

R E T U R N

TO AN ADDRESS from the Legislative Assembly to His Excellency the Governor General, dated the 23rd ult., praying His Excellency to cause to be laid before the House “copies of the Reports and Plans (subsequent to those already laid before the “House) of the Exploration of the country west of Lake Superior, conducted by S. “J. Dawson, Esq., C. E., and party, during the last two years.”

By Command,

C. ALLEYN,

Secretary,

Secretary's Office,

Toronto, 16th March, 1859.

R E P O R T S .

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT,
4th July, 1858.

SIR,—I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 16th and 20th April, containing instructions for the guidance of the Expedition during the present season. These instructions it will be our endeavour to carry out to the satisfaction of the Government.

I have now the honor to inform you, that as soon as the exploratory surveys, in progress at the date of my last report, were completed, I set out on the excursion I had proposed by way of the Manitouba and Winnipegos Lakes to the Saskatchewan River, and returned by the Assiniboine, reaching this place on the 29th ult.

On my arrival I found the men brought here by Professor Hind waiting for me,—the Professor himself having gone west to the Souris River, and in order that as little time as possible might be lost, I immediately dispatched two of my assistants with eleven men and two canoes to commence the work indicated in your instructions, retaining one canoe and five men until such time as I could collect provisions enough to prevent the necessity of sending immediately to Lake Superior, where Professor Hind had left the supplies, bringing here only enough for his own party. We have now obtained a sufficient supply and are about to set out.

As the time at my disposal will not admit of my reporting so fully as I could wish on the various surveys which have been accomplished since the date of my last report, I shall for the present confine myself to a brief account of our last expedition, and a description of the extensive region through which we travelled.

On the 10th of May, having provided ourselves with such supplies as the settlement could afford, we crossed over to Manitouba Lake. There we embarked in canoes, and had a very tedious passage against strong head winds to the northwest end of Winnipegos Lake; from whence we crossed by the Mossy Portage to Lac Bourbon.

Leaving my assistants to measure the distance and ascertain the difference of level between the lakes just named, I descended the Saskatchewan to the Grand Rapid and examined it. Returning again to the Mossy Portage I divided the party—sending my Chief Assistant, Mr. Wells, back by the western coast of Winnipegos Lake, Lac Dauphin and the little Saskatchewan, as detailed in his report which I send herewith, while with the other division of the party I ascended Swan River, crossed from thence to Fort Pelly and came down by the Assiniboine.

In order to be the better comprehended in describing the general appearance of the country, I enclose a rough sketch,* hastily compiled from our notes, to which I would respectfully refer you.

A range of high lands, it will be seen, extends south-eastward from the Pasquia Mountain on the Saskatchewan, in latitude 35° 30' North, to the United States boundary line. This range has in all probability, at some period, formed the south-western embankment of a great inland sea, which covered the valley of Red River, and comprised within its mass Lakes Winnipeg, Winnipegos, Manitouba and the numerous smaller lakes which are spread over the great alluvial flat in which they lie. The country, bounded on one side by this range, and on the other by Lake Winnipeg, and the high lands to the eastward of Red River is an almost unbroken level, sloping very slightly to the Red River and Lake Winnipeg.

Part of this extensive tract is open prairie land, but by far the greater portion is densely wooded. A line drawn north 75° west from the confluence of Red River with Lake Winnipeg to Lac Dauphin would pass through about an equal extent of wood land and prairie. From thence northward, a forest but rarely broken by prairie openings extends to the Saskatchewan. To the south the country becomes more open, until, on nearing the Assiniboine, the woods entirely disappear, and an apparently boundless

* The sketch above referred to is embraced in the general map now being published.