

how forests have been converted into prairies. This seems to me of the very essence of the inquiry, which can alone be solved by evidence of authenticated facts, one ounce of which should be entitled to more weight than a pound of ingenious conjecture.

How vain, then, are the most plausible theories and fine spun speculations, when we have this palpable, tangible proof of the actual process by which the result has been produced, and that by a simple cause adequate to the result. If the thousand witnesses who have observed this process going on before their very eyes had been in the habit of writing and publishing their observations for the last half century, the question would have been long since so conclusively settled, both among the learned and the unlearned, that all men would be surprised that it was ever a subject of dispute. The great danger to truth would have been that too much effect would have been attributed to igneous agency. For myself, while I am prepared to believe that this has been the most potent of all the causes contributing to the result, I am also prepared to admit that there have been many minor auxiliary causes aiding the principal one, which may have escaped the attention of observers. Least of all of these are the facts, which may be considered established as such, and which tend to support what may be termed the shallow pond theory. Those which are invoked in support of what may be termed the arid theory may have had a considerable influence in aid of the prairie fires on what may be termed the fertile prairie, and even the most controlling cause on the desert plains, where both herbs and trees are nearly wanting for the lack of moisture to sustain them, even if once there planted. Where there is not sufficient rain fall to sustain trees when planted, we may reasonably assume that that is the cause of their absence; but I am slow,