

The remainder of the surface is generally occupied by second growth forest, more or less dense. Some patches of the original forest remain, particularly in the river valleys. They are composed of much larger trees, chiefly coniferous, among which the black spruce is most abundant. Handsome groves of old and large balsam poplars are also to be found in some of the valleys. Though a large proportion of the prairie land is immediately available from an agricultural point of view, much of the region now covered with second growth and forest will eventually be equally valuable.

East of the Smoky River and southward towards the Athabasca, the prairie country is insignificant in extent, the region being characterized by second growth woods in every stage of development.

The largest tract of poor land is that bordering the valley of the Athabasca. South of Lesser Slave Lake it rises to a considerable height. This region is also very swampy in many places, and for a width of 20 to 25 miles on the trail from Sturgeon Lake to the Athabasca is quite unsuited for agriculture, though in many places it would furnish good pasture were the timber cleared away.

To the northward, east of Smoky River, peaty and other swamps occupy part of the surface. Land of this character may be regarded as permanently unsuited for agriculture.

The luxuriance of the natural vegetation on the prairies is described as truly wonderful, and indicates not only the fertility of the soil, but the occurrence of sufficient rain-fall.

The explorers unite in the opinion that the fertile area is of great extent, and that the whole region is certainly well adapted for stock raising. But the explorations do not establish beyond question its adaptability for the systematic growth of the higher cereals. Cultivation has been attempted on a limited scale at the Hudson's Bay Forts, in sheltered spots in the valley of the Peace River, but no portion of the plateau has been placed under cultivation, with the exception of very limited areas in the vicinity of Lesser Slave Lake and of Sturgeon Lake. Sufficient data have not been obtained to admit of any reliable comparison between this district and the better known fertile portions of the North-West, and it