

precipitated with violence into the forests, opens fresh channels, whilst the old ones, obstructed by the mire and sand brought down, are filled up and transformed into a marshy savanna. The Duck Portage was formed in this way. Entering it from the north (the direction facing the current), the idea is suggested that it is a channel of the river or one of its affluents; but the traveller soon finds himself in an immense dried-up marsh, quite level, and entirely composed of black viscous mud, cracked by desiccation and covered with timber formerly deposited by the waters. Its Chipewyan name, "Tédh dédh-héli t'ué" (Float-wood Lake) points to its origin. There is however, no trace of any lake; but a chain of wooded and elevated isles shows that this is the ancient bed of the Slave River, which, after filling in with muddy deposits, has been obstructed in its course by imbedded timber and forced to break a passage to the right by an abrupt eastern elbow. I think this alteration of course has been effected recently. It may perhaps be the outlet which I saw in course of formation in 1862, though I had then no opportunity of accurately fixing its position.

During extraordinary floods the surplus waters of the Slave River spread over this great marsh and scour the Duck Portage; but at an epoch before the formation of the present bed, when the Duck Portage was the ordinary channel, the overflow passed to the left by another natural channel, now dry. This shows a gradual tendency of the Slave River towards the east in this district. The conditions above referred to as existing at the mouth of the Athabasca, are also shown at the mouth of this river, for the current has so clogged its bed and filled up its estuary as to be compelled to divide and make its way across the sedimentary deposits of its delta, which it cuts up into a great number of mud islands.

The first and oldest of its branches contained large and lofty islands, identical as to soil with the mainland, and wooded, like it, with white pines, *Populus balsamifera*, aspens, and birches, whose venerable trunks show an existence of at least six or eight centuries. If a line be drawn on the right from this point to the mouth of the Des Seins River, and on the left to that of the Oxen River, a triangle or delta will be described wholly occupied by the ancient and recent mouths of the river. The latter, after divid-