

DR. DAWSON'S EVIDENCE.

COMMITTEE ROOM.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, 13th April, 1883.

GEORGE M DAWSON, D. S., F.G.S., and R.S.M., called and examined:

By the Chairman :—

Q. You are connected with the Geological Survey I believe?—Yes.

Q. In what capacity?—As Assistant Director.

Q. You have some knowledge of British Columbia, I believe?—Yes. I have worked there in connection with the Geological Survey for the greater part of five seasons.

Q. Will you state generally your opinion of the agricultural and pastoral lands of British Columbia, their situation and extent, and also the character of the soils and climate in different districts of that Province?—British Columbia is naturally divided into two very distinct parts agriculturally by the mountains which form the coast range. The interior region has a climate of extremes and in the southern part is very dry. The coast region has a mild, equable climate. British Columbia must, however, be considered throughout as an agricultural and mountainous country, that is the amount of arable land, compared to the whole surface, is comparatively small. I do not say this to the disadvantage of British Columbia, as it must be remembered that other countries, known to be very productive, are similarly situated—in California for instance, it has been estimated that only one-fifteenth of the State is flat land, not mountainous, and only a part of that is cultivable. The southern part of the interior, east of the Fraser River, is the district which has so far attracted most attention agriculturally. The cultivation is restricted as a rule to the valleys, which are wide and trough-like, and cut through the surface of the plateau, and the climate is so dry in summer that irrigation is necessary. This is, however, generally easy on account of the number of streams running from the higher plateaux and mountains, and with irrigation very fine crops are produced. The higher plateaux are not cultivable, owing to their altitude and the fact that summer frosts occur. These higher plateaux, however, are covered largely with bunch grass, and form those renowned stock raising regions which have given the south of British Columbia such importance in that respect. Thus, the mere area of agricultural lands does not give the full measure of the capacity of the country for maintaining an agricultural and stock-raising population. A man with a comparatively small farm in these valleys has large herds of stock which roam over the hills and sustain themselves on the natural grass. The whole area of agricultural lands east of the Fraser River in southern British Columbia I have estimated at something under 1,000 square miles, of which about 500 square miles probably may be easily utilised.

Q. Have you anything to say in reference to the character of the soil and the climate?—The character of the soil is almost uniformly, very fertile in these valleys. The climate in summer is very dry and warm. It is one of extremes. In winter the cold is considerable, but the cattle still winter out very well and live all the year round on the natural grasses.

Q. In the interior portion?—In the interior portion; yes.

Q. The climate, I believe, is very good upon the sea shore?—Yes. In the northern part, then, of the interior plateau, there is another extensive low country, white pine, but producing an equally good wood. As a rule this tree is remote from the sea-coast, so that it has been utilized only to a small extent so far. The hemlock,