MACKENZIE
AND HIS VOYAGEURS

BY CANOE TO THE ARCTIC AND THE PACIFIC 1789-93

By
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With Illustrations from Thirty-two Photographs

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FOREWORD

In the preparation of this essay, Mackenzie's narrative, as contained in the original edition of his *Voyages*, 1801, was used as a basis. Supplementary information regarding the routes followed was obtained from other sources, particularly from the publications of the Geological Survey of Canada. The writer himself travelled over the greater part of the track of the Pacific "voyage" by canoe and portage, from the town of Peace River, below Mackenzie's Fort, to the Parsnip-Fraser divide, and thence down the Fraser.

The tide-water section on the Pacific was checked up by reference to Bulletin No. 6, "Mackenzie's Rock," issued by the Historic Sites Commission, Ottawa, 1925; and the Indian Trail from the Blackwater to Bella Coola over the interior plateau, by reference to Dr. G. M. Dawson's report of 1876, in the Geological Survey Report of Progress for that year.

The first two chapters are in the nature of a summary of explorations in the North-West collated from Mackenzie's own narrative, supplemented, where necessary, by reference to Dr. Davidson's *The North-West Company*; Dr. Elliot Coues' *New Light on the Early History of the Greater North-West. The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson*; Lawrence J. Burpee's *Search for the Western Sea*, and L. R. Masson's *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*, Quebec, 1889–90. 2 vols.

The outline of Spanish, British, American, and Russian affairs on the Pacific, in chapters vi. and xiii., is derived

largely from Robert Greenhow's *Historical and Political Memoir of the North-West Coast of America,* New York, 1840; and his *History of Oregon and California, and other Territories on the North-West Coast of America,* New York, 1845.

The writer acknowledges the many courtesies extended to him by Mr. E. S. Robinson, the librarian of the Vancouver City Library, who freely placed the library's valuable collection of material relating to the North-West Coast, and the fur-trade in Canada, at his service; his thanks are also due to Mr. J. Forsyth, the Provincial Librarian, Victoria; to His Honour, Judge F. W. Howay, for permission to quote from his writings; to Mr. A. J. C. Nettel of the Vancouver Office of the Geological Survey; to Mr. J. E. Umbach, surveyor-general, Victoria; to Mr. Iver Fougner, Indian Agent, Bella Coola; to the University of California Press and the University of Chicago Press for permission to quote from their historical publications; and to the following for photographs: the Geological Survey, Ottawa; the North-West Territories and Yukon Branch, Ottawa; and Lt.-Col. H. St. J. Montizambert for a rare photograph of the view observed by Mackenzie in the lower Parsnip valley on 5 June, 1793; and to the Topographical Branch of the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, for excellent maps of the Athabasca and Mackenzie Rivers.

A bibliography will be found in Appendix E. This, however, is only a brief indication of the wealth of material relating to the subject of this book.

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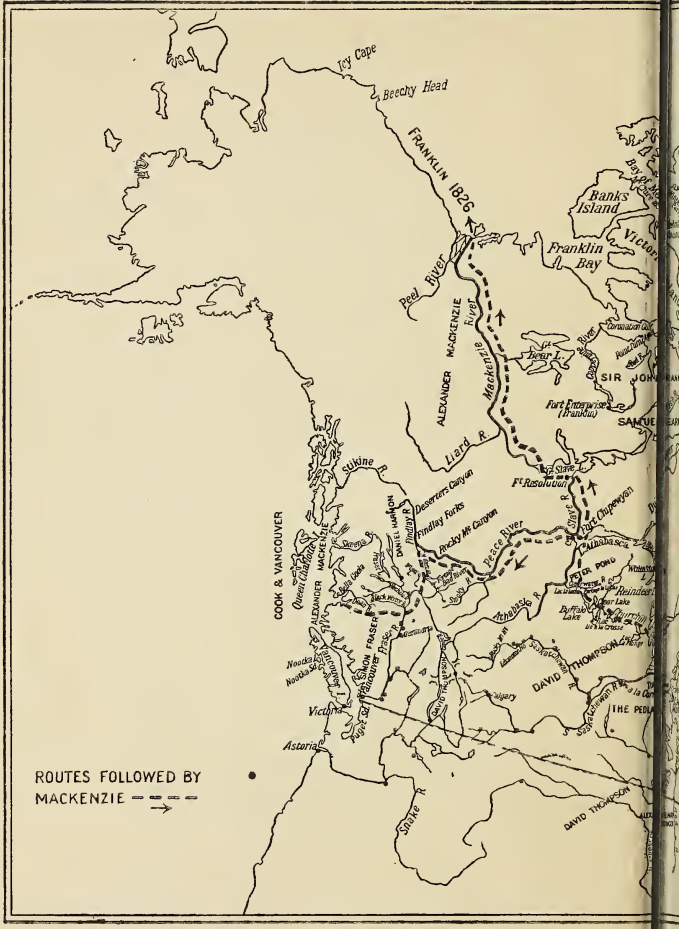
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MACKENZIE AND HIS VOYAGEURS

CHAPTER I

UNROLLING THE MAP OF NORTH-WESTERN AMERICA
1670 – 1789

THE new world offered an opportune field for the absorption of the energies released by the Renascence. The efforts of the three leading nations of Europe to carve out empires in the new domain, the factors that resulted in their successes and failures, the advances made over the terrain, their acquisition of territory, the clashes that occurred, and the accelerated trend of population to the new land are the elements of an epic of enthralling interest. Nothing in history compares with the North American Saga. The migration of millions from all the nations of the earth to the promised land, the beginnings here of a civilisation transcending anything yet thought of by man, the material advancement on a scale that takes the breath—these are aspects of a drama that will engage the attention of future historians.

Harking back along the trail, the student who is curious about the origins of that structure which to-day amazes him, comes at last to individuals who seem to have been fated to go forward to discover and mark out the paths where legions of the busy world were to follow.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie was one of these, and his

discoveries cannot be seen in proper perspective except against a background of history. In such a brief essay as this must be, only the barest outlines of the earlier story can be sketched.

His exploits as an explorer place him in the first rank among the score or so of resourceful men whose travels and discoveries in remote parts have served to amplify our knowledge of the world's geography.

That he was a keen business man, a capable administrator, and a man of broad vision, were matters of greater importance to his fur-trading associates than the fact that he had performed feats equal to anything in the history of exploration. The reader, however, derives an additional pleasure from his versatility, for, like the Elizabethans, he moves in far camps with a gallant spirit, and a masterful mind that no untoward circumstance can daunt.

It is the purpose in these pages to follow his track to the Frozen Sea, and then to the Pacific, with sufficient references to his private life, his business activities, and the events of the time to give perspective to his work as an explorer. The stage on which this romantic drama was enacted covered more than half a continent, and was variously referred to in the literature of the fur-trade as *le pays d'En Haut*, the Indian Territory, the Interior, and by a more recent public as the North-West.

When Mackenzie was still a clerk in Montreal it was virtually a *terra incognita*. Moreover, it is necessary to a proper understanding of the story that a résumé of the explorations and discoveries of his immediate predecessors should be given. The first two chapters therefore summarise the French and British advances north-westward, while an account of the growth and recession of Spanish and Russian dominion on the Pacific will be found in chapter vi.

The continent of North America at the time of the conquest of Canada when the British fur-traders began to take an interest in the country beyond the Great Lakes was known within boundaries roughly indicated by a line drawn from the Bay of San Francisco to the Gulf of Mexico, thence up the Mississippi and along the Great Lakes to the Atlantic. North and west of that line there existed certain more or less known areas and positions which enabled the cartographers to fill in the general outlines and features of the continent in those quarters.

The Alaskan coast had been roughly blocked out from Cape Addington off Prince of Wales Island in latitude 55° 30′ to the Commander Islands on the Kamschatkan coast by Vitus Bering and his lieutenant Chirikov, 1725–40. But from Drake's Bay in California to 55° 30′ north, the coast-line was not known, nor had any river in that extent flowing into the Pacific been discovered. The whole Arctic coast round from Bering Strait to Baffin Land was a blank. Hudson Bay had been mapped, and the Hudson's Bay Company's people knew the districts around their forts, and had some more or less vague notions of the interior obtained from the tribes that visited them. The company had sent out its own explorers at different times, urged on by a public opinion which at that early date questioned the validity of their claims to a large proportion of the North American continent.

Kellsey [1] was the first of these, but the tale that he brought back in 1692 of his wanderings in the western interior has never been regarded seriously. In the next century Anthony Hendry, in the interests of his employers, travelled by way of Hayes River and the Saskatchewan as far as the Red Deer River, where he wintered in 1754–5 among the dreaded Blackfeet, but his superiors declined to believe his account

[1] See note at end of chapter.

of tribes of Indians that scoured the plains in the wake of vast herds of buffalo. Again in 1771 the company dispatched Samuel Hearne to search for the Coppermine River, which, after three attempts and long and weary wanderings along the edge of the "barren lands," he finally discovered, and explored to within sight of the Arctic sea. As the result of his three journeys, a number of lakes and rivers were added to the map, such as Clinton-Colden, Great Slave, Artillery, Dubawnt, and Yath-Kyed Lakes, and the Coppermine, Dubawnt, Kazan, and Seal Rivers, and numerous others of lesser importance.

Matthew Cocking, a factor of York House, was sent inland in 1772 to the Saskatchewan to counteract the encroachments of Thomas Curry and James Finlay, two adventurous "pedlars" from Montreal, who upon the withdrawal of the French were the first to go into the country west of the Great Lakes. They had in that year intercepted a great part of the Fort York trade on its way to the sea. Incidentally it might be mentioned that it was not until 1774 that the Hudson's Bay Company established a post away from their home bases, when Cumberland House was built by Samuel Hearne on the Lower Saskatchewan in a strategic position which commanded the whole of the north-west interior.

It will be observed that the Hudson's Bay Company made no use of the knowledge of the country brought to them by their explorers, until forced to action by the independent Montreal traders. Kellsey's journey,[1] if it was ever made, and some authorities doubt it, was presented with such a lack of definiteness as to be valueless so far as any geographical information contained in it was concerned. Anthony Hendry's story of his journey along one of the

[1] See note at end of chapter.

most important highways of the continent, by way of Hayes River and the Saskatchewan, to within sight of the foothills of the Rockies, was laughed to scorn by the officials of the company, but its courses have been followed part of the way by Matthew Cocking, and the travels and discoveries of later explorers and traders have verified his most important statements. The Hudson's Bay Company therefore up to 1772 had to its credit the explorations of Samuel Hearne in the Barren Lands as far as the Arctic shores, and a very important reconnaissance by Anthony Hendry to the edge of the foothills of the Rockies.

The original impulse to discover a route to Cathay, which seems to have spent itself for the time being when Cartier reached and named Lachine, received renewed energy from time to time during the French régime. It is hardly necessary to recount Champlain's journey up the Ottawa and over to Lake Huron by a canoe route which is of classic interest in the literature of the fur-trade, nor the discovery of Lakes Ontario, Huron, and Superior by Etienne Brule, and that of Michigan by Jean Nicolet. Radisson, Chouart, and Dulhut added the headwaters of the Mississippi and the waterways immediately north and west of Lake Superior to the ever-unfolding map.

Both man and nature conspired to impose upon the French the duty of exploring the west. The St. Lawrence River Basin provided only narrow strips of land for settlement. The north was rough and forbidding. The southern gateways were held by the powerful Iroquois, but westward the river and lake routes led to low waterpartings between the St. Lawrence Basin and the watersheds that drained into Hudson Bay and down the Mississippi. Champlain, who ranks among the foremost of the French explorers, had by his indefatigable journeyings blocked out New

France in the rough. His successors discovered and used the short portages between Lake Erie and the Wabash; Lake Michigan and the Illinois and Grand Rivers; and the head of Lake Superior and the St. Croix. Thus the head-waters of the Mississippi were reached by a number of convenient divides. The most important one, pertinent to the subject, is the route over Grande Portage between Lake Superior and Rainy Lake leading direct to Lake Winnipeg and the North-West.

All these natural highways had been carved out in glacial times by the advance of the Keewatin and Labrador ice-sheets. They were intimately known to the Indians in the hoary past, and Indian guides conducted the first French explorers, missionaries, and fur-traders westward. To-day these ancient highways are the rail, canal, and steamer routes over which a copious traffic flows.

To lure on the early adventurers there was ever a promise of a richer harvest of furs in the virgin territory beyond the lakes.

Much of the romance and a great deal of the adventure incident to life in the new world centres about the fur-trade. The impoverished French nobles found this a remarkably easy way to mend their fortunes. The energetic spirits of the community quickly realised that greater profits could be made by going direct to the source of supplies. Hence there arose that class of semi-savage adventurers, the *coureurs du bois*, young men of spirit, who gloried in the discovery that they could range the woods and waterways with the unerring facility of the redman, and at the same time gather canoe loads of valuable furs.

These lively *voyageurs* and their equally spirited superiors spread French influence and a liking for the French among the Indians of the St. Lawrence valley, around the Great

Lakes and westward over the prairies along two main lines of travel.

The French monopoly was encroached upon in 1670 when Charles II. granted to the Hudson's Bay Company, headed by Prince Rupert, the Duke of Albemarle, Earl Craven and others, exclusive control of the trade, commerce, waters and lands lying within the entrance of Hudson Strait, which were not actually possessed by the subjects of the English king or any other Christian prince or state. This organisation, although it made no serious attempt to explore and possess the country west of Hudson Bay until 1772, nevertheless met with much opposition from the French during the first century of its existence.

As a matter of fact the French, led by the Vérendryes, had executed a flank movement as early as 1731, establishing posts which cut off the company's supplies of furs in the rear, without active interference from that corporation during French rule. The first recorded meeting of a representative of the Hudson's Bay Company and the French traders west of the Great Lakes occurred in 1754–5 when Anthony Hendry, the first Englishman to emerge on the Saskatchewan, encountered de la Corne at Pasquia, a French post on the lower Saskatchewan; and it was not until nine years after British traders had established themselves on the old French locations that the Hudson's Bay Company took action.

In 1727 the French Government became sufficiently interested in the possibilities of the unexplored western country, and the reports of a salt sea lying in that direction, to commission Father Charlevoix to make inquiries among all the Canadian posts regarding the existence of such a body of water, as a result of which an expedition left Montreal in June for the headquarters of the Mississippi where Fort Beauharnois was established among the Sioux. This was to

be the base for further explorations westward, but the post was abandoned and no further attempt made in this enterprise until the Vérendryes appeared upon the scene.

With the Indian Ochagach's tale of a salt sea that rose and fell, as an incentive, Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye set out upon a journey which for perennial interest ranks with those of Anthony Hendry, the founders of La Jonquière, Alexander Mackenzie, Samuel Hearne, Lewis and Clarke, Coronado, de Soto, and La Salle.

Fort St. Pierre was established by the Vérendryes on Rainy Lake, Fort St. Charles on Lake of the Woods; and Fort Maurepas at the mouth of the Winnipeg River. Ochagach's salt sea was no other than Lake Winnipeg which does occasionally rise and fall. From this point the French pathfinders explored along two routes to the west, by way of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in the south, and the Saskatchewan River in the north. At the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers they erected a temporary post known as Fort Rouge, and on the Assiniboine near Portage La Prairie, the important post of Fort La Reine. From this centre La Vérendrye and his sons crossed over to the Mandan villages on the upper Missouri by a well-known portage. The father's illness forced the party to return to Fort La Reine. The sons, François and Pierre, continued the exploration up the Missouri, and on New Year's Day, 1743, they were rewarded with a view of the Rocky Mountains, whose snow-capped summits towered against the western sky. It is supposed that they had reached a point near Helena, Montana.

Vérendrye the elder was born at Three Rivers in 1685, and he and his sons were consequently the first Canadians to reach Lake Winnipeg and the country to the west. The sons also discovered Lakes Manitoba, Winnipegosis and

Photo E. J. Whittaker *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

North End of Methye Portage, over Divide between Athabasca and Churchill Watersheds

Photo D. B. Dowling *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

"At Cumberland House," Sask.

Site of first forts established by the North-West Company and Hudson's Bay Company west of the Lakes

Dauphin, and the Saskatchewan River, which they explored as far up as the forks. Their maps show Lake Winnipeg receiving the waters of the Saskatchewan, and emptying into Hudson Bay by way of the Nelson. Fort Bourbon was built by them at the north end of Cedar Lake, a large expansion of the Saskatchewan not far from its outlet, and Fort Poskoia at the mouth of the Pasquia River. They also erected Nipawi on the south side of the river about a hundred miles above The Pas, and another post referred to variously as Fort St. Louis, des Prairies, or La Corne, about twelve miles below the forks.

Vérendrye the elder died in 1749, and his forts were turned over by an ungrateful government to Le Gardeur de Saint Pierre, who was absolutely unfitted for frontier administration. He selected Fort La Reine as his headquarters, whence he dispatched Chevalier de Niverville to the Saskatchewan with orders to explore it and establish a post three hundred leagues up its course. Niverville fell ill, and was left behind at Fort Poskoia, but ten of his *voyageurs* in two canoes ascended the south branch, and in 1751, three years before Anthony Hendry's journey to the Red Deer River, established Fort La Jonquière, which according to Masson must have been near the present site of Calgary.

The capture of Canada, involving as it did a change of proprietors, had its effect on the fur-trade, which almost at once passed out of French control. In 1761, a year after Montreal was taken, English traders and a few French merchants sent goods to Lake Superior. In that year, Alexander Henry, the elder, purchased goods at Albany, and set out for Michilimackinac by the Ottawa route. As he had no knowledge of the Indian trade, or of the wilderness, but was actuated by a sportsman's desire to thread the wilds and perhaps pick up a fortune, he relied upon an old

French trader, Étienne Campion, to make up for his own lack of experience. Henry was captured when that post was taken by Pontiac in 1763, but eventually escaped. In 1765 he obtained a grant of the monopoly of the trade around Lake Superior with Jean Baptiste Cadotte, who had built a fort on the south side of Sault Ste. Marie.

The first British traders went west from Michilimackinac in 1765 and 1766 and were plundered by the Indians at Rainy Lake on both occasions. The next season, however, two adventurers, whose identity seems shrouded in mystery, went up Lake Winnipeg. In the account of Matthew Cocking's reconnaissance on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1772, James Finlay is reported to have been on the Saskatchewan in 1767, but Mackenzie says that Thomas Curry was the pioneer on this river, and Burpee suggests that the two were together, and may have been the identical adventurers who were plundered the two preceding years. At any rate these two share between them the honour of being the first British traders to operate west of Lake Superior.

Joseph Frobisher established Cumberland House on the lower Saskatchewan in 1772, and proceeded thence by a series of waterways to the Churchill River, the Missinipi or English River as the traders called it, where he intercepted the Chipewyans at Frog Portage and obtained from them a very large and valuable cargo of furs which had been intended for the Hudson's Bay Company's post at York House. Matthew Cocking came over from Hudson Bay post-haste the same year to find out precisely what the presumptuous Montreal "pedlars" were doing on the Company's "preserves." Two years later Samuel Hearne was sent inland by the ancient and honourable company to build a fort at the most strategic point and selected the site of Cumberland

House, since it commanded the whole of the interior. Hearne left this place to become governor of Fort Prince of Wales, and was the official who surrendered that post to La Pérouse in 1782. Up to this time the Hudson's Bay Company had built only three posts away from tide-water. These were Henley House on Albany River, Split Lake House on Nelson River, and Fort Nelson on Footprint River, all close to the Bay.

Joseph Frobisher thus carried the frontier over to the Churchill River in 1772, an important step forward, for this route by way of Frog Portage, or Portage du Traite, opened the door to the whole of Canada north of the 56th parallel, and west of the Rockies.

Alexander Henry, the elder, had reached the west, for with Cadotte he is recorded as passing up the east side of Lake Winnipeg, in 1775, and being overtaken by Peter Pond, and later by Joseph and Thomas Frobisher. Travelling together, the traders reached the mouth of the Pasquia River on the lower Saskatchewan where there was a Cree settlement of thirty families under the famous brigand, Chatique, who, in his inimitable way, held up the traders after the manner of Robin Hood or Claude Duval, exacting from them a proportion of their rum and goods. The traders were glad enough to pass on with their lives, no doubt recognising the poetic justice of this forced tribute to a petty potentate.

Henry and the Frobishers with forty men and ten canoes wintered at Amisk or Beaver Lake, while Pond went on to Dauphin and Cadotte to Fort des Prairies.

A permanent fort on the Churchill was begun by Thomas Frobisher on 12 April, 1776, and on 15 June he was joined by Joseph Frobisher and Alexander Henry, who immediately proceeded up the Churchill to look for a tribe of Indians expected to be *en route* to Hudson Bay with their annual

catch of furs. They were met at Ile à la Crosse and the traders returned down the river with them to the new fort.

This meeting with the Chipewyans was important for several reasons. The Montreal traders by intercepting them here stirred up the Hudson's Bay Company to decided action. The natives came from a country that had not yet been entered by any white man, and they brought important information, probably the first authentic word of a possible route to the Pacific. From them Henry learned that a great river, the Unjigah or Peace, came from the western mountains, which were not far from a salt sea beyond them; and that Slave River flowed into Slave Lake, but the outlet of the latter was not known. These two rivers and the lake were then known by the Indian equivalents of their present names.

Frobisher and Henry were the first to ascend the Churchill to Ile à la Crosse, and the first of the Canadian traders to hear of the Peace River route to the Pacific. The Chipewyans who hunted in the Peace, Slave and Athabasca countries and carried their peltries all the way to Hudson Bay were evidently worth cultivating, consequently we find Thomas Frobisher ascending the Churchill to establish a post at Ile à la Crosse, while Joseph Frobisher and Alexander Henry went east to Montreal.

Peter Pond now enters the story and continues the process of unrolling the map farther west and northward. He had preceded Alexander Henry into the West, coming in, it is stated, in 1768, and was, therefore, close on the heels of Thomas Curry and James Finlay. He was regarded by all his confrères as a trader of ability. He was, moreover, imbued with the explorer's enthusiasm, and in the course of his stormy career did more than any one individual of that period, with the exception of Alexander Mackenzie, in the

cause of northern exploration, and possibly in the matter of gathering and disseminating information relating to the North-West he was second to none. Mackenzie himself was indebted to Pond for some of that knowledge of the country upon which he based his project of northern and western exploration.

Pond's extensive travels in the North-West and his accumulated geographical knowledge enabled him to produce several maps which, in spite of their shortcomings, were actually the only useful maps of that day. He was a native of Milford in the state of Connecticut. Aside from his turbulence and the several crimes imputed to him he was not only a successful trader, but one of the real pathfinders of the West. In 1776–7 he was still on the Saskatchewan, spending his time chiefly at the Forks. In 1778 he forgathered with the other traders at Sturgeon Lake, and there is no doubt that his known ability as a trader and traveller induced his fellow-traders to entrust him with an undertaking which was to carry the Canadian outposts another great step forward.

Mackenzie's account of the arrangement is worth quoting: "The success of this gentleman [Joseph Frobisher] induced others to follow his example, and in the spring of the year 1778, some of the traders on the Saskatchewan, finding they had a quantity of goods to spare, agreed to put them into a joint stock and gave the charge and management of them to Mr. Peter Pond, who in four canoes was directed to enter the English River [the Churchill], so called by the Frobishers, to follow his [Joseph F.'s] track, and proceed still farther, if possible to Athabasca, a country hitherto unknown but from Indian report. In this enterprise he at length succeeded, and pitched his tent on the banks of Elk River, by him erroneously called the Athabasca [but now called

by that name], about forty miles from the Lake of the Hills [Lake Athabasca], into which it empties itself."

Following his instructions Pond crossed over to the Churchill at Frog Portage, and ascended the river to Ile à la Crosse, whence he paddled through Clear and Buffalo Lakes and up the La Loche River. From this point he crossed the thirteen-mile divide called then Portage La Loche and since known throughout the west as Methye Portage, which leads to the Clearwater River, a branch of the Athabasca. Pond was the first white man to cross over from the drainage basin of the Churchill to the Arctic watershed. For a hundred years after his time this canoe route to the North Country was used by thousands, including many who afterwards attained fame in exploration and literature. Among the outstanding names are found those of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Philip Turner, the astronomer, Sir John Franklin, Sir John Richardson, Sir John Rae, Sir George Back, Sir W. F. Butler, Bishop Tache, Governor Simpson, David Harmon, David Thompson, Simon Fraser, and Sir James Douglas, the majority of whom penned graphic pictures of the beauty of the scene. Mackenzie's description has been quoted frequently. He says: "The Portage La Loche is of a level surface, in some parts abounding in stones, but in general it is an entire sand, and covered with the cypress, the pine, the spruce-fir, and other trees natural to the soil. Within a mile of the termination of the Portage is a very steep precipice, whose ascent and descent appears to be equally impracticable in any way, as it consists of a succession of eight hills, some of which are almost perpendicular; nevertheless, the Canadians contrive to surmount all these difficulties, even with their canoes and lading. This precipice which rises upwards of a thousand feet above the plain beneath it, commands a most extensive, romantic, and ravishing prospect. From thence

the eye looks down on the course of the little river, by some called the Swan River, and by others the Clear-Water and Pelican River, beautifully meandering for upwards of thirty miles. The valley which is at once refreshed and adorned by it, is about three miles in breadth, and is confined by two lofty ridges of equal height, displaying a most beautiful intermixture of wood and lawn, and stretching on till the blue mist obscures the prospect. Some parts of the inclining heights are covered with stately forests, relieved by promontories of the finest verdure, where the elk and buffalo find pasture.

"From this elevated position I beheld my people, diminished, as it were, to half their size, employed in pitching their tents in a charming meadow, and among the canoes, which, being turned upon their sides, presented their reddened bottoms in contrast with the surrounding verdure. At the same time the process of gumming them produced numerous small spires of smoke, which as they rose, enlivened the scene and at length blended with the larger columns that ascended from the fires where the suppers were preparing. It was in the month of September when I enjoyed this scene, of which I do not presume to give an adequate description, and as it was the rutting season of the elk, the whistling of that animal was heard in all the variety which the echoes could afford it."

Descending the Clearwater River past the present railhead of the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway and the location where Fort McMurray now stands, Pond reached the Athabasca River and continued down past the great deposits of tar-sands which outcrop on the river, to within thirty miles of its mouth where he pitched his tents and built what came to be known as "The Old Establishment," his headquarters for the next six years. According to

Mackenzie this was the only post in this part of the country up to 1785. While there is no definite information on the subject it is generally accepted that Pond was the first white man to stand on the shores of Athabasca Lake. In 1788, Pond sent Cuthbert Grant and Laurent Le Roux to establish posts on Great Slave Lake. It was during the journeys in this connection that Cuthbert Grant lost two canoes and five men in the rapids of Slave River known since as the Portage des Noyes. There is a probability that the French had been as far as Great Slave Lake before this, but whether before or after Hearne passed that way is not certain. At any rate, when the North-West Company reached it in 1786, they found there a family of French-Indian descent of the name of Beaulieu, indicating the likelihood of the presence of the French on the lake or in the district long before.

Alexander Mackenzie then comes upon the scene and takes up the story of extension north and west. Up to this time no white man had been below Great Slave Lake, nor up the Peace River any distance. The Saskatchewan had been ascended by Anthony Hendry as far as the Red Deer River where he had wintered with the Blackfeet Indians in 1754–5. A French party sent out by Le Gardeur de Saint Pierre had established Fort La Jonquière, which according to Masson was located near the present site of Calgary. The younger Vérendryes had been to a point on the Missouri near Helena, Montana, but the west and the north had yet to be pierced by a more daring adventurer. In passing, it may be mentioned that Lewis and Clarke, acting under instructions from President Jefferson, followed the track of the Vérendryes up the Missouri, and crossed the divide, reaching the Pacific on 15 November, 1805.

The nearest approach to the Rockies, or one equally near as that of the Vérendryes, made before Mackenzie

started out on his trip to the Pacific, was that of Peter Pangman. Alexander Henry, the younger, relates that when he was at Rocky Mountain House in 1810, he rode to rising ground in the west and found engraved on a pine-tree the name of Peter Pangman, and the date 1790, and Henry says that from this position "the Rocky Mountains appear at no great distance all covered with snow."

NOTE

Under date of 15 May, 1926, a London dispatch states that officials of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, have gone to Ulster to copy a remarkable document which has just come to light.

Papers of the Dobbs family, Carrickfergus, just presented to the Ulster Record Office were found to include three journals dealing with the explorations of the North-West Passage. The earliest and most valuable is the journal of Henry Kellsey, covering the period from 1683 to 1722.

Kellsey, whose life was spent in exploration, was the first Englishman to penetrate from the Hudson Bay coast to the western Canadian prairie country. It was not before known that a copy of his journal was in existence.

CHAPTER II

STEPPING WESTWARD

CANADA was already British in 1763, the year in which Mackenzie was born. The Hudson's Bay Company had reached the end of its first century. The French traders with few exceptions had vanished. In the same year Alexander Henry, the elder, was captured at Michilimackinac by Pontiac, when the redman made his last despairing effort to oust the encroaching European. George the Third had been three years upon the throne, the Treaty of Versailles, which fixed the Mississippi as the dividing-line between British and Spanish America, had been signed, and the United States was still thirteen years away from its first birthday.

No British trader had yet penetrated farther west than Lake Superior, and little or nothing was known of the continent north of the Pascoya or Saskatchewan River, and west of the immediate sea-board of Hudson Bay. Neither Hearne nor Cocking had yet gone forth beyond the immediate precincts of the bay. Anthony Hendry, Vérendrye's sons, and the founders of La Jonquière had been to the eastern edge of the foothills of the Rockies, but the whole of the Pacific shore-line and the Arctic coast from Cape Mendocino in California clear around into Hudson Bay was absolutely unknown, with the exception of a dozen or so landfalls of Bering and Chirikov along the Alaskan coast. No Spanish settlements existed on the Pacific north of Mexico. San Diego and Monterey, the first of these, were

not begun until 1769. No Russian settlements had yet come into being on the mainland of Alaska, but freebooting Russian sea-otter hunters were active on the Aleutian Islands.

Rev. Dr. Bryce is authority for the statement that Alexander Mackenzie was born at Stornoway in 1763,[1] of the family of Mackenzies of Seaforth, who formerly owned the Island of Lewis. He received, as the phrase goes, a fair education, and, like all boys cradled by the sea, he was much attracted by the risks and excitement of boating in those turbulent waters. One who had spent his youth in mastering the navigation of the sea in an open boat was not likely to be daunted in later life by the lakes and rivers of Northern Canada. Pitting his skill, ingenuity and endurance against the elements gave him the measure of some of nature's obstacles, and like a veteran of many storms he was able in the northern wilds, in the midst of toil, gloom and loneliness, to visualise the silver lining, to foresee the dawn, and cheerfully anticipate ease after toil, while those around him were sunk in gloom and discouragement.

The inquisitive mind and enterprising spirit with which nature had endowed him were well seconded by a constitution and a frame of body equal to the most arduous undertakings, a combination of physical, mental, moral and spiritual qualities which lost nothing in that rough school among the stormy Hebrides.

He speaks of the "commercial views" which had led him early in life to become a trader among the Indians. But posterity turns a deaf ear to that plea, preferring rather to believe that he was of the chosen, one of the few who "sail under sealed orders," which only the spirit ever reads, and thereby inspires the workaday man to his true mission

[1] Bryce, Rev. Dr. George, *Mackenzie, Selkirk, Simpson*, p. 10. Morang and Co.

in life. The inner necessity that impels men to the fulfilment of their destiny, the impulse to achieve, in fact all the subtle workings of the soul, whose obvious fruits are deeds, these things in their inception are too often hidden from curiosity. Hence it is difficult to date the birth of the ideas which finally led him to make those voyages which were to solve certain vexed problems and prepare the way for the development of a new empire.

He arrived in Montreal in 1779 and entered the counting-house of Messrs. Gregory and MacLeod, well-known merchants of that city. He was then sixteen. The inquisitive mind of which he speaks, with his commercial tendencies, enabled him in the five years he spent with this firm to attain a mastery of all the details that would be useful to him. He became intimately acquainted with the kind of articles required in the trade, their costs in England, their transportation to Montreal, where they were repacked in bales or "pieces" of ninety pounds each, for convenience in handling in the canoes and on the portages, their dispatch to the west in canoes and *bateaux*, each canoe having a value of £700 sterling by the time it reached its destination, the whole method of financing, the number and nature of the personnel, their wages and cost of maintenance, the prices paid and received for furs—these interests were a part of his daily life; all he lacked was canoe experience and direct bargaining contact with the natives themselves. He had before him the example of Curry, who was able to retire after one successful trip into the Indian country.

As an example of the volume and nature of the trade the following abstract will give a notion: "In the year 1785 there were issued 43 passes for 108 canoes, 146 *bateaux*, 1644 men, 42,780 gallons of rum, 7270 gallons of wine, 48,610 pounds of powder, 1425 fusils, 839½ cwt. of shot,

Photo K. G. Chipman, Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913–16 *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

A Thirteen-dog Team, Freighting

Photo F. J. Alcock *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

Fort Chipewyan, North-west End of Athabasca Lake, from the Roman Catholic Convent

to the value of £109,875." One of these passes, No. 13, was granted on 2 May, to Gregory and MacLeod, for "4 canoes, 50 men, 400 gallons of rum, 32 gallons of wine, 1700 pounds of powder, 64 fusils, 20 cwt. of shot, worth £2850." [1]

It is not to be wondered at that after five years' observation of the stream of wealth passing in from the west, and hearing daily the tales of traders, and the yarns of the "comers and goers," as the canoemen plying between Montreal and Grande Portage were called, that Mackenzie felt that he was sufficiently experienced, or knew enough about the routine of the business, to go on a venture of his own to Detroit with a cargo of goods entrusted to him by his employers. That they had great faith in this young man of twenty-two is evidenced by their action in making him without any solicitation on his part a *bourgeois*, or partner, in the newly-formed partnership with Peter Pangman.

Eight years before Mackenzie arrived in Canada the competition among the Montreal traders was so keen and unscrupulous that they had virtually ruined one another. Under the Proclamation of 1763 the traffic was thrown open to any subject of any colony who might obtain from the governor a licence which would bind the applicant to obey regulations made by the Legislature of Quebec.

The traders followed certain well-known routes and encountered the same tribes, whence arose a fierce rivalry, and a determination to obtain at all costs the valuable furs possessed by the natives. The Indians were bribed with liquor. Fifty thousand gallons of rum and high wines were used for this purpose in 1785, the year in which Mackenzie himself was engaged on his first venture at Detroit.

[1] Davidson, Gordon Charles, Ph.D., *The North-West Company*. Univ. of Calif. Pub. in Hist., vol. vii., p. 24.

The consequence was that the traders ruined one another, the Indians were corrupted, and the English character was brought into contempt. Mackenzie says: "With drinking, carousing, and quarrelling with the Indians along the route and among themselves, they seldom reached their winter quarters, except by dragging their property on sledges, when the navigation was closed up by the frost. The object then of each was to injure his rival traders in the opinion of the natives as much as was in their power, by misrepresentation and by presents, for which the agents employed were peculiarly calculated. Towards the spring the rival parties found it absolutely necessary to join and make one common stock of what remained for the purpose of trading with the natives, who could entertain no respect for persons who had conducted themselves with so much irregularity and deceit.

"They were in a continual state of alarm and were even frequently stopped to pay tribute on their route into the country, though they had adopted the plan of travelling together in parties of thirty or forty canoes and keeping their men armed, which sometimes indeed proved necessary for their defence."

It was finally recognised that the trade should be regulated by agreement among themselves. In 1771, therefore, nine rival interests combined for one year. The results were so satisfactory that the arrangement was continued for another three years, but was renounced at the end of two years, when violent competition again held sway, which continued until the murder of Ross and Wadin by Peter Pond, and the poisoning of an Indian, and a threatened uprising, once again brought the parties to their senses. In the winter of 1783–4 they entered into a partnership under the name of the North-West Company. Mackenzie was at this time still in the counting-house of Gregory and MacLeod. The

following year he was engaged in his private venture to Detroit.

The stormy petrel, Peter Pond, and his friend Peter Pangman were not included among the partners in the new company, the first declining to accept the terms, and the second, for some reason not elucidated, being ignored, though he was entitled to be included. The pair started off to Montreal to ally themselves to other interests. Pond, however, eventually entered the company. Pangman enlisted the support of Gregory and MacLeod, and the X.Y. Company was formed to compete with the North-Westers, and the ancient and honourable company on Hudson Bay, which was now actively drumming up trade in its hinterland, and not by any means pleased with the enormous inroads made upon its preserves by the two younger and more energetic combinations.

As we have seen, Mackenzie was made a partner in the X.Y. Company by his old employers, who were influential members of the new concern and who no doubt relied upon him largely as a wintering partner to manage their affairs in the Indian country.

Alexander Mackenzie, now a full-fledged *bourgeois*, was sent, at the mature age of twenty-two years, with his cousin Roderick Mackenzie to take charge of the Churchill district, which was a very important one until its trade was reduced by the establishment of posts farther inland. Their relations with the officials of the older companies were always friendly, but during its short career the X.Y. Company made things lively both for the North-West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, and we are assured that the energetic young *bourgeois*, Alexander Mackenzie, was chiefly responsible for this spirited challenge.

The killing of Ross by Peter Pond brought about the union

of the X.Y. Company and the North-Westers, and, after the amalgamation, Alexander Mackenzie was sent to take charge of the important department of Athabasca.

In 1788 Alexander wrote to his cousin Roderick divulging his intention to undertake a voyage of discovery the next year down the river that runs out of Slave Lake to the Northern Ocean. In order to further this plan he begged his cousin not to retire as he had intended, but to accompany him to Athabasca to take charge of that district, and thus enable the prospective explorer to carry out his project; above all he was not to mention this matter to anyone, as a knowledge of his proposed expedition might affect his standing with the powerful interests at Montreal. Alexander was so earnest in his appeal that Roderick felt moved to accede to his request and accompanied him to the new district.

The new chief thought at first of abandoning the posts farther north and withdrawing from the district, but, on more mature reflection, decided not only to retain all of them but to establish others. He therefore sent Boyer to establish a post on Peace River, and Le Roux was directed to go back to Slave Lake to the post already built there, and another was begun at Lac à la Martre, fifteen days' travel from Great Slave Lake towards the north-west. Roderick was commissioned to select a site for a new establishment on Lake Athabasca, where, after a careful inspection, he decided upon a location on a promontory, on the south side of the lake, eight miles east of the mouth of the Athabasca River. The fishing was good, a very important matter for these northern posts which had to depend largely on fish for their food supplies.

Roderick Mackenzie was entrusted with the task of building the fort, and made such a good job of it, that the astronomer Turner, David Thompson, Simon Fraser, and

many others speak of it as the most comfortable post in the North. It was painted inside, and a great deal of thought was given to the interior arrangements. The famous library established by Roderick was known throughout the North-West. Fort Chipewyan, as the new establishment was called, was not only the "Emporium of the North," but was dubbed the "Little Athens" as well.

All the events connected with the development of the North-West led to the ultimate establishment of Fort Chipewyan with Alexander Mackenzie in charge. The unexplored North and West stretched out in alluring expanses before his door. It was part of his domain. He was lord of all he surveyed and much more. It was his business as a trader to know that territory. It is not in the nature of man to live tranquilly on the edge of an unknown empire. Sooner or later the desire to continue his travels will carry him over new spaces until his mind is satisfied with fuller knowledge.

In attempting to account for the impulses which led Mackenzie to undertake his explorations it should not be lost sight of that, like all the traders of that day, he had acquired a technique of travel, had learned the ease of getting to new places, and was naturally interested in the marvellous network of navigable lakes and rivers which connected the whole of the known part of Canada. What was more natural to suppose than that the remainder, the unexplored, unknown part, was probably penetrated and linked with the known part by a maze of navigable lakes and rivers, as easy to negotiate and as far-reaching and important as the system that was so familiar to them? It is difficult to resist the call of the next reach, the next bend, the next lake and what may lie beyond each.

The traders had a great deal of leisure in the summer

months after the brigades had been sent off to their far-distant destinations at Grande Portage, and this is the season when travelling is particularly delightful on the northern waterways. With little to keep them at their humdrum duties it is easy to understand that men with initiative would want to be off, following the immemorial highways either towards civilisation or away from it.

Mackenzie had been an active rival of the North-Westers, and Simon McTavish, who was known as "the Marquis," from his autocratic domination of the Company's affairs, was not particularly friendly towards young Alexander Mackenzie. "The Marquis" was one of the leading merchants of Montreal, a power in directing the destinies of the company, whose opinion was to be considered by a young man of twenty-five just appointed to the charge of one of the most important and most desired districts in the gift of the company. On that account Mackenzie felt it desirable to keep his plans very much to himself. If they got to the ears of McTavish, that autocrat might easily block them or transfer the ambitious young man to another district.

Full credit must be given to Roderick Mackenzie for furthering his cousin's projects by remaining in the trade when he would have preferred to retire. Roderick Mackenzie was a man of active mind, literary tastes, and a soul above the sordid details of rum and beaver-skins. His *Reminiscences* throw a flood of light on the condition of the trader's existence and the general history of the development of the fur-trade in the North-West. He collected a large amount of material, much of which has not yet been used, and it is believed that the *Voyages* were either written by him or very extensively edited by his hand.

When Fort Chipewyan was completed, Alexander

Photo O. S. Finnie *Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa*

"Rapids of the Drowned," Fort Smith, Slave River

Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa

Salt Springs, Salt River, near Fort Smith

Mackenzie journeyed down by dog-team over the ice about Christmas time and remained there until February 1789, when he accompanied the winter express up the Athabasca as far as "The Old Establishment."

By this post he informed his partners at Grande Portage of the building of Fort Chipewyan, and the opening up of an extensive trade with the Chipewyan Indians who had been accustomed to trade at Hudson Bay, though it cost them a seven months' journey. Boyer, who had been sent up the Peace, was going out, and Vaudreuil was being sent in to take his place. Le Roux had returned from the north side of Great Slave Lake on 22 March, where he had been trading with the Red-Knives and the Slaves, to whom he had promised a rendezvous that summer on the west side of the lake.

In May Roderick Mackenzie left for Grande Portage and says that, when he left Chipewyan, "Mr. Mackenzie was preparing for his voyage of discovery."

Speaking of Fort Chipewyan, Mackenzie: says "This being the place which I made my headquarters for eight years, and from whence I took my departure, on both my expeditions, I shall give some account of it, with the manner of carrying on the trade there, and other circumstances connected with it.

"The laden canoes which leave Lake la Pluie [Rainy Lake] about the first of August, do not arrive here till the latter end of September, or the beginning of October, when a necessary proportion of them is dispatched up the Peace River to trade with the Beaver and Rocky Mountain Indians. Others are sent to Slave River and Lake or beyond them, and traffic with the inhabitants of that country. A small part of them if not left at the Fork of the Elk River [Athabasca River], return thither for the Knisteneaux,

while the rest of the people and merchandise remain here, to carry on trade with the Chipewyans, about 800 of whom trade here.

"Here have I arrived with ninety or an hundred men without any provision for their sustenance, for whatever quantity may have been obtained from the natives during the summer, it could not be more than sufficient for the people dispatched to their different posts. The whole dependence, therefore, of those who remained was on the lake and fishing implements for the means of our support. The white fish are the principal object of pursuit: they spawn in the fall of the year, and about the setting in of the hard frost crowd in shoals to the shallow water, when as many as possible are taken, in order that a portion of them may be laid by in the frost to provide against the scarcity of winter; as during that season the fish of every description decrease in the lakes if they do not altogether disappear. In this state they remain until the beginning of April, when they have been found as sweet as when they were caught.

"This fishery requires the most unremitting attention, as the voyaging Canadians are equally indolent, extravagant, and improvident, when left to themselves, and rival the savages in a neglect of the morrow. Thus do these *voyageurs* live, year after year, entirely upon fish, without even the quickening flavor of salt, or the variety of any farinaceous root or vegetable. During a short period of the spring and fall, great numbers of wild fowl frequent this country, which prove a very gratifying food after such a long privation of flesh-meat.

"In the fall of the year the natives meet the traders at the forts, where they barter the furs or the provisions which they may have procured; they then obtain credit, and proceed to hunt the beavers, and do not return till the beginning of

the year; when they are again fitted out in the same manner and come back the latter end of March, or the beginning of April. The major part of the Chipewyans return to the 'barren grounds' and live during the summer with their relations and friends in the enjoyment of that plenty which is derived from numerous herds of deer."

Fort Chipewyan was a general rendezvous for all Athabasca. This post, which Mackenzie describes, and the newer one built later, on the north side of the lake, where it now stands, were remarkable in that for over a century and a quarter they formed the distributing and receiving point for the commerce of a territory of more than half a million square miles.

David Harmon makes certain observations in his journal under date of 21 September, 1808:

"Ever since my arrival in this place, people from almost every corner of this extensive department have been flocking in, some of whom are from more than a thousand miles down Mackenzie's River, which is nearly north-west from this. Others are from Great Slave Lake and Peace River. Mr. Simon Frazer has just returned from the Pacific Ocean. Mr. Frazer states that his party met with some ill-treatment from the Indians who live along the sea-coast but that they were hospitably received by those who reside farther up the country." [1]

It was from this point that Mackenzie was about to put to the test those theories he had formed after a year's association with Pond. All the details of the proposed trip down north were carefully gone over, even to the providing of money to traffic with the Russians if they should be encountered.

[1] Harmon, Daniel Williams, *Journal of Voyages and Travel in the Interior of North America*. Toronto, 1904, p. 140.

CHAPTER III

SEEKING POND'S OUTLET

THE expedition was assembled and by nine on the morning of 3 June all was in readiness for the order to start. Every member in his time had travelled far on many a hazardous trip. The innumerable lakes and rivers in the drainage basins from the Churchill to the St. Lawrence were the highways and by-ways of their journeyings. Athabasca River and its lake they also knew, but "English Chief" and Laurent Le Roux had been farther afield, the former to the forts on Hudson Bay, the latter to Great Slave Lake.

Mackenzie had Pond's map, and in imagination had plotted the route through the unknown north-west quarter of the continent to the Pacific. Captain Cook's latitudes and longitudes at points on the western sea-board were known to him, and he surmised that the northern river might lead him out of Great Slave Lake to one of the several embouchures known to open out upon the Western Sea. What the intervening distance held was merely a matter of conjecture.

The journey must be completed in the short season of three or four months, or in two seasons if it became necessary to winter. Therefore the preparations were careful and thorough in every detail; not that the fur-trader, explorer by instinct, is ever careless in his arrangements. Comfort, success, life itself depend upon meticulous attention to all the minutiæ of the voyage. Hence, however furious the

driving may be when under way, there is deliberation on the day of departure.

While Mackenzie was going over final matters in the fort, taking a last look into the famous library which served to keep the "wolves of the North" from too complete a severance from civilisation, he bade adieu in his own way to one of the most comfortable posts in the North, in whose cheerful precincts he had spent the last winter quite happily with his cousin Roderick Mackenzie. Here, before a roaring fire during the long winter nights, with hot toddies at his elbow, he had discussed tentatively the plans that were shaping in his mind to explore the northern river. The volleying of the ice on the lake and the distant howl of wolves only served to render more alluring the balmy weather in which his future voyage was envisaged.

The die was cast. The time had come. The canoes had their lading and were waiting on the still waters outside. The leader's thoughts flashed back to far-off moments of reverie when the impulse to explore first had its birth; but such cogitations lie too deep below the surface to be regarded too starkly; their effect is emotional, obscure, emerging only in a stronger sense of individuality, an awakening of the self to a consciousness of a definite step forward, which, however often it may occur, always comes with something of surprise, and keen appreciation. In the meantime the crew were engaged in the casual farewells characteristic of the men of the North.

The historical importance of the undertaking escaped them, but while drinking the parting dram they were voluble about remembered days of carousal at Grande Portage or Montreal. The sun was already high in the heavens. The substantial log buildings stood out in the clear air on the point of the three-mile promontory, "the

base of which appeared in the shape of a person sitting with her arms extended, the palms as it were forming a point." The four canoes, carefully loaded and covered with tarpaulins, were objects of attention to the women and children, whose faces and the canoes were reflected in the still waters of the lake. The craft were so well down in the water that it seemed impossible that they could carry all the members of the party. Speaking of the loads carried by the fur-brigades Mackenzie says: "An European, on seeing one of these slender vessels with her gunwales within six inches of the water, would think his fate inevitable in such a boat when he reflected on the nature of such a voyage; but the Canadians are so expert that few accidents happen."

The *voyageurs*, with their love of the gay and ornate, had given extra touches of bright colour to the canoe of their leader. A thirty-two-footer, four feet ten inches wide in the middle, narrowing fore and aft to two feet six, where the bowman and steersman sat, and two feet deep, made throughout of the best selected yellow birch bark, free from wrinkles, stretched over seventy-one ribs of thin white cedar, and longitudinal slats of the same material, it seemed a flimsy if picturesque affair, with its painted, curved-up bow and stern pieces; yet it was spacious and strong, capable of carrying twenty-five "pieces" of goods of the regulation weight of ninety pounds, besides its crew and their provisions and baggage.

The lading was carefully stored on the "grand-perch," of four three-inch poles laid side by side in the middle of the bottom, so that the weight rested on them without pressing upon the bare and unprotected sides, which would have been fatal to such a vessel. The cargo was made up of provisions and clothing for the voyage, and an assortment

of suitable articles of merchandise as presents to ensure a friendly reception among the Indians. Arms and ammunition in sufficient quantity, both for defence and hunting, formed a very important part of the equipment, since it was intended at every opportunity to supplement the supplies by fishing and hunting. A mast and lug-sail, and ten-foot, iron-shod setting-poles for each man, an extra number of towing-lines, tents, blankets, camp-kettles, a bundle of "watape" for stitching up seams, gum for repairs, hatchets, a crooked-knife and a few other indispensable articles completed the load, all of which were protected from the rain and incidental splashings by sheets of oil-cloth lashed to the thwarts.

The *voyageurs* who formed the crew were François Barrieu, Pierre de Lorme, Charles Ducette, and Joseph Landry. The Indian wives of two of the *voyageurs*, and a young German, John Steinbruck, had places in Mackenzie's canoe, which thus carried eight people in addition to its load of goods.

A Chipewyan chief with his two wives and two young Indians occupied a second canoe. "English Chief" had often led his people on fur-trading jaunts all the way to Fort Churchill and, because of his trade relations with the English on Hudson Bay, he had earned the sobriquet of which he was very vain. As he was the most intelligent, travelled Indian available, and had the prestige of a leader among his people, he was selected as guide, interpreter and general supervisor of the native hunters who accompanied the expedition. His followers had a third canoe. M. Le Roux, the clerk, was in charge of another, loaded with goods for the trade on Slave Lake. He carried in addition a part of the supplies intended for the voyage.

As second in command the clerk gave the word to stand

by, and all was excitement among the onlookers. Indian hunters crowded to the water's edge, eyeing the canoes and equipment with the appraising scrutiny of men experienced in the requirements of the wilds. Their women edged nearer, smiling broadly at the unwonted thing happening in their midst. This was a stirring event, and their excitement took the form of child-like wonder. All, however, instinctively left a lane for the passage of "Kitche Okema," the most powerful human creature they had yet seen, who moreover regarded them with a friendly if sometimes stern eye, as a father might his children. Shy youngsters became momentarily bolder, scrambling from the rear to places of vantage. Among them were several who were keener and more attractive in appearance and decidedly more aggressive. These children of Indian mothers, distinctively showing French and Scottish characteristics, pushed the others aside and gazed at the men of the expedition with a spirit of camaraderie.

Each of the spectators felt in some degree that he was sharing in an important enterprise, for it was common knowledge that Kitche Okema and his party were bound on a great quest to a new country, where furs were as plentiful in the woods as the water-fowl were in the shallows at the western end of the lake.

The *voyageurs*, always ready enough to make every occasion a festive one, had not been favoured with more than a moderate amount of rum, otherwise there would have been a delay until they sobered up. As it was, they were in fine fettle. Each man had responded, when Le Roux shouted the word, by grabbing his own private paddle and getting into his place in the canoes.

Mackenzie appeared, coming down with quick strides, abstracted in manner, and yet with that half-smile of the

Photo G. S. Hume *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

INDIANS LANDING AT FORT RESOLUTION

Photo G. S. Hume *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

"THE RAMPARTS," MACKENZIE RIVER

thoughtful man who acknowledges with innate politeness the interest of the onlookers.

"*Bon voyage! Bonne chance!*" There was a chorus of farewells and pleasantries, and much vociferation. As Mackenzie, the great lord of the North, just twenty-six years of age, took his place, that send-off in French from Chipewyan throats, as he was about to make his dash into the wilds, and down the Columbia perhaps, or even to Cook's River on the far Pacific, touched an emotional chord in his Highland make-up. His partners, and friends and relatives in the new world, and those he had left behind a short ten years ago in the distant Hebrides—of them all, only Roderick, his cousin, knew of this undertaking, on which he was staking his standing with his partners and perhaps his life, and that one who shared his secret was away with the Athabasca brigade *en route* to Grande Portage.

The steersman lifted his pole on high and at the drop, the paddles flashed in unison and the flotilla, to the sound of volleys from the muskets on shore, glided swiftly away, *en route* to the silent places of the North. Someone tentatively started a *chanson de voyage*, but *En roulant ma boule* was laughed aside in favour of *Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre*, as being more appropriate to the occasion.

By noon Fort Chipewyan was disappearing in the rear, and their faces were definitely set towards the unknown. Off the mouth of the Athabasca the course was changed from a westerly to a north-westerly one, and after a run of thirty-seven miles the tents were pitched on the banks of the River des Rochers, through which the lake debouches, after a course of thirty miles, into Slave River. This connecting channel is a stream 150 yards wide with an easy current flowing between low alluvial banks which carry a fine growth of spruce, poplar, birch, tamarack and willow.

This region, in fact, is part of the delta of the Peace, which comprises an immense tract of the richest lands in Canada. At high water in May and August the flooding Peace flows into the lake by this and other channels, where it combines with the discharge of the Athabasca. The precipitation of sediments brought down by both rivers has resulted in the formation of extensive lowlands which now occupy a large area, formerly a part of the lake.

Thirty-seven miles in ten hours might be considered good going, but this day's run was just to get the expedition safely started from the post. From now on the day's work would extend from four in the morning to seven at night, and the speed would seldom be less than four miles an hour, and often eight and ten. The men might grumble, but they were inured to it; it was in fact their business, and, as in the case of all grinding labour, the victims were inclined to relax periodically, when the opportunity occurred, in violent dissipations.

The canoes had to be hauled ashore and gummed and, while they were undergoing this operation, the camp-fires blazed and pungent smoke, mixed with the odour of ducks, geese and fish cooking, gave an edge to appetites already keen.

Promptly at four next morning the canoes were under way. The Peace, where it enters the Slave, is about a mile wide, but the Slave itself in its upper section varies from 600 to 1200 yards, flowing with a uniform current of about three miles an hour between low wooded banks. In the seventy-one miles to the head of the rapids there are no obstructions, no affluents of any consequence, and only occasional outcrops of rock. On such stretches as this the going is good, and the party jogged along comfortably, smoking their pipes, varying the monotony with traditional songs, and letting the current do at least half the work.

After a satisfactory day the second camp was made on the eastern bank at Dog River, just above the first rapid several miles across from the present location of Fitzgerald. From this point the river falls 125 feet in sixteen miles in a series of dangerous chutes, spreading out to a width of two miles as it tumbles over a broken gneissic spur, thrust across from the Laurentian region in the east. Without good guides a safe descent is almost impossible. Many rocky islands break up the river into intricate channels. Log-jams and drift-piles are numerous and troublesome. But a descent by canoe or boat can be made on the east side by making five or six portages totalling nearly 4000 paces.

To negotiate the series of six large and several minor rapids required all the skill and endurance of every member of the party. The cargo of ninety-pound "pieces" was unloaded and reloaded half a dozen times and carried over portages which varied in length from 300 to 1200 paces. Sometimes it was only necessary to lighten the canoes, but over the carrying-places, the canoes, the heaviest of which weighed over three hundred pounds, were shouldered by the bowman and the steersman whose special duty it was to transport their craft in this fashion. "No men in the world are more severely worked than these *voyageurs*," says a writer of the time, "but it is not with impunity that they so exert themselves. They lose much flesh in the performance of such duties, though the quantity of food they consume is incredible. They smoke almost incessantly, and sing peculiar songs which are the same their grandfathers and their great-grandfathers sang before them." [1]

"So inured are they to this kind of labour that I have known some of them set off with two packages of ninety pounds each and return with two others of the same weight

[1] Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections*. Two vols. London, 1852.

(across Grande Portage) in the course of six hours, being a distance of eighteen miles over hills and mountains." [1]

The mosquitoes, which had followed them in clouds and were seldom absent, were particularly annoying to the men engaged in transferring their canoes and cargo past the rapids. The whole outfit was bodily carried a total distance of about a mile and a half. In this way Casette, Mountain, Pelican, and the Rapids of the Drowned and several minor ones were passed. A venturesome Indian woman, however, in trying to run a chute alone in her canoe sensed danger in time to abandon the craft, which went down the falls and was dashed to pieces. Every traveller in the North knows that experienced men may be caught and drowned. Only three years before, a party proceeding to Slave Lake in the fall of the year, under the direction of Cuthbert Grant, lost two canoes and five of its men in the Rapids of the Drowned, which occasioned the place to be called Portage des Noyés. Proceeding six miles farther, camp was made at 5.30 in the evening at Point de Roche. The hunters brought in several geese, a beaver, and four ducks. All were greatly fatigued after such a strenuous day's work, as well they might be. The mere labour of lifting and carrying things is by no means so trying as the incessant strain required to avert dangers and prevent catastrophes. The high nervous tension is more wearing than mere muscular effort.

Slave River below the rapids winds through a level alluvial plain between banks of clay and sand. The west side shows dark rich soil, especially in the lower reaches. At the sixtieth parallel the banks are a hundred feet high, becoming, as the river descends, gradually lower. The stream averages half a mile in width, with a gradient of about six inches to the mile.

[1] Mackenzie, *Voyages*.

In spite of the labours of the previous day a start was made on Saturday at 2.30 a.m. It turned cold and a head wind impeded them, kicking up quite a swell. Early in the day Salt River was passed, a small stream thirty yards in width which drains a large country to the west, partly forested and partly prairie. Large deposits of pure salt are found here. Indians *en route* to Fort Chipewyan invariably stopped for a load, as it was much appreciated by some of the Europeans, though the *voyageurs* and Indians, who lived most of the time on an exclusive fish diet, did not use it.

The Slave meanders widely between the rapids and the lake. At Le Grand Détour, forty miles below the rapids, it is fifteen miles around the loop, and only 1000 yards across the neck, and at Point Ennuyeux the distance around the loop is ten miles, while the portage is barely half a mile.

From 3 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday the party battled with head-winds and violent rains which twice forced them ashore for shelter. Travelling downstream against strong head-winds is a most exasperating proceeding. All were wet and grumpy, but the rain continued for the remainder of the day. The night was boisterous and there was no abatement Monday. Camping under such circumstances was by no means an unmitigated pleasure, yet the day off gave the men a rest, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Tuesday the ninth, the weather being calm and foggy, a start was made at two in the morning. A small eastern outlet ten miles in length led them by many windings into the lake, where they arrived at nine, only to find it entirely covered with ice, except along the shore. Here to their relief the mosquitoes left them. The ground, it was observed, was not thawed for more than fourteen inches down and

there was scarcely any appearance of verdure along the lake, although on the rivers above trees were in full leaf.

Speaking of the country on both sides of Slave River Mackenzie says: "The Indians informed me, that, at a very small distance from either bank of the river, are very extensive plains, frequented by large herds of buffaloes, while the moose and reindeer [1] keep in the woods that border on it. The beavers, which are in great numbers, build their habitations in the small lakes and rivers, because in the larger streams, the ice carries away everything with it during the spring. The mud banks in the river are covered with wild fowl, and we this morning killed two swans, ten geese, and one beaver, without suffering the delay of an hour, so that we might soon have filled the canoe with them if that had been our object."

Slave River enters the lake through many channels flowing among low alluvial islands. The lower edge of the delta has in fact a frontage of twenty miles. The prevailing north-east winds cast up miles of driftwood which forms barrier beaches on the south shore. The long lagoons made in this manner eventually fill up and are reclaimed from the lake and added to the delta which is gradually encroaching northward across the lake. A great part of the northern section of Slave River was once an arm of the lake, since filled in by the above sequence of sedimentation, north-east winds, barrier beaches of driftwood, lagoons, swamps and alluvial lands.

The canoes proceeded eastward behind one of these long barriers to the houses erected by Messrs. Grant and Le Roux in 1786. They had wintered here that and the following year, calling the place (old) Fort Resolution. Le Roux had then crossed the lake to the North Arm where a house

[1] For "reindeer" read "caribou" in the following pages.

was built, and afterwards known as (old) Fort Providence. He had left the latter place in March to join Mackenzie at Fort Chipewyan.

It was observed that the channel in five miles was exceedingly shallow, the depth of water being nowhere more than three feet, and the canoes were consequently often aground.

"Here we found our people who had arrived early in the morning and whom we had not seen since the preceding Sunday. We now unloaded the canoe and pitched our tents, as there was every appearance that we should be obliged to remain here for some time. I then ordered the nets to be set as it was absolutely necessary that the stores provided for our future voyage should remain untouched. The fish we now caught were carp, *poisson inconnu*, whitefish and trout."

A heavy rain on Wednesday night weakened the ice. A hunting party was sent out to a lake nine miles away, and "the women were employed in gathering berries of different sorts of which there was a great plenty. I accompanied one of my people to a small adjacent island where we picked up some dozens of swan, geese and duck eggs; we also killed a couple of ducks and a goose. The weather was fine and clear, with a strong westerly wind. The ice moved a little to the westward."

The ice moved again the following day in the same direction and Mackenzie ascended a hill but could not perceive that it was broken in the middle of the lake. The mosquitoes appeared again in great numbers. On Saturday a northerly wind drove the ice, now much broken, along the shore, covering the nets.

"One of the hunters returned from Slave River with three beavers and fourteen geese. He was accompanied

by three families of Indians, who left Athabasca the same day as myself; they did not bring me any fowl; and they pleaded in excuse, that they had travelled with so much expedition as to prevent them from procuring sufficient provisions for themselves."

A boisterous Sunday with heavy rain and an electric storm helped to reduce the ice, so that with a favourable westward wind on Monday a passage was opened to the opposite islands. Embarking at sunset they crossed over a stretch of eight miles in two hours.

"At half past eleven p.m. we landed on a small island and proceeded to gum the canoe. At this time the atmosphere was sufficiently clear to admit of reading or writing without the aid of artificial light. We had not seen a star since the second day after we left Athabasca. About twelve o'clock the moon made its appearance above the tops of the trees, the lower horn being in a state of eclipse which continued for about six minutes in a cloudless sky."

A northerly wind and floating ice prevented embarking until 1 p.m., when they ran ten miles in a choppy sea, taking in a considerable quantity of water. Wednesday's delay was compensated by good fishing. At 4 a.m. next morning the nets again yielded an abundance of fish; but after four miles they were again blocked by ice which had been driven into the passage by a south-east wind. While waiting for an opening the hunters killed a caribou and its fawn. They also brought in some Indians from the opposite side of the island, where they were waiting for the ice to clear in order to cross the lake. With his thoughts ever on the food supply Mackenzie let no opportunity slip that could be devoted to hunting and fishing, and it was owing to his eternal vigilance in this particular that he was enabled to prosecute his enterprise with a comforting margin of provisions. Confidence in

him as a leader received its final sanction from his thoughtfulness and success as a provider.

The weather was cloudy and the wind changeable, but nevertheless they were pestered by mosquitoes, though in a great measure surrounded by ice. The next day it was possible to make a large island six miles west where fish, cranberries, and small spring onions were plentiful. M. Le Roux, who had gone back to the camp of the eighteenth, where there was good fishing, was now sent for. A southerly wind drove the ice northward, and at 2 am.. Le Roux and his people arrived, after having been severely buffeted by the wind. At 5 p.m. the ice had been driven past to the north, and the flotilla steered west fifteen miles through broken ice to a cluster of small islands three miles from the mainland on the north side of the lake. The intervening space was completely obstructed; five large and two small caribou, however, were killed on a near-by island, which was accordingly named Ile de Carrebœuf.

Mackenzie frequently devoted himself to careful astronomical observations, but these, while recorded with frequency in his *Journals*, are not quoted here except in one or two instances, as he states that he afterwards realised that his astronomical knowledge was not sufficiently accurate to make his records on this trip reliable.

He sat up the whole of Sunday night to observe the setting and rising of the sun. The orb was beneath the horizon four hours and twenty-two minutes and rose north 20° east by the compass. It, however, froze so hard that during the sun's disappearance the water was covered with ice half an inch thick.

Coasting thirteen miles north-west along the edge of the ice brought them to an island where M. Le Roux's people buried two bags of pemmican against their return. Leaving

Ile à la Cache at 2.30 p.m., a course was followed eighteen miles west and north among the islands and camp was made at eight on a small one. Although the weather was by no means warm they were tormented and their rest interrupted by hosts of mosquitoes which followed them in dense swarms. On Tuesday they landed on the mainland at three lodges of the Red-Knives, and were told that there were many more lodges of their friends at no great distance.

As this is the first occasion when a transaction in trade occurs it is interesting to quote his exact words describing it, particularly his reference to the use of liquor in such transactions. "M. Le Roux purchased of these Indians upwards of eight packs of good beaver and marten skins and there was not above twelve of them qualified to kill beaver. The 'English Chief' got upwards of a hundred skins on the score of debts due to him, of which he had many outstanding in this country. Forty of them he gave on account of debts due by him since the winters 1786 and 1787, at the Slave Lake; the rest he exchanged for rum and other necessary articles, and I added a small quantity of that liquor as an encouraging present to him and his young men. I had several consultations with these Copper Indian people, but could obtain no information that was material to our expedition, nor were they acquainted with any part of the river which was the object of my research, but the mouth of it. In order to save as much time as possible in circumnavigating the bays, I engaged one of the Indians to conduct us; and I accordingly equipped him with various articles of clothing, etc. I also purchased a large new canoe, that he might embark with the two young Indians in my service."

In the afternoon the Indians were assembled and told that a fort would be established here for their benefit under M. Le Roux, "which would be continued as long as they

should be found to deserve it." Heretofore they had been pillaged by the Chipewyans and therefore had no motive to pursue the beaver but to obtain a sufficient quantity of food and raiment, but now they would exert themselves to the utmost, to obtain in the way of trade some of the white man's alluring offerings in addition to the food and raiment which hitherto had proved ample for their needs.

Mackenzie now sent out his last mail to Messrs. Macleod and Mackenzie, leaving it with Le Roux to be forwarded to Athabasca, and on Thursday, 25 June, at 3 a.m., M. Le Roux saluted his superior officer with some volleys of small arms which were returned by the deeply laden canoes, for the officials were now parting, the former to trade with the Red-Knives, and the latter to pursue his toilsome way out of the lake.

First they traversed a bay[1] several miles across, which was reported by the Indians to be fifteen leagues in depth with a much greater breadth in several parts and full of islands. On attaining the far side he observed that the topography had altered. The hills and rocky islands sparsely covered with scattered trees and moss, with which they had been favoured since leaving the south shore now gave place to flat land of loose sandy soil well-wooded, gradually rising inland. That clue to his whereabouts makes it clear that on leaving Slave River he had first gone east and then north through the islands to a point near the Yellow-Knife River, crossing the North Arm at its narrowest part. The North Arm and Slave River, the latter formerly a southern extension of the lake, sharply divide the rocky Laurentian plateau region on the east from the low wooded central plains area west of it.

Following a south-east course of about forty-five miles

[1] The North Arm of Slave Lake.

along the west side of the North Arm, the point is rounded and the northern shore hugged as conveniently as possible. Twice, however, the Red-Knife guide, who had not been over the route for eight years, led them into deep bays. English Chief was very much irritated with him and threatened to murder him for undertaking to guide the party in a course of which he was ignorant. The Red-Knife's instinct, however, was true, for he recollected, when brought to a stand in the rushes at the head of the last deep bay, that, on a former occasion, he had crossed overland from the river they were seeking to this spot.

Embarking in the evening at four of Monday, 29 June, just twenty days after they had entered the lake, they doubled the point an hour later, and entered a shallow passage, not more than six feet deep, on the north side of a large island. The channel was full of fish and swarming with water-fowl of many kinds. This was the outlet of Great Slave Lake and the beginning of La Grande Rivière which they had been seeking so long.

Had Mackenzie realised that his journey to the frozen seas from this point and back was a little matter of 2000 miles, would he have attempted it, after battling twenty days on Great Slave Lake with ice and stormy weather? A thousand miles downstream is not a difficult undertaking, at eight miles an hour just a spurt of eight days or so, but returning up-river by poling and towing the canoes is a job of great magnitude. But explorers and leaders, fortunately for their projects, are not always called upon to perform the drudgery. The will to do resides in them, and theirs is the work to translate that determination, by rewards, inspiration and driving power, into successful accomplishment.

CHAPTER IV

LA GRANDE RIVIÈRE EN BAS

The Grand River flowing out of Great Slave Lake to some unknown bourne had been up to this day when Mackenzie and his party entered it a more or less mythical stream, spoken of by Indians and depicted on Pond's maps, but really a plaything of the imagination, whose course was made to span a country of indefinite extent, and unite, in the minds of enthusiasts like Pond and Ogden, Great Slave Lake with such distant points as the "River of the West," Cook's River on the Pacific, and the Icy Sea in the North.

What Mackenzie's theories were with regard to the course of this river are not precisely known. Had he been convinced that, like the Coppermine, it emptied into Polar seas, it is doubtful whether he would have pursued his explorations northward with so much persistence. Hearne's journeyings were familiar to him. He was aware that, while adding to geographical knowledge, Hearne's discoveries had not added to the great company's coffers in the way of trade. The far North did not particularly attract the trader. The North-West Company had mapped out an ambitious plan to survey the immense territory between the fifty-fifth and sixty-fifth parallels extending from Hudson Bay to the Pacific. It was consequently within these latitudes that new water-ways would prove alluring. The fur-traders knew the position of Cook's River, or Cook's Entry, in Alaska; and on maps of North America current in Mackenzie's time, a large river flowing into the Pacific in about the same

latitude as the Columbia was indicated, and known as the "River of the West," later to be called the Oregon by Jonathan Carver.

In 1775, Heceta passed the mouth of the Columbia, but was unaware that the greatest river draining the Pacific slope here entered the sea,[1] and in 1789, while Mackenzie was making his trip to the frozen seas, John Meares also passed the indentation, calling it Deception Bay. The bar was finally crossed in 1792 by Robert Gray of Boston, who realised the importance of his discovery. A few months later Lieutenant Broughton of Vancouver's expedition sailed a hundred miles up the river in boats and took possession of the country for the King of England.

Any notions, therefore, that Mackenzie may have had about the Grand River coming out on the Pacific in a latitude lower than its outlet on Great Slave Lake, must have been derived from speculations current at the time, rather than from actual knowledge of the existence of a river flowing in that direction.[2] Cook's River, as Mackenzie calls it, though Cook's Entry was the usual designation, now generally known as Cook's Inlet, was the only break in the coast of any consequence north of California. Hence he had that position always in mind, though there is not the slightest doubt that he hoped to come out lower down the coast after traversing a country favourable for trade, for it must not be forgotten that Mackenzie was an energetic and successful trader, fired with an explorer's enthusiasm, which had mastered him and which he had allowed to actuate him that he might add to the company's wealth by opening up new territories rich in fur resources.

As he hoped to discover a river discharging westward,

[1] On Spanish maps this indentation is marked Rio de San Roque.
[2] The Spanish voyages of 1774–5 were not published until 1781.

it may be surmised also that he was not particularly anxious to find himself on the shores of the Icy Sea anywhere in the neighbourhood of the Coppermine.

The Russians were known to have established trading-posts on the North Pacific, and Mackenzie therefore took money with him in order to be able to traffic with them. Whatever private hopes and fears he may have entertained, there is no question that he was greatly influenced by the theories held by Peter Pond with regard to the river flowing out of Great Slave Lake.

The question then that was uppermost in his mind, when he entered the Grand River, was whether the course would continue west to Cook's River, or north to the Arctic, or south-west towards the region "where rolls the Oregon."

In the Ogden letters the following is of interest as indicating the sources of some of the notions Mackenzie had of the river he was about to descend: "From out of the Great Slave Lake runs a very large river which runs almost south-west and has the largest falls on it in the known world. The falls are in longitude 141. The great chain of mountains that extends from Mexico along the western or Pacific Ocean, and the North Pacific Ocean, terminates in latitude 62½, and longitude 136, so that the Slave River runs to the westward of them and empties into the ocean by its course in about the Lat. of 59."

These statements of Ogden's are based partly upon information obtained from Pond, and partly upon wild surmisings of his own. Pond, it is known, obtained his data from Indian sources. Some of it was authentic, and some mere hearsay, often of an exaggerated character, and it may be taken for granted that there were misconceptions on the part of Pond in his interpretations of the Indian stories.

Besides which, authorities state that Pond himself was not above drawing the long bow when it suited his purpose. At all events Mackenzie's observations while on Slave Lake fixed the latitude of these waters in 61° 40′ [1] and therefore he was prepared to find the outlet flowing west and perhaps south-west. Moreover, that rumour of the biggest falls in the world was to haunt him day and night. So far as they knew, no one had been on this river before, except of course the native population, if there were any such. Even the Red-Knife guide's limit of travel extended no farther than the first lake-expansion a few hours' journey from the lake, so that from now on they felt themselves to be veritable discoverers, pioneers of the new world, forerunners of all that might pass this way in the days to come. They were adventurers in the true sense of the word.

The outlet from the lake is seven or eight miles in width and very shallow. A moderate current flows around a large island about fourteen miles in length, which occupies most of the space between the shores. Passing down the northern channel, every member was on the *qui vive*, as the canoes, urged on by wind and current, made rapid progress, south-west and then west, past what is now Fort Providence, into a lake-expansion. Here the country was so low and the width of the river so great that the opposite shores were scarcely visible. This body of water is to-day known as Mills Lake. The Red-Knife guide had never been beyond this point, but was well acquainted with the river that flows in from the Horn Mountains in the north, which is the country of the Beaver Indians. His people frequently forgathered on that river with the Beavers.

For some time there was difficulty in finding egress from

[1] Mackenzie's latitudes have been found to be much nearer the exact positions than his longitudes.

this expansion, but finally the main channel was discovered flowing to the south, and camp was made soon after sunset. The land to the north was low and forested, while that to the south was much higher, with an abundance of wood.

The next day the course was southerly. A low ridge of mountains was seen in that direction from fourteen to twenty miles away. It was the northward-facing escarpment of the Alberta plateau, which here parallels the Mackenzie east and west as far as Trout River, at the mouth of which the explorers pitched their second camp since leaving the lake. While the tents were being erected a violent tempest swept down, knocking them flat and drenching everyone to the skin. The Indians had employed themselves on the islands chasing wild fowl, which had recently cast their feathers, and were successful in catching five swans and as many geese.

A few miles below the Trout River camp the sluggish water ends, the river narrows to half a mile and the current increases to between seven and eight miles an hour, which rate it maintains for seventy to eighty miles. In one of the reaches Mackenzie lost his lead and part of his sounding-line. Great quantities of ice encumbered the banks.

The river had turned north and west again, and their hopes, raised so much the day before, of a stream flowing south or south-west, received a set-back. Reaching the junction of the Liard, or "River of the Mountains," with the main trunk, they came to a small island, the present location of Fort Simpson, where there were poles of four lodges standing which, they concluded, had belonged to the Knisteneaux[1] on their war excursion of six or seven years ago. These Indians, better known as the Crees, had spread north and west, driving all other tribes before them.

Mackenzie was in daily expectation of coming to dangerous

[1] See Appendix C, "Indian Tribes."

rapids or falls, rumours of which had reached him, and the party, consequently, was always keenly on the alert, for they were well aware that it is quite possible on a new route to run into falls or rapids which give no warning, and that strangers are likely to find themselves suddenly in great danger. The *voyageur* in new country is always subconsciously prepared for *le rapide qui ne parle pas.*

Their canoes were deeply laden, and to relieve them, and also to provide a store of food for the return journey, two bags of pemmican[1] were concealed on one of the islands, in the hope that they would be of future service. "The Indians were of a different opinion as they entertained no expectation of returning that season, when the provisions would be spoiled."

After an examination of the Indian encampments of the last year, it was concluded from the manner in which the wood was cut that these people had no iron tools, and Mackenzie felt justified in thinking that they had not yet come in contact with traders, which gratified the trader in him, while it brought some disappointment to the explorer, who was ever on the look out for indications of communication with the western seaboard.

In spite of fog the flotilla was off at five-thirty. By noon the first important range of high mountains[2] was seen, west and south, stretching as far as it was possible to see. The summits, cloud-capped in the highest parts, were bare and rocky, but the declivities were covered with wood. Certain patches of white high up above the timber-line were thought to be talc, though they possessed a more brilliant whiteness.

[1] Sun-dried buffalo-meat, pounded fine, and mixed with melted fat, preserved in buffalo-skin bags, hair-side in. It was a staple food among the fur-traders on long journeys, when fish, fresh, dried, or frozen, or game could not be had. Also known as "taureaux."

[2] The Mackenzie Range.

The Indians called them *manetoe aseniah*, or spirit stones, not having any suspicion, apparently, that they were merely patches of snow.

The current had averaged four miles during the day, and the banks were higher than any yet encountered, towering two hundred feet above the river. Great caution was observed lest they should run into some great rapid or fall. "This was such a prevalent idea that all of us were persuaded that we heard those sounds which betokened a fall of water."

The river turned sharply north at what is now known as Camsell Bend, where the stream impinges upon the Mackenzie Mountains. For several hundred miles it parallels the range, whose peaks were always in sight. The river widened and groups of low islands filled the channel, one of which was about twenty miles in length.

At eight in the evening the fourth camp was made on the north side of the river. The Indians complained of the perseverance with which the party pushed forward, saying that they were not accustomed to such severe fatigue as it occasioned. Probably Mackenzie mentions this complaint merely to contrast their indolence with the unremitting labours of the canoemen.

They had reached a point three hundred miles down the river, travelling an average of seventy-five miles a day since quitting the lake, which is certainly not an excessive speed. The current between "Head-of-the-Line," which is about six miles west of Trout River, and the Liard, a distance of seventy-five miles, has a velocity of seven to eight miles an hour, at which rate it is not difficult to jog along comfortably a hundred miles a day. It is to be remarked that Mackenzie makes no mention of complaints from his *voyageurs*. They were used to the routine. The fur-trade demanded intensive work over short periods, for the

distances were so great that, in order to get the season's travelling done between the break-up and the freeze-up, the brigades had to be kept on the move almost continuously.

Writers of the time state that the canoemen worked about twenty hours a day for two or three weeks at a stretch, resting only every two hours for five or ten minutes to fill their pipes, hence their custom of describing distances by so many pipes. They were usually allowed a dram of high wines, a strong distillation from corn, in the morning and another at night.[1]

Compared with what they had been accustomed to, it cannot be said that the work was arduous; the hours were long, but, having a current varying from two to eight and even ten miles an hour, they were not obliged to paddle with great labour, the river itself doing most of the work; it was merely necessary to get into the current and stay in it as many hours as they conveniently could. Hence the statement so often made that Mackenzie drove his men at an excessive speed is not well founded. He merely observed a routine that all northern canoe travellers observe of giving the river current a chance to do as much of the work as possible in the shortest time. It is generally conceded that Mackenzie was by no means so merciless as Governor Simpson, who in his day was regarded as an insatiable "speed-fiend," incessantly urging his men to greater efforts.

The fact of the matter is that, on a trip of this kind, every member of the expedition excepting the Indians knew the conditions of the problem and was personally concerned to do his utmost, in loyal co-operation with his chief, to get the voyage successfully over as quickly as the circumstances would allow. It will be found that the *voyageurs*, "his people," as he so often calls them with a note of patriarchal

[1] Landmann's *Adventures and Recollections*. Two vols. London, 1852.

pride, were loyal and entirely at one with him, within certain limits, when the work was what they were accustomed to. The Indians of course lacked vision, interest, in fact all objective beyond that of the prestige they were to acquire as companions of the "Great Chief," and the compensation which would be theirs for services that Mackenzie could at no time dispense with.

The next day found them bounding along at an exhilarating rate among rocky islands which seemed to indicate a near approach to rapids or falls. The river boiled around them, producing a hissing noise like a kettle of seething water. The hissing was probably due to the presence in the water of particles of sand in great quantity which were forced up against the under surface of the canoe in a continuous sand-blast, making a scraping sound which is "felt" rather than heard.

High mountains on both sides hemmed them in, narrowing the stream to one and a half miles, and finally to half a mile.

Their camp-fires flared that night on the north shore at the foot of a high hill which in some parts rose sheer from the river. This is probably the elevation that has come to be known as "Roche-qui-trempe-l'Eau," opposite the present site of Wrigley. Ascending the hill with two men, after an hour and a half's hard walking Mackenzie gained the summit, and was surprised to find it crowned by an encampment. "The Indians informed me that it was the custom of the people who have no arms to choose these elevated spots for the places of their residences, as they can render them inaccessible to their enemies, particularly the Knisteneaux,[1] of whom they were in continual dread. The prospect from this height was not as extensive as we expected, as it was terminated by a circular range of hills of the same

[1] Crees.

elevation as that on which we stood, the intervals between the hills were covered with small lakes, which were inhabited by great numbers of swans. We saw no trees but the pine and the birch, which were small in size and few in number. We were obliged to shorten our stay here from the swarm of mosquitoes which attacked us on all sides."

Cold weather prevailed next day, which was in great contrast with the sultriness experienced recently. The river maintained its speed and about six in the evening turned sharply to the west for three or four miles. Ice was piled up along the banks. "The hunters killed a beaver and a goose, the former of which sank before they could get to him: beavers, otters, bears, etc., if shot dead at once, remain floating like a bladder, but if there remains enough life for them to struggle, they soon fill with water and go to the bottom."

The sun set at fifty-three minutes past nine, and rose seven minutes before two next morning. The party was on the move soon after sunrise, passing among islands for five miles, when the river began to widen and the current to slacken. A rugged snow-covered mountain appeared ahead, and in the evening several smokes were seen on the north shore, which proved to be a bivouac of the first Indians encountered on the river.

"As we drew nearer we discovered the natives running about in great confusion; some were making to the woods and others hurrying to their canoes." Perceiving that it was impossible to avoid the strangers, they made signs to the canoes to keep at a distance. English Chief and his young man persuaded them to approach the tents, and finding themselves well received they hastened to call their fugitive companions from their hiding-places. "There were five families consisting of thirty persons of two different

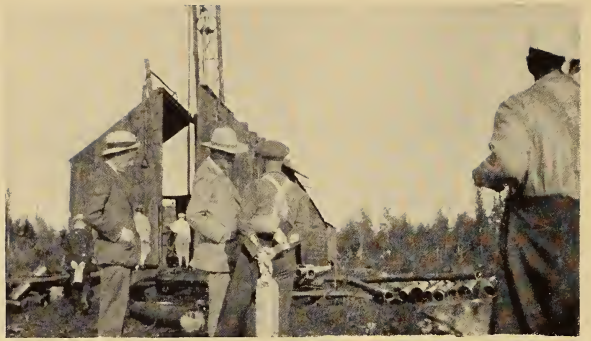


Photo O. S. Finnie *Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa*

His Excellency the Governor-General at the Oil-well below Fort Norman, 28 July, 1925

Photo G. S. Hume *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

"Bear Rock," near Fort Norman
Mackenzie camped at the foot of this rock

tribes, the Slaves, and the Dog-Rib Indians. We made them smoke, and supplied them with grog. A distribution of knives, beads, awls, rings, gartering, fire-steels, flints and hatchets, made them more familiar than we expected, for we could not keep them out of our tents, though I did not observe that they attempted to purloin anything. They informed us that it would take several winters to get to the sea, and that old age would come upon us before the period of our return. We were also to encounter monsters of such horrid shapes and destructive powers as could only exist in their wild imaginations. They added besides, that there were two impassable falls in the river, the first of which was about thirty days' march from us. Though I placed no faith in these strange relations, they had a very different effect upon our Indians, who were already tired of the voyage. It was their opinion and anxious wish that we should not hesitate to return. They said that, according to the information which they had received, there were very few animals in the country beyond us, and that as we proceeded the scarcity would increase, and we should absolutely perish from hunger, if no other accident befell us."

Finally one of the tribe was induced to accompany the party in consideration of a small kettle, an axe, a knife, and some other articles. And at three in the afternoon the canoe was reloaded and the new guide, who had changed his mind, had to be compelled to embark.

"The people are meagre, ugly, and ill-made, particularly about the legs, which are clumsy and covered with scabs, due probably to their habit of roasting themselves before the fire. They are of moderate stature and are of a fairer complexion than the generality of Indians who are the natives of warmer climates."

In the matter of hirsute adornments, some of the men

wore long hair and beards, and others were closely cropped with a single tress hanging down behind. The younger men had removed all the hair from their faces by extraction. Both sexes wore caribou-skin parkas, with leggings that came halfway up the thighs, and moccasins, all very neatly decorated with porcupine quills, and the hair of the moose, coloured red, black, yellow and blue. Gorgets and bracelets of wood and horn, belts, garters, and head-bands, the latter embroidered with quills, and stuck round with the claws of bears, were typical ornaments. "Their cinctures and garters are formed of porcupine quills, woven with sinew in a style of peculiar skill and neatness, to which are attached fringes of leather strips, worked round with hair of various colours. Their mittens are also suspended from the neck in a position convenient for the reception of the hands."

Their semicircular huts, built facing each other across a fire, were in tepee style, the side facing the fire being open, the back covering consisting of branches and pieces of bark. Fishing-nets were observed to be from three to forty fathoms in length and from thirteen to thirty-six inches in depth. The bow and arrow, fishing-hooks, spears, daggers, clubs, raw-hide snares, stone axes, and awls, were in general use among them. Iron obtained in traffic from the Chipewyans had been converted into knives. Their canoes were of birch, and so light that one man could easily carry one of them overland. They were really one-man canoes, but capable of holding two. From their information it appeared that large bodies of Indians inhabited the mountains on the east side of the river.

The tribesmen promised to await the return of the expedition until the fall at this point, now known to the world as the location of the Fort Norman oil wells. Soon after embarking Great Bear Lake River was passed. Its

waters were observed to be a beautifully clear, greenish blue, in great contrast with the cloudier waters of the main stream, though comparatively speaking the Mackenzie is characterised by the purity of its water, in spite of the fact that it drains several thousand miles of the Cordilleran system. The two great lakes above serve as sedimentation basins, regulating the flow as well, which at a medium stage discharges about half a million cubic feet a second.

A wind storm accompanied by rain forced a landing when they had proceeded six miles. According to the guide, the summit[1] of the rocky hill, Bear Rock, at whose foot they were camped, was the scene of a storm every day of the year.

In order to prevent the escape of their reluctant guide it became necessary to keep a strict watch over him during the night.

At three in a very rainy and cloudy morning the expedition was once more *en route* through numerous islands, the river in places spreading to a width of ten miles. The banks, since the day before, varied from one hundred to three hundred feet in height; the current continued to run about four miles, while rugged ranges of limestone mountains were always in sight, though possibly thirty miles' distance from each other. In the evening camp was pitched under a high rocky hill, which the party attempted to ascend, but mosquitoes drove them down. This was in the neighbourhood of Roche Carcajou,[2] and Mackenzie noted that the mountains terminated here, and a considerable river came in from the west.

[1] 1300 feet.

[2] Roche Carcajou is about 1000 feet high and rises steeply from the water's edge. It gets its name from a weathered knob which bears a resemblance to a wolverine. The river flowing in from the west is Carcajou River, 116 miles from Fort Norman.

Crossing next day to the opposite side in consequence of a rapid, he observes, "We might have spared ourselves this trouble, as there would have been no danger in continuing our course, without any circuitous deviation whatever. This circumstance convinced us of the erroneous account given by the natives of the great and approaching dangers of our navigation, as this rapid [1] was stated to be one of them."

An Indian encampment came into view later, and as usual the startled natives immediately decamped. "Our guide called aloud to the fugitives and entreated them to stay, but without effect. An old man, however, did not hesitate to approach us and expressed himself as too far advanced in life and too indifferent about the short time he had to remain in the world to be very anxious about escaping from any danger that might threaten him, but at the same time he pulled his grey hairs from his head in handfuls to distribute among us, and implored our favour for himself and his relatives."

On being satisfied that they were in no danger the fugitives were induced to return. They consisted of eighteen people similar to those already seen. The usual presents were made and they provided the party with fish. The guide had again to be forced to embark.

These people told Mackenzie of another great rapid near at hand and "abounded in discouraging stories concerning the dangers and difficulties which we were to encounter.

[1] "The river falls over a ledge of rock forming the most important obstruction to steamboat navigation from Great Slave Lake to the sea. In high water the rapid is drowned out, but in low water the fall is increased, and becomes a more serious obstruction, although not sufficient to prevent the passage of steamboats. The river is divided by a channel part way down the rapid, and the usual canoe route is down the western channel where the fall is more gradual than on the east side." *Geol. Sur. Can. Mem.* 108, p. 32.

From hence our course was N.N.E. two miles when the river appeared to be inclosed with lofty perpendicular white rocks, which did not afford us a very agreeable prospect."

Thus Mackenzie, with the ever-present apprehension of great waterfalls in mind, approached the Ramparts, regarded by present-day travellers as one of the scenic features of the trip.

"We now went on shore to examine the rapid [1] but did not perceive any signs of it, though the Indians still continued to magnify its dangers; however, as they ventured down in their small canoes, our apprehensions were consequently removed, and we followed them at some distance, but did not find any increase in the rapidity of the current. At length the Indians informed us that we should find no other rapid but that which was now bearing us along."

The river contracts to five hundred yards here and, bending to the east, runs seven miles between vertical cliffs which increase from one hundred and twenty-five feet at the upper end to two hundred and fifty feet at the lower. The current is not more than four or five miles an hour. The explorer was descending the river during the period of high water, and the two formidable rapids, at Sans Sault, and the Ramparts, were drowned out. Soundings at the upper end gave a depth of three hundred feet.

A landing was made at Hare Indian River, where they found a party of twenty-two persons from whom they obtained hares and partridges in exchange for articles which delighted the natives. They reported that their people were at the lake above setting snares for reindeer.[2]

[1] "In low water a somewhat formidable rapid occurs at the upper end of the Ramparts." *Geol. Sur. Can. Mem.* 108, p. 32.

[2] Throughout the narrative "reindeer" and "deer" are to be read "caribou."

They promised to go for their furs and other articles which they wished to trade, and be at this point in two months' time when Mackenzie expected to be passing on his way up.

"There was a youth among them in the capacity of a slave whom our Indians understood better than any of the natives of this country whom they had yet seen. He was invited to accompany us, but took the first opportunity to conceal himself and we saw him no more."

The guide renewed his complaints, assuring Mackenzie that the Eskimos, "whom he represented to be a very wicked and malignant people, would put us all to death. Two summers since a large party of these came up the river and killed many of his relatives."

Next day other lodges were seen. "We were informed that they were of a different tribe, called the Hare Indians, as hares and fish are their principal support, from the scarcity of reindeer and beaver. A small quantity of our usual presents were received by them with great satisfaction."

The guide who had become troublesome was here exchanged for another, who at once repented of his bargain, but "we paid very little attention to his remonstrances, and compelled him to embark."

A hunting party of eight encountered the following day told them wonderful stories of danger and terror. "We were now informed that behind the opposite island there was a Manitoe or Spirit in the river which swallowed every person that approached it."

In the course of the night during a violent thunderstorm the new guide escaped. "We therefore compelled another of these people, very much against his will, to supply the place of his fugitive companion."

A party of natives of a more pleasing appearance was

met with on the ninth. They were far more attractive than any yet seen. "They were healthy, full of flesh, and clean in their persons. English Chief clearly comprehended one of them though he was not himself understood."

These people used the sinew-backed bow, which it was understood they had copied from the Eskimos. "It consists of two pieces, with a very strong cord of sinew along the back which is tied in several places. When this cord becomes wet, it requires a strong bow-string and a powerful arm to draw it."

This weapon is regarded as being one of the few elements in North America derived from an Asiatic culture.

A number of well-dressed moose skins were purchased from them. "They presented us with a most delicious fish, which was less than a herring, and very beautifully spotted with black and yellow, its dorsal fin reached from the head to the tail, and in its expanded state assumes a triangular form, and is variegated with the colours that enliven the scales; the head is very small, and the mouth is armed with sharp-pointed teeth."

The native whose speech was most intelligible was prevailed upon to accompany them; and his first official statement was that the sea was distant ten sleeps to the north, and that in three nights they should be in the country of the Eskimos, with whom his people had formerly made war but were now at peace. He spoke of the Indians up the river in terms of great derision, calling them old women and abominable liars.

"The sound of our fire-arms frightened our guide, who could only be persuaded to embark when assured that what he had heard was a signal of friendship." Two of his brothers in another canoe amused the party with native songs and dances. The guide caught the infection and presently his

little canoe was too small a stage for his antics and he asked to be taken into Mackenzie's canoe.

"No sooner had he entered than he began to perform Eskimo dances to our no small alarm. He was however soon persuaded to be more tranquil, when he began to display various indecencies according to the custom of the Eskimos He informed us that on the opposite hill the Eskimos, three winters ago, killed his grandfather."

A smoke was seen ahead and on near approach a group of forty Deguthee Denees[1] indulged in a most terrible uproar, running about as if deprived of their senses. Their hostility was indicated by the removal of their women and children to a place of safety. But they were soon pacified in the usual way.

The guide expressed his alarm regarding the Eskimos, but on being reassured by Mackenzie's people he consented to remain with the party. From these Indians it was learned that the distance overland to the sea, both to the east and to the west, was very short. "They represented the land on either side as projecting to a point."

The sultriness of the early part of the day gave way to a decided fall in the temperature, indicating the extremes that are likely to be experienced within a few hours in these latitudes. Mackenzie notes a large quantity of wild flax, the growth of the last year, lying on the ground, and the new plants sprouting up through it, which circumstance he had not observed in any other part.

This day's journeying had been between low clay banks, but the country was low and flat and no mountains were visible.

For sixty miles the course had been due west. On Friday, 10 July, the canoes entered the Narrows, or the Lower

[1] See Appendix C, "Indian Tribes."

Ramparts. Below this constriction the land is low on both sides of the river, with mountains in the distance whose tops were covered with snow. The river widened and spread in many channels among low islands, some of which were treeless and others covered with spruce of a larger size than any they had yet seen since leaving the first reaches of the river near Great Slave Lake. The low banks of the islands, standing six feet above the water, displayed a face of solid ice intermixed with veins of black earth. As the sun melted the ice the trees frequently fell into the water. The channels in the delta [1] were numerous and perplexing, but Mackenzie selected the middle one, which ran north.

"I obtained an observation this day which gave me 67° 47′ north latitude,[2] which was farther than I had expected, according to the course I kept, but the difference was owing to the variation of the compass, which was more easterly than I imagined. From hence it was evident that these waters emptied themselves into the Hyperborean Sea, and though it was probable that, from the want of provision, we could not return to Athabasca in the course of the season, I nevertheless determined to penetrate to the discharge of them."

The new guide was very much discouraged. His accounts of what they were to expect so disheartened the hunters that Mackenzie was convinced they would have left him if it had been in their power. "I however satisfied them in some degree by the assurance that I would proceed onward but seven days more and, if I did not get to the sea, I would

[1] "The delta of the Mackenzie extends in a north and south direction for about 100 miles, and has a spread across the seaward side of about 70 miles. On the west the steep fault scarp of the Richardson Mountains rises abruptly out of the delta plain, and on the east it is bounded by a lower rounded range known as the Reindeer Hills." *Geol. Sur. Can. Mem.* 108, p. 33.

[2] Six miles below Point Separation, the head of the delta.

return. Indeed, the low state of the provisions, without any other consideration, formed a very sufficient security for the maintenance of my agreement."

An old Eskimo camp, which had been in use that year some time after the breaking up of the ice, attracted their attention in the evening, and they remained at the spot for the night.

Under date of 11 July he writes: "I sat up all night to observe the sun. At half-past twelve I called up one of the men to view the spectacle which he had never before seen, when on seeing the sun so high he thought it was the signal to embark and began to call the rest of his companions who would scarcely be persuaded by me that the sun had not descended nearer to the horizon, and that it was now but a short time past midnight."

Winding among low islands the following days, the party observed many old Eskimo camps, from which it was concluded that these people had dwelt in the neighbourhood for a considerable time, though it did not appear that they had erected any permanent quarters.

"About the places where they had made their fires were scattered pieces of whalebone and thick burned leather with parts of the frames of three canoes." In the afternoon three houses or huts were examined and found to be constructed after an igloo model of driftwood covered with branches and dry grass, topped with a foot of earth. Sledge-runners and bars, pieces of whalebone, and bark net-floats were found in and about the houses, while before each hut a great number of stumps of trees were fixed in the ground for use as fish racks.

On several of the islands fresh footprints were seen, but no natives were discovered in the neighbourhood. The weather was rainy and disagreeable, but a black fox excited

their interest, and as they were able to appraise the value of the pelt, no doubt the disagreeableness of the weather was forgotten for the moment. Trees were no longer in evidence. Willows were dwarfed to three feet. The weather, the scenery, and their situation depressed them, for the guide had unsettled the hunters by telling them that they were coming to a large "lake" on the morrow, inhabited by Eskimos, who killed a large fish living in its waters, and that white bears, capable of dragging the weight of a dozen men out of the water with one paw, roamed over the ice. Another large animal lived there as well, he said, but the hunters from the south could not understand the description which he gave of it. He described their canoes as being large enough to hold five families.

"However, to reconcile English Chief to the necessary continuance in my service, I presented him with one of my capotes or travelling coats; at the same time to satisfy the guide and keep him, if possible, in good humour, I gave him a skin of the moose-deer, which in his opinion was a valuable present."

The channels continued to meander among low islands so naked that scarcely a shrub was to be seen. At ten on a Sunday morning a landing was made at four huts like those last seen. The land near-by was high and covered with short grass and flowers, though the ground was thawed not more than four inches from the surface, beneath which was a solid block of ice.

Every article associated with the unknown proprietors had its interest for the visitors, who wandered about contemplating the *disjecta membra* of the communal life lying scattered about. Runners, bars, sinew and willow-bark cording, small pieces of flint fixed into wooden handles, which probably served as knives, pieces of very thick leather,

possibly of the sea-horse, all helped to reconstruct the manner of life of these people.

"A square stone kettle with a flat bottom, also occupied our attention, which was capable of containing two gallons, and we were puzzled as to the means these people must have employed to have chiselled it out of a solid rock into its present form."

The guide had come to the end of his knowledge and the party having arrived at "the entrance of a lake," [1] were at a loss which way to steer. The canoes followed the current westward. An observation gave 69° 1′ [2] north latitude. The same course was continued in the open "lake" to the western-most land in sight, a distance of fifteen miles. The "lake" opened out wider to the west, the depth being not more than four feet, and often as little as one. The shallowness prevented the canoes from going farther to the westward. At five they reached an island, and it was seen that the water was covered with ice for two leagues distant, with no land ahead.

"We landed at the boundary of our voyage in this direction, and as soon as the tents were pitched I ordered the nets to be set, and I proceeded with the English Chief to the highest part of the island from which we discovered solid ice extending from the south-west by compass to the eastward."

As he had no thought of undertaking an exploration of the polar seas he properly calls this the "boundary of our voyage in this direction," from which point there was visible a sea-scape covering 225 degrees of the compass, ice-covered to the horizon in every direction, justifying the terms Icy and

[1] Mackenzie here adopts the Indian way of referring to a body of water as a "lake."

[2] The observation is exact.

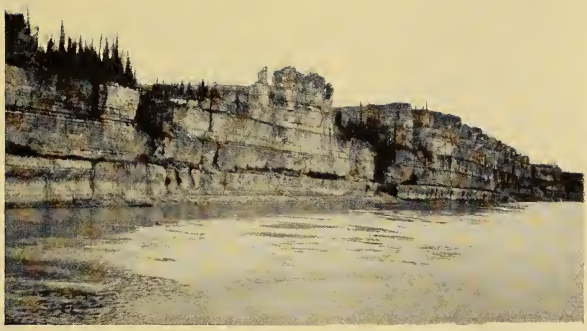
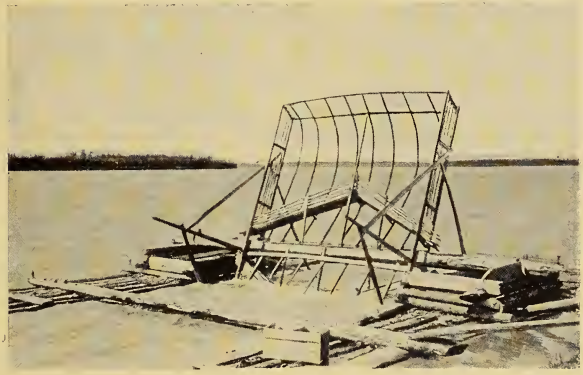


Photo O. S. Finnie *Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa*

"The Ramparts," Mackenzie River



Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa

Fish Reel: Mackenzie River

Hyperborean, which he applies to it time and again. A range of mountains in the west, the Richardson, vanished north and south, stretching farther to the north than the edge of the ice at the distance of more than twenty leagues.

Many islands were in view to the eastward. "My people could not at this time refrain from expressing real concern, that they were obliged to return without reaching the sea, indeed the hope of attaining this object encouraged them to bear without repining, the hardships of our unremitting voyage. For some time past their spirits were animated by the expectation that another day would bring them to the *Mer d'ouest*, and even in our present situation they declared their readiness to follow me wherever I should be pleased to lead them."

There is a certain apparent indefiniteness in the narrative at this point. But close attention to Mackenzie's original hopes, taken in conjunction with the fact that he had evidently arrived at the Hyperborean Sea where whales, walruses, porpoises and ice abounded, and Eskimos lived, will make it clear enough that he expected nothing further in this immediate neighbourhood, but looked for possible information from the residents, either here or higher up the river, regarding a route to the Pacific that might exist on the western side of the mountains. His whole purpose at this moment was to begin retracing his steps, exhausting by the way all efforts to wring from the natives whatever they knew of western geography. While he had not expressed his intentions to his party, nevertheless he was fully determined to follow a western route to the sea if one should come to his knowledge.

CHAPTER V

TRACKING UP-STREAM A THOUSAND MILES

DURING the night of Monday, July the thirteenth, forty days since their departure from Chipewyan, the tide rose in their Arctic camp, and their baggage had to be moved. In the morning the weather was fine and calm. The nets yielded seven *poissons inconnus* which were unpalatable, a whitefish that proved delicious, and another about the size of a herring, which none of the party had ever seen before except English Chief who recognised it as a kind that was plentiful in Hudson Bay.

The stores had been reduced to five hundred pounds, "which without any further supply, would not have sufficed for fifteen people above twelve days." Therefore the nets were used at every opportunity to supplement their rations.

Mackenzie for once allows himself the luxury of sleeping longer than usual, but his conscience constrains him to say in extenuation that he had sat up till three in the morning. His modesty frequently robs his narrative of the personal element, and there is, in consequence, an occasional flatness in the story. It is not always possible to know what he thought on those occasions when it is important that we should know. What precisely did he think at this juncture regarding his venture? Was he satisfied that he had reached salt water? It has been observed that he, who had passed his boyhood on the sea-girt Hebrides, nowhere intimates that he took the obvious course of tasting the water. On the other hand, to his matter-of-fact mind it may not have appeared

necessary to say that on the edge of the delta of an immense fresh-water system like the Mackenzie the water would be fresh and not salt. He expresses his disappointment at not reaching the sea, but the narrative makes it abundantly clear that he was satisfied that he had reached the Hyperborean Sea; possibly he was thinking of an extensive view of the ocean to satisfy his people of the magnitude of such a body of water. His expectations regarding the outlet of this great river had been somewhat different. He had arrived nowhere, certainly not on an ocean open to trade, judging from the amount of ice visible in midsummer. He had expected to come out in Russian territory, or on a sea-board more agreeable than this frozen waste, and he was disappointed, but that he knew perfectly well that he had reached the sea no one reading his journals and letters can doubt.

His men reported large fish in the offing which they had at first thought to be pieces of ice. "I immediately perceived that they were whales,[1] and having ordered the canoe to be prepared we embarked in pursuit of them. It was indeed a very wild and unreflecting enterprise, and it was a very fortunate circumstance that we failed in our attempt to overtake them."

A fog came up and was really responsible for their safety, as it prevented them from continuing the pursuit in their frail birch canoe. The guide told them that the Eskimo subsisted on these fish which were frequently thirty feet in length. "The part of them which appeared above water was altogether white, and they were much larger than the largest porpoise."

When the fog dispersed at midday Mackenzie daringly

[1] The beluga, or white whale, a large porpoise that is found in the Arctic in great numbers.

resolved to go out to the ice, but a wind arose, and the fog returned and both ice and island were shut out from sight. A sail was hoisted, the swell became violent, and two men found it all they could do to bail out the water that came aboard. "We were in a state of actual danger, and felt every corresponding emotion of pleasure when we reached the land." The Indians were nearer shore and their canoes were nearly filled with water. Realising the danger of navigating the seas in their frail craft, Mackenzie decided to give more attention to an examination of the islands in the hope of meeting people who could give them information. The guide suggested that natives were more likely to be found on the eastern channel which he had originally recommended to Mackenzie. As the delta has a frontage of seventy miles on the seaward side and extends one hundred miles upstream, the difficulty of examining the maze of channels in this intricate system of outlets can be readily understood. As a matter of fact Mackenzie made no serious attempt to search the delta, contenting himself with returning up-river in the most direct way.

"At eight we encamped on the eastern end of the island, which I had named the Whale Island.[1] It is about seven leagues in length, but not more than half a mile in breadth. This morning I ordered a post to be erected close to our tents, on which I engraved the latitude of the place, my own name, the number of persons I had with me, and the time we had remained there."

On the night of Wednesday the fifteenth, "being awakened by some casual circumstance at four this morning, I was surprised on perceiving that the water had flowed under our

[1] The position of this island may be seen on any modern map, as it lies about thirty miles from the continental shore-line, off the delta, still bearing the name that Mackenzie gave it.

Photo O. S. Finnie *Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa*

WATERFRONT AT AKLAVIK, MACKENZIE DELTA
R.C.M.P. Post and Wireless Station

Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa

ESKIMO WOMEN OF THE MACKENZIE DELTA, AKLAVIK

baggage. We were all of the opinion that this circumstance proceeded from the tide. The water continued to rise till about six." Mackenzie decided to stay and further observe the tide which next day rose sixteen or eighteen inches.[1]

The party embarked Thursday and steered under sail among the islands hoping to meet with some of the natives, but these expectations were not realised. "We accordingly made for the river and stemmed the current." In these words he indicates definitely the beginning of the return journey up-stream. The water shoaled to paddle-depth in the afternoon, and the temperature became more agreeable, though the rise in warmth was not without its disadvantages, for it subjected them to the persecution of the mosquitoes.

A landing was made Friday on an island which was in use as a graveyard. Various articles, including canoes, sleds, dishes and troughs, were there to accommodate the spirits of the departed. "The frame of the canoe, which was entire, was put together with whalebone; it was sewed in some parts and tied in others. The sledges were from four to eight feet long; the length of the bars was upwards of two feet; the runners were two inches thick and nine inches deep; the prow was two and a half feet high and formed of two pieces sewed with whalebone.

"The weather was now very pleasant and in the course of the day we saw great numbers of wild-fowl with their young. I ascended the high land eastward, whence I had a delightful view of the river, divided into innumerable streams, meandering through islands, some of which were covered with wood and others with grass. The mountains which formed the opposite horizon were at a distance of forty miles."

The hunters were successful in killing two reindeer on

[1] The Arctic tides are very small.

Saturday, "which proved a very seasonable supply as our pemmican had become mouldy for some time past, though in that situation we were under the necessity of eating it." Cranberries and pale yellow raspberries, with a great variety of other plants and herbs, grew in profusion in the valleys and lowlands near the river.

During a stormy night the guide escaped in his shirt, leaving behind the moose-skin which had been given him. It is surmised that he feared to be taken south as a slave, and was afraid of men who could kill so readily at a distance as they had killed the reindeer on the day previous. In the afternoon the hunters killed twenty-two geese of a smaller variety than those that frequent the Athabasca. They were moulting and unable to fly. Next day a further large addition was made to the bag, and on Tuesday the twenty-first the canoes reached the head of the delta, one hundred miles up, and entered again the main channel, where the current was found to be so strong that it was absolutely necessary to tow the canoe with the line.

Every two hours the men in the canoe relieved those on shore, so that it was a very hard and fatiguing duty, but the tracking saved a great deal of time, which was now very precious to them. That evening they camped above the Narrows or Lower Ramparts on the spot where they had been on the ninth instant.

The fugitive guide's relatives arrived and inquired after him, but were not satisfied with Mackenzie's account. There was much haranguing on the occasion. The brother, however, signified his readiness to be appeased by a gift of beads, which Mackenzie in his wisdom refused, contenting himself in handing over the bow and arrows which the guide had left with them.

Mackenzie sat up to watch the natives, who became very

curious as to his motives, and were more so when they saw him engaged in writing. "Those who remained kindled a small fire, and laid themselves down to sleep round it like so many whelps, having neither skins or garments of any kind to cover them, notwithstanding the cold that prevailed."

The tracking was taken up at three-thirty in the morning and Mackenzie walked with the Indians to their encampment, which occupied three hours of hard travelling. "They had hid their effects and had sent their young women into the woods as we saw but few of the former and none of the latter." For a few beads, a supply of fish, as much as the canoe could conveniently contain, was obtained from them.

These people regarded the Eskimos as a treacherous lot, and had sworn to avenge the raids upon them in which many of their relatives had been killed. The Eskimos were reported to be on the sea-board not far overland from this spot where they kill the reindeer. Later they would hunt whales for their winter stock. They had informed these people that they had seen large "canoes" full of white men [1] to the westward eight or ten winters ago, from whom they had obtained iron in exchange for leather. The "lake" where they had met these canoes was called by them *Belhoullay Toe*, or White Man's Lake.

The line was employed all day except two hours when it was possible to use the sail. The camp of the eighth was reached on the evening of the twenty-third. The Indians had gone ashore at five from fatigue, and were greatly displeased when Mackenzie continued on. The hunters returned sullen and dissatisfied. "We had not touched any of our provision stores for six days in which time we had consumed two reindeer, four swans, forty-five geese, and a

[1] Captain Cook's ships reached 70° 30′ north in 1778. This incident would be common knowledge among the Eskimos.

considerable quantity of fish. But it is to be considered that we were ten men and four women. I have always observed that the north men possessed very hearty appetites, but they were very much exceeded by those with me since we entered this river. I should really have thought it absolute gluttony in my people if my own appetite had not increased in a similar proportion."

A party of Deguthee Denees[1] was met with on Friday, who appeared hostile, thinking that the flotilla carried a raiding party of Eskimos. But seeing Mackenzie's men in possession of some of the clothes, and bows belonging to their people, they concluded that Mackenzie had killed their relatives and was now departing with the fruits of victory.

"English Chief expressed his displeasure at their running away to conceal themselves, their property, and their young women in very bitter terms. He said that his heart was set against those slaves and complained aloud of his disappointment in coming so far without seeing the natives and getting something from them.

"The weather was sultry all day Saturday, ending up in a violent storm while camp was being prepared. The ridge-pole of my tent was broken in the middle where it was sound and nine inches through, and we were obliged to throw ourselves flat on the ground to escape being wounded by the stones that were hurled about in the air like sand."

Waking a large encampment of Indians on Sunday, Mackenzie bought from the frightened natives a supply of fish in exchange for the usual trinkets, and found among them a Dog-Rib Indian whom some private quarrel had driven from his country. English Chief understood him as well as one of his own nation, and obtained some information

[1] See "Indian Tribes," Appendix C, for list of Déné tribes from the Arctic up the Mackenzie and Peace to the Coast Range.

from him, ascertaining that another river, very much larger than this, flowed on the far side of the western mountains into the *Belhoullay Toe*, or White Man's Lake. The natives living there were wicked giants possessed of the evil eye. Their canoes were extremely large, and those who lived around the entrance to the river killed a kind of beaver, the skin of which was almost red. As there was no known communication by water with this river, the natives who saw it went over the mountains.

Mackenzie, not forgetting his business interests, prepared the way for future trade in a discussion regarding the fur resources of the country.

An incident that occurred here throws an interesting light on the Indian's way of reacting to his environment. "My Indians were very anxious to possess themselves of a woman that was with the natives, but, as they were not willing to part with her, I interfered to prevent her being taken by force; indeed I was obliged to exercise the utmost vigilance as the Indians who accompanied me were ever ready to take what they could from the residents without making them any return."

Another Indian was met the following day who endeavoured to convey his notion of the circumjacent land, and particularly of a river to the west, by delineating a map on the sand. "He accordingly," after being bribed, "traced out a very long point of land between two rivers though without paying the least attention to their courses, which he represented as running into the great 'lake,' at the extremity of which, as he had been told by Indians of other nations, there was a *Belhoullay Couin*, or White man's Fort. This I took to be Unalascha Fort,[1] and consequently the river to

[1] Unalaska, on one of the Aleutian Islands. A rendezvous of the Russian hunters in Cook's time.

the west to be Cook's River, and that the body of water or sea into which this river discharges itself at Whale Island communicates with Norton Sound. I made an advantageous proposition to this man to accompany me across the mountains to the other river, but he refused it."

Mackenzie then proceeded to an Indian camp to which he had been referred for more authentic information. On arriving there he found that his young men in attempting to land had their canoe seized and broken and were on the point of revenging this insult when he intervened.

The interpreter was instructed to harangue the people assembled in council for the purpose of obtaining further geographical information, but met with little success. Aside from the statement that the tributaries of both great rivers [1] take their rise in the western mountains, their information was a strange medley of folk-lore and fact. They themselves never went beyond the mountains, where they hunted the little white buffalo,[2] and what they stated about the river was hearsay and fabulous speculation.

Mackenzie, however, suspected that his interpreter, who was tired of the voyage, was not anxious to obtain, or to communicate to him, information which would be likely to induce him to follow new routes, or extend his quest over another season.

The assembled Indians then entertained the explorers with a series of dances. "In this pastime old and young, male and female, continued their exertions till their strength was exhausted. This exercise was accompanied by loud imitations of the various noises produced by the reindeer, the bear, and the wolf."

[1] It is difficult to say whether these Indians had any knowledge of the Yukon, or whether they were referring to Peel River.

[2] *Ovis dalli*, a white variety of mountain sheep.

Mackenzie was determined to extract every possible item of information, and instructed English Chief to renew his inquiries, which he did without success. Mackenzie then resorted to threats, which only made them one and all very sick at the same moment, and they answered in a faint tone that they had told all they knew, and would die if taken away on such a journey beyond the mountains into the land of magicians and monsters. They endeavoured to win English Chief away from Mackenzie, in which they were aided and abetted by the solicitations of the chief's women. Finding it fruitless to remain, Mackenzie looked forward to obtaining a better account from the Indians at Bear Lake River where, he now recalled, some of the natives had mentioned this river to him when he passed that way.

Some beaver skins were purchased, and abundant supplies of fish and berries. A marauding dog had to be shot, "as we could not keep those animals from our baggage. The people hearing the report and seeing the dog dead were seized with great alarm. The women took their children on their backs and ran into the woods. They were reassured, but the woman who owned the dog was loud in her sorrow, declaring that the loss of five children the preceding winter had not affected her so much as the death of this animal. But her grief was not of long duration, and a few beads soon assuaged her sorrow.

"When we arrived this morning we found the women in tears from an apprehension that we were come to take them away. To the eye of a European they certainly were objects of disgust, but there were those among my party who observed some hidden charms in these females which rendered them objects of desire, and means were found, I believe, that very soon dissipated their alarms and subdued their coyness."

The rapid at the head of the Ramparts was passed easily, the canoes in fact were paddled all the way through. The weather was cloudy and the heat insupportable, but the next day they could not put on clothes enough to keep warm. At ten the Sans Sault Rapid was passed by tracking on the west side. The current was found to be much stronger than before; the river had in fact fallen five feet in the interval. Since they had begun the ascent they had consumed only three days' of their original provisions, and on August the thirty-first they had recourse to their corn rations again.

English Chief was in an irritated state, because of jealousy occasioned by the attentions of one of his young men to one of his wives, and his moroseness was no doubt aggravated by a disinclination to winter in the country in pursuit of a mythical river somewhere in the west. "I now found my interpreter very unwilling to ask such questions as were dictated to him, from the apprehension, I imagined, that I might obtain such intelligence as would prevent him from seeing Athabasca this season."

"On the night of Saturday, August the first, it was sufficiently dark for the first time since leaving Athabasca to render the stars visible." The speed of the tracking may be gathered from Mackenzie's statement that he walked with the Indians, as they went faster than the canoes. On arriving at Bear Lake River the camp was found to be deserted, and they continued walking till five in the afternoon, when they discovered several smokes along shore. "We quickened our pace, but in our progress experienced a very sulphurous smell, and at length discovered that the whole bank was on fire for a considerable distance. It proved to be a coal mine. The beach was covered with coals and English Chief gathered some of the softest he could find as a black

dye, it being the mineral with which the natives render their quills black." [1]

Low water, cold nights, the disappearance of mosquitoes, and the lengthening of the beaver's fur were all signs which impressed upon these men of the north the necessity of hastening. "The air was now become so cold that our exercise, violent as it was, scarce kept us warm."

Tracking day after day is toilsome work. The track is often among boulders, cobblestones, gravel, sharp rocks, steep slides, and mud. Once in a while there are stretches which afford comfortable footing. But hopping about from rock to rock, jamming the toes and ankles into crevices among the cobblestones, in addition to having the weight of the canoe to drag against the current for a thousand miles, sweating one day and maddened by mosquitoes, and the next shivering with the cold—such work day after day would try the endurance of the hardiest.

Thus it was to continue, with occasional days of fine weather, moderately difficult paddling, sailing now and then, but in the main a steady grind with painful feet, against a swift current seldom less than two, averaging four to five, and often attaining a velocity of eight and ten miles an hour. Around the points especially, the current frequently assumed the proportions and speed of a rapid. From the fourth to the tenth this routine was unvaried, by which time Camsell Bend was reached. As this course would take them away from the mountains, Mackenzie, who had been on the look out unremittingly for natives and what information they might have regarding the river to the westward, conceived

[1] "A few miles above Fort Norman on the east side of the river occasional columns of smoke indicate the presence of fires, which are consuming the seams of lignite out-cropping in the bank." *Geol. Sur. Can. Mem.* 108, p. 31. These fires have been burning for 137 years, since they were first reported by Mackenzie in 1789.

the idea of ascending these western mountains while he had the opportunity. There may have been a half-formed thought in his mind that by attaining the summit, the river in the west would open out to view. The distance to the Pacific was greatly foreshortened on all maps of the day. But the size, volume and direction of the Liard must have convinced him that it drained an extent of country westward greater than that indicated on the maps of that time.

Leaving camp at four in the afternoon, Mackenzie with a young Indian set off through the woods towards the range in the west. The forest was difficult to penetrate. Coming out at last to rising ground they obtained their first view, since leaving the canoe, of the mountains which appeared to be as far off as ever. Proceeding, the travellers ran into marshy ground which effectually halted their progress, and they were reluctantly compelled to return, reaching the canoes at midnight.

The hunters reported coming upon Indian camps, and Mackenzie asked English Chief to search for the natives, but he was backward in complying. Mackenzie was evidently greatly dissatisfied with the meagre information that he had so far been able to secure, relating to the existence of a river flowing westward to the ocean. Ever since leaving the delta the suspicion had been growing in his mind that the Indians along the river knew more than they communicated, and that English Chief communicated less than he heard. "They were afraid that I should obtain such accounts of the other river as would induce me to travel overland to it, and that they should be called upon to accompany me. I was indeed informed by one of my own people, that English Chief, his wives and companions had determined to leave me on this side of Slave Lake in order to go to the country of the Beaver Indians."

All the following day a look out was kept for Indians. "A fire had spread all over the country and had burned about three inches of the black light soil which covered a body of cold clay that was so hard as not to receive the least impression of our feet."

At seven the following morning the island where the store of pemmican had been cached was reached, and the bag proved a very welcome addition, as it rendered the party more independent of the supplies obtained by the hunters. Indeed, Mackenzie suspected them of not devoting themselves to their duties very diligently, as they no doubt hoped by this means to hasten the end of the voyage.

Arriving at an Indian camp, which was immediately deserted on the approach of the party, Mackenzie found his Indians dividing up the property of the fugitives. He rebuked English Chief with some severity, and ordered him, his young men and the *voyageurs* to go in search of the natives, who, however, could not be found. Mackenzie still cherished the hope of hearing more definite news of the river flowing westward, and desired before leaving this part to question the residents of the country, and was, therefore, much put out when his people failed to act with dispatch in overtaking and detaining the fugitive Indians.

English Chief objected to the reprimand and was direct in voicing his displeasure. Mackenzie had apparently been brooding over his interpreter's suspected disloyalty for some time past, and now took the opportunity to speak to the point. "I stated to him that I had come a long way and at very considerable expense, without having obtained the object of my wishes, and that I suspected that he had concealed from me a principal part of what the natives had told him respecting the country, lest he should be obliged to follow me, and that his reason for not killing game, etc.,

was his jealousy, which likewise prevented him from looking after the natives as he ought, and that we had never given him any cause for any suspicions of us. These suggestions irritated him in a very high degree, and he accused me of speaking ill words to him, and he denied the charge of jealousy, and declared that he did not conceal anything from us, and that, as to the ill-success of their hunting, it arose from the nature of the country, and the scarcity which had hitherto appeared of animals in it. He concluded by saying that he would not accompany me any farther. His harangue was succeeded by a loud and bitter lamentation, and his relatives assisted him in the vociferation of his grief. I did not interrupt their grief for two hours, but as I could not well do without them I was at length obliged to soothe it, and induce the chief to change his resolutions which he did, but with great apparent reluctance, when we embarked, as we had hitherto done."

Arriving at the entrance of the "River of the Mountains," as the Liard was then called, Mackenzie sent for English Chief to sup with him, and a dram or two dispelled all his heart-burnings and discontent. "He informed me that it was a custom with the Chipewyan chiefs to go to war after having shed tears in order to wipe away the disgrace attached to such a feminine weakness, and that in the ensuing spring he should not fail to execute his design. At the same time he declared his intention to continue with us as long as I should want him. I took care that he should carry some liquid refreshment to his lodge, to prevent the return of his chagrin."

The Liard was ascended for some miles on Friday, and the voyage was then resumed. The two following days were very sultry and the tracking very difficult, because of the constriction of the channel to half a mile, and the consequent strength of the current, which from the Liard to Trout

Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa

WHALE BOATS IN THE MACKENZIE DELTA

Photo G. S. Hume *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

"LONE MOUNTAIN," MACKENZIE RIVER AREA

River, where they had made their second camp on 30 June, a distance of seventy-five miles, runs from seven to eight miles an hour.

Six miles before reaching this camp the river widened, the current slackened to about two miles, and the paddling was not more difficult than in dead water. In fact they had reached that thrice-blessed point in the ascent of the Mackenzie known to later trackers as "Head-of-the-Line," for it was here that the line was finally abandoned for the paddle and sail. By Monday night they had reached their first camp on the river where they had been on 29 June.

As the stock of provisions was nearly exhausted, a hunting party was sent out from this camp. The surrounding land is low, and the river so wide that the far side is scarcely visible on the horizon. "We were nearly five miles to the north of the main channel of the river. The fresh tracks and beds of buffaloes were very perceptible. Near this place a river flowed in from the Horn Mountains which are at no great distance to the north."

In the evening English Chief arrived in with the tongue of a cow or female buffalo, and four men and the Indians were dispatched for the flesh.

Quite evidently the wood buffalo, whose range now extends from the Mackenzie to the Peace west of Slave Lake, at one time spread out to the north of Slave Lake and east of Slave River.

Wednesday was spent in the same locality to wait for the hunters. The canoes were repaired and new paddles made, while the women were employed in gathering berries. Mackenzie remarks that some peculiar quality in the water of this river corrodes wood, and renders paddles useless in a comparatively short time.

The explorers made an effort to get a view of the mouth

of Horn River, but were not successful in discovering it. Wind and rain detained them in camp Friday. But three hours' sail next day brought them to Slave Lake where the wind was so violent that they were forced to camp.

The course around the southern shore of the lake would have been shorter, but there was no certainty of obtaining sufficient supplies of fish in that direction, now an important consideration, besides which, Mackenzie expected to meet M. Le Roux and the Red-Knife Indians at the clerk's house on the North Arm.

Sailing on Sunday was fraught with great danger, as they were off an exposed shore, shallow and boulder-strewn. "Two men were continually employed in bailing out the water which we took in on all sides." A sprit carried away, and had their mast gone, as they expected every moment, the canoe would in all probability have filled and sunk.

At four in the afternoon of Monday, three canoes with sails hoisted appeared in the distance. They proved to be M. Le Roux and an Indian family who had been out hunting for twenty-five days. He was on his way to the river to leave a letter notifying his chief of his whereabouts. During the absence of the explorers he had been as far as Lac à la Martre where he met eighteen small canoes of the Slave Indians from whom he obtained five packs of marten skins.

English Chief arrived in the evening to relate the wreck of his canoe on the shallow shore, and he stated that his people were all lamenting lest they should not overtake the main party. "This evening I gave my men some rum to cheer them after their fatigues."

Violent winds prevented them from moving for two days. The journey was then continued, after bidding good-bye to English Chief and his people, who had become quite

exhausted and had decided to remain behind in order to visit the Beaver Indians, but the Chief promised that he would return to Athabasca in the course of the winter.

It blew a gale all night but the nets were filled with fish in the morning. "Two of the men who had been gathering berries saw two moose-deer, with the tracks of buffalo and reindeer." In the evening two shots were heard across the bay and a fire was seen there. Mackenzie's people made a large fire also, as an indication of their position. Late at night English Chief came in drenched, to report that his canoe was broken in pieces, and his fowling-pieces and supplies lost. His people soon arrived and were accommodated with dry clothes. The Indians were sent out next day to hunt, but returned without success, and said that they would not go any farther as they did not wish to be drowned.

M. Le Roux's house was reached at two in the afternoon on Sunday. The Indians arrived late, "when, according to a promise I had made the latter, I gave them a plentiful equipment of iron-ware, ammunition, tobacco, etc., as a recompense for the toil and inconvenience they had sustained with me."

Arrangements were made with English Chief to bring the Beaver Indians to trade with M. Le Roux who would remain at this station during the winter. "I sat up all night to make the necessary arrangements for the embarkation in the morning and to prepare instructions for M. Le Roux."[1]

Ile à la Cache and Carrebœuf Island were passed on Tuesday, and on Wednesday two crossings of twelve and twenty-four miles were made which brought them to the point of the old fort near the entrance to Slave River. Swans, cranes, geese and ducks were speeding south and

[1] Laurent Le Roux re-engaged with the company in 1791 for five years as a clerk at £100, was married to Esther Loiselle five years later, settled at l'Assomption, and died there 1855, aged ninety-seven.

the air was filled with bustle and clamour; every wind was heralded by a hurrying flight of wild-fowl who thus preceded the storms. The men needed no spur; they were on the home-stretch and toiled steadily southward, paddling, sailing, tracking and portaging with as much eagerness as the moving hosts which continually passed them, darkening the air with their myriads.

Five days after entering Slave River they had successfully carried around the Portage des Noyés and encamped at the upper end to dry their clothes, some of which were almost rotten. Again the series of rapids had to be passed and their canoes and what remained of their supplies carried eight hundred and twenty paces around Pelican Rapids, three hundred and thirty-five around Mountain, one thousand at the next, one thousand at the Portage d'Embarras, and three hundred and eighty over the upper one, which brought them thankfully once more to Dog River, where it may be supposed that they breathed easily and felt themselves virtually at the end of all their toils and difficulties. Camp was made here at four in the afternoon as all were in a state of great fatigue. Some hours' sailing helped them along next day, but there were frequent showers of rain in the forenoon and two "shower of snow" in the afternoon.

They ran into a war-party of the Knisteneaux in the evening consisting of three men, five women, and children, who from absolute hunger had separated from the main body while in the enemy's country, where in the course of their wanderings they met a family of the hostile tribe whom they destroyed. They had no idea what had become of their friends. These people appear to have been great sufferers from their expedition. Mackenzie gave them some medical attention, and provided them with necessary food and ammunition.

It froze hard that night and was cold all day Friday. Another day brought them out on the "Lake of the Hills," better known to-day as Lake Athabasca, where a spanking breeze wafted them under a high sail to Fort Chipewyan by three in the afternoon. Mr. Macleod, Cuthbert Grant, and four carpenters were employed in the prosaic work of building a new house. There was no fanfare of trumpets to welcome the intrepid voyagers back from the frozen seas. Corsairs of old and ravishers of the Spanish Main were more warmly welcomed with their spoils than were Mackenzie and his tattered crew by the workaday carpenters on the September afternoon, one hundred and two days after his departure for the unknown.

He had definitely determined the course of a river which drained a basin of 682,000 square miles. He had added to the trader's domain one of the richest fur-bearing territories in the world.

As far as the scientific world was concerned, his great achievement settled for all time the question regarding the existence of a practicable North-West passage, and those navigators who had cherished dreams of carrying off the £20,000 offered by the British Government for the discovery of a sea-way between the Atlantic and the Pacific had the wind taken out of their sails by the exploit of an adventurous fur-trader and his motley crew.

That his associates were envious of his achievement even to the point of jealousy is indicated by the cool way in which they ignored his discovery. Mackenzie was chagrined to find that his confrères at Grande Portage and Montreal avoided the subject. There was no cordial recognition of his success, although they knew that it brought honour to the North-West Company. Throughout the chronicles of the fur-trade it is frequently remarked that the traders were

wanting in real generosity of spirit. In after-days, it is true, when honours fell thick upon him, he received his due of homage, though not without amusement when he recalled how steadfastly his associates had endeavoured to belittle those exploits which a great nation thought worthy of high recognition.

Photo G. S. Hume *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

"Rock by Riverside," Fort Wrigley, Mackenzie River
Mackenzie camped at the foot of this hill and ascended it.

Photo Charles Camsell *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

"Tracking" up Boiler Rapids, Athabasca River

CHAPTER VI

SPANISH AND RUSSIAN AMERICA ON THE PACIFIC

Mackenzie summarises his view of the results of the Arctic voyage in a letter to Lord Dorchester, written in Montreal on 17 November, 1794. He says that he "followed the course of the waters which had been reported by Mr. Pond to fall into Cook's River. They led me to the Northern Ocean by the 16th July. The sea was then covered with ice at some distance from the land. We saw a number of white porpoises and observed a small tide. Farther it was needless for me to go. Besides it would have been very dangerous to attempt to coast with such a slight vessel as I had. Therefore we returned by the way we went. Tho' this expedition did not answer the intended purpose, it proved that Mr. Pond's assertion was nothing but conjecture, and that a North-West passage is impracticable."

Mackenzie realised that his knowledge of navigation and astronomy was not sufficient, and his instruments inadequate, to enable him to make reliable observations, and was determined to remedy the lack at the first opportunity, which, however, did not present itself until 1791. In the meantime he pursued the routine of the fur-trader. On his way out to Montreal he met Philip Turner, the astronomer, who was *en route* to Fort Chipewyan to fix the position of important places in his itinerary. Mackenzie sent word that the English party was to be well looked after, as they were explorers and not interested in commerce. He adds that the expedition was not well furnished for travelling in the

wilds. Turner found Fort Chipewyan to be 115° west longitude, thus placing Lake Athabasca more than three hundred leagues from the Pacific, instead of the meagre fifty leagues guessed at by the optimistic Pond, all of whose maps were remarkably foreshortened on the Pacific and Arctic sides.

In the same letter to Lord Dorchester, Mackenzie says: "Not having been furnished with proper instruments to ascertain the longitude in my first expedition, I made myself but little known during my residence in London, the winter of 1791–2, but, to prevent the like inconveniency, I then purchased proper ones in case I should make a second attempt."

There is no information about his stay in London beyond what he himself furnishes. But his subsequent observations indicate a more accurate method, although, as in the case of all navigators of the time, there were minor discrepancies.[1]

It seems proper at this point to give a résumé of the information regarding the Pacific Coast which was available in London when Mackenzie was there, and to which he must have had access. The summary must of necessity begin with the advent of the Spanish in America, and follow in brief outline their advance from the south, the encroachments of the Russians in the north, the intrusions of the British and American fur-traders in the intervening waters, and the clearing up of the complicated situation by the Oregon Treaty in 1846.

Within half a century of the re-discovery of America by Columbus, the rich and populous country of Mexico was wholly in the power of Spain. The larger islands of the

[1] With the best instruments of the day there was a difference of between fifteen and sixteen miles in the position of Nootka as observed by Cook and Vancouver.

West Indies and parts of the mainland coasts were the first to be laid under contribution. Balboa, 1513, looked out over that Peaceful Ocean which Magellan, 1520, was to cross to the Philippines. From Nova Scotia to Cape Horn the Spanish captains had charted the seas, and two continents were ready to be made into an empire greater than any yet known to man. There were virtually no competitors for this magnificent gift of Pope Alexander VI.

But Spain was unequal to the occasion. Her island plantations deteriorated. The natives, who were really enslaved, died off; negroes were expensive, and the mineral wealth of the mainland began to attract a host of grandees and adventurers who traversed the country in every direction in their ceaseless search for people to plunder and mines to exploit.

The southern valleys were occupied by the invaders, and the silver of America compensated for the diamonds and spices of India. In every section of the country silver-mining became the great industry. Agriculture, pursued with native labour under the guidance of the Jesuit priests, thrived, and missions, mining-centres, and cattle ranches spread north as far as the arid belt which interposed an effectual barrier to northward progress. While Spain was declining in Europe, New Spain in America was steadily expanding. Her policy, however, was one of conquest, and her object the exploitation of the wealth of all the new lands. To settle her own free-born nationals on the soil seemed to be no part of her plan. The native population was not supplanted, it was merely used to furnish cheap labour. As late as 1768 the prosperous valley of Sonora in Northern Mexico had only 500 Spanish families distributed among a native population of large proportions. Lacking a firm foundation in the colonial soil and losing prestige and power

in Europe, Spain was fated, in the race for supremacy, to be ousted by more vigorous nations.

Her advance northward was blocked by a desert region, but by the end of the seventeenth century her missions had reached Santa Fé on the upper Rio Grande, in latitude 35°–40°. This thin line of settlement, however, was a mere outlier, isolated from the central government. With seaports at Acapulco and San Blas and navigators who had sailed both oceans at her command, it may be wondered why she had not already taken possession of the entire Pacific Coast.

As early as 1539, under the direction of Cortes, Ulloa had explored the coast to within 200 miles of the present city of San Diego. In 1543 de Soto with a band of adventurers had traversed the vast region now forming the south-western states, up as far as the Ohio, from which point he descended the Mississippi to the Gulf. This expedition convinced the authorities that no wealthy nations were to be found in the north, and explorations by land were not pursued.

In the same year Cabrillo sailed north to about the forty-third parallel. The navigators of the day found the prevailing north-west winds a hindrance, and did not pursue their voyages in that direction.

Portugal had lost the Philippines to Spain, and the Spanish ships, in order to avoid the Portuguese buccaneers off the Cape of Good Hope, found it expedient to open up a line of travel to their new possessions across the Pacific from Mexico. The trade-winds were followed across to Asia, and a return was made by the westerlies which brought them to land in the neighbourhood of Cape Mendocino. The shipping was thus absorbed in a lucrative trade.

The early history of this coast discloses a curious hiatus between Cape Mendocino and Alaska which persisted until

Vancouver's time. An extract from the *United States Pilot* will throw some light on the existence of this blank for 250 years after Spain had become seated on the western ocean.

"On the coast of California from latitude 40° north, a wind from the north-west blows pretty steadily during the greater part of the year. . . .

"Sailing vessels.—The only way to make a passage from any part of this coast to the northward is to stand out to sea on the starboard tack until the variable winds are reached in about 130° west, and then make northing. From July to January vessels may have to stand on as far as 140° west. . . .

"Fogs.—In the northern part of the California coast they are more frequent and at times very dense, and have been known to extend several hundred miles seaward. These continue at times for weeks rendering navigation very difficult." [1]

To avoid these difficulties mariners coasting westward, and keeping in the lanes which favoured their progress, found themselves edged out off the coast in about latitude 40° north. Their northing brought them eventually to the Alaskan coast. The intervening coast-line, therefore, was the last to be explored, and then only under specific orders from interested governments.

Certain factors then operated to prevent Spain from occupying the entire Pacific sea-board, and thus acquiring an indisputable right to it, as she might easily have done.

These were the arid barrier in the north of Mexico; the realisation that no nations sufficiently rich to plunder were to be found in that direction; the adverse winds and fogs which made navigation difficult; the absorption of her shipping in the Macao and Philippines trade; the uninviting nature of the country to the north; her lack of colonising

[1] *West Coast of Central America Pilot*, 1916, pp. 34-41.

ability; and her complete assurance that her rights in the Pacific would not be infringed by other nations.

Conquest and plunder were of more importance to her than enterprises looking to the future. Conquering and occupying Cuba, Florida, Venezuela, and La Plata and carrying off the wealth of Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, and the Philippines absorbed her energies, and drew her attention away for long periods from California and the North-West Coast.

In 1762 the great territory of Louisiana was ceded by France to Spain, which gave her possession of the whole of North America west of the Mississippi, except possibly some islands and a narrow coastal strip in Alaska to which Russia might lay claim.

The Russians had been encroaching along the Aleutian Islands since Bering's voyages, 1725–40, revealed the great wealth in sea-otter skins to be found in those waters.

After the Peace of Paris, 1763, both France and Britain began sending out exploring expeditions, which were conducted in a manner that gave to them the character of political movements.

Spain consequently bestirred herself. The coast was known to about latitude 43° north, to which point Vizcaino had attained in 1603. But Sir Francis Drake had been as far north as 48° twenty-four years before Vizcaino's voyage. After having plundered the town of Guatulaco near Acapulco, and desiring to avoid possible interception by the Spanish, he sailed north with the intention of crossing the Pacific, reaching latitude 48° north on 2 June. His men began to suffer from the cold. Returning down the coast he finally entered Drake's Bay a few miles north of San Francisco, in latitude 38°, where he remained from 17 June to 23 July. The natives entreated him to remain as their king, "where-

fore in the name and to the use of her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, he took the sceptre, crown, and dignity of the country into his hands," bestowing upon the country thus legitimately added to the English dominions the name of New Albion, and erecting on the shore of the bay a monument with an inscription commemorative of the transfer.

The Viceroy of New Spain received orders from Madrid to explore and settle the coast of America northward. Vizcaino had spoken favourably of San Diego and Monterey, hence these points were selected for colonisation. Portola was dispatched with a small party of priests, soldiers and colonists from the Gulf of California overland to San Diego where the first Spanish settlement on the Pacific Coast north of the Mexican sea-board was established, 1769. One of the land parties overshot Monterey and reached the Bay of San Francisco, but turned southward back to San Diego. By 1779 San Francisco had become a Presidio as it boasted a mud fort and a small garrison.

When Captain Cook arrived on the coast in 1778 Spain had small settlements at San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco. In the 200-year period between Drake's landing in California and Cook's arrival, the Spaniards had made no explorations north of Vizcaino's sailing in 1603. The north-west coast had in fact been forgotten.

Captain Cook passed Cape Flattery without discovering the Strait of Juan de Fuca, spent four weeks at Nootka, and considered himself the first to land there. His next important landfall was off Mount Edgecumbe, near Sitka. He sighted Mount St. Elias under latitude 60°, and entered the great gulfs of Prince William Sound and Cook's River, and passed on to Unalaska. His ships were frequently visited by the natives, none of whom appeared to have had previous intercourse with civilised peoples. Passing the south-western

extremity of the Alaskan peninsula the expedition came upon traces of the Russians near the fifty-fifth parallel. Eight days' sailing westward brought them to Unalaska, the largest of the Fox group of the Aleutian Islands, a well-known place of resort for the fur-traders of Asia, none of whom, however, were present at the time. The ships turned northward, touching at Cape Prince of Wales and East Cape in latitude 66°, the two extremities of America and Asia facing each other across the fifty-one miles of the water that forms Bering Strait. The American coast-line was then traced to Icy Cape in latitude 70½°, when farther progress was blocked by ice-floes.

Spain claimed that Perez, Maurelle, Heceta, and Bodega made important voyages in 1774–5. Perez is credited with the discovery of the Queen Charlotte Islands in latitude 54°, and Nootka Sound in 49½°. He is said to have entered the latter, naming it San Lorenzo. Heceta too, the Spanish accounts say, discovered the Columbia in latitude 46° 16′, which is marked on Spanish maps as Rio de San Roque. But these voyages were for the time being kept secret by Spain. They were finally published in London in 1781 by the Hon. Daines Barrington.[1] Consequently, Cook was unaware of any Spanish discoveries later than those of Vizcaino in 1603, though, as he says in his *Journal*, "some account of a Spanish voyage to this coast in 1774 and 1775 had reached England before I sailed."

[1] *Journal of a Voyage in 1775 to explore the Coast of America northward of California, by the Second Pilot of the Fleet, Don Francisco Antonio Maurelle, in the King's Schooner called the Sonora, commanded by Don Juan Francisco de la Bodega.* Don Juan Perez, who had sighted the Queen Charlotte Islands the year before, was an ensign in this voyage of 1775. The Spanish navigators in both voyages had instructions from their government to land whenever practicable, and take possession of the country to forestall the British, and thus establish their title to the North-West Coast by right of discovery.

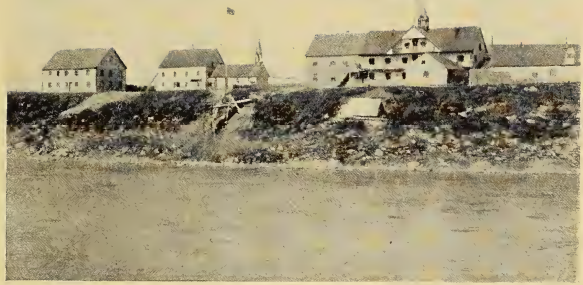


Photo O. S. Finnie *Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa*

Roman Catholic Mission at Fort Providence

Photo G. S. Hume *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

Crossing Great Slave Lake
D.L.S. Astronomical and Geological Scows

Cook's *Journals* published in 1784–5 directed the attention of Europe, the East Indies, and the United States to the great value of the fur-fisheries in the North Pacific Ocean. Cook's men were in fact the first to carry furs to China where they were highly prized. The only trade in furs at this time was that conducted by Britain in Hudson Bay, and by Russia in the northern parts of her own empire.

Then followed a rush of ships from the United States, the East Indies, Macao, Canton, England, Portugal and Ostend, to engage in the fur-trade between America and China.

The Russians under Gregory Shellikof advanced as far eastward as Kodiak Island in 1787.

These varied activities alarmed Spain whose claim to the exclusive navigation of the Pacific and the peaceful possession of the sea-board was being openly flouted. Accordingly the *Princesa* and the *San Carlos*, two armed vessels under Estevan José Martinez, were dispatched in 1788 to investigate the establishment of Russian posts in Prince William Sound, Alaska.

"According to the report addressed to the Viceroy of Mexico by Martinez, the Russian establishments in America were four in number, all of them situated west of Prince William Sound, and their population including soldiers and hunters amounted to 400. They had not advanced eastward, but reported that the Empress of Russia was about to send out a strong force to occupy Nootka." [1]

A subsequent memorial addressed by Madrid to the Empress of Russia, naming Prince William Sound as the boundary between Russian and Spanish America, was the first admission on the part of Spain of the right of any other Power to occupy a part of America bordering on the Pacific.

[1] Greenhow, Robert, *Memoir of the North-West Coast*, p. 96.

Martinez was sent to occupy Nootka in 1789. Then followed the events that led to the Nootka Convention of 1790. Certain vessels found there were seized, including Captain Meares' small vessel the *North-West America*. Meares alleged that he was dispossessed of a plot of land given to him by Maquinna, the Indian chief, and of some buildings erected thereon. The large ships were taken to San Blas, and afterwards released with their crews after being reminded of Spain's exclusive rights.

Captain Meares preferred a claim of $650,000 against Spain. The British Government submitted the matter to the nation, and the whole kingdom was thrown into a fever of excitement.

A convention [1] was finally agreed to, which restored the "buildings and lands," and offered to make just reparation, and admitted Britain's right to navigate the waters of the Pacific and to make settlements anywhere in unoccupied territory not nearer than ten sea-leagues from any Spanish settlements. Britain was debarred from access to all Spanish settlements, but Spain had equal rights in any British settlements north of Nootka. In the end Spain merely abandoned Nootka, in accordance with orders that had been sent to the commandant to abandon the place agreeably to a royal *dictamen*.[2]

This was the situation of affairs on the Pacific Coast when Mackenzie was about to attempt his voyage thither.

Spain was still dominant, and was recognised as the Power that had the right to dictate treaties and grant rights to others.

During his residence in London, 1791–2, Mackenzie no doubt had access to Barrington's translation of the

[1] See Appendix D.
[2] Greenhow's *North-West Coast*, p. 141, note.

Journal of Francisco Antonio Maurelle which was published in 1781. Meares' account of his *Voyages* came out in 1790, and on 13 May of that year he presented his memorial to the British Parliament in which he recited his case against Spain, claiming the restitution of his ship, his lands and buildings, valued by him at $650,000. He eventually received $210,000. What particularly interested Mackenzie was the account Meares gave of the voyage of the *Washington* through an immense inland sea [1] east of Vancouver Island, which at that time had not been circumnavigated. This account is prefixed to Meares' narrative of his voyages under the title "Observations on the Probable Existence of a North-West Passage." Some of the statements made therein caused a wordy war which was waged in a series of pamphlets between Captain Dixon and Captain Meares. The former's journal had been published in 1789, and he took issue with Meares on his extravagant statements. This controversy was familiar to Mackenzie as he refers to it in a note.

Vancouver sailed from London in January 1791 for Nootka as one of the commissaries appointed to carry out the terms of the Convention.

It may be taken for granted that Mackenzie availed himself of all the material published up to that date relating to the North-West Coast. Although he nowhere mentions the fact, he was probably aware that Heceta claimed to have discovered the Rio de San Roque, in latitude 46° 20′ north.

Mackenzie's knowledge of the trade between the North-West Coast and China made it clear to him that it was just as easy to send furs to China direct from the Pacific coast as it was to send them to England from Montreal—in fact,

[1] Meares asserts that the *Washington* "sailed through a sea extending upwards of eight degrees of latitude" east of Vancouver Island.

with good river communications with the interior, much easier. It was expected that the Nootka Convention would remove some of the difficulties from the question of establishing settlements on the Pacific. Hence his eagerness to be first on the ground.

CHAPTER VII

WINTERING ON THE PEACE

He left the Downs on 7 April, 1792, and upon his arrival in Canada, attended the annual meeting of the partners at Grande Portage in August, and then hurried back to Chipewyan, which is a two months' journey. He had, however, previously sent word that a small party of men was to be dispatched to the Peace for the purpose of squaring timbers for a house. The whole time between his arrival at Fort Chipewyan and his departure on 10 October was spent in preparation for the dash to the Pacific, and in discussing with his sympathetic cousin his theories, hopes and fears. That he would eventually make this trip was foreshadowed from the first. In fact it is quite plain that he wanted to emerge on the Pacific on his first journey, and was grievously disappointed when the Great River carried him down to the Arctic.

Fully convinced of the existence of a river in British territory flowing into the Pacific, Mackenzie once more took up the quest. On 10 October, 1792, we find him at Fort Chipewyan where he had made every necessary preparation for his contemplated dash across the Rockies to the western slope. It was his purpose to winter at the most distant settlement on the Peace in order to shorten the work of the following season. "The Peace," he remarks, "is the route by which I propose to attempt my next discovery across the mountains from the source of that river."

Roderick Mackenzie a second time furthers the plans of his more resourceful cousin by taking charge of Fort Chipewyan during his absence.

The three leading canoes entered the Peace at seven in the morning of 12 October, 1792. Mackenzie was struck, as every observant traveller since his time has been struck, with the remarkable richness and fertility of the made land in the angle formed by Peace River, Athabasca Lake, and Athabasca River, totalling perhaps half a million acres. He states that the western end of Lake Athabasca, and Clear Lake and the other small lakes as well, are now so shallow, from the deposition of sediment brought down by the two great rivers, that there is every reason to expect that in a few years they will have exchanged their character and become extensive forests.

Travelling rapidly over the waters of the majestic Peace through this fine territory, Peace Point was reached at noon on the thirteenth, and his interpreter tells him that the river derives its name from a peace pact arranged here between the Knisteneaux and Beaver Indians. It appears that the Beaver Indians and the Slaves formerly lived as neighbours around Portage La Loche, or Methye Portage. The Knisteneaux invaded the country from the south and drove both tribes before them northward down Athabasca River and across the lake, where the fugitives separated, the Slaves proceeding farther north down Slave River to Slave Lake, both river and lake taking their names from this event, while the tribe of Beavers went up Peace River closely followed by their enemies. Here the rivals made peace, and this point was settled to be the boundary between them.

The weather was cold and raw and Mackenzie knew that it was advisable to hasten as the ice might run any day,

after which it would be difficult, if not impossible, to travel. By the seventeenth the Falls or Chutes of the Peace were reached where the river is about four hundred yards wide with a drop of about twenty-five feet. A portage of eight hundred paces at the lower end and about six hundred at the upper with a mile intervening takes the traveller to the navigable waters above.

Whether Mackenzie had any conception of the vast power possibilities of these falls, or the likelihood of the establishment here, in the future, of one of the great cities of the North American continent, it is difficult to say. He was a man of ideas, but no development in the world's history in any way comparable to the sudden rise of large cities all over the American continent since his time had ever occurred. Cities in the old world were the slow accretion of centuries. If such thoughts looking to the future ever crossed his mind when passing such fine sites, he undoubtedly thought that future too remote to justify any references to such possibilities. One recalls Champlain's reflection when he crossed the Isthmus of Panama and noted with the eye of the engineer the importance of this route to the commerce of the world, and realised the certainty of a canal eventually joining the two oceans. Flitting adumbrations of the crowded days to come must have disturbed Mackenzie's reflections time and again in the course of his travels in the great North-West, at many points where the confused rhythms of hurrying feet will echo when the capitals of Europe are duplicated throughout this vast region, traversed for the first time by this inspired son of the wild Hebrides.

A snow-clad landscape greeted them in the morning, and as if to meet their eagerness a wind sprang up and enabled them to make good headway against the current by sailing. Cheerful fires of dry poplar blazed that night at

the upper end of Grand Isle above Loon River, designated on recent maps as the Wabiskaw.

"It now froze very hard; indeed it had so much the appearance of winter that I began to entertain some alarm lest we might be stopped by the ice; we therefore set off at three o'clock in the morning of the nineteenth and about eight landed at the 'Old Establishment.' "

The river up to this point had been surveyed by M. Vaudreuil, formerly of the company's service. They were now due west of Chipewyan, though the Peace had made a curve of fifty miles to the northward. The country so far traversed was low and fertile, generally wooded but with some open stretches covered with grass. "On a line with the Falls and on either side of the river, are said to be very extensive plains which afford pasture to numerous herds of buffaloes."

Mackenzie does not often dwell upon the possible agricultural future of the extensive regions covered by him; indeed, he seems to have been of the general opinion that the climate was too severe. Perhaps his outlook was that of the fur-trader, who was not inclined to see anything more in the wilds but a perfect game and fur preserve, with the natives placed there as convenient servants of the company. To-day one of the most interesting of the Dominion Experimental Farms is located here, near Fort Vermilion, in the midst of what surveyors and grain-growers regard as the largest and richest tract of wheat lands on the continent.

James Finlay with his party was camped near the fort, which had been assigned to his charge. Five years later he was to ascend the Peace and explore the northern branch which has since borne his name. Both parties then made every necessary preparation that would enable them to make a becoming appearance on their arrival at the post the

following morning. Mackenzie adds that, although he had been in the Athabasca country since 1787, he had not yet seen a single native from the Peace.

It was usual for the fur-brigades, or a partners' flotilla, when within a few hours of a post, to camp for the night to rest and remove the stains of travel. Next morning with all their finery on, after having imbibed a dram or two to add to their dash, the canoes started gaily for their destination. It was necessary to impress the child-like mind of the savage with a display of grandeur; moreover the partners themselves were not above a boy-like pleasure in setting off their overlordship with a certain amount of backwoods pomp and circumstance. So with ribbons and feathers adding a touch of colour and gaiety to their attire, and singing one of their liveliest songs, the paddlers made the water fly in order to bring their canoe before the populace at a swinging clip. But long before they appeared off the post, the dogs and children were aware of their approach, and had communicated their excitement to the rum-thirsty inhabitants, who, with the keenest anticipations of renewed indulgence, rushed to the water-front and welcomed the leaders with loud cries of greeting, friendship and flattery, which were not unappreciated by the great ones. The canoe, with a bone in her mouth, foamed in to the landing like a runaway wolf, and some of the nervous ones held their breath for a second, fully expecting a crash, but at a signal, a dozen strong arms dug their paddles into the water in a great back-stroke, and the speeding canoe, within the space of a few feet, came to an abrupt stop. One and all leapt ashore, glad to be released from the cramping work. The lading was hurriedly disposed of, and *voyageurs* and partners alike gave themselves over to enjoyment, which gained impetus in the wee sma' hours, when it became possible

to whoop it up in savage style. Mackenzie does not himself describe such a scene of revelry as a personal experience, but others have frequently done so, and they have given him full credit for being one of the gayest of the gay on such occasions, particularly in Montreal, when he was among his equals behind the discreet doors of the Beaver Club.

The populace, to the number of three hundred, turned out at six next morning, "animated with the prospect of again indulging themselves in the luxury of rum." Volleys of small arms proclaimed their welcome. It appears that the North-West Company observed a practice neither to sell nor give any rum to the natives during the summer. Of the Indians of the Peace Mackenzie says "they are passionately fond of liquor, and in the moments of their festivity will barter anything they have in their possession for it." Their appetites had been on edge since May. "They very soon expressed their desire for the expected regale. I called them together to the number of forty-two hunters, or men capable of bearing arms, to offer some advice which would be equally advantageous to them and to us, and I strengthened my admonition with a nine-gallon cask of reduced rum, and a quantity of tobacco."

Liquor was very seldom sold to the natives. It was rather a gift from the gods, a special dispensation to signalise the fact that Kitche Okema was pleased with his children and desired that they should likewise be happy. It was given to them on special occasions, as when they brought furs to barter, or when a great man of the company came among them. Nine imperial gallons of rum, even reduced rum, for forty-two men, it will be admitted, is quite a sufficient amount to produce the war-whoop in the most approved style. The resulting *boissons* or drinking bouts have been described time and again as bestial affairs. At every post a

considerable proportion of the natives, in the course of successive debauches, were killed by their relatives in their drunken frolics. In a four-year period an official of the company records seven killings of this nature in a tribe of forty. Mackenzie, though he frequently dispenses the fiery beverage among his people, does not describe what afterwards happened, but that the same scenes followed upon those occasions as when others treated the native population to a regale may be taken for granted.

In 1808 Wilberforce sponsored a bill in the British Parliament prohibiting the use of liquor among the Indians, but this was opposed by a petition from the North-West Company which defended its policy of supplying the Indians with liquor on the plea of necessity. This company used at its posts an average of ten thousand gallons per annum, though in the year 1785, when Mackenzie himself entered the field on an independent venture of his own, the returns show that they used fifty thousand gallons of liquor in the ordinary course of business.[1] There were only a thousand servants and partners in the company, and since, as one of the officials writes, "we take a drink once a week and get drunk perhaps once in seven years," there must have been a very large amount of liquor for annual distribution among the natives.

An unbiased history of the fur-companies would reveal to an astonished public scenes of debauchery among the native population, and the servants and partners of the companies as well, that would amaze those who have been accustomed to regard the "Wolves of the North" as Christian gentlemen, devoted entirely to "plain living and high thinking." But this narrative is chiefly concerned with Mackenzie the explorer, and therefore cannot take cognisance of

[1] Davidson, Gordon Charles, Ph.D., *The North-West Company*, p. 24.

certain features more intimately associated with the trader's affairs.

The weather began to show increasing signs of inclemency. It froze rather hard in the night and the thickness of the ice in the morning was sufficient notice for them to proceed without the least delay. "I accordingly gave the natives such good counsel as might influence their behaviour, instructed Mr. Finlay, and took my leave under several volleys of musketry." The loaded canoes had already been sent on two days before with orders to proceed with all speed. Passing the Smoky, which comes in on the east, with a breadth of about half of that of the main branch, the party arrived at a point six miles farther up. The speed at which they had travelled in their race to reach their destination before the freeze-up had quite exhausted the men. Not a single hut was in readiness to receive them.

The principal chief of the neighbourhood and seventy men who had been anxiously awaiting their arrival received them "with every mark of satisfaction and regard which they could express. If we might judge by the quantity of powder that was wasted on our arrival they certainly had not been in want of ammunition, at least during the summer."

These people had given his predecessor some trouble. Therefore, no sooner was his tent pitched than Mackenzie summoned the Indians, gave each of them four inches of Brazil tobacco and a dram of spirits, and lighted the pipe. He admonished them, telling them that they would be treated kindly if they deserved it, but that he should be equally severe "if they failed in those returns which I had a right to expect of them. I presented them with a quantity of rum which I recommended to be used with discretion, and added some tobacco, as a token of peace."

When Mackenzie speaks of recommending that liquor

should be used with discretion, it must not be forgotten that he had in view British public opinion, which was not entirely in favour of this method of taking advantage of the weaknesses of the nation's wards.

The two men who had been sent ahead in the spring to get the necessary timbers ready had employed themselves so diligently that all was in readiness to begin the work of construction. But Mackenzie knew the necessity of keeping up the food supplies, and therefore, until the seventh, was busy settling matters with the Indian hunters, equipping them for the winter hunting. On the sixth, ice began to run in the river, and navigation was at an end until the end of the following April. Having settled with the Indians, all hands were set to work to construct the fort, put up the dwellings, and form store-houses. The other fork of the river, since known as the Smoky, one league distant across the neck of land, froze solid on the sixteenth, but the main river did not set fast until the twenty-second, which enabled them to cross the river, a fortunate circumstance, since the hunters, while the ice was running, had been prevented from crossing and securing meat supplies. Nevertheless they had their difficulties while the snow was insufficient for sledding, during which time the hunters had to bring in the spoils of the chase on their backs, a very toilsome business and one not relished by those accustomed to canoes and dog-teams. The weather was so severe by the twenty-seventh that the axes of the workmen became almost as brittle as glass. After 2 December it was impossible to keep a record of the temperature, as on that date Mackenzie's Fahrenheit thermometer was injured and became useless. This loss and the situation in general moves him to comment upon the lack of knowledge and experience both in himself and in those who looked to him for help. "In this situation, removed from all

those ready aids which add so much to the comfort, and is indeed a principal characteristic of civilised life, I was under the necessity of employing my judgment and experience in accessory circumstances by no means connected with the habits of my life, or the enterprise in which I was immediately engaged."

These people seemed to be more ignorant than the generality of savages regarding the remedial virtues of herbs and plants, and Mackenzie was now obliged to become their physician and surgeon. His first case was that of a woman whose swelled breast had been lacerated by flint stones in an attempt to produce a cure. Cleanliness and poultices were more effective than the mutilations. A workman developed a sudden pain in his thumb which prevented him from using his axe, and Mackenzie was surprised to find a red stripe half an inch wide extending from the thumb to the shoulder. There was violent pain and chilliness and shivering. The case was beyond his skill, but to relieve his patient's mind the doctor concocted a liniment of rum and soap, "a volatile liniment, with which I ordered his arm to be rubbed but with no effect." The man raved during the night, and blotches appeared on his body and pains in his stomach, whereupon the surgeon conceived the idea of taking some blood from him and, "I ventured from absolute necessity to perform that operation for the first time, and with an effect that justified the treatment." The man was completely restored to health and activity.

His house was ready for occupation on 23 December, on which date he quitted his tent and moved into the hut. The men were then set to work to build a range of five houses, seventeen by twelve feet, for themselves. All the materials were in readiness. "It would be considered by the inhabitants of a milder climate to be a great evil to be

exposed to the weather at this rigorous season of the year, but these people are inured to it, and it is necessary to describe in some measure the hardships which they undergo without a murmur, in order to convey a general notion of them."

He goes on to say that these servants of the company left this place in May and went to Rainy Lake in canoes laden with packs of fur, which, from the immense length of the journey and other concurring circumstances, was a most severe trial of patience and perseverance, but the length of their stay at Rainy Lake was not sufficient time for ordinary rest, since they took a load of goods brought from Montreal over Grande Portage, in exchange, and proceeded on their return, travelling from twelve to sixteen hours a day. They had been there two months since their return from Rainy Lake and during that time had been continuously engaged in the very toilsome labour of getting out timbers and digging ditches for the palisades. "Such is the life which these people lead, and it is continued with unremitting exertion till their strength is lost in premature old age."

The winter was characterised by the advent of one of those winds peculiar to the north. On the twenty-ninth, after a calm, cloudy day, a rumbling was heard in the air, and a perfect hurricane came up from the south-west which lasted for some hours. The atmosphere became warm and the snow disappeared rapidly, the ice on the river was covered with water, and had the same appearance as when it is breaking up in the spring. An hour's calm was then followed by violent winds, clouds, rain and hail, which continued all night and next day, when it turned to snow.

New Year's Day his people celebrated in the customary

manner with a discharge of fire-arms, after which they were regaled with plenty of spirits and cakes.

Mackenzie's surgical skill was again called into requisition. A youth with his thumb hanging by a strip of flesh as the result of the bursting of a gun, was in a fair way to die of blood-poisoning, since the wound was putrefying, and in an advanced stage of mortification. The Indian doctors had exhausted all their arts of conjuring without avail. Mackenzie used a poultice of bark from the spruce-fir, and the juice of the same bark for cleansing purposes. It proved a painful dressing, but in a few days the wound was clean, and the proud flesh around it destroyed, but whether this desirable result was due to the efficacy of the spruce poultice and the decoction, or to the vitriol which he also used, he fails to state. "In short I was so successful that by Christmas my patient engaged in a hunting party and brought me the tongue of an elk."

A Chinook wind on the fifth again reduced the snow Mackenzie had observed at Athabàsca that a south-west wind always brought clear, mild weather. "To this cause it may be attributed that there is now so little snow in this part of the world. These warm winds come off the Pacific Ocean, which cannot in a direct line be very far from us, the distance being so short that though they pass over the mountains covered with snow there is not time for them to cool."

Mackenzie here speaks of the comparatively short distance to the Pacific. The maps of the period, especially Pond's, make the distance from Lake Athabasca to the western ocean short. But Mackenzie must have had his ideas on the subject modified by the observations of Turner, the astronomer, who had wintered at Fort Chipewyan, 1791–2, while Mackenzie himself was in England perfect-

ing his own astronomical knowledge. Turner, who had been sent out by the Hudson's Bay Company at the instance of the Colonial Office, had found by a series of observations that Lake Athabasca, instead of being forty or fifty leagues from the Pacific as Pond and others had supposed, was in reality more than three hundred leagues distant. Mackenzie himself had not been able to determine any longitude. Hence, when he speaks of the ocean being only a short distance away, the language is the same as he had formerly used, but he had in mind the full significance of Turner's conclusions.

The observations of Cook, Bering, and Chirikov at half a dozen points on the western seaboard must have been known to him. If he accepted Turner's longitude for Athabasca he had before him a fairly proximate distance across the continent. It is possible, indeed probable, that he regarded the stretch between him and the ocean as being much shorter than it actually was. At any rate the belief helped rather than hindered him.

A continued firing of shots one night brought to his attention the curious custom among the natives of discharging their fire-arms on the death of a relative to warn others not to approach the afflicted one at this time, as, in his sorrow, he was careless of life, and might in his great grief deprive an incautious intruder of his.

While here he learned from the Indians of the existence of a large lake one hundred and twenty miles due east, known to them as Slave Lake, from the fact that the Slave Indians lived there. The fact that two lakes bore the same name led to the addition of "Great" and "Lesser," to distinguish them. The Knisteneaux or Crees formerly came from their territory on the Saskatchewan River to make war on the Slaves at this lake where they left their canoes, to follow a well-beaten path all the way to the Forks.

Among the people at the post Mackenzie discovered two Rocky Mountain Indians who informed him that the natives here who called themselves by that name were not entitled to it and that they alone were from the Rocky Mountains. They were familiar with the country adjacent to those mountains, and with the navigation of the rivers which emerged from them. They said that the country from this point to the mountains was similar to that in the immediate vicinity, and that animals were plentiful throughout the territory, but that the course of the river was interrupted in the mountains by successive rapids and considerable falls. But, more important still, these men definitely informed Mackenzie that there was another great river on the far side of the mountains which flowed towards the midday sun, and that the distance across the divide was not great.

From the middle of February to 16 March the hard frost continued, but on the thirteenth some geese were seen, which was considered a good omen as these birds were always looked upon as the harbingers of spring. On the twenty-second a wolf was so bold as to venture among the Indian lodges, and was very near carrying off an Indian child. By 1 April the hunters were able to bring in geese, and Mackenzie remarks on the earliness of the appearance of the wild-fowl. The snow had entirely disappeared by the fifth.

"At half past four this morning I was awakened to be informed that an Indian had been killed." Investigation brought to light the fact that his Indian hunter had murdered a young native. The former, it appeared, had lent one of his three wives to the young man three years ago, and had recently reclaimed her. The young man and woman, however, continued to meet, which roused the husband to a state of jealous fury, with the result that he at last mur-

dered the young man. All the Indians at once fled from the post.

Gnats and mosquitoes appeared in swarms on 20 April, while on the other side of the river, which was still covered with ice, "the plains were delightful, the trees were budding, and many plants were in bloom. Mr. Mackay brought in a bunch of flowers of a pink colour. The change in the appearance of nature was as sudden as it was pleasing for a few days only were passed away since the ground was covered with snow. On the twenty-fifth the river was cleared of ice."

An old Indian in explaining his age gave some interesting information regarding the change in the appearance of the countryside and the migration of animals. "He remembered the opposite hills and plains, now interspersed with groves of poplar, when they were covered with moss without any animal inhabitants but reindeer. By degrees, he said, the face of the country changed to its present appearance, when the elk came from the east, and was followed by the buffalo; the reindeer then retired to the long range of high lands that at a considerable distance run parallel with the river." The Clear Hills and Caribou Mountains, the latter an old erosion plateau, which together extend from Fort St. John to the vicinity of Slave River, make up the range of highlands spoken of. Caribou are still found on the tableland opposite Fort Vermilion.

The death of White Partridge, the young man recently murdered, threatened to upset all the plans Mackenzie had made with the Indians regarding their spring hunt. These people had assembled some distance from the fort, and sent messengers to him to demand rum that they might weep for the departed, as it was considered a great degradation for an Indian to weep when sober. Mackenzie refused, and they threatened to go to war with other tribes. On

receiving a second message by people of weight among them, Mackenzie thought it prudent to comply, on the express condition that they would remain peaceably at home.

The winter purchases of furs were loaded into half a dozen canoes and dispatched to Chipewyan on 8 May, and Mackenzie closed the business of the year for the company by writing his public and private dispatches.

The following day the canoe was put into the water. It was built so lightly "that two men could carry her on a good road three or four miles without stopping. It was twenty-five feet long inside, twenty-six inches deep, and four feet nine inches wide. In this slender vessel we shipped provisions, goods for presents, arms, ammunition, and baggage to the weight of three thousand pounds and an equipage of ten people, viz., Alexander Mackay, Joseph Landry, Charles Ducette, François Beaulieux, Baptist Bisson, François Courtois, and Jaques Beauchamp, with two Indian hunters and interpreters. With these persons I embarked at seven in the evening. My interpreter and another whom I left to take care of the fort, shed tears on reflecting upon those dangers which we might encounter in our expedition, while my own people offered up their prayers that we might return in safety from it."

Photo Dr. Kindle *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

A Family Party Travelling: Mackenzie River

Photo O. S. Finnie *Courtesy N.W.T. and Y. Branch, Dept. of Interior, Ottawa*

Native Women and Children at Fort Providence

CHAPTER VIII

THROUGH THE "MOUNTAIN OF ROCKS"

MACKENZIE wisely decided to dispense with an Indian following on this voyage, as he realised that they would be a hindrance rather than a help. In the event of difficulties with his Canadians they were more likely to be amenable, as, in the last resort, he could appeal to their fidelity as *engagés* of the company. Moreover, they could be reached by arguments and suggestions that would make no impression on the primitive and alien mind of the native.

Joseph Landry and Charles Ducette had been with him to the Arctic and for that reason their pride as veterans, who had accompanied their chief in that undertaking, would prevent them from giving in too readily to the difficulties which would assuredly confront them. Alexander Mackay, whom Mackenzie praises for his bravery and resourcefulness, was second in command. His position was that of foreman, as Mackenzie had found in his first voyage that it was expedient to be relieved as much as possible of the supervision of the men, in order that he might give his mind to the necessary work of observing and recording. Quite evidently intelligence and agility were not always qualities to be desired above the more stolid virtues, for we find him taking along Cancre the Crab, an Indian youth who was slow but sure. Perseverance, endurance and fidelity were the main qualities upon which the success of the expedition depended.

"From the place we quitted this morning the west side

of the river displayed a succession of the most beautiful scenery I had ever beheld. The ground rises at intervals to a considerable height. At every interval or pause in the rise, there is a very gently ascending space of lawn, which is alternate with abrupt precipices to the summit of the whole, or at least as far as the eye could distinguish. This magnificent theatre of nature has all the decorations which the trees and animals of the country can afford it; groves of poplar in every shape vary the scene; and at their intervals are enlivened with vast herds of elk and buffalo, the former choosing the steeps and uplands, and the latter preferring the plains. At this time the buffaloes were attended with their young ones, who were frisking about them. The whole country exhibited an exuberant verdure."

This description of the country between Peace River Crossing and Dunvegan applies to-day, with the difference that the animals seen now are domesticated cattle belonging to the numerous settlements which spread over the prairie level. Some of the best-improved farms in Alberta occupy this stretch behind the terraces which Mackenzie here describes.

The river was rising and it was necessary to make use of the setting-poles, as the paddles in such a swift current were not effective enough. Passing the one hundred and twentieth meridian, camp was made within the present boundary of British Columbia, in the Peace River Block, a mile or two east of Cut-Bank River, which was known at the time as Quiscatina Sepy, or, to adopt the modern spelling, the Kiskatinaw. Mackenzie's camp must have been at Rolla Landing, where the wagon-road into Pouce Coupé and Grande Prairie leaves the river, or very close to it. As a matter of fact there is a convenient beach here which makes it a natural camping-ground.

A party of Beaver Indians appeared and Mackenzie was

apprehensive lest they should influence his Indians to desert. It appears that an old Indian at the fort who had been at war beyond the Rocky Mountains had given him an account of a large river that forked between the mountains and had directed him to take the southern branch, saying that from its headwaters there was a carrying-place of about a day's march for a young man to get to the other river, that flowed towards the midday sun. His son had accompanied him on that trip, and the old man arranged that his son should accompany the explorer, but another young man, who had been refused a place as hunter for the party, persuaded the son to desert. The instigator of this desertion now appeared and Mackenzie remarks that under any other circumstances he would have chastised the man for seducing away his intended guide. Of the latter no word could be obtained, nor of the old man, who should have been in this neighbourhood.

The river banks became lower, and the stream itself widened from three to five hundred yards and was full of islands and flats. During the day the tracks of many grizzlies were seen, and the den of one of them was discovered on an island. It measured ten feet long, five feet high, and six wide. "The Indians entertained great apprehension of this kind of bear, which is called the grisly bear, and they never venture to attack it but in a party of at least three or four. Our hunters, though they had been much higher than this by land, knew nothing of the river."

At the entrance of a branch it was observed that some of the wood had been cut with an axe, and it was concluded that these tools had not been used by any of the Indians they were acquainted with. Animals were plentiful, and the scenery occasionally reminded them of the magnificent stretch opposite the fort. Mackenzie was much taken with the situation at the mouth of Sinew River, which he

describes as an excellent spot for a fort, or factory, as there was plenty of wood, and every reason to believe that the country abounded in beaver. "As for the other animals they are in evident abundance, as in every direction, the elk and the buffalo are seen in possession of the hills and plains. The land above the spot where we encamped spreads into an extensive plain, and stretches on to a very high ridge, which in some parts presents a face of rock but is principally covered with verdure, and varied with the poplar and white birch tree. The country is so crowded with animals as to have the appearance in some places of a stall-yard, from the state of the ground, and the quantity of dung which is scattered over it. The soil is black and light. We this day saw two grisly and hideous bears."

At two on the afternoon of Friday, 17 May, eight days after the commencement of the voyage, "the Rocky Mountains appeared in sight with their summits covered with snow, bearing south-west by south. They formed a very agreeable object to every person in the canoe, as we attained the view of them much sooner than we expected."

Mackenzie was still in the Peace River Block a few miles below Hudson's Hope. The river trough at this point varies in height up to a hundred feet and more, and it is impossible usually to get a view of the prairie-level. Mackenzie was accustomed to the low elevations of the plains, so that a mountain of two thousand feet looked bigger to him than it would to one used to the sight of great ranges. What he really saw was the first ridge of the foothills west of Hudson's Hope now known as Bull's Head Mountain. He was still over eighty miles in a direct line from the main range, and probably more than a hundred by the river. As far north as the fifty-sixth parallel the Rockies have lost more than half their height, and they continue to diminish northward, Mount

Selwyn, indeed, the highest peak near the Peace, being only 4200 feet above the river, and 6220 feet above sea-level.

Next day their troubles began. The canoe struck on a stump in a situation where it was difficult to make repairs, since the banks were steep and there was little foothold. The current became stronger and the going, under some of the cut-banks, was hazardous, because of the continued falling of large stones. It was spring, and the frost was coming out of the ground, loosening the soil and the rocks, which hurtled down with tremendous force, often without the slightest warning. It was plain from the numerous trails on both sides of the river that the animals used this part to cross back and forth.

The current increased in velocity on Sunday, so that Mackay, the two hunters and Mackenzie got out to lighten the canoe. They found a beaten path which led them into a herd of buffalo with their young ones. Musket-shots from the canoe warned the party to return, when it was found that progress had been stopped by waterfalls above. Mackenzie was greatly displeased at the delay as he had previously given directions that the river should be followed as long as it was practicable. The last Indians had informed them that at the first mountain there was a succession of rapids, cascades and falls, which they never attempted to ascend, and where they always passed overland the length of a day's march.

Mackenzie possibly had in mind the exaggerations of the Indians below Slave Lake, and may have been inclined to minimise the accounts he had recently received regarding the passage through "Rocky Mountain Canyon." But in this instance the natives had understated the difficulties. While he says that "the account which had been given me of the rapid was perfectly correct," he nevertheless takes the most

astounding risks in endeavouring to continue by river rather than by making a portage here.

"The 'Canyon of the Mountain of Rocks,' or Peace River Canyon, as it is variously called, is where the Peace River cuts through the foothills of the Rockies and emerges on to the plains. According to McLearn, it is a recent topographic feature, the river having been forced into its present channel by a terminal moraine which closed up the old gap between Portage and Bullhead Mountains, through which the river formerly flowed. The canyon is about twenty-five miles long, and the river consists of a series of foaming rapids for about half the distance; below that the water is calmer, with relatively small drops and a few riffles. The canyon is quite impassable for navigation. The portage around the canyon is only fourteen miles in length, as the river makes a big half-circle bend." [1]

The canoe, which carried a load of nearly three tons and had only a few inches of free-board, had to be carefully and skilfully moved from one side of the river to the other, as occasion demanded. It was a risky operation, and might have ended at any moment in irretrievable disaster. For a short distance the canoe was tracked along an island, but, in clearing the point, it was squeezed against a projecting rock by the force of the current and seriously injured. After great exertions the craft was repaired, the goods dried and re-loaded and the course continued about three-quarters of a mile. Tremendous cliffs walled them in. The river thundered by in a wild swirl, for the mighty Peace, which spreads out a mile or so in other places, here hurls itself through a twenty-five-mile horse-shoe chasm between walls three hundred feet high, dropping 225 feet in its course

[1] Galloway, J. D., Prov. Mineralogist. *Ann. Rep. B.C. Min of Mines*, 1923.

from the upper to the lower level. It became more and more difficult to cross from side to side in order to take advantage of slacker water and footholds. Finding at last that it was too dangerous to continue crossing, because of cascades immediately below them, "which if we had got among them would have involved us and the canoe in one common destruction," there was no alternative but to return by the same course by which they had come. Dizzy cliffs overhung the boiling cauldron below, while in mid-stream were several islands like battleships breasting the tide, very much worn below by water and ice, and presenting the appearance of tables supported on smaller bases. Mr. Mackay and the Indians who were in a high position watched, with feelings which may be imagined, the frail canoe and its cargo of men and valuable material crossing amid whirlpools of seething water, from one island to another. When they finally reached the west side, the current was found to be as violent, but they were able to use a sixty-fathom tow-line till they came to the foot of the most rapid cascade they had yet seen. A portage of 120 paces was necessary here to get over a rocky point and past the falls.

Mackenzie and three others ascended the high bank whence he endeavoured to direct the canoemen to lighten the vessel of part of its lading, but, though he called to them with his utmost strength, they, in the midst of the terrific turmoil below, were unable to hear him.

"And here I could not but reflect with infinite anxiety on the hazard of my enterprise. One false step of those who were attached to the line, or the breaking of the line itself, would have at once consigned the canoe and everything it contained to instant destruction."

The men were always in danger of stepping into the mill-race and being drowned, or of being instantly killed

or maimed by large rocks which were continually rolling from the banks.

A reconnaissance of several hours through the woods brought them out on the river where the mountain spur abuts on the stream. The channel was about a hundred yards broad, and from this point, looking downstream, they saw the river contracted to fifty yards and rushing with great velocity between perpendicular rocks. Mackenzie waited here in great anxiety for the arrival of the canoe. At last he sent Mackay down in search of it, while he and the others continued a mile and a half farther up, where the river flowed between precipices three hundred feet high in a succession of rapids and cascades. Returning to the last point, the canoe was seen being portaged over a rocky projection below. It had been broken but the men had repaired it, and now with the line they were able to ascend to where Mackenzie had been. An inviting beach led them to camp for the night, and while resting by their fires of driftwood they were interested by the appearance of several elk feeding on the edge of the opposite precipice three hundred feet above them.

The explorer sent a man and an Indian ahead next day to reconnoitre. The *voyageur* reported that it would be impracticable to pass several points, particularly thosew here the undercut cliffs projected. The canoe was again broken next day in hauling it over a difficult place and Mackenzie risked his life in jumping to a place of vantage in order that he might assist the others to the same point without danger to them. When the poles failed them they had recourse to the towing-line, a highly dangerous proceeding as the men who held the line were high up on the cliffs, and had frequently to pass it around projecting rocks and trees that overhung the cliffs, while the men below had all they could do to prevent the current from swinging them in and out

at violent angles which would have resulted in their being instantly swamped.

Once more it was necessary to cross over to the far side. The men stripped off their shirts and were ready for the worst, but the passage was safely made. An altitude had to be taken, for which purpose the canoe was run ashore, and the men took advantage of the moment to leave it without securely fastening it. It sheered off into the current and, but for the fact that one man from absolute fatigue had remained near it with the loose end of the painter in his hand, the canoe and everything in it would have been lost and the party stranded.

The tracking was continued and in a space of two miles the canoe had to be unloaded four times. "In many places it was with the utmost difficulty that we could prevent her from being dashed to pieces against the rocks by the violence of the eddies."

Late in the afternoon the river became one continuous rapid. A wave struck the bow with great force and broke the line. For a wild moment it seemed that canoe and men were doomed, for the wave washed them outwards over rocks that a moment before were bare, but the next moment another wave, more propitious, washed them inward over the same rocks, and the men quickly held her to the banks, but they were so shaken by the wild work of the river that farther progress was impossible then; particularly as the river as far as they could see was one white sheet of foaming water. The men were so discouraged that "it began to be murmured on all sides that there was no alternative but to return."

Mackenzie, however, ordered his men to climb the hill and make camp while he and an Indian continued up the river until night, but could see no end of the rapids and

cascades. "I was therefore perfectly satisfied that it would be impracticable to proceed any farther by water."

The river since noon had not been more than fifty yards wide, flowing between stupendous rocks. At a stage of higher water it would not have been possible to ascend so far as they had done. Coal was observed in the cliffs, and heat, smoke, and sulphurous smells were emitted from some of the larger cracks in the strata.[1]

As there was nothing for it now but to find the shortest and most convenient overland route to navigable waters above, Mackay with three men and two Indians was sent out with instructions to find such a route. On their return at sunset Mackay and his men reported that navigable water had been reached at a distance of about nine leagues. In spite of the strenuous labours of the last week, and the constant danger to which all had been exposed, the men, when faced with the problem of getting by this obstruction, did not become discouraged. "A kettle of wild rice, sweetened with sugar, which had been prepared for their return, with their usual regale of rum, soon renewed that courage which disdained all obstacles that threatened our progress, and they went to rest with the full determination to surmount them on the morrow."

With great care and infinite labour, the cargo and the canoe were first brought to the level of their encampment. A single slip would have been fatal, for the rocks shelved steeply into the swift deep water below. The canoe was

[1] Sixty square miles around the canyon are held as coal leases. The coal is said to be equal to the best West Virginia product. As an indication of the amount available, F. McLearn, of the Geological Survey, gives an estimate of 84,000,000 tons covering an area of seven square miles, which includes seams of two and a half feet and over. The water-power available here is enormous, and undoubtedly one of the large industrial cities of the future will be located somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood.

then warped up the hill by means of a rope, the end of which was given a turn around a tree above. In this way every foot gained was held. By two in the afternoon the whole outfit had been safely hauled and carried to the summit, that is to say, on to the general level above, and the men at once began cutting a road westward, about a mile of which was completed that day, through a forest of large trees with little or no underbrush. On Thursday the party moved on three miles, and by Friday at four in the afternoon the river was reached a hundred yards or so above the rapids, where, later, Cust's House was established.

Mackenzie estimates the length of the road that they made at about seven miles, but remarks that the Indian carrying-place, whose length was probably ten miles, was safer and more expeditious than the passage they had cut with so much difficulty.

Two hundred yards below their location the mighty Peace was contracted to thirty-five yards between perpendicular rocks through which it rushed with astonishing but silent velocity. The river was rising daily. In a higher stage these portals would themselves be submerged, and the greater volume of water would rush as swiftly through a channel a hundred yards wide flanked by cliffs of considerable height.

"At a small distance below, the channel widens in a kind of zig-zag progression, and it was really awful to behold with what infinite force the water drives against the rocks on one side, and with what impetuous strength it is repelled to the other; it then falls back, as it were, into a more straight but rugged passage, over which it is tossed in high foaming, half-formed billows, as far as the eye could reach."

A large number of trees had been felled with axes in this vicinity, either by the Knisteneaux, or some tribe accustomed to this tool. While his men busied themselves

with the canoe, and in preparing poles, Mackenzie left a message of friendly import for the behoof of passing tribes, in the shape of a pole, to which he attached a knife with a steel, flint, beads and other trifling articles, while Cancre the Crab added a token of his own, a green stick chewed at one end like a brush used by the Indians to pick marrow out of bones, and signifying a country abounding in animals.

Low mountains lay off both sides of the river with grassy foothills nearer at hand, and flats in the angles of the river, which here varied from a quarter to half a mile in width. There was still snow on the mountain-tops, and it was to the rapid thawing of the snow throughout the upper watershed that the river owed its rise of one or two feet a day.

Carbon River, thirty miles up, was reached on Sunday evening and the party camped for the night. The strength of the river was increasing from day to day so that poling and tracking were continuous. It was very seldom that paddles could be used to advantage. The river bottom and the shores were on the whole favourable for both methods of progression.

The explorer refers to his passage of the Parle-Pas Rapids in these words: "In the afternoon, Tuesday the twenty-eighth,[1] we approached some cascades which obliged us to carry our canoe and its lading for several hundred yards." These are the famous rapids which the *voyageurs* refer to as "Le rapide qui ne parle pas," as when they are approached from above there is no indication of them in the appearance of the water, or in any appreciable increase in the sounds of the river. From below they have a very formidable look.[2]

[1] Mackenzie lost his note-book overboard the day before, and for the period up to 4 June he had to trust to memory in writing up his narrative.

[2] Signs have been erected above both the Finlay and Parle-Pas rapids to warn travellers; the latter one is some distance upstream. *Ann. Rep. B.C. Min. Mines*, 1923.

While weather-bound at a camp about three miles above these rapids, Mackenzie enclosed a letter in an empty nine-gallon rum keg and "consigned this epistolatory cargo to the mercy of the current."

All the rivers flowing in from the mountains on either hand were swollen, and, where they entered the Peace, it was necessary to use great caution in passing the turbulent waters caused by the junction of these torrents with the main stream. Trout were plentiful at these junctions, particularly the Arctic trout, a beautifully marked fish from ten to fourteen inches long, with most brilliant scales and a dorsal fin sticking up as high as the body is deep.

Throughout Friday their way wound through the highest parts of the Rockies, the mountains being one solid mass of up-ended limestone, bare, craggy, and majestic beyond words. The explorer refers in the most casual way to his passage through this gorge, seemingly not impressed very greatly by the scenery and, it may be, not fully aware that he was now passing to the west of the backbone of the continent. His men were cold, and went ashore to kindle a fire, but a drink or two of rum warmed them up, "and the current being so smooth to admit of the use of paddles I encouraged them to proceed without further delay." They had now passed Mount Selwyn which dominates the scene, and the view that opened out before them looked west beyond the Rockies towards the Omineca country. "An extensive view opened upon us displaying a beautiful sheet of water. Here the wooded mountains opened on either side, so that we entertained the hope of soon leaving them behind. When we had got to the termination of this prospect, the river was barred with rocks, forming cascades and small islands." This obstruction later received the name of Finlay Rapids, after the fur-trading explorer of that name, whom

Mackenzie had left below in charge of one of the forts, and after whom Finlay River is named. Canoes and boats are usually let down the north side, or they may be portaged on either side. Expert canoemen sometimes run them with empty canoes. While they look formidable enough, gas-boats of considerable size have been warped up time and again. To Mackenzie and his expert *voyageurs* Finlay Rapids as well as the Parle-Pas would be mere child's-play

Surmounting these obstructions the expedition found itself at Finlay Forks, where Finlay River, coming in from the north down the Great Valley that parallels the Rockies on the west, joins with the Parsnip, which flows north in the same valley. The two here unite, turn sharply east, and tumble in a cataract over Finlay Rapids, and the combined waters then take the name of Peace River until the stream is lost in the Slave.

CHAPTER IX

OVER THE DIVIDE TO THE "TACOUCHE TESSE"

The old Indian warrior, from whom Mackenzie had obtained information about a river that flowed towards the midday sun, and the route by which that river might be reached, had evidently impressed the explorer as a man of observation and judgment, whose statements might be relied upon as being a correct exposition of his geographical knowledge. Arrived at Finlay Forks, Mackenzie's experienced eye told him that the main trunk of the system was the fork flowing in from the north, the Finlay, since it carried the largest volume of water. He had fixed upon a point on the Pacific where he wished to emerge from the continent, and this northern branch seemed most likely to bring him nearest to the outlet of his dreams. He seemed to have a predilection for the north and west rather than for the south, perhaps because of the more or less tentative policy of the North-West Company to explore and take possession of the territory between the fifty-fifth and sixty-fifth parallels. Nevertheless, the call of that mythical "River of the West," the Great River lying somewhere to the south, offered him an alternative in his present dilemma.

Heretofore he was not inclined to regard Indian descriptions and directions too seriously, but the difficulties experienced by him in the canyon, from disregarding the warnings and directions of the natives met below, had no doubt made an impression on his mind, and we find him admitting, when confronted with the perplexing choice

between the north and south fork, that is to say, between the Finlay and the Parsnip, that, if he had been governed by his own judgment, he would have taken the northern branch; but the old warrior had warned him not on any account to follow it, as it was soon lost in various branches in the mountains, whereas, by going south, he would reach a carrying-place across a divide which would put him upon a river that flowed south, where the inhabitants build houses and live upon islands.

"There was so much apparent truth in the old man's narrative that I determined to be governed by it, for I did not entertain the least doubt, if I could get into the other river, that I should reach the ocean."

Neither Mackenzie nor any of his contemporaries was aware that the unknown part of the continent between the Pacific and a line from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Athabasca was many degrees wider than the maps of the time indicated, for, although the longitudes of certain isolated points on the Pacific were known, as of Nootka, Cape Addington, and Cook's Inlet, the remainder of the coast-line had not been determined, and it was believed that great gulfs and arms of the sea extended inland for many hundreds of miles,[1] hence the distance to the western ocean was always much foreshortened to his mind's eye. Thanks then to the old Indian's advice and Mackenzie's good sense in following it, the expedition was in all likelihood saved from disaster. With Mackenzie's persistence, the chances are that, had he decided to ascend the Finlay, he would have continued up one of its western branches into the mountainous region where the headwaters of the Peace, Liard, Fraser, Skeena, and

[1] Meares had suggested the existence of such great indentations in his recently issued book. "Observations on the Probable Existence of a North-West Passage." Meares, John, *Voyages in* 1788–9. London, 1790.

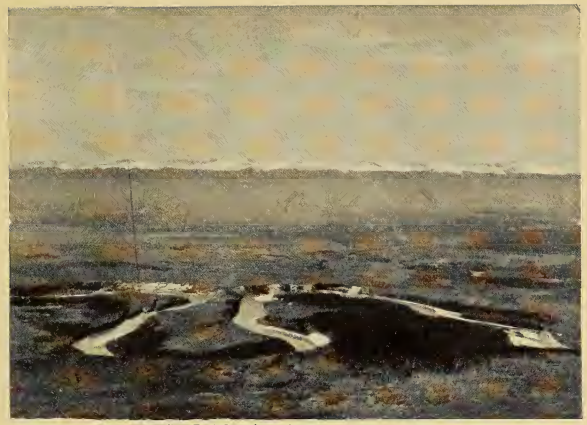


Photo Lieut.-Col. H. St. J. Montizambert

Double Loop, Lower Parsnip River

This is the view obtained by Mackenzie, 5 June, 1793

Photo B. R. McKay *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

Fort George Canyon, Fraser River

Sixteen miles south of Prince George, British Columbia

Stickine interlock in a maze of turbulent streams. It is a question whether the expedition would have safely made the coast and back through that difficult mountainous terrain. There are practicable routes through it, but it is hardly likely that the explorers would have chanced upon any of them without the assistance of Indian guides, who in that region could not be easily found.

He therefore directed his steersman to take the Parsnip, which was swifter but much narrower than the other. The water was continually rising. A view of that wild mountain river in flood was enough to daunt the enthusiasm of the most loyal *voyageur*. Paddles were useless, poles often would not reach bottom, and the water was so high that it was not always possible to use the towing-line. The Indians were tired of the voyage, and the *voyageurs* with two evils before them were inclined to choose the lesser. Mackenzie was urged by his entire personnel to take the northern branch. He himself favoured that course, but his determination to abide by what in the circumstances appeared the most logical course speaks well for his firmness of purpose. The velocity of the water was so great that it took them the greater part of the afternoon to cover two or three miles, "a very tardy and mortifying progress. The voyage was openly execrated by many of those who were engaged in it." But he shows his sympathetic nature when he says, "the inexpressible toil these people had endured, as well as the dangers they had encountered, required some degree of consideration."

Mackenzie possessed in an eminent degree the faculty of being superior to the annoyances and difficulties of the moment, which enabled him, while sympathising with the momentary cause of discontent, to bring to bear arguments that restored his men's mental poise, and imbued them with

something of his own enthusiasm. Nor did he neglect mere creature comforts. A rest, a roaring fire, dry clothes, a good meal and that soother of all earthly troubles, so dear to the heart of the *voyageur*, a generous round of rum—these things Mackenzie used to restore the spirits of his men; for, after all, the physical man when rested, warmed, dried, well fed, and soothed with drink, is quite ready to take up the battle with renewed zest. And at the propitious moment he did not fail to impress upon them the fact that he was determined to proceed.

Getting away from the forks, they found that the current slackened somewhat, but towards evening it increased in strength. Mackay and the Indians walked to lighten the canoe. At sunset a dry spot was found, and camp was gratefully made for the night. The land party joined them, but had to swim a channel as the canoemen had unwittingly chosen an island for their camp-site. On comparing the number of shots both parties had fired as signals to each other, it was discovered with some alarm that several shots could not be accounted for, and the Indians became convinced that a Knisteneaux war-party must be in the vicinity. "If they were numerous we should have no reason to expect the least mercy from them in this distant country."

While discounting their fears Mackenzie nevertheless thought it prudent that they should look to their fire-arms, put out the fire, and that each should take up his station at the foot of a tree. The men took their turns in keeping awake. While a part of them dozed fitfully the remainder used their eyes to the utmost, in an attempt to detect the slightest movement in the gloom. The noise of rushing waters drowned all minor sounds, and their ears, so useful in the silent places, were in these circumstances of no avail.

They passed an uneasy and restless, but uneventful

night. While fighting upward against a rapid current among a network of islands next day, Mackenzie observed two large fallen trees, which had been undermined by the river, and thought that the reports they had heard the night before were due to the crash of these river-side giants.

Beaver-work was everywhere evident about twenty-five miles from the forks. Mackenzie, Mackay, and the Indians usually walked through the woods to lighten the canoe. The two hunters, with respect for the tradition of their guild, were averse to helping in the navigation of the craft, and had to be allowed to sit idly aboard. Hence to keep them busy hunting, and to relieve the canoe of some of its burden, they were kept on shore as much as possible.

It was difficult to find a dry spot to camp. Having pitched their tents on the only dry gravel visible on the night of the fourth, they found themselves and their canoe and baggage in the water next morning from the rapid rise of the river in the night. The large amount of beaver-work seen on the Parsnip leads Mackenzie to say that in no other part of the North-West had he observed so much evidence of their presence in an equal distance. In places they had cut down several acres of large poplars. They work at night, but many were seen by the travellers in the day.

Since 31 May when they entered the Parsnip their toilsome ascent had continued. The river, still rising daily, was not yet at its highest, but even at this stage progress was extremely slow and trying. The writer has observed a fall of twenty feet in the Parsnip at Finlay Forks in the month of July. In the early part of July when the water is still fairly high, the distance from the Pack to the Forks, which is about one hundred miles, can be made quite easily in twelve hours without much further exertion than steering the canoe.

At high water the gravelly shores are submerged, towing becomes impossible over the greater part of the distance, poling is likewise precarious, and paddling is nearly always out of the question. Progress can only be made by constantly changing from one method to another, and when all fail it is necessary to pull the canoe up laboriously by clinging to the branches of the trees that border the river. This method is probably more dangerous than any other, since entanglements of the canoe, its lading, or the occupants with limbs and sweepers are fraught with possibilities of sudden wreckage.

Wednesday, 5 June, was one of those days that stand out with peculiar interest in the explorer's experience. The land party had, as usual, gone on ahead, and the canoe had been directed to proceed with all diligence. In the event of accident or any emergency requiring the presence of their leader, two shots were to be the signal, while such a signal from him would require them to answer, and to wait for him, if they were above.

The explorer with his foreman, Mackay, and the two Indians ascended a hill to view the country, but found on reaching the summit that they were still on the valley floor, with ranges of mountains enclosing the trough on either side. Reaching the river again, they fired the signals, but received no answer. Thinking the canoe was ahead, Mackenzie crossed over the small end of an extensive loop and reached the river higher up at ten, where he had a long view above, but no canoe was in sight. They repeated the signals and sent broken branches down the stream as signs of their presence above. At twelve, having gone ahead again, Mackenzie once more fired two shots. The water rushed by with tremendous velocity. The heat of the day, the fatigue of walking, the annoyance of mosquitoes, gnats, and deer-flies,

the lack of food, and their anxieties all added to the disagreeableness of the situation. Returning to their companions at the spot where they had fired the first two shots, it was found that they had been three or four miles down the river without having discovered any traces of the canoe.

Mackenzie feared the worst, and his mind was in a state of extreme agitation. He reproached himself for leaving his people, saying that "it was an act of indiscretion which might have put an end to the voyage that I had so much at heart."

Mackay and Cancre were instructed to go down the river as far as they could that night, and continue next day to their last camp, while Mackenzie and the other hunter returned up-river to prosecute their search in that direction. While preparing a bed of branches a shot was heard and presently another, which were followed by two others more distant. Mackenzie was in a state of physical distress from his violent exertions, from the lack of food, and an undue consumption of cold water, and was not inclined to stir from his improvised camp. The Indian, however, complained so bitterly of cold and hunger that Mackenzie at last complied with his companion's solicitations, which no doubt was the best thing he could do, and both proceeded wearily down-stream, reaching the canoe by dark, barefooted and drenched with rain.

"But these inconveniences affected me very little when I saw myself once more surrounded with my people." They had broken the canoe, and their day had been more strenuous than any they had yet experienced. Mackenzie seems to have had his doubts about the truth of their assertions. He suspected that they had virtually taken it into their heads to loiter, perhaps to mature some plan to compel his return to that distant fort on the Peace which, in the midst of these difficulties and with a prospect of months of similar grinding

work and danger, seemed like a haven of security and ease. He thought it prudent to affect a belief in their story, and was glad enough to comfort each of them with a consolatory dram.

As an instance of their routine he speaks of a stretch of four miles where the current was so strong that it was impossible to stem it with paddles, the depth was too great to enable them to receive assistance from the poles, and the banks of the river too closely lined with willows and other trees to make it possible to employ the line. "The whole of this distance we proceeded by hauling the canoe from branch to branch." On Friday the water rose another two inches, the current became stronger; a few days before they had despaired of accomplishing the ascent, but they were getting used to the navigation of this mountain river on the western slope, which differed so markedly in all its characteristics from those of the plains and eastern Canada, with which they had long been familiar. The canoe, which had been little better than a wreck, was again repaired. On Saturday they passed a high white sandy bank on the eastern shore, which fixes his position near Nation River. Strangely enough, he passed this fairly large branch without noticing, or at all events, without commenting on it, no doubt thinking from the appearance of the confluence that it was merely another channel around an island, as many such channels had been passed on the way up from the Forks.

They were already looking for the carrying-place that was to take them over the divide to the Pacific slope, in fact had been looking for it for the past two days, although they were only eight days from the Forks. The smell of fire on Sunday warned them of the presence of natives, who were presently heard in the woods in a state of great confusion. As it was necessary to obtain information from the in-

habitants Mackenzie took every measure not to frighten them away, for which purpose he decided to camp on the farther side of the river which was not more than a hundred yards wide at this point, but on nearing shore he was confronted by two men brandishing spears, who warned him away. The interpreters endeavoured to reassure the natives, but it was some time before they felt sufficiently satisfied that the intentions of the party were friendly.

Mackenzie was determined not to let slip this opportunity to gain information from the natives of the country, who presumably knew something about it, for which purpose camp was pitched, and efforts made to gain the confidence of these wild creatures. The party consisted of three men, three women, and seven or eight children. They were fed and indulged and favoured with presents, and questioned. The Indian seemingly parts with his information with difficulty. He seems to be more or less a psychological puzzle. Apparently he conceives some notion of what his questioner's interest ought to be, and answers accordingly. Questions are not answered in a direct, impersonal way. He feels that his ego is being menaced and reconnoitres the enemy from behind his barrage of evasions. It is only when the personal element is finally removed from the matter in hand that he states facts as he knows them. Hence at first Mackenzie was disappointed to find that none of these people knew anything about the river to the south. They had just arrived over a carrying-place of eleven days from a river which they thought was a branch of this one. They possessed iron in considerable quantities worked into several kinds of spear-heads, knives and arrow-tips. They had obtained the metal from a neighbouring tribe beyond the carrying-place, who in turn travelled a moon to other tribes living in houses, where skins and furs were bartered for commodities from the sea-

coast. The coast Indians lived upon the "Stinking Lake," and traded directly with white men who came in vessels as big as islands.

The people to the west were numerous and hostile towards strangers, yet for a moment he entertained the thought of an excursion overland in that direction, but immediately abandoned the tentative project as impracticable. Then he thought of throwing in his lot with these Indians, and travelling with them by gradual stages to the sea, after the manner of Samuel Hearne, but this wild scheme was at once thrown aside as quixotic. Mackenzie suspected that his interpreters, who were tired of the voyage, might possibly have refrained from putting his inquiries before the natives in the proper way. He knew a word or two of the language, and his quick ear caught references to a big river which runs towards the noonday sun, a branch of which was separated from the headwaters of that which they were now navigating by a short carrying-place. The inhabitants were numerous and warlike and lived in carpentered houses built on islands.

With hope renewed, Mackenzie enlisted the services of one of these people as a guide and prepared to depart immediately. He describes them as of low stature, not pleasing in appearance, with round faces, long hair and high cheek-bones. Their garments consisted of moccasins, leggings up to the hips and tunics made of beaver-skins and caribou hide. The women were cleaner than the men, and both wore a black artificial stripe across the face under the eyes extending from ear to ear.

They had much iron in use, which was a gratification to the explorer, as it indicated that it was not impossible to reach the sea-board whence this article of trade had come. Their course up the Parsnip was continued, the river

hugging the Rockies closely. By the twelfth the river had decreased in width to fifteen yards with a moderate current. Near its termination in a snow-field, the party branched off on a stream less than ten yards wide, in which there was very little current, but the channel meandered so much that it was sometimes difficult to get the canoe forward around the bends. A mile from the main river the first of a series of lakes was entered, which forms one of the ultimate sources of the Peace River. Mackenzie had the satisfaction, which was shared by his two men, Joseph Landry and Charles Ducette, who had accompanied him to the Arctic, of realising when he entered this lake that they were probably the only three living men who had travelled by canoe every foot of the way from the Arctic Ocean to this source. Whether it has ever been done since is doubtful.

A beaten path led over a low ridge 817 paces through a narrow pass to another lake. Canoes and various articles were left about by Indians to be picked up on their return this way. Passing out of a third lake down a rivulet encumbered with driftwood they soon found themselves in swift water. The land party had great difficulty in making their way through the woods. Drift-piles had to be cut through and roads made to portage around bad places. Getting free from these impediments, Mackenzie was about to join the land party in order to further lighten the canoe, "but those in the boat," he says, "with great earnestness requested me to embark, declaring at the same time, that if they perished, I should perish with them."

His men were not accustomed to these mountain torrents and were soon in difficulties. The canoe struck a rock, was turned sideways, and broken by the first bar. The leader instantly jumped into the water, to check its progress, and the crew followed his example, but they were carried into

deeper water, and all had to clamber aboard precipitately, one man being left behind in the confusion. Being now out of control the canoe was at the mercy of the wild waters. First the stern was shattered, and was only held together by the gunwales; the force of the impact as well as the velocity of the current swung them over to the other shore, where the bow was smashed; Mackay seized some branches and was swung clean out of the canoe with tremendous force. The canoe continued its mad career with its helpless occupants, and in shooting a fall had a number of holes punched in its bottom. All the thwarts were started except the one behind the scooping-seat. The canoe flattened out on the water, to which occurrence, bad as it was, they owed their lives and the salvation of their baggage, for in this condition it was impossible to upset the wreck. On reaching shallower water the mass came to rest on some stones. The crew were thoroughly exhausted by their strenuous exertions and by the numbing effect of the ice-fed waters. The shore party came to their assistance, except the Indians, who on seeing the wreckage sat down and wept aloud. Mackenzie kept his station breast-high in the chilling waters on the far side of the raft until everything had been safely got ashore. It was found that their stock of leaden balls was gone, and some of their necessary articles. "The loss was considerable and important, but these considerations were forgotten in the impression of our remarkable escape."

All had escaped without injury. The crew regarded the accident with mixed feelings. They were on the whole by no means sorry that the mishap had occurred as it promised an immediate return to the fort.

It seemed for the moment, even to the undaunted leader, that it would be impossible to proceed farther. But the things were spread out to dry. Big fires were lighted, a hearty meal

prepared, and rum enough distributed to raise their spirits. Mackenzie then addressed them in his persuasive way, urging the honour of conquering disasters, and the disgrace that would attend them on their return home without having attained the object of the expedition. "Nor did I fail to mention the courage and resolution which was the peculiar boast of the north men, and that I depended on them at that moment for the maintenance of their character. The effect was gratifying. They swore that they were ready to go whereever I should lead."

Scouts were sent out to gather bark for the canoe, to view the country, and particularly the water route. Their reports were discouraging. The river was so obstructed by boulders and log-jams that the scouts thought it would be necessary to carry the whole way through a dreadful country where much time and labour would be required to make the passage.

Two days after their misfortune they were able to proceed again, but in *fourteen* hours of hard labour they were not able to make more than *three* miles. Here one of the crew, Beauchamp, refused to embark. This was the first instance of absolute disobedience, and the disciplinarian in the leader desired mightily to deal severely with the mutineer. Beauchamp was a very useful, active and laborious man, but he had the general character of a simpleton among his companions, and Mackenzie met the case by making him an object of ridicule. A regale of rum that night before a roaring fire helped to clear their minds of present difficulties, and induced them to look forward with pleasure to the hour when they should be gliding over the waters of the Great River which they were approaching. But the morrow brought its discouragements. Roads had to be cut to get by the falls, and the canoe was carried two miles through a swamp at

great risk to the men engaged in this task. Murmurs were rife, but Mackenzie took no notice of them.

The guide was a valuable member of the party, and Mackenzie had been in the habit of sitting up half the night to watch him, Mackay taking the other half of the vigil. On Monday night Mackay's vigilance relaxed and the guide escaped, whereupon Mackenzie was wroth with his lieutenant, whom he sent off with Cancre the Crab and the dog in a fruitless search for the fugitive.

Moving by land and by water alternately all the next day, they finally arrived in the evening at the bank of the Great River. "At length we enjoyed, after all our toil and anxiety, the inexpressible satisfaction of finding ourselves on the banks of a navigable river on the west side of the first great range of mountains." Here on the morning of 18 June, Mackenzie indulges his men in a well-earned rest until seven in the morning, at which late hour they prepared to embark.

The Great River, after all, proved to be only a branch of the north fork two hundred yards wide, but in the afternoon they emerged upon the Fraser proper where it was half a mile wide.[1]

They were now able to make rapid progress. From time to time fires were seen, indicating the presence of natives. The Nechaco was not observed, and if noticed at all, it must have been mistaken for the lower end of a channel on the far side of an island. The canyon[2] below the junction of the Nechaco made it necessary to portage. "The labour and fatigue of this undertaking from eight till twelve beggars all description, when we at length conquered this afflicting passage of about half a mile over a rocky and most rugged hill." Another short carrying-place occurred just below,

[1] For a surveyor's description of Bad River, see Appendix B.
[2] Fort George Canyon, sixteen miles below Prince George.

where the river contracts to forty or fifty yards. "The great body of water tumbling in successive cascades rolls through this narrow passage in a very turbid current full of whirlpools."

The swift current enabled them to speed down at a gratifying rate. The high banks were overshadowed by lofty firs and wide-spreading cedars, to be succeeded by shores of a more moderate height, and flats, the former rising gradually in wooded slopes to the horizon, and the latter thickly covered with the cottonwood, birch, spruce, and willow. A day's journey below the canyon a wooden house thirty by twenty feet, containing three fireplaces on the ground, was discovered, and Mackenzie remarks that it was the first carpentered building of native construction he had seen west of Michilimackinac.

For some time past their canoe had been a mere patchwork that would barely hold together from day to day. It had been broken and wrecked and strained so often in the water and on the carrying-places, that it had become imperative to make another, to facilitate which the men were sent out on the twentieth to find bark, and were successful in securing enough to cover a framework thirty feet long, and four and a half feet in height. Running a rapid later in the day did not improve the condition of the canoe. It was now too heavy to portage, although, when they left the fort on the Peace, it was so light that two men could easily carry it several miles without resting.

Mackenzie thought it was advisable to cache a ninety-pound bag of pemmican for their return, which was accordingly done in the customary manner by digging a hole and burying it sufficiently deep to admit of a fire over it without doing any injury to the hidden treasure. It was thus secure both from the natives and the wild animals of the country.

A party of Indians engaged in securing their winter

supplies of salmon, after tedious parleying, and many alarums and excursions, entered into friendly communication with them, imparting the information that the river flowed south to the sea where white people were building houses. In three places it was impassable. The current was everywhere strong, while in the places mentioned it was impossible either to run the rapids or pass over the mountains which rose sheer from the water. The inhabitants were numerous; one tribe particularly which lived in underground houses [1] was described as being malignant. The explorers were warned against going any farther, their informants stating that those below were armed and would undoubtedly destroy them.

In the course of the day they met other parties lower down who confirmed these reports, and added that the distance to the sea overland was comparatively short, and that a well-beaten path led to a river which emptied into a "lake" whose waters were nauseous. White men in big vessels as large as islands came there and traded iron and various articles for the furs and skins which these inland natives were in the habit of carrying to the coast, over the road mentioned.

Mackenzie himself thought that the distance overland could not be more than five or six degrees. He recalled Captain John Meares' statement regarding the inland extension of the sea at Nootka, which Mackenzie thought must reach as far east as 126° west longitude. What his own expectations were he does not disclose. According to the account of the Indians the overland route from the

[1] The interior Salish tribes, like the Lillooets, Thompsons and Shuswaps, lived in circular, semi-subterranean houses excavated in the dry soil, some of which were sixty feet in diameter, and capable of housing thirty people. From December to March they thus gained a certain amount of protection from the cold.

Fraser was travelled so often by them that their path is visible throughout the whole journey, which lies along small lakes and rivers. They appeared to be well acquainted with this route, which they said occupied six nights to the place where they met the coast Indians, from whom they received iron, brass, copper, and beads, for dressed leather, beaver, bear, lynx, fox, and marten skins.

Mackenzie's party thought that it would be madness to attempt the overland passage through so many savage tribes, who appeared to be more aggressive than those east of the Rockies. The provisions had been reduced to thirty days' rations, the ammunition amounted to one hundred and fifty bullets and thirty pounds of shot, and the hunters were not remarkable for their skill and zeal in the chase. But all these impediments vanished, or were minimised, when Mackenzie reviewed the situation. He was convinced that this river, the Fraser, could not empty itself north of the position of the supposed "River of the West," the Columbia. The distance and the difficulties enumerated made it useless to think of descending it to its mouth. In any event he felt it necessary to give up any thought of returning to Athabasca this year, but in spite of these reflections, he decided to pursue his object with resolution, and let the future take care of itself. A dash overland to the coast appealed to him. There was after all a possibility of reaching the ocean and returning safely within a period short enough to enable him to return to Athabasca before the freeze-up, and he determined to risk it.

Mackenzie was alone in cherishing a desire to achieve his object. His people were not merely indifferent but eager to turn back. Hence the burden carried by the leader could not be lightened by any member of the party. Without counsel or the possibility of a friendly discussion of the pros

and cons, he had to think out his plans, and then by persuasion to induce his followers to continue with him.

It is remarkable that the world owes some of its most important advances out of "chaos and old night" to the persistence of an idea, held often by an obscure individual, cherished in loneliness, and pursued unflinchingly in the face of indifference, ridicule and active opposition, to ultimate success. No other circumstance in life suggests so convincingly the possibility of inspiration from sources not dreamt of in everyday philosophy.

Pursuing his inquiries he ascertained that, some distance above, a river fell in from the west which was navigable for small canoes four days from its mouth, and from thence, the Indians said, they slept but two nights to get to the people with whom they traded. The coast-dwellers had wooden canoes of a very large size in which they went down a river one day's journey to the sea.

Having secured one of his informants to guide him overland, Mackenzie then called his own people together, and put the situation before them. "I declared my resolution not to attempt it, unless they would engage, if we could not after all proceed overland, to return with me, and continue our voyage to the discharge of the waters whatever the distance might be." And he further assured them in the most solemn manner, that even if he had to make the attempt alone, he would not abandon his design of reaching the sea.

His people, one and all, eagerly expressed themselves as being ready now as ever to follow where he should lead, and preparations were immediately made to return upstream to the river that falls in from the west. Mr. Mackay, by Mackenzie's directions, engraved the explorer's name and the date of the year on a tree at the southernmost point of their

Photo by B.C. Bureau of Mines

Interior Plateau of British Columbia, typical of the higher parts passed over by Mackenzie on the Bella Coola Trail

Photo Iver Fougner

Bella Coola Colonists, Bella Coola Valley, British Columbia

They have converted the valley through which Mackenzie passed into the home of a prosperous community

descent [1] of the Fraser which the explorer speaks of as the Tacouche Tesse, under the impression that he was on that mythical "River of the West," named by Jonathan Carver the "Oregon." In May, the year before, Captain Robert Gray, of Boston, sailed over the bar of the Columbia and explored the estuary, naming the river the "Columbia," [2] after his own ship.

Their return up the river appears to have alarmed the whole native population who were thrown into a state of great confusion. Mackay and an Indian had been sent with the guide, who desired to visit his family before venturing toward the coast. The alarm that prevailed among the tribesmen, however, communicated itself to the guide, and Mackay and his Indian found it possible to keep up with him only by running. Arrived at his lodges he found them deserted as if for ever, whereupon he ran into the woods several times bellowing like a madman, and then departed south, leaving Mackay and his companion far behind. Not finding Mackenzie at the rendezvous, Mackay and his Indian, being convinced that the whole countryside was up in arms and that the whole of their party had been destroyed, formed a plan to take to the woods and cross in as direct a line as they could to the headwaters of the Peace, and raft thence to the Fort. They were on the point of putting their plan into execution when Mackenzie appeared, and he remarks that it was a scheme which could only be suggested by despair.

Mackenzie was unable to understand what it was that had suddenly roused the native population. His own people were panic-stricken, and they considered that it was now

[1] Latitude 52° 30′. Fort Alexandria was afterwards built here.

[2] Heceta named this estuary Rio de San Roque in 1775, under the impression that it was a river.

hopeless and impracticable to carry out their plans. The explorer was not in the least in dread of an attack, "even if their whole force should have been combined," but he was greatly distressed at the prospect of having their journey blocked, a thought which he entertained "with sensations little short of agony."

His party seemed for the first time to be decided in their opinions as to the necessity of returning without delay, and their cry was, "Let us re-embark and be gone!" But in a more peremptory tone than he had yet used he ordered them to unload the canoe and take it out of the water. He then put his little force in a state of defence, distributing a hundred bullets that remained, while some of the men were employed in melting down shot to make more. There was no gum to mend the canoe, and none of the men had sufficient courage to venture into the woods in search of it. Before nightfall the party moved to an old house, three sides of which were standing, affording a protection from the woods. The leader and his lieutenant and three men kept alternate watch, while a sentinel stationed a little distance off was relieved every hour.

At daylight they returned to their former position, and Mackay informed his chief that the men had expressed their dissatisfaction to him in a very unreserved manner, and had in very strong terms declared their resolution to follow him no farther in his proposed enterprise. But Mackenzie assumed an attitude which was intended to lead them to suppose that he was not aware of their mutinous purposes.

While he was engaged in taking the latitude[1] the men without orders loaded the canoe, from which he concluded

[1] 52° 47′ 51″. Deserter's Creek is opposite Kersley, ten miles below Quesnel.

that they had arranged among themselves to return at all costs. The men, meanwhile, were chafing to leave but unable to muster the necessary resolution. Mackenzie appeared to be wholly inattentive to their behaviour. After several hours he ordered four men to step into the canoe and drop down to the "guardhouse," and he was relieved to find that his command was instantly obeyed. The remainder of the party walked down. On drawing near, the leader, in a sportive moment, quite thoughtlessly shot an arrow towards the guardhouse, when to his astonishment and infinite alarm it struck the logs, and instantly created confusion among his men, who had just landed, and thought they were attacked. A disturbed night followed in the course of which their dog sensed something in the woods, and at two in the morning the sentinel saw about fifty paces away what he thought was a bear, but daylight proved it to have been a human figure creeping on all fours, an old, grey-haired, blind man, who had been compelled by extreme hunger to leave his hiding-place. The old chap's fears were quieted, and he was warmed and fed and questioned, when it appeared that some Indians from above had followed after Mackenzie's party and spread the story that they were enemies, and the unexpected return of the exploring party in direct contradiction to their own declarations confirmed them in the belief that the strangers were in truth powerful enemies. The people were now so scattered, the old man said, that it would be some time before they could meet again.

This account decided Mackenzie to proceed with his purpose, depending on the old man, whom they carried along by force,[1] to explain their attitude to any natives they might encounter. The men were in a state of extreme ill-humour all day, and, not daring to openly vent it on Mackenzie,

[1] Quesnel River was passed at 3 p.m.

they disputed and quarrelled among themselves. About sunset the canoe struck on a snag which tore a hole in the bottom, whereupon the crew unburdened themselves of their pent-up wrath without reserve. "I left them as soon as we were landed and ascended an elevated bank in a state of mind which I scarce wish to recollect, and I shall not attempt to describe."

On Friday, 28 June, their canoe, now an absolute wreck, compelled them to build a new one, which they began in latitude 53° 2′ 32″.[1] The work was well forward next day, and Mackenzie, who had regained his poise and felt himself again master of the situation, took the opportunity to "unfold his sentiments" to his men by lecturing the foreman of the canoe-making job, "who, though a good man, was remarkable for the tardiness of his operations." This, of course, was not Mackay, who, except for his laxity in letting guides escape on several occasions during the small hours, was in all other respects a man deserving of praise. The leader left nothing unsaid, and the man was much mortified that he had been singled out when, as a matter of fact, he did not deserve Mackenzie's displeasure more than the others. This, however, was Mackenzie's method of having it out with his crew, for while addressing the foreman of the canoe-builders, he was really laying down the law to the crowd, for he intimated that he was no stranger to their late conversations, from whence he concluded that they wished to put an end to the voyage. He suggested that they should be explicit and tell him at once of their determination not to follow him farther. He concluded by saying that whatever plan they had meditated to pursue, it was his fixed and unalterable determination to proceed, in spite of every difficulty that might oppose, or danger that should threaten

[1] Canoe Island is about two miles above Cottonwood River.

him. His object being attained, the conversation dropped, and the work went on.

The unexpected return of their guide restored confidence to the *voyageurs*, especially since he made it known that the false reports that had been spread among the natives regarding the explorers' attitude towards them had been dissipated, and he added that the two men seen the day before had just returned from their rendezvous with the coast Indians, and had brought a message that his brother-in-law had an axe for him there, for which he required a dressed moose-skin in exchange. The latter article the guide had with him in the canoe, which little circumstance did more to hearten them than anything else in the whole voyage, for it had the effect of bridging the distance between them and that brother-in-law in the most wonderful way.

The blind man tried to escape in the night but was detained just as he was pushing off in a canoe, and the next day the guide and his friend departed without Mackenzie's knowledge and in spite of the fact that Mackay had been detailed to watch him. On inquiry some of the men composedly told him that the guide had gone off to wait for them above, and Mackenzie observes that he hoped this might be true, "but, that my people should suffer them to depart without giving me notice, was a circumstance that awakened very painful reflections in my breast." After four days' labour the canoe was finished by five in the afternoon, and they were happy in the knowledge that it was stronger and better than the old one. The remainder of the day was spent by the men in cleaning and refreshing themselves, a very welcome relaxation after the labour and stress of the last ten days.

The blind man was left here at his own request. The mosquitoes, sand-flies, and deer-flies, always troublesome

from mid-June to mid-August, were particularly trying at this low spot, which Mackenzie named Canoe Island. Some of the irritation of the men may be attributed to the onslaught of these little tormentors, which have been known to completely break the nerve of strong men. An added cause of ill-feeling was the necessity, from the diminishing food supplies, to place the men on a short allowance of two meals a day, "a regulation peculiarly offensive to a Canadian *voyageur*." But he gave the men a dram each, "which could not but be considered at this time as a comfortable treat. They were, indeed, in high spirits when they perceived the superior excellence of the new vessel, and reflected that it was the work of their own hands."

At ten in the morning of Wednesday, 3 July, they arrived at the river whence the trail extended westward, and to which Mackenzie gave the name of the West Road River (now known as the Blackwater). But no guide was to be found nor any inhabitants, and Mackenzie was once more in a quandary.

To proceed without a guide was little short of madness. Yet he put the situation before the men, and was pleased to find that some of them were ready to accompany him in his dash overland. The others advised proceeding upstream a few leagues in the hope of meeting the guide or of obtaining another, which advice Mackenzie readily accepted. When they had gone less than an hour on their way, the guide and six of his relations appeared coming down in canoes. Mackenzie presented him with a jacket, a pair of trousers, and a handkerchief for his honourable conduct. The following day, after the guide and his relations and several of his own men with Mackay had been sent on ahead, Mackenzie and his men buried in one place a ninety-pound bag of pemmican, two bags of wild rice, and a gallon keg of gunpowder, and

in a second location two bags of Indian corn, and a bale of different articles of merchandise.

Near the end of the trail the canoe was hidden on a staging and carefully protected from the sun by a thick covering of leafy branches, while the remainder of their stores which had to be left behind were cached in a hollow square of green logs, which was then covered with heavy timbers.

The party of ten carried four bags of pemmican of the usual weight of ninety pounds, a case of instruments, a ninety-pound parcel of goods for presents, and another ninety-pound pack of ammunition. To this weight must be added the guns, hangars, pistols, telescope, and extra clothes, making a total of more than 750 pounds to be divided among the members of the party. Each of the two Indians had his gun and trifles, and forty-five pounds of pemmican, which thoroughly disgusted them, and they would have instantly left if they had dared. The leader and his second each carried about seventy pounds, while each of the Canadians had a burden in the neighbourhood of one hundred pounds, including a gun and some ammunition.

Mackenzie thought that the distance would be between five and six degrees of longitude, which would mean about 250 miles in a direct line, and nearly three hundred by trail. Whether the remainder of the party knew what was before them is not stated. However, the actual distance to salt water was less than that.[1] It will be admitted that this overland trip was a formidable undertaking, particularly for men more accustomed to river navigation and short "carries" than to land expeditions on foot over several hundred miles of wild western country. Even with these loads they could not expect more than two meals a day.

[1] To "Mackenzie's Rock" four and a half degrees, and to the end of the trail on Bella Coola River, three and a half.

CHAPTER X

"BACK-PACKING" TO THE PACIFIC

THEIR first spell took them up a steep incline of a mile, certainly a heart-breaking introduction to their long hike across the interior plateau to the Pacific sea-board.[1] After twelve miles they met their guide at an Indian encampment. They were cheered while resting here by the arrival of an elderly man carrying a lance like a sergeant's halberd, which he had obtained in barter at the coast. He reported that many of his countrymen were returning over the trail. According to his computation the journey required no more than six days for people who were not heavily laden, and from the rendezvous it was not more than two days' march to the sea. These people sent two young men along to notify the different tribes of the party's approach and secure for them a friendly reception.

At a lakeside camp where some families were congregated, Mackenzie obtained two earrings from a child, consisting of two halfpennies, one bearing the effigy of George the Third, and the other the symbols of the State of Massachusett's Bay, coined in 1787. Their route led through more or less open country along the general line of the fifty-third parallel. It was a lake country with all the features indicating former glaciation. By Saturday the well-beaten road they were following and the West Road River (the Blackwater) drew nearer together. The latter could be seen off in the distance below a number of wide terraces, winding

[1] See Appendix A, "The Bella Coola Trail."

in the trough of the valley, the whole countryside being dotted here and there with isolated trees, which produced a very charming effect, reminding the travellers of the scenery of the central plains more than any spot they had yet seen since crossing the Rockies. Though they were suffering with thirst, the distance was too great and the descent too steep to justify them in wasting the time in going for a drink.

Here the guides left them and ran on ahead to notify the next tribe, saying that as the road was so well indicated, it was unnecessary for them to remain. Mackenzie, however, thought otherwise and, with Cancre the Crab, started off in pursuit, coming up with them where they had stopped with an itinerant family, which included a corpulent woman belonging to a coast tribe. The sea-coast, they said, was at no great distance. The woman, who was an object of curiosity to the travellers, wore a tunic and a woven cypress-bark robe, and was decorated with a necklace of blue beads, while similar ornaments adorned her hair and hung from her ears. Her arms were encircled with bracelets of brass, copper and horn. She was short, stout, with an oblong face, grey eyes and a flattish nose. They were on their way to the Great River to fish for salmon and among their impedimenta was an old woman, quite blind and infirm, whom they carried on their backs in turn.

Their guides left them, and their places were taken by two boys, who on coming up to an Indian family later delegated the office to the strangers. According to the information of the last people they were now coming to a river which was neither large nor long, but whose banks were inhabited, and to whose mouth a great wooden canoe filled with white people came when the leaves began to grow.

In order to prevent his guides from escaping in the night, Mackenzie, since leaving the canoe, sacrificed his comfort

to the extent of sleeping with them. Their beaver-skin robes were alive with vermin, their bodies were painted with red earth, and their mops of hair drenched with rancid fish-oil. Yet so great was the explorer's solicitude for the success of his venture that he did not hesitate to submit to these inconveniences.

Crossing two mountains on Saturday the expedition descended to a level country where a good trail ran through cypress woods to two lakes through which a river ran. The road paralleled the river on elevated ground. Another glimpse into the lives of the aborigines of the Stone Age was afforded them when they passed a family which had stopped on its journey to the Great River, to enable the mother to cut away the weeds that had grown over the graves of her husband and son, buried here some years before in the course of a similar visit to the fishing-station on the Fraser. The travellers speculated on the event which had resulted in the burial on the trail of the two male members of the woman's family, and they learned incidentally that she invariably stopped here on her annual journey to perform this memorial rite.

Towards evening they joined a party going their way, consisting of seven men, seven women, and a number of children. Swamps knee-deep had to be crossed, and a river forded which brought them in the evening to some Indian lodges on a quiet lake-like expansion of the river. The owners received them with hospitality.

Rain frequently fell and added to their miseries. The packs were heavy. Indeed, their average day's march amazes the modern frontiersman. A pack-train is doing good work when it covers fifteen miles of rough country, but these hardy *voyageurs* frequently went twice as far, carrying loads close on to a hundred pounds in weight. Possibly the full

significance of this remarkable feat can hardly be realised, except by those who have themselves "back-packed" all day and every day on some memorable trip.

The trail on Tuesday ran twenty-six miles along the largest stream encountered since leaving the Fraser. It was full of salmon and was thought to be a branch of the Fraser,[1] entering it below the lowest point they had attained in their descent. Although the countryside was grassy and appeared to be a favourable range for game, there was a complete absence of animals, which rather puzzled the explorers, and, realising that it would be difficult to secure provisions on their return journey, Mackenzie thought it wise to conceal half a bag of pemmican, which was done in the usual way by burying it and making a fire over the spot. From this point the snow-covered mountains were visible in the distance.

At a beautiful lake [2] farther on, a party of Indians who called themselves the Red-Fish Men [3] were living in a state of comparative comfort. They were cleanly, healthy, and agreeable in appearance, and their language denoted that they belonged to the great Chipewyan [4] family which extends from Hudson Bay up the Churchill River and the Peace to the eastern edge of the Coast Range in British Columbia. They had all been to the coast, but their estimates of the time of the journey varied from four to eight days.

Two guides were engaged from this party who led them during most of a rainy day through a morass, and over a rough country, with the snow-clad mountains coming into more distinct view. The day was cold and wet, the travellers were in misery, and camped early, after doing about fifteen miles. The guides did not like their way of travelling and

[1] They were still on the Blackwater River.
[2] One of the Cluscus Lakes.
[3] See Sloua-cuss-Dinais in Appendix A.
[4] See Appendix C, "Indian Tribes."

threatened to leave. Concluding that the distance [1] to salt water was longer than they had expected, Mackenzie again reduced their rations by one-third, which brought the amount down to less than one-half of the normal allowance.

The river [2] thought to be a branch of the Fraser was crossed again on a raft after a day's travel through a country in which no less than seven lakes were seen. Their guide finally left them on the pretence of hurrying forward to warn the tribes of their coming.

Once again Mackenzie found himself confronted by distressing uncertainties, for here at a cross-roads, he was without guidance, and his people, as on former occasions, were recalcitrant, and expressed their desire to return; but once again the leader persuaded them that it was, on the whole, more convenient to proceed. The distance now could not be great, the number of tribes to pass had decreased, and those that they would now meet, having seen white men before, would be disposed to treat the party with kindness.

As they were now surrounded with snow-clad mountains, it was so cold that, with all their exercise, it was impossible to keep warm. Consequently, their camps did not afford them much comfort during the hours of sleep. "About five, after we had warmed ourselves at a large fire, we proceeded on our dubious journey." In an hour's time they came to a house from which smoke issued. Mackenzie's people were in a state of alarm, and followed him to the house with reluctance. A man fled from its shelter, and three women and several children within shrieked with the abandon of those who expect to be immediately massacred. Mackenzie ordered his interpreters to speak to the man who was fleeing, but they themselves were so agitated with

[1] They were not yet half-way across.
[2] The trail crosses the Blackwater several times.

fear as to have lost the power of utterance. When the fears of their prisoners were finally calmed, one of the women informed them that from the mountains ahead the sea was visible. The man was finally induced to return, and after some parleying was engaged as guide.

Gaining the summit of a hill,[1] a river[2] of some size, which the guide said was navigable for canoes, was seen about three miles away flowing from the south-east. A second summit was reached which gave a view of a new snow-clad range of mountains ending, according to the guide's information, at tide-water.

A building constructed of timbers squared on two sides, with a roof projecting ten feet in front, attracted their notice, as it seemed to have some connection with a nearby burial-place surrounded with boards neatly arranged and covered with bark.[3] "Beside them several poles had been erected, one of which was square, and all of them painted. Several hieroglyphics and figures done with a red earthy pigment decorated the house inside and out."

At the end of an exhausting day the guide encouraged them with the hope that "in two days of similar exertion we should arrive among people of another nation." A travelling party of five men and their families received the explorers with great kindness. They were the people the guides had been expecting to meet. The new people were of a very pleasing aspect. "The women had adorned their hair with beads, and had it arranged in large loose knots over the ears, and plaited with great neatness from the division of the head. The men were clothed in leather, their hair was neatly combed, and they were more cleanly than any natives we had yet seen. Their eyes were of a grey hue with a tinge

[1] Between the Blackwater and Dean Rivers. [2] The Dean.
[3] On Gatcho Lake. See Appendix A.

of red. There was one man among them six feet four inches. His manners were affable, and he had a more prepossessing appearance than any Indian I had met with in my journey. He was about twenty-eight years of age, and was treated with particular respect by his party."

They were loaded with skins and furs, and were on their way to the coast where some of their people had already gone. Mackenzie's party was glad to travel with them, particularly since their rate of travel was regulated by their women and children, yet at this easy pace they did twenty miles that day. These amiable people changed their route [1] next day, and, with great reluctance, Mackenzie was compelled to part from them, though he would gladly have continued with them to whatever destination they had in view. They pointed out the pass which would lead him next day to a view of the river flowing into the sea.

The party had now been thirteen days on the trail since leaving their canoe. It was Wednesday the seventeenth when they reached the summit of the pass, where the snow was as hard underfoot as concrete. A tempest raged, and the hail fell in an avalanche, and Mackenzie remarks that the weather was as distressing as any he had ever experienced. The hunters scoured the hills for game and succeeded in bringing in a small caribou doe, whereupon they renewed their shivering march. Before them appeared a stupendous mountain, on the hither side of which flowed the stream that emptied into the Pacific.[2] As soon as wood was found a big fire roared, the venison was cooked, and they made a heartier meal than they had done for many a day before.

The alteration in their outlook raised their spirits, and to

[1] Probably *en route* to Salmon House on Dean River.

[2] After leaving the headwaters of the Blackwater the trail crosses Dean River a little east of the 126th meridian, and reaches Bella Coola River a little west of it.

signalise the occasion Mackenzie shaved off his beard and changed his linen, "and my people followed the humanising example." Descending rapidly they presently came to a precipice, from which they saw the river below, and a village on its banks. The mountain-side was covered with pine, spruce, hemlock, birch and other trees. In about two hours the bottom was reached. Here the timber was found to be very large, including the largest and loftiest cedar trees the explorer had ever seen.

The guide forged ahead to the houses of some friends to prepare a reception for the party who, being overtaken by darkness in the thick wood, proceeded by feeling, rather than seeing, their way. At last several fires were seen in small huts where the people were preparing their fish. Mackenzie says: "I walked into one of them without the least ceremony, threw down my burden and, after shaking hands with some of the people, sat down upon it. They received me without the least appearance of surprise, but soon made signs to me to go to the large house erected on upright posts."

Here a dignified chief[1] seated them on cedar-bark mats in the place of honour, and set before them generous quantities of roasted salmon. The women and children had already retired, and the chief signified that the visitors were to sleep in the house. A fire was prepared for them in one quarter of the building on the ground hearth. This was surrounded by a sleeping platform, backed like couches and raised a few inches off the earth, which ran around three sides of the fireplace. Then a dessert in the form of a creamy emulsion of salmon eggs was brought in to them, to be followed by a second dish flavoured with gooseberries and sorrel. "Having been regaled with these delicacies, for such they were considered by that hospitable spirit which provided them, we

[1] Of the Salish nation. See Appendix C.

laid ourselves down to rest, but I never enjoyed a more sound and refreshing rest, though I had a board for my bed and a billet for my pillow."

A dam across the river built with great labour and considerable ingenuity, below which a series of salmon-traps were placed, enabled the natives to obtain large supplies of salmon annually with the least possible exertion. It was owned exclusively by the chief, who portioned out the catch as he saw fit among the tribesmen. Here was evidence of an aristocracy of wealth, and of capitalism in its primitive form. This possession gave the chief great power among his people. Mackenzie found it impossible to obtain fresh salmon from them, although there were literally thousands of the fish available. He, however, was supplied with an unlimited quantity of cooked fish, with berries and oil. It appears that the Indians had certain superstitions regarding the "Salmon-Spirit." If certain observances were violated the great Salmon-Spirit would be offended, and the salmon would abandon the river. Animal flesh was taboo at this time. One of the visitors threw a bone of a deer into the river and an Indian, seeing the act of desecration, immediately dived for the bone and burned it, afterwards carefully washing his polluted hands. A dog which swallowed a bone from the camp was beaten until he disgorged it, when the offending article was carefully burned as in the former case. They would not permit Mackenzie to examine the weir too closely, and refused him a canoe, because the fish would instantly smell the venison they had and would quit the river for ever. But this difficulty was got over when the chief suggested that the venison should be given to one of the strangers in the village belonging to a tribe of meat-eaters.

Mackenzie's request for fresh salmon seems to have roused suspicions in the minds of the people. Their food supply

Photo H. Carry

TOTEM-POLE ART OF THE COAST INDIANS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Erected in the projected model Indian village, Stanley Park, Vancouver, British Columbia

Photo Iver Fougner

"RASCALS' VILLAGE," BELLA COOLA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

was at the mercy of an enemy who, in quite a casual way, might easily deprive them of this cherished source. The chief diplomatically intimated that the current was very strong and would take them in a short time to the next village, where their wants would be supplied, and requested that the party should hasten its departure.

Fifteen armed men, rather corpulent but of fine appearance, arrived from another village to see the white men. The people as a whole appeared to be of a quiet and peaceable character. The women wore bobbed hair, which required little care or combing, while that of the men was plaited and smeared with oil and earth. The black beady eye of the Indian east of the Rockies was absent here, the predominant colour being a grey, tinged with red. The chief was presented with several useful articles, and the party embarked at noon in two canoes with seven natives. The river was swift and the canoe attained a speed of about ten miles an hour; they passed over another weir on their way, and encountered many canoes going up and down. Mackenzie was greatly impressed with the dexterity of the natives in river navigation. "I imagined that the Canadians who accompanied me were the most expert canoe-men in the world, but they are very inferior to these people, as they themselves acknowledged."

There was great confusion in a village as they approached it through a wood. The men were running from house to house, arming with bows and arrows, spears and axes. There was nothing for it but to put on a bold front and march unconcernedly into their midst, which produced the desired effect, as the majority of them threw down their arms and crowded round to greet them.

An elderly man broke through the crowd, thrusting the others aside unceremoniously, and affectionately took Mackenzie in his arms. He was followed by his son. The pressure

of the crowd was so great that they could not move. At length a lane was made to accommodate the approach of the chief's eldest son. Mackenzie stepped forward to meet him, and presented his hand, whereupon the young man, with a gesture, broke the string of a very handsome robe of sea-otter skins he was wearing and flung it over the shoulders of the explorer, which was as flattering a reception as could be expected.

The whole party was then banqueted for three hours with various native delicacies, the crowd remaining the entire time to indulge their curiosity. Mackenzie presented the young chief with a blanket and the old man with a pair of scissors whose use was explained to him. His beard was of great length, and, with a twinkle of humour, he forthwith began to put the new instrument into use.

The village contained four elevated houses and seven on the ground-level; the population was in the neighbourhood of two hundred. A large house fifty by forty-five feet was in the course of erection. The pillars, carved with totem figures, were two and a half feet in diameter. The whole when finished would approximate in a crude way to the form of a Greek temple. Here and there were erections of thick cedar boards, neatly joined, measuring twenty by eight feet, decorated with painted hieroglyphics and symbolic figures of different animals, highly conventionalised. The work was executed with a degree of correctness that was not to be expected from such an uncultivated people; but their sculpture, it was observed, was superior to their painting.[1]

Mackenzie formally visited the chief the next day, and was favoured with a sight of his treasures, which he kept in huge cedar chests, whose outer surfaces were decorated with carvings in low relief set off with various colours. He

[1] See "Indian Tribes," Appendix C.

valued highly a long blue coat embellished with brass buttons, and another of Spanish manufacture made of flowered cotton. Copper and brass were plentiful among these Indians. Their arrows and spears were pointed with these metals which were also worked up into personal ornaments, such as collars, earrings, and bracelets for the wrists, arms and legs. Iron, too, was plentiful. Some of their twisted iron collars weighed as much as twelve pounds.

Mackenzie's instruments were a source of apprehension to them as they feared that his necromantic manipulation of them might frighten away the salmon. It was probably this superstition which induced them to provide him with a canoe to continue the voyage, but the old chief was obliging enough to send his young son to accompany the party. Before leaving the village Mackenzie inspected a very large cedar canoe, literally "dug out" from a single tree trunk, in which the chief with forty of his people had gone about ten winters ago a long distance south, and met with two large ships full of white men who received them kindly. The canoe was forty-five feet long, four feet wide, and three and a half feet deep. It was painted black, and decorated with white figures of fish of different kinds. The gunwale, fore and aft, was inlaid with the teeth of the sea-otter, which circumstance led Mackenzie to think that this was the identical canoe which Captain Cook describes as having met on the coast, "adorned with human teeth," in which supposition Captain Cook was no doubt mistaken, as there is a very great resemblance between human teeth and those of the sea-otter.

Missing an axe from his equipment Mackenzie requested its return, but the chief would not understand, whereupon the leader took up his position on a stone with his gun ready, and intimated that he would not depart until the

article was restored. His own people were highly displeased with him for his determined action, indeed the whole village was instantly in an uproar, but the leader thought that in their peculiar circumstances that he was justified in the measure which he adopted. The axe had been hidden under the chief's canoe and was soon returned.

Once again they were *en route* in a large canoe with seven natives. The river was a continuous rapid, and their progress was correspondingly swift. They were obliged to go on shore at the invitation of a person of some consequence, who regaled them in the same manner as they had been entertained at the last village and then embarked with them. In a short time they arrived at another house of very large dimensions, which was partitioned into different apartments, whose inhabitants received them kindly and banqueted them in the native fashion.

They finally reached the village at the mouth of the river consisting of six very large houses erected on palisades, rising twenty-five feet from the ground, which were like the others seen, with the exception of their great elevation. It appears that Mr. Johnstone of Captain Vancouver's expedition had visited this village in the first week of the previous month.

There is an element of the pathetic in the fact that two great explorers on the far side of a continent, both of whom were interested in the same problems, should have missed each other by such a narrow margin. What a comfort it would have been to Mackenzie and his discouraged men to meet people of their own kind who were officials of a powerful government, strongly armed and well-equipped, and with all the means to start the expedition back fully provided!

CHAPTER XI

"MACKENZIE'S ROCK"

By eight next morning, having changed to another and larger canoe, they emerged from the Bella Coola River into North Bentinck Arm. It was Saturday, 20 July, a foggy day, with a head wind blowing from the west. The bay had a breadth of from one to three miles. Seals, porpoises, gulls and ducks were plentiful. The swell and the head wind prevented them from going on more than ten miles down the arm, and they camped in a small cove on the right side of the arm. Not being accustomed to the tide, which rose and fell here fifteen feet, the party had frequently to move their baggage. The Indians left them, but the young chief returned at dark with a porcupine which he dressed and boiled, and ate with the assistance of two of Mackenzie's people, who were famished enough to relish this dish, from which circumstance they called their haven Porcupine Cove, a name which has since been changed to Green Bay.

Their situation was disquieting. The provisions were now reduced to twenty pounds of pemmican, fifteen pounds of rice, and six pounds of flour, which can hardly be regarded as more than a day's rations for ten half-starved men. Their canoe was leaky, they were on a barbarous coast, and they had as yet no reason to expect assistance from the natives.

The sea yielded certain edible foods like mussels which were gathered and eaten by Mackay, but the others were wholly unacquainted with shell-fish and would not partake of this food. Leaving Porcupine Cove at six in the morning

they entered a channel two and a half miles wide, whose extent was visible for ten or twelve miles towards the south-west. The shores were everywhere mountainous, as indeed their course down the river had been; all of which was so entirely different from the low undulating elevations of the prairies which they had left so far behind.

Mackenzie appears to have come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to reach the open ocean, and being uncertain whether they were in a bay or among a maze of inlets and channels he decided to confine his search to a proper place for taking an observation. He therefore turned north-west up Labouchere Channel and held a course to the first prominent point, and was met on his way by three canoes with fifteen men, moving to another camp. They stopped to look at the travellers whose possessions they examined with an air of indifference and disdain. They spoke the language of the young chief with a different accent and were no doubt of a different tribe.

"One of them in particular made me understand with an air of insolence that a large 'canoe' had lately been in this bay, with people in her like me, and that one of them, whom he called Macubah (Vancouver), had fired on him, and that Benzins had struck him on the back with the flat part of his sword. . . . I do not doubt that he well-deserved the treatment which he described."

This party persuaded the young Indian to leave Mackenzie, which action he was powerless to prevent. Coasting along King's Island down Dean Channel they were overtaken by a canoe with two boys in it, which was on its way to a neighbouring village. The troublesome Indian forced himself into Mackenzie's canoe and requested him to steer to a narrow channel opposite, that led to his village in Elcho Cove, which was accordingly done. His insolence became

irksome. He asked for the explorer's hat, his handkerchief, and everything he saw and repeatedly complained of the affronts that had been put upon him by "Macubah" and his men, who had come up the channel which was now visible towards the south-west. This aggressive Indian was no doubt of the tribe of Bella Bellas who at that time had a large village in Elcho Cove, which looks south-west into Burke Channel.

In the meantime, ten canoes, containing about fifty men, had been following the explorers. Fearing an attack, Mackenzie instructed his men to be on the alert, and if any violence was offered to defend themselves to the last.

Landing at a deserted village they immediately took possession of a rock, where there was not room for more than twice their number, and prepared to defend themselves. The people in the first three canoes were the most troublesome, but, after doing their utmost to irritate Mackenzie's party, they went away. The remainder continued to press the visitors to return with them to their village, but, not succeeding in their efforts, they too went away about sunset. But another canoe with seven stout, well-looking men arrived and endeavoured to trade a goat-skin and a sea-otter skin for Mackenzie's sword. They stated that Macubah had left his ship behind the point to the south-west, and had proceeded to their village in boats which were rowed with oars. These men marked their refusal of anything asked of them by repeating emphatically, with some show of pride in their linguistic knowledge, the British monosyllable, "No! No!"

"The natives having left us, we made a fire to warm ourselves, and as for supper there was but little of that, for our whole daily allowance did not amount to what was sufficient for a single meal. The weather was clear through-

out the day, which was succeeded by a fine moonlight night. I directed the people to keep watch by two in turn, and laid myself down on my cloak."

The night passed without any untoward event, and in the morning the guide arrived back, with several men in two canoes. The latter brought some pieces of raw seal's meat, which some of the party bought at an extravagant price. "The young chief was now very anxious to persuade our people to depart, as the natives, he said, were as numerous as mosquitoes, and of a very malignant character. This information produced some very earnest remonstrances to me to hasten our departure, but as I was determined not to leave this place, except I was absolutely compelled to it, till I had ascertained its situation, these solicitations were not repeated."

Two other canoes now appeared coming up the main channel from the south-west, and the young Indian in his agitation actually foamed at the mouth as he repeated the danger they were in. This young Indian was of the Salish nation, as indeed all those on the river were, who greatly feared the islanders and coast-dwellers generally, and usually thought discretion the better part of valour, hence his emotion on seeing the new-comers.

Again his panic-stricken people adjured Mackenzie to flee. While not altogether free from apprehensions, he was, nevertheless, under the necessity of disguising them from his followers, and he replied with resolution in his tones, that he would not stir until he had accomplished his object; but, to humour them and keep them busy, he ordered them to load the canoe in readiness for departure, while he himself continued his observations. The two canoes approached and five men and their families quietly came ashore and examined Mackenzie's instruments with

much admiration and astonishment. They were evidently of another tribe as the guide did not understand their language.

"I now mixed up some vermilion in melted grease, and inscribed in large characters on the south-east face of the rock on which we had slept, this brief memorial: 'Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada by land, the twenty-second of July 1793.'" This position, Mackenzie adds in a note, he found to be the cheek of Captain Vancouver's Cascade Canal, but recent investigations by Captain R. P. Bishop and J. P. Forde, on behalf of the Government of British Columbia, fix the location of "Mackenzie's Rock" on the south-east point of Elcho Cove, about mid-way in a direct line between Ocean Falls and Cascade Inlet.

By various observations during the day and night of 22 July, the position was found to be 128° 2′ west of Greenwich and 52° 21′ 10″ north.

"I had now determined the situation, which is the most fortunate circumstance of my long, painful, and perilous journey, as a few cloudy days would have prevented me from ascertaining the final longitude of it."

The party then removed to a small cove about three miles north-east, to a position against a cliff that rose from three to seven hundred feet from the water, where they were better able to defend themselves in case of attack. The two canoes of strangers followed them, and induced the guide to join them, but, feeling himself responsible to the old chief for his son's safety, Mackenzie compelled him by actual force to come on shore. The strangers motioned to the guide to escape over the hill, and indicated that they would pick him up on the other side of the promontory. Mackenzie desired his people to keep a watch on him, but "they peremptorily refused to be employed in keeping him against

his will," and he was therefore reduced to the necessity of watching the young man himself.

"As soon as I had completed my observations, we left this place: it was then ten o'clock in the afternoon." It has since been determined that Mackenzie's finding was about thirty miles too far west,[1] the exact position being 127′ 20″.

"The exact point which marked the termination of his voyage has been for years a matter of doubt. This doubt originates, almost entirely, in the discrepancy which exists between the text of Mackenzie's *Voyages*, and the footnotes which he has added. If the latter be excluded the difficulty is greatly diminished. In estimating the reliance to be placed on these footnotes, one must bear in mind that, as appears from his letters to his cousin Roderick Mackenzie, the explorer transcribed his journal, and prepared it for publication in 1794. Vancouver's *Voyage* was published in 1798, and Mackenzie's *Voyages* in 1801. It would seem, therefore, that the footnotes were added some four years or more after the journal was written. It is not surprising that errors occurred when, after that lapse of time, Mackenzie tried to plot his route upon Vancouver's chart." [2]

It is a satisfaction to all admirers of the intrepid explorer to know the exact spot where the last dramatic scene in the first overland voyage was enacted. The erection of a commemorative tablet by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, gives to the event a local habitation and a name, and thus another stirring incident in the early

[1] Captain R. P. Bishop in *Mackenzie's Rock*, p. 13, says: "There is a discrepancy of about 42 minutes of arc, amounting to nearly thirty miles."

[2] From His Honour Judge F. W. Howay's Introduction to *Mackenzie's Rock*, Bulletin No. 6 of the Historic Sites Series, Ottawa, 1925, by Captain R. P. Bishop, B.C.L.S., F.R.G.S.

history of North-Western America is rescued from the twilight of tradition and assigned its proper place in that colourful pageant which links the marching present with the immemorial past.

The fact that Mackenzie was the first European to cross the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific will be more generally recognised. Lewis and Clarke are still given credit for this feat by historians who apparently ignore the facts. Before the cession of Louisiana to the United States, the prompt and sagacious President Jefferson, with the approval of Congress, commissioned Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clarke to seek and trace to its termination in the Pacific some stream, "whether the Columbia, the Oregon, the Colorado, or any other which might offer the most direct and practicable water-communication across the continent, for the purposes of commerce." These instructions were issued in 1803. A few days after their delivery to Captain Lewis, the commander of the expedition, the news of the cession of Louisiana reached the United States, and he immediately set off for the west. On 15 November, 1805, they landed at Cape Disappointment or Hancock's Point, on the northern side of the entrance of the Columbia into the Pacific, after a journey of more than four thousand miles from their place of departure.[1]

Lewis and Clarke were thus twelve years later than Mackenzie in reaching the Pacific. The Spaniards, it is true, crossed within their territory in the south. History credits Cabeza Vaca, and two other Spaniards and a negro, with having travelled in the course of nine years, 1527–36, from Tampa in Florida to Culiacan near the Gulf of California. The wanderings of these adventurers, however, demonstrated nothing more than the fact that the intervening

[1] Greenhow's *North-West Coast of North America*, p. 152.

country was void of anything to excite the cupidity of the treasure-seeking Spaniards.

No other event in the history of the north-west quarter of the continent is fraught with so much significance as the successful termination of the overland journey performed by Alexander Mackenzie, the leader on his own initiative, with Alexander Mackay, his second in command; and Joseph Landry, and Charles Ducette, who had accompanied the explorer in his voyage to the Arctic, François Beaulieux, Baptist Bisson, François Courtois, Jaques Beauchamp and the two Chipewyan Indians, one of whom is frequently mentioned under the reputable name of Cancre the Crab.

Full credit must be given to all the members of the party, for, in spite of the frequent alarms and rebellions of the *voyageurs* and the Indians, the success of this remarkable achievement was due to their co-operation, particularly to their ability to endure the excessive hardships of the journey.

CHAPTER XII

THE RETURN TO FORT CHIPEWYAN

LEAVING at once when the explorer had accomplished his purpose, the party travelled all night, arriving at Porcupine Cove at 4.30 in the morning. Continuing on their way they found the tide at the mouth of the river so low that it was necessary to make a landing a mile below the village.

The moment the canoe touched the shore the guide jumped out and hastened away, telling them to draw the canoe up out of reach of the tide and leave it. Mackenzie had long ago lost all faith in guides and was inclined to suspect their motives. He could not understand why this young man should be in such a hurry to leave them, when he was perfectly safe in his own country. Mackenzie hastened after him, and when nearing the village, while the guide was fifteen or twenty paces ahead of him, two men rushed from the houses with daggers in their hands and fury in their aspect.

Mackenzie stopped short, threw down his cloak, and raised his gun. They knew the effect of fire-arms and at once dropped their daggers. Mackenzie lowered his gun and drew his sword. Several others arrived, including the Indian whose insolence had annoyed them so much a few days before. Mackenzie's wrath now flared, and he says, "My resentment predominated and if he had come within my reach I verily believe that I should have terminated his insolence for ever."

The natives crowded around him, and one contrived to

get behind, and endeavoured to pinion his arms, but was shaken off. At this juncture one of Mackenzie's men appeared on the edge of the woods, whereupon the natives fled. In ten minutes all of his men had come up, and he reflects that his own party might easily have been dispatched one at a time, and not one of them would have returned to tell the horrid fate of his companions. Mackenzie's Highland blood was up, and he informed his men that he was determined to make the natives feel the impropriety of their conduct, and compel them to return his hat and cloak which had been taken in the scuffle. "I therefore told my men to prime their pieces afresh, and prepare themselves for an active use of them if the occasion should require it."

Thus prepared they drew up in military array before the houses and made signs for a parley. The young chief came down and informed Mackenzie that the rascal who had made such a nuisance of himself had told the villagers that Mackenzie had not only ill-treated him, but had murdered four of his companions a few days before. Mackenzie pointed out and emphasised the falsehoods, and demanded, as a condition of his departure, that everything which had been purloined should be returned together with a necessary supply of fish; the things were accordingly restored, and a few dried fish handed over, whereupon a reconciliation was effected, but Mackenzie thereafter refers to the place as "Rascal's Village." Two more salmon were brought, and poles were furnished to enable the party to ascend the river.

But the current was so strong that it occupied four polers, who alone were in the canoe, one hour to cover half a mile. To increase their troubles they saw the impudent rascal who was now an object of execration, proceeding rapidly upstream, and apprehended further trouble from him. The difficulty of making head against the rapid current, and an

expectation of further trouble, so alarmed the *voyageurs* that most of them swore that they would not again enter the canoe, but would take to the mountains and try to gain the trail on the plateau above by passing over the range. Having decided on this course they threw everything which they had into the river, except their blankets.

"I was sitting all this time patiently on a stone, and indulging the hope that, when their frantic terror had subsided, their returning reason would have disposed them to perceive the rashness of their project, but when I observed that they persisted in it, I no longer remained a silent listener to their passionate declarations, but proceeded to employ such arguments as I trusted would turn them from their senseless and impracticable purpose."

The steersman, who had been with Mackenzie for five years in that capacity, instantly replied that he was ready to follow his leader anywhere, but would not again enter the canoe. His example was followed by all the rest, except Mackay and one of the Indian hunters who was now sick. As the latter was not in a condition to be of any use, Mackenzie and Mackay were therefore compelled to pole the canoe upstream, while the six *voyageurs* and the other Indian walked along the shore. Their progress was consequently slow. Nothing that they had yet undergone in the way of canoe-work was comparable with the labour of getting up this river. The land party had continually to wait for them. Mackenzie excuses them on many occasions, but on this occasion when they were homeward bound, no excuse can be urged. They were in a state of fear, they were not only afraid of the Indians, but acknowledged by their action that the river was too much for them and that they were unable to negotiate it.

The leader, on this return trip up the Bella Coola River,

showed some of his finest qualities. He was fearless, and ready to stand alone against a whole tribe of Indians. He refused to be stampeded by his panic-stricken men, and he undertook the work which they balked at. Moreover, he showed his humanity by the care that he devoted to his sick Indian hunter, whom he did not desert in a far country. It may not seem entirely complimentary to praise a man for a simple, instinctive act of kindness to an ailing fellow-creature, but readers will call to mind not a few instances in which explorers have not hesitated to leave their sick followers in distant parts, recking not whether they ever reached their homes again.

The fears of every member of the party were roused when two well-manned canoes appeared above paddling vigorously with the accompaniment of rhythmic warlike grunts at every stroke, but much to their relief the canoes shot by with great rapidity. Their local guide, the young chief, who had left them at the lower village, now appeared in a canoe with six others coming down to meet them, which was regarded as a good omen, and shortly after, on arriving at a house, they were received in a friendly manner and supplied with fish. At dark they arrived at another house where they again met their *bête noire* with four of his friends, but the inhabitants were friendly and provided them with fish and berries. They now learned that these troublesome people were islanders, Bella Bellas, it is presumed, who had come up the river to exchange cedar-bark, fish-spawn, copper, iron, and beads for roasted salmon, hemlock-bark cakes, and bricks of salmon-roe.

The members of the expedition were well fed that night and, to guard against unexpected happenings, Mackenzie and a man sat up for the first part of the night, and Mackay and another for the second half. Early in the morning

Photo Iver Fougner

SQUINAS, YOUNG CHIEF FROM ANAHIM LAKE, BRITISH COLUMBIA, ON THE BELLA COOLA TRAIL

Photo J. Keele *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY CAMP, GRAVEL RIVER, MACKENZIE AREA

Mackay was sent to look at the canoe, and returned to say that the islanders were loading it with their articles of traffic and were ready to depart. Mackenzie rushed down and seized the canoe, and would have overset it, had not one of the people of the house, who had been kind to him, told him that their guide had gone off with Mackenzie's canoe, and that this one really belonged to the islanders.

The explorer's precipitate act quite evidently frightened the blustering islander and his people, for they forthwith made all haste to leave. The loss of the canoe and guide was repaired by engaging two of the people of the village to accompany them. Without the assistance of the local Indians it would have been impossible for Mackenzie and Mackay to make headway against the strong current in a heavy canoe.

The chief who had regaled the party on their way down was found seining salmon higher up. He took the entire outfit aboard, and proceeded up with great expedition, and Mackenzie remarks that these people are surprisingly skilful and active in setting against a powerful current. Once in the roughest part of a rapid they displayed their command of their craft by a little skylarking to impress their passengers, nearly filling the canoe in their efforts.

Food was plentiful of its kind, and they were conducted by friendly Indians from one group to another. At one time the road passed through a magnificent forest of cedar-trees, some of which measured twenty-four feet in girth, while some of the alders were seven feet around.

At one o'clock on Thursday the twenty-fifth, they arrived opposite the village of the old chief, whose son had been their guide. This was the third day of their return journey. Mackenzie rather expected trouble here, but was pleased to notice that the village was in a state of tranquillity. Several of the natives were fishing both above and below the weir.

Mackenzie instructed his men to wait for him with arms ready while he went alone to the chief's house, and, if they heard pistol-shots, to get away as quickly as possible and make the best of their way across the mountains.

Mackenzie's actions were usually well-considered, but this one appears on the face of it to have been unnecessarily risky. The village, however, appeared as tranquil as one might expect to find it on a sultry summer afternoon. The women were quietly engaged in the age-old occupations of spinning and weaving, and the preparation of food-supplies. They smilingly invited this stern-looking White Chief to partake of a meal with them, but he passed on seeking the chief, with what thoughts in his mind it is hard to know. The old chief and his son, their former guide, at last appeared. The old man held in his hand a tobacco-pouch which the young chief had purloined from Mackay. When he had approached within three or four yards he threw the pouch at Mackenzie with great indignation and walked away. Mackenzie's habit of demanding the return of stolen articles at the point of the gun had perhaps impressed the natives of the valley, and when he was seen stalking through the village it is probable that the young man's conscience reminded him of the pouch, and he accounted to his father for the explorer's evident search for a victim by admitting his theft. Hence the old man's anger and humiliation when he felt it expedient to return the article.

Mackenzie followed and offered his hand. It then transpired that the chief was in great distress from having lost his son, who had died of an ulcer, and to whom Mackenzie on his way down, recognising the hopelessness of the young man's condition, had given a few drops of Turlington's balsam on some sugar. Knowing the nature of their superstitions he may have felt some misgivings in connection

with this case, as he had realised that the young man could not live, and that the administration of medicine on his part might be regarded as being responsible for the boy's death. Mackenzie had probably forgotten the serious condition of the young man in the press of his own affairs, and therefore did not understand his brother the guide's anxiety to return home as speedily as possible.

The chief had also been under the belief that Mackenzie had killed the guide, his son, or that all had perished together. Mackenzie took them both by the hand and requested them to come to the place where his men were. Both were remunerated with cloth, knives, and a portion of everything that now remained to them, and they were greatly pleased. The party was well fed, and when about to leave ten roasted salmon were presented to them. The chief and his son and a great number of the people attended them on their way for a short distance.

There was a great confusion in the village as they left, and Indians came running after them, telling them to stop, which threw the party into disorder. When they were mustered again, it appeared that the natives merely wished to let them know that they were taking the wrong road and desired to put them upon the right one.

In the forest of stately cedars while following a well-beaten path they were gladdened to get a sight of their dog which had been lost at this village on the way down. The natives told them that the poor creature had howled every night on the outskirts. The animal's predicament had evidently affected its sanity, for it now ran backwards and forwards in a wild way, and, though it followed the party, it could not be induced to recognise its master. In a pathetic manner the creature would approach, as if with the belief that these men were friends, but its hallucinations suddenly

overpowering it, it would dash away abruptly as if terrorised by what it had seen. It was reduced almost to a skeleton. Food was dropped for it, and in a short time it regained its sagacity, and once more became an important member of the party.

That night, fearing that their friends might turn up in the rôle of enemies, they did not kindle a fire, but each man took his tree, and laid down in his clothes with his gun ready, beneath the protection of its branches.

At eight o'clock on a fine summer's morning, just at that time when the fragrant forest is pictured with such vividness against the blue sky, they arrived at the upper village, which they had christened the Friendly Village, now known to settlers in this valley as Burnt Bridge, where they were received with great kindness. The plutocratic chief, Soocomlick, who was at his weir, was sent for, and on his return he immediately entertained the explorers with the most respectful hospitality. "In short he behaved to us with so much attention and kindness that I did not withhold anything in my power to give, which might afford him satisfaction. To his other acts of kindness he added as large a supply of fish as we chose to take."

Mackenzie concluded that some of these river villages were merely temporary residences during the salmon run. He observed that the people as a whole seemed to be on a footing of equality, while the strangers in their midst were compelled to obey the people or quit the village. The chief was lord over all. While he did not at all times exercise his authority, he was nevertheless automatically looked up to, and was expected on special occasions to express the will of the people. Ordinarily, however, his own will was executed, without particular reference to the wishes of the populace. They appeared to be of a friendly disposition, but subject

to sudden gusts of passion, which were as quickly composed. "Of the many tribes of savage people whom I have seen, these appear to be the most susceptible of civilisation." [1]

The stay here was not more than three hours, and "at eleven in the morning we left this place, which I called the Friendly Village, accompanied by every man belonging to it, who attended us about a mile, when we took a cordial leave of them, and if we might judge from appearances they parted from us with regret."

Waving a cordial good-bye to these people who had befriended them both on their arrival and on their departure from the coast, the party, having escaped all dangers so far, now cheerfully turned their steps homeward, feeling that henceforth the only difficulties to overcome were those obstacles interposed by rivers, forests, and mountains.[2]

Their stock of fish was divided up, each man getting about twenty pounds. There was still a little flour and some

[1] See Appendix C, "Indian Tribes."

[2] This valley is now peopled by a colony of settlers from Norway, who, since their settlement here about thirty years ago, have become prosperous. Every detail of Mackenzie's arrival at Bella Coola is of interest to them. Indeed as pioneers in a new world they have a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties faced and overcome by Alexander Mackenzie and his men. They regard the stout-hearted explorer as in a sense their own hero.

The writer is indebted to Mr. Iver Fougner of Bella Coola, who represents the Department of Indian Affairs in this district, for the information that the Indians of to-day whose ancestors gave Mackenzie a friendly reception cherish the tradition of his advent among them with peculiar pride, and identify themselves with those who are concerned in keeping his memory green.

It is interesting to hear from Mr. Fougner that Skimillick, a descendant of Soocomlick, who was chief of the Friendly Village (Burnt Bridge) in 1793, though old and feeble, still likes to talk about the coming of the great White Chief from over the mountains, the story of whom was still fresh in the memory of the tribesmen in his youth; how, when his slaves were faint-hearted, he put a great shame upon them by doing easily that which they found it so hard to do. Skimillick is now virtually a pensioner of the Indian Department, and is a frequent visitor at the Indian Agency.

pemmican. Looking up, the mountain towered above them so steeply that it seemed impossible for them to climb it. From one to five they toiled upwards, to a spot where they could get water. They were so completely exhausted that it was only with great pain that any of them could crawl about to gather wood for the necessary purpose of making a fire. But, later in the evening, they "sat around the blazing fire, talking of past dangers and indulging the delightful reflection that we were thus far advanced on our homeward journey." The scenery was sublime and the contemplation of it added much to the enjoyment of the evening. "Such was the depth of the precipices below, and the height of the mountains above, with the rude and wild magnificence of the scenery around that I shall not attempt to describe such an astonishing and awful combination of objects, of which indeed no description can convey an adequate idea."

It was summer below, but in this spot the frost was still in the ground, the grass was just beginning to spring, and the crowberry bushes to blossom.

By Sunday the twenty-eighth, they were back at their camp-site of the sixteenth, and found their pemmican in good condition. "We continued our route with fine weather and without meeting a single person on our way, the natives being all gone to the Great River. We recovered all our hidden stores of provisions, and arrived at about two in the afternoon of August 4th at the place we had left a month ago."

The canoe and all their goods were found in good order. Large numbers of natives arrived from above and below, and a distribution of presents was made among those who had been of service to the explorers. Some articles were stolen from the camp, and Mackenzie gravely informed the Indians that the sea belonged to the white men and that, if the articles were not returned, he would issue orders to

prevent the salmon from coming up their river, whereupon every stolen article was promptly returned.

On Tuesday, 6 August, the canoe was loaded, and the party proceeded in high spirits at finding themselves once more comfortably together in it. It is interesting to note in passing that, after having been without rum for a month, they did not feel the need of it. "I treated myself, as well as the people, with a dram; but we had been so long without tasting any spirituous liquor, that we had lost all relish for it." This is the plain statement of a man who was not at all concerned with the merits of the question of abstinence or indulgence.

As they went blithely forward they were interested in watching the Fraser "boil with the commotion made by countless salmon which were driving up the current in such schools that the water seemed as it were to be covered with the fins of them."

The river was undergoing one of those minor rises due to excessive rains in the mountainous country above. The rain and the strong current caused by the flood made the work of ascending the river very difficult. The lower rapid, the canyon, and the upper rapid were all passed without mishap, and in six days the North Fork of the Fraser was reached. Here the water was slack, having indeed fallen six feet in the last day or so as rapidly as it had risen. While navigating this branch, the party had a better opportunity to admire the mountain portals which flanked the river on either side like a "succession of enormous Gothic churches." Another day took them across the swampy carrying-place between this fork and Bad River. But the men, who were on insufficient rations, were not as strong as they should be, the weather was cold, and those whose duty it was to carry the canoe, which was much heavier than the original

one, ran the risk of their lives at almost every step in this freezing bog. But they all managed to stagger to safety, and were glad enough to camp once more on that river where two months ago they had come to such sudden grief.[1]

Bad River was now lower, but the water, draining from glaciers and snow-fields, was as cold as water can be. It was necessary to wade in the boulder-strewn bed and drag up the canoe the whole distance. Ordinarily it is impossible to remain in such water more than a few minutes at a time for it has the excruciating quality of liquid fire. But the *voyageurs* had no choice. Their only relief, if it can be called such, occurred when it became necessary to portage over or around the numerous log-jams which encumbered the streams. This was heavy enough labour, but it was, nevertheless, a relief from the icy waters.

At sunset on 15 August, they were camped at the spot "where some of us had nearly taken our eternal voyage on June 13th. The legs and feet of the men were so benumbed that I was very apprehensive of the consequences."

The water was low and an effort was made to locate their lost bag of bullets but without result. Salmon were shouldering upstream in large numbers, having made their way up from the Pacific since mid-June.

Mackenzie was interested in the project of transplanting Pacific salmon, which no one since his day has thought of doing, to the headwaters of the Peace, but unfortunately they were short of provisions, pressed for time, and worst of all his ankles were swollen, and he could not even walk except with great pain and difficulty.

He writes on Friday the sixteenth: "We now reached the highland which separates the source of Tacouche Tesse or

[1] See Appendix B.

Columbia River and the Unjigah or Peace River, the latter of which, after receiving many tributaries and passing through Slave Lake, disembogues itself in the Frozen Ocean while the former empties itself in 46° 20′ north latitude, and longitude 124, west of Greenwich."

Simon Fraser himself in 1808 thought that this river (the Fraser), Mackenzie's Tacouche Tesse, was the Columbia, and did not realise that he had descended another river until he took his position at the mouth, and found it to be far north of the known position of the Columbia.

Mackenzie's ankles were in such a condition that he had to submit to being carried across this height of land to the headwaters of the Peace, on which, by half-past seven, they were at last peacefully gliding.

The relief and thankfulness which these weary travellers experienced when they found themselves on the home-stretch, on a swift current, which every hour would carry them from six to ten miles nearer home, will be readily understood by those who have followed their difficult course. So swift was their progress that on Sunday the eighteenth he says: "We were seven days in going up that part of the river which we came down to-day."

Beaver and wild-fowl swarmed everywhere. Strangely enough, Mackenzie seems not only to have missed the mouth of the Pack, but that of the Nation as well. The former would hardly be noticed except as the outlet, apparently, of a quiet backwater around an island, many of which of similar appearance are passed daily on such a voyage. But even had he known that the Pack was a considerable branch of the Parsnip, it is not likely that he would have taken it, as its waters have the dark appearance of swamp water, whereas the Parsnip at this point has all the swiftness and energy of a main branch. Without absolutely definite

information respecting the route to the Fraser by way of the Pack, McLeod Lake, Crooked River, and Giscome Portage, it is not likely that Mackenzie would have deviated from the Parsnip, which to the ordinary eye was the main river, and most likely to carry the traveller the longest distance towards the Fraser.

Finlay Forks was reached on Sunday, and the rapids passed without any difficulty. These may be run by good canoemen though it is usual to land on the north bank and portage about two hundred yards. The canoe is often let down by line, though there is one point of rock at the lower extremity which requires care in rounding. "Considered separately the Parsnip and the Finlay partake of the nature of mountain streams, but when they combine there is at once apparent a more placid aspect. It seems appropriate that the river should bear its distinguishing name from the confluence to its junction with the Slave.

"Turning east it flows through the gorge of the Rockies under the shadow of Mount Selwyn. The scenery is magnificent, and for three hours while drifting through at six or eight miles an hour the traveller is more or less in a maze from a sheer surfeit of grandeur.

"From the summit of Mount Selwyn (6220 feet) the Peace may be seen flowing eastward under bridges of mist, a mighty river, a full vertical mile below, meandering in majestic curves through a mountainous trough that leads to the prairie lands of Alberta. In every direction range after range extends, somewhat softened by purple mists, an impressive panorama of 'billows standing rigid in the last convulsive grimace of the earth's crust.'

"In years to come a great national park will include Mount Selwyn and its picturesque environs in a near-at-hand playground for the future citizens of the large city

which will one day people this attractive spot with its millions." [1]

Camp was pitched just above the Parle-Pas Rapids, which required daylight to run them. While this chute has a formidable appearance it can be negotiated by a short portage on the southern bank, or by letting down the boat or canoe by line on the north side. By the evening of the twentieth their last impediment faced them, the carrying-place called the Portage de la Montagne de Roche, the Rocky Mountain Canyon, or, to adopt its present name, the Peace River Canyon, now provided with a nine-mile wagon-road to Hudson's Hope.

As they were reduced to a reserve of two meals, Mackay and the two Indian hunters were sent on ahead to the foot of the canyon to endeavour to secure meat for the party.

Mackenzie's people, recalling their bitter experiences in surmounting the canyon, were disinclined to return by the road by which they had come, but Mackenzie had observed that the river had fallen fifteen feet in the narrowest part, and had lost much of its former turbulence. While five of the men were detailed to carry the baggage over, Mackenzie and the others took the canoe apart, cleaned out all the dirt, and exposed it to the air to dry it out as much as possible, which would lighten it materially.

At sunset Mackay and the hunters returned with heavy burdens of buffalo meat, and "a hearty meal concluded the day, and every fear of future want was removed." The portage was made by four the following afternoon, though, from the reduced vitality of the men, it was found almost as difficult to let the canoe down the final declivity as it had been to get it up. Some of their poles which had been left

[1] Woollacott, A. P., *Canada North of the Fifty-sixth Parallel.*

here had since been carried away by a rise in the river though they had been left twenty feet above the water-level.

Mackay and the hunters who had gone on again were met at noon the next day with plenty of fat meat, ready roasted, as they had killed two elk near by.

Their descent from the watershed had been made in the best time of the year. The water is then at a convenient stage, the mosquitoes and the flies have vanished, the weather is ideal for camping out, and fish and game are plentiful. There is probably no similar stretch in Canada at the present day through a wilderness that can be travelled so conveniently from railhead to railhead as the waterways from Summit Lake thirty miles from Prince George by auto-road, down Crooked, Pack, the Parsnip and Peace to the town of Peace River Crossing eight miles below the site of Mackenzie's Fort. There are guides who conduct parties over this route every year, but most of it can be run by the veriest tyro. From Hudson's Hope down, the resident settlers frequently make a jaunt to town by building rafts of logs and floating down to the Crossing, through the lovely country so well described by Mackenzie. He had a great affection for the familiar scenery of the central plains and refers to its beauty often. "On leaving the mountains we saw animals grazing in every direction. To give some notion of our appetites I shall state that the elk, or at least the carcase of it which we brought away, to have weighed 250 pounds, and as we had taken a very hearty meal at one o'clock it might naturally be supposed we should not be very voracious at supper. Nevertheless, the whole was consumed by ten the next morning by ten persons and a dog in two meals.

"On Friday when the sun arose, a beautiful country appeared around us, enriched and animated by large herds of wild cattle. The weather was now so warm that to us,

who had not of late been accustomed to heat, it was overpowering and oppressive. In the course of this day we killed a buffalo and a bear; but we were now in the midst of abundance and they were not sufficiently fat to satisfy our fastidious appetites, so we left them where they fell. We landed for the night and prepared ourselves for arriving at the Fort on the following day.

"The weather on Saturday continued fine, and the country increasing in beauty, though as we approached the Fort the cattle appeared proportionately to diminish. We now landed at two lodges of Indians, who were as astonished to see us as if we had been the first white men whom they had ever beheld.

"At length as we rounded a point, and came into view of the Fort, we threw out a flag, and accompanied it with a general discharge of our fire-arms, while the men were in such spirits, and made such an active use of their paddles that we arrived before the two men whom we left here in the spring could recover their senses to answer us. Thus on Saturday, September 4th, we landed at four in the afternoon, at the place which we left on the 9th of May."

Thus ended one of the most remarkable voyages in history. It was remarkable for the vision, the persistence and the fortitude of the leader, and for the endurance of every member of his party. It is still more remarkable when it is considered that the power of France and Spain in North America had waxed and waned, that a British Colony had grown to nationhood and had set out upon an independent destiny of its own, and that of a population of four and a quarter millions, only one individual was endowed with the genius for this achievement. In spite of the pioneering spirit of the people and the enterprise of the colonial and home governments, no efforts had been made in a period of 300

years to explore the country west of the Rockies, except several expeditions of the Spanish in the south, or to send out land parties to help in solving the question on which numerous ships of different nations were engaged on the Pacific seaboard.

In the retrospect it would seem that it required not only 2000 years but all past time to awaken the mind of man to the fact that he was in possession of a planet which from the beginnings of its habitable stages had been crying out for his inspection. It remained for a man of ideas, a private individual, to undertake on his own initiative this great task of linking the oceans.

Two half-dazed Indians peered out from their circumscribed mental niche upon the returned explorers, trying with their limited outlook to understand something about it. "Mackenzie had reached the Pacific, overland from Canada." Even that pregnant statement conveyed little to the Europe that knew so little of America; but to-day an enlightened world thrills to such a home-coming.

"Here my voyages of discovery terminate. Their toils and their dangers, their solicitudes, and their sufferings, have not been exaggerated in my description. On the contrary, in many instances, language has failed me in the attempt to describe them. I received, however, the reward of my labours, for they were crowned with success."

CHAPTER XIII

THE VANISHED FRONTIER

CANADA owes a great deal to the fur companies. They explored the land, surveyed and mapped it, established posts and communications, and in the course of their commercial activities brought the Indians under subjection, and exercised over them a benevolent despotism that kept them occupied and at peace. The North-West Company was a pioneer in this valuable work, and Mackenzie was one of its most far-seeing agents. His discoveries were immediately followed by important commercial and political consequences. The developments that followed the voyage to the Pacific particularly deserve the attention of those who delight to honour the founders of empire. It is not too much to say that but for Mackenzie's personal interest, his initiative and persistence, there would have been no Canada on the Pacific, and the British Empire would thus have been deprived of one of her most important strategic and economic assets, a dominion that stretches from sea to sea, and provides a highway within her own borders to the Orient and India.

The fur-trader by the very nature of his occupation was of necessity a number of other things. Ranging far beyond the reach of the arm of the law he exemplified a code which is aptly rendered in that legend, *Pro Pelle Cutem*, a commercial adaptation of the Mosaic law not entirely free from an underlying savour of dry Scotch humour, which because

of its sophistication wholly escaped the mental grasp of the Redman.

When the trader had become reputably organised he dealt out "unequal laws unto a savage race." The passionate child-like egos that were his subjects had to be curbed, and trained to realise that trinkets and rum were the rewards of industry. Having accepted the two main tenets of the new religion, the code of *meum et tuum* was never afterwards questioned by the Indian—and law and order, after its kind, prevailed within the jurisdiction of the trader.

The demand having been created in the savage breast, its satisfaction resulted in the Indian becoming a docile servant of "the company," so utterly dependent on it, that to be banished from its favour constituted the greatest punishment attainable in this world.

While the "50,000 gallons of rum, per annum," no doubt had deleterious effects upon the aboriginal races, that was offset by their complete subjection to the fur-trading companies, and the way was thus prepared for the peaceable settlement of the land. Any troubles that arose from opposition on the part of the native races may be directly traced to friction between rival companies or interests in which the Indian and his descendants became embroiled.

Trading in those days was impossible to men lacking in courage, resourcefulness, and the explorer's instinct. The North-Westers were remarkable for the possession of these qualities, so well instanced in Mackenzie, Thompson, and Fraser. Indeed that company owed its phenomenal success to the peculiar gifts of its partners. They were not counter-jumpers, but men of the open spaces to whom trading, in a sense, was incidental. The "ancient and honourable company" (the Hudson's Bay) with true British conservatism deemed it its dignified duty to remain behind its counters

Photo E. J. Whittaker *Courtesy Canadian Geological Surv e y*

NORTHERN TRADING COMPANY'S POST, FORT SIMPSON

Photo J. B. Tyrrell *Courtesy Canadian Geological Survey*

CARIBOU ON THE SHORE OF CAREY LAKE IN THE "BARREN LANDS"

and wait for trade. To plunge with an entire stock-in-trade two thousand miles from the base of supplies into the heart of the fur-country, and there capture the best of the harvest, was a commercial innovation which could only have originated in the minds of those who knew the country, its routes of travel, its resources, and the comparative ease with which it was possible to bargain from a canoe or a brigade of them. When the rich ladings from the Athabasca, the Assiniboine, and the Saskatchewan were diverted to Grande Portage the Hudson's Bay Company bestirred itself.

Thus the North-Westers by their energy and push not only compelled the older concern to branch out, but actually by superior generalship, better business methods, and a wider outlook forced a union, which is usually regarded as an absorption of the North-West Company by the English corporation. While this may be technically true, the fact remains that the old body corporate was taken possession of by its more vigorous young competitor, the rejuvenated entity thereafter masquerading under the old name. For that reason the North-West Company, which really inaugurated the policy of western expansion, deserves more credit for the exploration and development of Canada west of the Great Lakes than has ever been accorded it.

It cannot be said that the Hudson's Bay Company was averse to the union. The daring rival had entered into possession of its territory, and, but for the union, would undoubtedly have upset the old company's claim to half of Canada; hence the union of interests, as a result of which Canada has had to forfeit to a private corporation a domain that Charles II. never had the right to dispose of. But leaving such academic questions out of consideration, there remains to the credit of the North-West Company an honour-roll of explorers that cannot be equalled in any continent,

and a list of achievements, including the establishment of sovereignty over an important section of the empire, which is entitled to commensurate recognition.

The publication in London of the Voyages of Meares, Dixon, Maurelle, Vancouver, Broughton and Mackenzie aroused a greater interest than that awakened by the publication of Captain Cook's *Voyages* in 1784–5. The Nootka Controversy had brought the civilised world to the verge of war, and the civilised world was therefore all agog about that new land which faced the North Pacific Ocean. Vancouver's and Mackenzie's explorations had in the main completed the mapping of the continent. The former had surveyed the coast-line from Cape Mendocino to Alaska with an accuracy which is the admiration of geographers and navigators of to-day.

Cook had concluded that the continent was continuous to the Arctic, and Vancouver's surveys and Mackenzie's *Voyages* confirmed that conclusion. It was at last realised beyond all peradventure that no practicable waterway connected the Atlantic with the Pacific, and that no arm of the sea extended inland for more than a hundred miles, though it remained for Captain Roald Amundsen on 27 August, 1905, to finally demonstrate, in his forty-seven-ton yacht, the *Gjoa*, that a water communication actually existed north of the continent, in the region of perpetual ice.[1]

From the different narratives published at the time it was apparent that the climate was mild, the country suitable for settlement, that it was rich in furs, timber and fish, and possibly in minerals. It was in the same latitude as Canada. The 49th parallel had come to be regarded, though without

[1] Amundsen, Captain Roald, *The North-West Passage*. New York, Dutton and Co., 1908, pp. 125–6.

foundation,[1] as the boundary between Canada and the United States west of the Great Lakes, and in consequence it was believed that the north-west part of America would in all probability soon become British territory.

For the advancement of British interests in Canada, and particularly in the North-West, Mackenzie suggested that the British Government should encourage the opening up of communications by land between the two oceans. He says: "By opening this intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and forming regular establishments through the interior, and at both extremes, as well as along the coasts and islands, the entire command of the fur-trade of North America might be obtained, from latitude 48° north to the pole, except that portion of it which the Russians have in the Pacific. To this might be added the fishing in both seas, and the markets of the four quarters of the globe. Such would be the field for commercial enterprise, and incalculable would be the produce of it, when supported by the operations of that credit and capital which Great Britain so pre-eminently possesses.

"Many political reasons, which it is not necessary here to enumerate, must present themselves to the mind of every man acquainted with the enlarged system and capacities of British commerce in support of the measure which I have

[1] The Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, provided for the appointment of commissaries to agree upon a boundary between British territory in the north held by the Hudson's Bay Company under their charter and the French possessions to the south.

Greenhow in his *History of California and Oregon*, p. 282, states that nothing has been found calculated to sustain the belief that any line of separation was ever settled, or even proposed. And yet both the United States and Britain negotiated on the basis of such a belief.

In an unratified treaty of 1808 between the two countries the 49th parallel was named as the boundary as far west as the Rocky Mountains. That groundless "belief" finally became an accomplished fact.

very briefly suggested, as promising the most important advantages to the trade of the united kingdoms." [1]

The fur-trader was not consciously an advocate of land settlement, but he was, nevertheless, a pioneer of settlement. Sir Alexander Mackenzie fought bitterly against the Selkirk colonisation scheme, and yet he did more than any other trader, or even Selkirk himself, to throw open the north-west to settlement.

This transcontinental and trans-Pacific project was outlined to Simcoe in 1794, who in his report to the Lords of Trade stated that Mackenzie had remarked on the necessity of combined action to secure the Pacific trade, and on the value of the Hudson Bay route. In January 1802, when in London, he laid proposals on the subject before Lord Hobart, the Colonial Secretary, suggesting the formation of a supreme civil and military establishment at Nootka, with a subordinate station on the Columbia River, and another in Sea Otter Harbour in latitude 55° north. His proposals were not acted on. In the retrospect it appears that Mackenzie's foresight was prophetic.

The North-West Company soon after initiated the policy of developing the fur-trade west of the Rockies. James Finlay was the first to follow Mackenzie over the mountains in 1797, exploring the river that bears his name. David Thompson crossed the Rockies in the years 1801–2–3. In the first year he was commissioned to lead a party over to the Pacific slope to establish posts, but on reaching the headwaters of the Kootenay he was forced by a large party of Indians of the plains to retreat, as they feared that the Flatheads west of the Rockies would be supplied with arms and ammunition.

In 1805 Simon Fraser reached McLeod's Lake, and

[1] Mackenzie's *Voyages*, Conclusion.

founded Fort McLeod.[1] Dr. Davidson, however, in his *North-West Company*, gives James McDougall credit for the erection of this first establishment west of the Rockies, adding, "later in the same year Simon Fraser ascended the Parsnip River, following in Finlay's track."[2] Dr. Elliot Coues, in *New Light on the Greater North-West*, states that Fraser was at Cumberland House on 18 June, 1805, and later left James McDougall and John Stuart at Rocky Mountain Portage with twelve men, while he himself with six men ascended the Peace and Parsnip to Fort McLeod where three of the crew wintered 1805–6.

The Lewis and Clarke government expedition crossed the Rockies by way of the Missouri and its branches in August 1805. They embarked on a westward-flowing river in October and, descending the Columbia, reached the Pacific 15 November, 1805.

Mackenzie in 1793, Finlay in 1797, Thompson in 1801–2–3, and Simon Fraser and his men in 1805, all preceded Lewis and Clarke to the Pacific slope. The Americans did not leave any of their party in occupation, but started on their return to the east 23 March, 1806, whereas the British traders made a permanent settlement at Fort McLeod in the spring of 1805, and many more in the succeeding years at different points west of the Rockies as far south as the Columbia River.

The following year Simon Fraser crossed over the Parsnip-Fraser divide, ascended the Nechaco to Stuart Lake and built Fort St. James in 1806. John Stuart was sent over to Fraser Lake to examine it, and reported that it was a suitable locality for a post, and Fort Fraser was accordingly built there. Fort George at the junction of the Fraser and

[1] Burpee, Lawrence J., *Search for the Western Sea*, p. 507.
[2] Davidson, Gordon Charles, Ph.D., *The North-West Company*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1918, p. 113.

the Nechaco followed in 1807. Receiving instructions to explore the "Tacouche Tesse," Fraser with Jules Maurice Quesnel, nineteen *voyageurs*, and two Indian guides, began the descent of the Great River, arriving at its mouth 2 July, 1808, after unspeakable difficulties. He found the position of the outlet to be in latitude 49° north, and realised that it was not the Columbia.

David Thompson, as previously stated, had crossed the Rockies in 1801–2–3. He was at first associated with the Hudson's Bay Company as astronomer, but they intimated to him that exploring and surveying were not the services expected of him. He accordingly in 1797 transferred his allegiance to the North-West Company which welcomed him with open arms. He was instructed to determine the location of all its posts, to locate the forty-ninth parallel, to visit the Missouri, to inquire for fossils of large animals, and to search for archæological remains, and to enable him to prosecute these various activities he received an order on all the posts for what men, canoes, horses and supplies he might require.

Leaving Rocky Mountain House 10 May, 1807, Thompson crossed over the divide to the Columbia which he reached 30 June. Paddling upstream to Windermere Lake, he built Fort Kootenay and wintered there. In June of the following year, while he was descending the Columbia from Kootenay Lake on his return journey to Rocky Mountain House, another North-Wester, Simon Fraser, on the fourteenth of the same month, had reached the junction of the Fraser and the Thompson in his perilous descent to the sea, so that the two were separated by about two hundred miles, both engaged in exploring new territory. Fraser heard from the Indians of the presence of Thompson's party to the eastward.

In succeeding years Thompson explored and mapped the whole of the Columbia River system, covering new ground as far down as Snake River, from the junction of which Lewis and Clarke had preceded him to the ocean. He established Forts Kullyspell, Saleesh and Spokan, south of the forty-ninth parallel. While at Snake River, 9 July, he formally laid claim to the country for Great Britain. He reached the Pacific Fur Company's establishment, Fort Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia, 15 July. The following references by Gabriel Franchère describe his arrival:

"Towards mid-day (Friday, 15 July, 1810) we saw a large canoe with a flag displayed at her stern rounding Tongue Point. We knew not who it could be. The flag she bore was British, and her crew was composed of eight Canadian *voyageurs*. A well-dressed man who appeared to be the commander was the first to leap ashore, and addressing us without ceremony said that his name was David Thompson, and that he was one of the partners of the North-West Company. Mr. Thompson said that he had crossed the continent during the preceding season, and had wintered at the headwaters of the Columbia. He kept a regular journal, and travelled, I thought, more like a geographer than a fur-trader. He was provided with a sextant, chronometer, and barometer, and during a week's sojourn had an opportunity to make several astronomical observations." [1]

In a note Franchère surmises that Thompson had come to take possession of the country with a view to forestalling the plans of Mr. Astor and remarks that, but for the desertion of his men and the consequent delay, he would have been on the ground first. As a matter of fact, when Thompson arrived the American traders had just completed the

[1] Gabriel Franchère's *Narrative*, pp. 120–1.

transference of their merchandise from the ship *Tonquin* to their warehouse. Alexander Mackay, by the way, who had been Mackenzie's foreman, was one of the partners in the American company and had sailed north on the ill-fated *Tonquin*, 5 June. Mackay was the first to fall under the war-clubs of the attackers when the ship was captured by the Indians in Clayoquot Sound.

It is not necessary to mention in detail the establishment of all the forts and communities in the territory west of the Rockies and north of the Columbia over an area close on to half a million square miles, between the years 1793 and 1846 when the Oregon Treaty finally settled the boundary between the United States and the British possessions.

With the acquisition from France in 1803 of the Louisiana territory extending from the Mississippi to the Pacific and from New Spain indefinitely northward, the United States had acquired not only a way to the Pacific, but a problem as well, that culminated in the famous agitation which had for its slogan "Fifty-Four-Forty-or-Fight." Before the Louisiana Purchase the United States was debarred by half a continent from access to the Pacific.

Russia, it will be recalled, had sent out Bering to explore the American coast, and his southern landfall seems to have become the limit of Russia's advance, though in the course of certain negotiations with the United States she actually laid claim to all the coast as far down as the Columbia River. However, her southern boundary was fixed at 54° 40′ north, in a treaty with the United States in 1824, and a similar treaty with Britain named the same boundary as that which separates Alaska from Canada today, beginning at 54° 40′ north.

Before the Oregon dispute arose, Russia had been eliminated by the above treaty, and Spain by the Florida

Treaty of 1819, by which she ceded to the United States "all rights, claims and pretensions to any territory north of parallel forty-two."

In the treaty of 1824 with Russia the United States did not question the former's right to the territory acquired by discovery, exploration, and occupation, but she would not recognise Britain's claims based on the same fundamentals. She seems to have been under the impression that the Florida Treaty gave her sovereignty as far north as 54° 40′, that is to say to the Russian territory.

The Nootka Convention ceased in effect in 1796, when Spain declared war on Britain, by virtue of the recognised principle that all treaties are ended by a declaration of war between the parties concerned. Consequently, the claims and rights of both parties that existed before 1790 came again into effect.

Now Spain's "rights, claims, and pretensions" had been curtailed, and weakened by her recognition of the Russian occupation in the north, and by her "concession" of a joint right to Britain as set forth in the Nootka Convention, both of which amounted to a confession that her "exclusive rights" were of a shadowy nature, and subject to further curtailment from time to time, whenever another nation should acquire sovereignty by making effective the three fundamentals of discovery, exploration and occupation.

Russia was so bitter against England during the Oregon Boundary controversy that she offered to give the United States all her American territory if the United States would adhere to her determination to make her northern boundary "Fifty-Four-Forty"—or fight.[1]

Before the Florida Treaty of 1819, when Spain ceded to

[1] Foster, John W., *A Century of American Diplomacy*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1901, p. 104.

the United States her rights north of 42°, there had been no attempt to oust the British or to question their right in the premises, which by this time had become well-founded.

Whatever may be thought of Spain's extravagant pretensions to the "continent, islands, harbours and waters of western America," it is worth noting that in the end both the United States and Britain swept aside all far-fetched references to a papal pronunciamento, and settled their dispute on the basis of a recognition of the dictum of the civilised world that sovereignty may be acquired by discovery exploration, and occupation. It is conceded now that on this basis Britain should have had Washington and Oregon. An American historian states that as late as 1844 the United States had no settlements north of the Columbia.[1] But the "piece of Yankee bluster," as the "Fifty-Four-Forty-or-Fight" diplomacy has been called, won the day. "It was a diplomatic triumph for the Americans."

To Drake, Cook, Meares, Vancouver, Broughton, Mackenzie, Finlay, McDougall, Simon Fraser, John Stuart, Jules Quesnel, David Thompson, David Harmon, Governor Simpson, Governor Sir James Douglas, Dr. John McLoughlin, John Work, and a score of others, credit must be given for pioneering in the work of discovery and exploration in this important domain; and to all those connected with the North-West Company and its later embodiment, the Hudson's Bay Company, for building posts and thus establishing a further right by occupation.

To the combined efforts of all of the above is due, then, the fact that Canada west of the Rockies is to-day British. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was the man of vision who, in a major sense, made this consummation possible.

[1] Meany, Edmond S., *History of the State of Washington*. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 137.

On his return from the Pacific he spent the winter of 1793–4 in a well-earned rest at Fort Chipewyan, moving to Montreal in the summer, where he enjoyed the society of his equals in that famous caravanserai of the "Wolves of the North," the Beaver Club,[1] whose motto, "Fortitude in Distress," was no doubt coined with the same sly twist that produced *Pro Pelle Cutem.*

He did not again return to winter in the north, but became an agent of the company in Montreal. He left for England in the fall, and returned to Canada the following year. His *Voyages* were published in 1801, and he was knighted in 1802. Returning to Canada with this prestige, he overtopped "Le Marquis" as a leading power in the fur-trade. No doubt his becoming acquainted with the Duke of Kent, when the latter was in Canada in 1792, was of some advantage to him in attaining preferment, for a correspondence was maintained between them, and on his visits to England he was frequently the duke's travelling-companion.

That his published work met with appreciation is evident from the fact that French and German editions were issued. It is rather amusing now to read that his *Voyages* was once regarded as an excellent topographical guide for military strategists. It appears that during the Napoleonic régime the emperor had conceived a fantastic scheme of embarrassing Britain by capturing Canada in the rear, and Bernadotte was entrusted with the superhuman task. Mackenzie's *Voyages*, as the latest authoritative work on Canada, was sent for, and the aspiring general was hugely interested in the strategic highways which he discovered in these tomes. Recounting the incident to a relative of Mackenzie's later,

[1] For an excellent history of the Beaver Club see Reed, Dr. Charles Bert, *Masters of the Wilderness*, University of Chicago Press.

he said: "I perused and re-perused that admirable work till I had made myself so thoroughly master of it, that I could almost fancy myself taking your Canada *en revers*, from the upper waters." [1]

For a time Mackenzie represented the county of Huntingdon in the Legislature of Lower Canada, but a parliamentary career did not appeal to him. In 1808 he retired to Scotland, and four years later married "one of the most beautiful and gifted of Scottish women," Geddes Mackenzie, of Avoch, where Sir Alexander settled down to married life and an interest in agriculture. He died 20 March, 1820, at the early age of fifty-seven.

The union of the North-West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company took place the next year. Sir Alexander Mackenzie had long foreseen the necessity of a merger, and advocated such a union in his published work. In his later days he was not so enthusiastic about it, as Lord Selkirk had bought his way into the Hudson's Bay Company in order to further his colonisation project, to which Sir Alexander was stoutly opposed.

The "Lords of the North," the "Pathfinders of the West," the "Masters of the Wilderness," as they have been called, have passed, but they have left their impress upon the land. Where their feet trod in dull routine or excited interest, vast city crowds now swirl, trading in their modern way, and carrying forward the great epic of human endeavour.

"Impelled by a greed for furs as rapacious as the Spanish lust for gold, the magnates of the fur-trade not only established their posts where cities now stand, but they traced innumerable highways and developed the possibility of travelling with ease and safety over prairie, river, lake,

[1] Bryce, Rev. Dr. George, *Mackenzie, Selkirk, Simpson*. Toronto Morang and Co., Ltd., 1905, p. 97.

and through unmeasured tracts of tangled wilderness. It was a period of great enterprise, of thrilling adventure, and almost inevitably of flagrant crimes.

"Of the old North-West Company only the spirit remains smouldering in the heart of its former rival. The fur-bearing animals are nearly extinct. It is the unwelcome end so clearly foreseen by the traders. The rolling prairies and forested wilds over which the trade was conducted have become converted into extensive farmsteads which support a spreading civilisation. The feudal grandeur of Fort William is a thing of the past. The Beaver Club which for forty years dominated the social, commercial, and political life of Canada has closed its doors; its council chamber is silent and desolate; the banquet-hall no longer echoes to the old world ditty, for the stalwart masters of the wilderness have passed away." [1]

[1] By permission. From Reed's *Masters of the Wilderness*, published for The Chicago Historical Society by the University of Chicago Press.

APPENDIX A

THE BELLA COOLA TRAIL

George M. Dawson, of the Geological Survey, traversed, in 1876, the trail followed by Sir Alexander Mackenzie from the junction of the Blackwater River with the Fraser to the Bella Coola River. An abridged description is given here. On good maps of British Columbia this trail is marked and can be followed in detail. On smaller maps, with less detail, the trail may be plotted roughly by drawing a line from the mouth of the Blackwater River to any of the following points: Euchiniko Lakes, Cluscus Lakes, or Tsa-cha Lake, thence to a point half-way up the Bella Coola River. The general direction is W.S.W., and the route covers about three and a half degrees of longitude west, and one degree of latitude south.

"On the north brink of the Blackwater Valley the so-called Bella Coola Trail leaves the well-beaten Telegraph Trail and, following the Blackwater and its tributaries till those of the Salmon River are reached, leads eventually to the head of Dean Channel and the Indian villages on the Bella Coola River discharging into Bentinck Arm. This trail appears from the markings on the trees and other circumstances to be a very old one, and indeed we know from Sir Alexander Mackenzie's narrative of his journey to the Pacific Ocean that it was in constant use at the time of his visit in 1793. He speaks of it as a well-beaten path, and it has probably been for a long time one of the great trading roads between the coast and inland tribes. Like all the other Indian trails in the northern part of British Columbia, since the great reduction of the Indian population by small-pox,

it has become in many places encumbered with wind-falls. The Blackwater is crossed at several places by the Indians when on their way to Cluscus Lakes. At high-water the river can only be crossed in the vicinity by rafting, but this is easily effected. The country along the north side of the first Cluscus Lake is of very pleasing appearance, sloping gently with an undulating surface to the water and dotted with groves of aspen and spruce when not covered with luxuriant grass. At the west end of the first lake an Indian house is situated, and this has for a long time been a rendezvous for the natives. [These people are the Sloua-cuss-Dinais of Sir Alexander Mackenzie's narrative.] There were at the time of his visit two houses at the upper end of the first lake, which as he says 'occupied a most delightful situation.'

"Passing then through a broken basaltic country, the trail follows for about three miles the south shore of Tsa-cha Lake, crossing three streams. The north side of Tsa-cha Lake, which is one of the expansions of the Blackwater River, is partly open and grassed. Eight miles farther on, between the two small lakes Tse-tzi and Klootch-oot, the Indian trail to Bella Coola River turns off and runs south-west between Il-gha-chuz Range on the west and It-cha Range on the east, to the head-waters of Bella Coola River."

Mackenzie, however, did not follow this branch from the two small lakes last mentioned, but continued westward.

"The main trail continues westward up the Blackwater River to Uhl-gak Lake, which has a fine meadow on its shores with an Indian house belonging to a man of some consequence called Smi-you, and a few Indian graves. This is believed to be the place described on p. 304 of the *Voyages*. The lake is three miles long, and has a rather prominent rocky hill on its north bank.

"About sixteen miles south-west Salmon River is reached. At Gatcho Lake is another Indian house and some graves, the house being the best built of any I have seen in the interior, and though repaired for a great 'potlatch' this

summer, bears marks of considerable antiquity. I have little doubt that this is the house mentioned by Mackenzie on p. 307, and that the river he crossed (p. 308) was the Gatcho Lake stream, which flows northward to the Nechaco.

"On arriving at the crossing-place [of the Salmon River], July 7th, we found the Indians of this part of the country collected here on their way down to their annual fishing at Salmon House. There may have been fifty or sixty of them. Here I parted from Mr. Cambie, who continued eastward to Quesnel. On July 8th we passed the Indians on the march, every man, woman and child, and even the dogs, with packs of appropriate size. All appeared to be in good spirits on the way to their annual holiday-making, the salmon-fishing, the whole scene much resembling that described by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who travelled this very road south-westward to Tanyabunkut Lake with the Indians on the way to their fishing, 15th July, 1793.

"Passing south-west from Tanyabunkut Lake the trail follows up the Tahyesco River, a branch of Salmon River. The trail was here scarcely visible, but our Indian guide, knowing the country, led confidently on, and brought us at length to the great gorge of the Bella Coola Valley. Here he stopped and told us that it was utterly impossible to descend into the valley with animals by this trail."

Geol. Sur. Can. Rep. Prog. 1876–7, pp. 20–34.

APPENDIX B

A SURVEYOR'S REPORT ON BAD RIVER

MR. T. H. TAYLOR, on instructions from the Surveyor-General of British Columbia, explored the Parsnip River in 1910, crossing over the divide from its head-waters to the Fraser. As this covers about three hundred miles of the most difficult part of the canoe-route followed by Mackenzie in the voyage to the Pacific, an extract from Mr. Taylor's report of 1910 is given here in order that readers may have before them a surveyor's matter-of-fact description of this part of the route.

"Leaving [Finlay Rapids] on August 20th, after five days' hard poling we arrived at the mouth of the Pack. Here I decided that I would go out by the Bad River route instead of the Crooked River as I thought the water in the Crooked River would be very low. So I kept on up the Parsnip. About fifteen miles above the Pack the Missinchinca River flows in on the right bank. Numerous small creeks flow in on both sides all the way along. For about seventy-five miles from the Pack the Parsnip is very swift and rapid, but from there for sixty miles there are long strips of almost dead water, gradually narrowing into a hundred, and some places fifty, feet. A range of mountains on each side of the river keep gradually closing in until at Arctic Lake they are hardly more than half a mile apart.

"About 135 miles above the mouth of the Pack and 225 from the mouth of the Parsnip, a small creek about twenty feet in width and ten feet deep at mouth, decreasing to a depth of two or three feet, flows through a willow flat into the Parsnip on the left bank. Here we turned off and left

the Parsnip. Going up this creek, after about four miles we came to a small lake about two miles long by a quarter of a mile wide, the water in this being as clear as crystal. On coming to the end of this, which we named Arctic Lake, we found no stream by which we could proceed. The mountains here close in towards one another to within half a mile, leaving an almost flat, narrow pass, which here forms the Pacific-Arctic divide. Aneroid shows here an elevation of 2650 feet. This strip extends for a distance of 2000 feet east to another small lake one mile long by a quarter of a mile wide, which we named Portage Lake.

"Finding an old trail across here grown up with dense willows and bush, and after having cleared it out, we portaged our supplies and hauled the canoe across.

"We now started downstream towards the Fraser, but had not gone more than a mile when we came to the end of this lake and found the creek-bed leading out of it almost dry. We had to portage here again about 700 feet to another small lake about the same size, which we named Pacific. From these lakes the Dolly Varden, salmon trout and rainbow trout, weighing from half a pound up to ten and twelve pounds, can be taken with a bait or spoon-hook.

"Flowing out of Pacific Lake is a very swift-running stream called the Bad River, average width about twenty-five feet. It is very rocky and shallow, but in places there are very deep holes. We had not gone more than three or four miles down this when we found the current gradually running slower, and after going through a willow flat came to one of the finest pieces of engineering work ever done on this river. Here the beavers had built a dam a number of years ago. After breaking through this, and eight more, we proceeded on down-stream. The country is very mountainous all along. Observations taken about ten miles from Portage Lake give latitude 54° 24′ 35″.

"Below here the river widens a little and drops more rapidly. We encountered two falls, around which we had to

portage about half a mile. At camp about twenty miles from Portage Lake we had to mend the canoes. Observation shows latitude 54° 27′. This stream is evidently not travelled very much, as we had to cut our way through log-jams and drift-piles at nearly every bend. About five miles below here this river joins a larger one coming in from the north, and this flows into the North Fork of the Fraser after about two miles. Here the North Fork of the Fraser is about 400 feet wide. The country is very mountainous with strips of spruce and poplar flats along the banks.

"About three miles below this junction the South Fork of the North Fork flows in on the left, and ten miles farther is a long canyon which extends for about six miles. The mountains gradually widen from here, leaving large flats along the river.

"The North and South Forks of the main Fraser unite about fourteen miles farther down, and from there to Giscombe Landing, a distance of about twenty-seven miles, the river varies from ten to fifteen chains wide, and the current runs slowly. Just below Giscombe is the beginning of the Giscombe Rapids, which are about eight miles long and very swift. We arrived at Fort George (junction of the Nechaco and the Fraser) on September 28th. Getting through the Fort George and Cottonwood Canyons without mishap, we arrived at Quesnel (ninety miles down) on September 30th."

APPENDIX C

INDIAN TRIBES

THE numerous tribes mentioned by Mackenzie in his voyages, taken together with the fact that his interpreters were able to make themselves understood over such an immense territory, leaves in the reader's mind the impression that the various tribes are all of one linguistic stock, which as a matter of fact is the case. A line drawn from Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay to the upper end of Kootenay Lake in British Columbia separates two of the largest stocks in Canada, the Algonquin, south and east of that line, and the Déné, north and west of it. The Knisteneaux, or Crees, so frequently mentioned by Mackenzie, belong to the Algonquin stock, and all the others met by him to the Déné stock, except those on Bella Coola River and the coast-waters. The Bella Coolas form an isolated branch of the Salish nation, the main body of which is located in the southern part of the province roughly indicated by the territory included in the following boundaries: longitude 118°–124°, and latitude 49°–51°.

The Déné tribes encountered by Mackenzie are the following, commencing at the mouth of the Mackenzie River:

Loucheux, lower Mackenzie River.
Hares, Hare Indian River.
Slaves, Mackenzie River and Slave Lake.
Dog-Ribs, between Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes.
Yellow-Knives, north-east end of Great Slave Lake.
Chipewyans, Lake Athabasca.
Sikanni, both sides of the Rockies.

Beavers, Peace River.

Carriers, interior plateau of British Columbia.

Five other tribes of the Dénés were not met on these trips. All of the above are of one linguistic stock, which, according to Professor Hill-Tout, numbers about sixteen thousand.

The Déné tribes of the Mackenzie made war upon the Eskimos, while those to the south submitted tamely to the Knisteneaux, or Crees. The latter were cold and uncommunicative in manner compared with the more genial Chipewyan, who was inclined to be voluble in his communications.

Mackenzie speaks of the Chipewyans as sober, timorous and vagrant, and the most peaceful Indians known in North America.

The Knisteneaux, of Algonquin stock, mentioned so often as warlike aggressors, occupied the territory between the Ottawa and the Athabasca, and the Churchill and the St. Lawrence. Their raids extended down the Mackenzie, and up the Peace into British Columbia. Mackenzie speaks of them as mild and affable, as well as just in their dealings among themselves and with strangers. He says further that, "of all the natives which I have seen on this continent, the Knisteneaux women are most comely."

The Bella Coola Indians are a Salish stock related to those on Vancouver Island from Victoria to Nanaimo, and to the tribes on the Fraser, and in the southern part of the province as far east as Kootenay Lake including the Lillooets, Shuswaps, Okanagans and Thompsons. Only about half the Salish peoples are found in British Columbia, the larger half living south of the forty-ninth parallel. They are commonly referred to as Flatheads, from their custom of deforming the skull. That which is regarded by others as a deformity is considered by them to be a mark of breeding, as only those of higher rank are permitted to observe this custom.

A full description of the Salish and Déné stocks will be found in Professor Hill-Tout's interesting and scholarly work *The Native Races of the British Empire. The Far West. The Home of the Salish and Déné.*

Mackenzie speaks of the art of the coast Indians as exemplified in their carvings and paintings. The following citation from Edward John Payne's excellent work, *History of the New World called America*, will be found of interest, since it gives to the four linguistic stocks found on the coast of British Columbia, namely the Salish, the Nootka-Columbian, the Haidah and the Tsimpsean, an ethnological and archæological importance hitherto unsuspected.

"The principal historical people of the New World, the Nahuatlaca, the native Mexicans, are traceable by ethnological resemblances to a district on the Pacific coast. If our conclusions are well founded, they are connected in a much nearer degree with a congeries of small groups which are still seated on the Pacific coast in British Columbia, from whose neighbourhood they had emigrated many centuries before the conquest [of Mexico]. The ethnological relations of the Nahuatlaca, though thus cut off from their country of origin, are too distinctive to be mistaken. They are clearly akin to tribes still found in British Columbia, especially to the Tsimpseans and the group called the Nootka-Columbian, which includes the Wakash, the Ahts, the Haidahs and the Quaquiutl" (vol. ii., p. 373).

"The original religion of the Nahuatlaca is well known. It was the worship of Quetzalcohuatl, the Man of the Sun, who had assumed the shape of a bird, descended with outspread wings and resumed human shape, for the purpose of instructing mankind in the arts of life" (vol. ii., p. 375).

"The Salish recognise Quetzalcohuatl under the name of Kumsnöotl, Quäaqa, or Släalekam" (vol. ii., p. 376).

"In the sculptor's art they excel in the fanciful and grotesque, in placing the human figure in strange postures, intermingling it with devices partly original and partly

borrowed from animal and vegetable forms. They have acquired that distinctive and somewhat conventional manner commonly described by the word 'style.' What is most striking is that this style approximates so nearly to the characteristic style of Mexican sculpture, that those who visit the coast of British Columbia immediately after travelling in Mexico at once recognise the resemblance between the two" (vol. ii., p. 377).

APPENDIX D

THE NOOTKA CONVENTION [1]

This treaty, which was signed at the Palace of San Lorenzo, or the Escurial, in Spain, on 28 October, 1790, is given here without variation from the original text, and is quoted from Robert Greenhow's *Memoir, Historical and Political, on the North-West Coast of North America and the Adjacent Territories* (New York, 1840), pp. 114–15.

"Art. 1. The buildings and tracts of land situated on the north-west coast of the continent of North America, or on the islands adjacent to that continent, of which the subjects of His Britannic Majesty were dispossessed about the month of April 1789 by a Spanish officer, shall be restored to the said British subjects.

"Art. 2. A just reparation shall be made, according to the nature of the case, for all acts of violence or hostility which may have been committed subsequent to the month of April 1789 by the subjects of either of the contracting parties against the subjects of the other; and, in case any of the said respective subjects shall, since the same period, have been forcibly dispossessed of their lands, buildings, vessels, merchandise and other property whatever, on the said continent, or on the seas or islands adjacent, they shall be re-established in the possession thereof or a just compensation shall be made to them for the losses which they have sustained.

"Art. 3. In order to strengthen the bonds of friendship and to preserve in future a perfect harmony and good understanding between the two contracting parties it is

[1] *Annual Register*, 1790, p. 304.

agreed that their respective subjects shall not be disturbed or molested, either in navigating, or in carrying on their fisheries, in the Pacific Ocean or in the South Seas, or in landing on the coasts of those seas in places not already occupied, for the purpose of carrying on their commerce with the natives of the country or of making settlements there; the whole subject, nevertheless, to the restrictions in the three following articles.

"Art. 4. His Britannic Majesty engages to take the most effectual measures to prevent the navigation and the fishery of his subjects in the Pacific Ocean or in the South Seas from being made a pretext for illicit trade with the Spanish settlements; and, with this view, it is moreover expressly stipulated that British subjects shall not navigate, or carry on their fishery in the said seas, within the space of ten sea-leagues from any part of the coasts already occupied by Spain.

"Art. 5. As well in the places which are to be restored to the British subjects, by virtue of the first article, as in all other parts of the north-western coasts of North America, or of the islands adjacent, situate to the north of the parts of the said coast already occupied by Spain, wherever the subjects of either of the two powers shall have made settlements since the month of April 1789, or shall hereafter make any, the subjects of the other shall have free access, and shall carry on their trade without any disturbance or molestation.

"Art. 6. With respect to the eastern and western coasts of South America, and to the islands adjacent, no settlement shall be formed hereafter, by the respective subjects in such part of this coast as are situated to the south of those parts of the same coast, and of the islands adjacent, which are already occupied by Spain: provided that the said respective subjects shall retain the liberty of landing on the coasts and islands so situated for the purpose of their fishery, and of erecting thereon huts and other temporary buildings serving only for those purposes.

"Art. 7. In all cases of complaint or infraction of the articles of the present convention, the officers of either party, without permitting themselves previously to commit any violence or act of force, shall be bound to make an exact report of the affair, and of its circumstances, to their respective Courts, who will terminate such differences in an amicable manner.

"Art. 8. The present convention shall be ratified and confirmed in the space of six weeks, to be computed from the day of its signature, or sooner if it can be done."

APPENDIX E

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