentine, &c. Vegetation is only to be seen in the inequalities of the stony surface or depressions in these products of fusion, where the action of water has not entirely cleared away their sandy surface, or where it has deposited a slight layer of sedimentary earth, as at the Chipewyan Mission. Conifers, black alder, heather, *Cistus*, *Absinthium*, and some other aromatic plants root in the meagre soil, and diminish the melancholy aspect of this vast exposed portion of the frame of nature.

I firmly believe that all the land 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 rivulets 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 colonization and cultivation of this portion of the Athabasca district deserve serious attention, and I have therefore done my best to prepare a

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