

be sufficient to exclude it from any estimate that may be made of agricultural land, but, judging from what was seen, very little of it would be of value when cleared. On the northern and eastern slopes there is some spruce, perhaps sufficient for building purposes in that region, but it is in constant danger of destruction by fire.

#### THE GRANDE PRAIRIE.

No part of the Peace river country is more spoken of than the Grande prairie and a week was spent in carefully examining it from every point of view. A complete circuit of the prairie was made and it was crossed in two directions. It was found that since the line showing the approximate area of the Grande prairie was laid down by Dr. Dawson twenty-four years ago, the forest has in many places encroached upon the prairie so that it is not now of so great extent as was then reported. At a rough estimate, 200,000 acres may be given as the area of prairie land. It varies little in character, except that on a few ridges a little gravel appears; otherwise, the soil is a rich black loam on a clay subsoil. This loam, as I saw it, varies from four to six inches in depth. It may be deeper in places but if so, such soil has not been seen by anyone whom I met in the country and on the Grande prairie, as elsewhere, frequent holes were dug for the purpose of ascertaining the depth of the soil. Dr. Dawson's description of the general character of the country is as follows:—\*

'The surface of Grande prairie is not monotonously undulating but may be characterized as forming a series of gently sloping ridges or swells between the various river and stream courses which are here not found to cut deep gorge-like valleys. Much of the country is park-like with groves of poplar, while extensive tracts are quite open, or with copse along the stream valleys only. Toward the edge, the prairie very often blends almost imperceptibly with the woodland by the gradual increase and coalescence of patches of poplar and willow.

Character of country.

'The soil of Grande prairie is almost everywhere exceedingly fertile and is often, for miles together, of deep rich loam which it would be impossible to surpass in excellence. The low ridges sometimes show rather light soil with an admixture of sand or gravel and a few boulders, but a very small proportion of the surface is unfavourable to cultivation.'

While I cannot agree with Dr. Dawson in saying that the soil is "deep" or that it cannot be surpassed in excellence, it is true that

\* Report of Progress, Geol. Surv. Can., 1879, pp. 53-54 B.