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S.S. WRIGLEY AT THE JUNCTION OF THE MACKENZIE AND LIARD RIVERS

**DOWN THE MACKENZIE  
AND UP THE YUKON  
IN 1906**

**BY ELIHU STEWART**

FORMERLY SUPERINTENDENT OF FORESTRY  
FOR CANADA

WITH A MAP AND THIRTY ILLUS-  
TRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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TO  
THE RIGHT HONORABLE EARL GREY

FORMER GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF CANADA WHO  
DURING HIS TERM OF OFFICE FOUND TIME TO  
ACQUAINT HIMSELF WITH MUCH OF OUR NORTHERN  
WILDERNESS THESE PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED

ERRATUM

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## PREFACE

THE following narrative is based on a report which I made to the Government of Canada, dated November 16, in the year 1906, shortly after my return to Ottawa from the far North.

In writing this report I had to resist the temptation to give many details which were present in my mind at the time but which would be scarcely warranted in an official document. In the following pages I have allowed myself more latitude and have also included several illustrations, the greater number of them being photographs taken by myself. Many of these were snapshots taken from the deck of one or other of the steamers on which I was a passenger, and for that reason are not as good as when time exposures were obtained.

I cannot allow this little narrative to pass out of my hands without expressing heartfelt thanks for the unfailing kindness and

## PREFACE

hospitality, as well as assistance, that I received from the officials of the Hudson Bay Company, as well as from the agents of the independent trading Companies, from the Missionaries, and also the natives of the country.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

MR. ELIHU STEWART'S opening words are strangely significant. "Perhaps no portion of America has received greater attention from the explorer during the last three centuries than the sub-arctic regions of Canada, and yet they remain practically unknown to the present day." The author relates his experiences in traversing what was practically virgin soil. That he should have carried out his immense programme without fear or accident is no mean feat, and this narrative should be found intensely interesting by all who recognise the great commercial and historical future in store for the vast Dominion, as well as those to whom the adventurous side of life especially appeals.

Mr. Stewart is well competent to do

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

more than furnish a superficial travel book. As Managing Director of "Canada Timber and Lands, Limited," he is actively concerned in the possibilities of the timber trade in Canada. There is no doubt that with the completion of the Panama Canal in sight and with the rapid settlement of the prairies and the increased railway facilities bound to eventuate, the superior timber of British Columbia can be exploited as never before. No other part of Canada produces timber in such abundance. Mr. Stewart was formerly Superintendent of Forestry for Canada, and much of the knowledge he thus acquired helps to form the present volume. Mr. Stewart gives many charming pen-pictures to relieve the more material side of "Down the Mackenzie and Up the Yukon," and he shows a fine feeling of atmosphere for lands "where it is always afternoon," where the late sun lingers in the quiet west; where the northern twilight embraces reluctant day, amid the profound silence of the gradual shadows. Only the cry of a loon or the

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hooting of an owl heard somewhere in the forest pierces the mournful calm.

Mr. Stewart wisely makes frequent reference to the soil conditions he has observed on his line of travel, and his impressions will be found most valuable. He insists, too, that before any accurate report can be given on the subject it will be most desirable—and indeed necessary—for the Government to have an exploration survey made by men competent to give an authoritative opinion. Canada is losing year after year from lack of information concerning its unoccupied areas. The difficulties of handling immense tracts of land are obvious, but not more so than the lack of enterprise which stays the country and delays its cultivation. In the present state of things the stray settler has little or no chance. “What would be thought,” asks Mr. Stewart, “of the settler who built his house and commenced to clear and till his land on the front of his lot without ever taking the trouble to examine the rest of his

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

possessions? The chances are he would afterwards find that much of his labour had been misdirected. In many parts of the country land has been surveyed, and opened up for settlement, that was unfit for agriculture and which should have been left for the growth of timber for which it was well suited. Frequently this land looked attractive to the inexperienced, and in many cases the settler spent years of hard labour only to find at last that beneath the few inches of humus there was nothing but barren sand."

In a country like Canada with its vast areas of wonderfully fertile land, it is unnecessary that any one should waste his labour on any part that is unproductive.

It is well that Mr. Stewart should express himself forcibly, without circumlocution, and his grave warning may perhaps act as a deterrent to the unwary and inexperienced, while bringing home to the Government the necessity not only of bringing agricultural immigrants into the country, but of direct-

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

ing them to fields where there is a known and excellent chance of labour and concentrated industry meeting with adequate reward.

Mr. Stewart pleads very earnestly for the establishment of a hospital somewhere in that vast region of the Mackenzie watershed. "Between Edmonton," says Mr. Stewart, "and the Arctic Sea we pass over sixteen degrees of latitude, while the distance by the travelled route is over two thousand miles. Again, from the Rocky Mountains on the West to the Hudson Bay on the East the distance is almost equally as great. At Athabaska Landing and at Peace River in the Southern fringe of this great wilderness a few physicians have established themselves, but beyond these places the only medical aid available is from an occasional visit of the Government physician and what the missionaries are able to furnish. At practically every fort and Indian village on our way we were besieged for medicine by the afflicted."

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

P Probably most of the illnesses would have been relieved, if not actually cured, by proper surgical treatment. It is curious to note that the Indians of these regions are as susceptible to appendicitis as Europeans. Mr. Stewart goes on to suggest that if such a hospital at Fort Simpson or at some point on Great Slave Lake were established it could be reached by canoes in summer from points all along the Mackenzie, and it would be possible to ameliorate the sufferings of many whose only hope is death. If this little volume may serve even as a faint plea for the assistance of those who dwell at present so far beyond reach of some of civilisation's essential requirements, Mr. Stewart will have performed a profound service.

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# PART I



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Historical : Early History of the Sub-Arctic Regions of  
Canada : Formation of the Hudson Bay Company :  
Rise of the North-West Company.

*“ The days were bright, and the morning light  
was sweet with jewelled song ;  
We poled and lined up nameless streams,  
portaged o’er hill and plain ;  
We guessed and groped, North ever North,  
with many a twist and turn  
We saw ablaze in the deathless days, the  
splendid sunsets burn.”*

### SERVICE

PERHAPS no portion of America has received greater attention from the explorer during the last three centuries than the Sub-Arctic regions of Canada, and yet they remain practically unknown to the present day.

As early as 1577, Martin Frobisher spent some time on the border of the Arctic.

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The name Frobisher in English history carries us back to the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in which he performed a distinguished part and for which he was honoured by his Queen.

Later, in 1611, Henry Hudson after sailing up the great river of the State of New York found a tragic death in that Canadian inland sea, which, along with the above river, bears his name.

Samuel Herne went down the Coppermine to the Arctic Ocean and wintered there in 1770 and 1771; and as a result of his travels wrote the first account of the North American bison and Indian methods of hunting.

Later, in 1789, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, one of the boldest and most resourceful explorers of modern times, made a journey in one short summer from Lake Athabaska, then called the Lake of the Hills, down the whole course of the Slave River, across Great Slave Lake and then all the way down the great, but then unknown river, the Mackenzie, 1000 miles to the frozen Ocean, returning the same season to Fort Chippewyan.

In the autumn of 1792 he commenced

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another voyage from Chippewyan ; this time with the Pacific Ocean as his objective point going westward up the Peace River ; and succeeded before winter overtook him, in reaching a point 600 miles up that stream near Dunvegan, where he wintered.

The next season he continued the ascent of the Peace to its headwaters ; crossed the Rocky Mountains, and, after the greatest difficulties and hardships, reached the Pacific, returning again by the same route to his post at Chippewyan where he arrived on July 24, 1793.

Another name which stands high in the annals of Arctic exploration is that of Sir John Franklin, who accompanied by Dr. Richardson, made the journey down the Mackenzie to the sea and traversed part of the Coast in 1825. Many others, whose names I need not recall, also imbued with a spirit of adventure, have from time to time journeyed along the icebound coast and through that subarctic wilderness, which to-day forms part of the Dominion of Canada. And yet, except along a few water routes, the country is still an almost unknown land—unknown to all except the agents and

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employees of those pioneer trading Companies, that have for centuries blazed the path through unfrequented regions of vast extent. Any narrative concerning that portion of North America would be incomplete that did not make frequent reference to at least two of these Companies.

The first and oldest of them is the Hudson Bay Company, which under Prince Rupert received a Royal Charter from Charles the Second in 1670. This Company of adventurers obtained great privileges over the country surrounding Hudson Bay and the streams flowing into it. In 1785 a great rival corporation was formed, viz., The North-West Company. This organisation had its head-quarters in Montreal, and as one stands to-day on Beaver Hall Hill in that City, where once stood Beaver Hall—and the head-quarters of the Company—and looks down to the river, it requires no great stretch of the imagination to behold a vision of a century ago, with the hardy canoe-men bearing on their backs up to the warehouse the peltries brought from the remotest parts of the far North-West and returning with merchandise to load again their canoes



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for the dusky natives of the far away Saskatchewan, Peace and Mackenzie.

This latter Company, not only established posts at various points on the great lakes of the St. Lawrence basin, but extended them into territory which the Hudson Bay Company regarded as belonging exclusively to themselves on the Red River and the Saskatchewan. Not only this, but they penetrated regions far beyond those into which the emissaries of the older Company had ventured, even to the Pacific Ocean on the one hand, and the Arctic on the other. It may be stated here that Sir Alexander Mackenzie immortal in the annals of exploration was himself an officer of the North-West Company. The presence of the New Company in waters tributary to the Hudson Bay soon resulted in conflicts sometimes sanguinary, between the employees of the two corporations, and this state of affairs continued till they were amalgamated in the year 1821.



## CHAPTER II

Plan of the Journey : Early Stages : At Edmonton ;  
A Peculiarity of Northern Rivers.

THE area drained by the Mackenzie River is of vast extent, covering something over 450,000 square miles. Its principal tributaries flow from the west ; they consist of the Athabaska, the Peace, the Liard and the Nahanni with many others of smaller size. To illustrate by comparison the size of the Mackenzie basin with that of some other streams, it is only necessary to say that the area of the St. Lawrence basin above the City of Montreal is about 310,000 square miles, while that of the Saskatchewan, including its two branches, is only 159,000 square miles ; so that the Mackenzie basin exceeds that of the St. Lawrence above Montreal, including that of all the great lakes by 140,000 square miles, and is nearly three times as great in extent as the basin of the Saskatchewan, including

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both the north and south branches of that great river.

A journey down that immense valley with my objective a point near the Polar Sea was the last I had set myself to accomplish. I had also hoped, but scarcely dared to expect to find my way back again to civilisation by crossing the Rocky Mountains to streams, whose waters find their way to the Yukon. Thence South up the latter stream to Dawson and Whitehorse, thence over the White Pass Railway to Skagway and from there to Vancouver. However, notwithstanding many misgivings, this programme was literally carried out and that without encountering a single accident worthy of mention. Knowing that my plans could be best accomplished through the assistance of the Hudson Bay Company, I applied to my friend Mr. Chipman, the late Commissioner from whom I had previously received assistance on other trips in the North Country, and was soon in possession of a letter to their agents, which had merely to be presented to assure me all the hospitality that could be given, in a country where hospitality means so much.

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On the last day of May, 1906, I found myself at Edmonton busily preparing for the journey. Edmonton, which but a few years ago was only known as the *entrepôt* of the Hudson Bay Company in the far West, is now, as the Capital of Alberta, putting on the appearance and assuming the airs of a modern City. Not only is it advancing commercially, but socially and intellectually it is not satisfied to remain in the background. With its semi-viceregal social establishment and its Provincial University, it already claims no inferior place to the Capitals of Sister Provinces. Edmonton's resources are more varied and her population more cosmopolitan than most of them. By her doors flows one of the great rivers of America, with timber and coal along its banks all the way to its source, while stretching away on every side is the rich soil of that wonderfully fertile belt that is bringing riches to tens of thousands of pioneer settlers. To all this it may be added that this new northern City has tributary to it, the vast northern region even down to the Arctic Sea, with little fear of any future rival. In a word, Edmonton is destined to

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be at once the Moscow and St. Petersburg of Canada.

Amid all the evidences of an active bustling life an incident occurred during the few days I spent there, which cast a dark shadow across the path of some of the older residents. During the early days, before the present invasion of new-comers began, the scattered settlements of half breeds and whites here and there over a large extent of country formed a somewhat close community, among the members of which there grew up a very warm attachment. This was further cemented by frequent intermarriages, and it was truly pleasing to hear the eager inquiries, from these people when we visited their homes beyond the Arctic Circle, concerning their relatives at Edmonton and even Winnipeg.

It so happened that the wife of a Hudson Bay Official, well-known throughout the country, had come down to Edmonton from Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie by the last (and I might say, the only) boat of the previous year, intending to return by the first transport in the following one, (1906)—that on which I was also to travel. She

## AND UP THE YUKON

had all preparations made for her return trip and was about ready to start, when a sudden illness intervened and she was called to make a journey to a land even less known than the one we were to penetrate. There was an old time funeral at Edmonton, and many were the expressions of sympathy heard on the street for the husband twelve hundred miles away, who, all unconscious of what had occurred, would be looking for his wife when our boat reached Fort Simpson. We realised throughout the long days of our journey to that point that we were carrying to the widowed husband the saddest of all messages.

On a bright morning on June 2, in a comfortable conveyance and with a good span of horses, we turned our faces to the North, bidding good-bye to the Railway and various other adjuncts of modern civilised life, and in less than three days arrived at Athabaska Landing, in round figures, one hundred miles distant.

Little need be said concerning this first stage in my journey, though the country passed over for some twenty miles would certainly be a surprise to any one familiar

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only with the new settlement in the wooded districts in the older Provinces. Certainly less than twenty years ago, this district was an unsettled part of a great wilderness. To-day, with its cultivated fields and with just enough woodland left to vary the monotony that characterises the treeless plains, as we looked across the country, really park like in appearance, we could almost fancy that we were passing through some of the rural districts of Old England. Early on the second day, we passed the height of land between the basin of the Saskatchewan and that of the Mackenzie River, though the land is so little elevated that it is imperceptible. Notwithstanding this, the waters of two neighbouring rivulets within almost a stone's-throw of each other, finally find their outlet into two different oceans. The one by way of the Saskatchewan, Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson River to the Hudson Bay of the Atlantic, and the other via the Athabaska, Slave and Mackenzie Rivers to the Arctic.

Athabaska Landing is on a southerly bend of the Athabaska River. This stream was named the Elk River in Mackenzie's

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time. At the "Landing" it is about sixty rods wide and the water is of the consistency and appearance of the Mississippi at St. Louis. Its general direction above this point is easterly, but here it takes a sharp turn north, which direction it maintains throughout its remaining course of 430 miles to Lake Athabaska, the latter called "The Lake of the Hills" by Mackenzie.

At Edmonton nearly every person met with had been talking land and town lots. The hotels were filled with "land lookers," coming from various parts of Canada with a large percentage of visitors from the United States, most of them speaking the English language, varied in tone in accordance with the districts from which they came. There was the "blue nose" from the Maritime Provinces with a dialect not unlike that heard in parts of England: the French Canadian speaking French English: the man from Ontario, also with his distinctive mark branded on him, though not realising it himself: the Western American from Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Kansas, each also with his peculiar idioms, but all self-assertive and reliant.

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At Athabaska Landing all was changed. The conversation here was of none of these things, but rather of last season's hunt and the state of the river; conveyed largely in the language of the Cree Indian. This is certainly a border town consisting of two or three hundred inhabitants largely half breeds. It is perhaps worthy of remark that no offence is taken in applying the term "half breed" to one who by nationality deserves the name, while he will bitterly resent the epithet "breed." A few years before I had made a journey from "The Landing" to Peace River, going from the latter place up the Athabaska some eighty miles, thence up a tributary, the Little Slave River into and across Lesser Slave Lake, thence overland eighty miles to the Peace River. I crossed near the entrance of Smokey River, where Sir Alexander Mackenzie had spent the winter to which I have already made reference.

During this journey I came to admire those half breed river men. It is a peculiarity of most of those northern rivers that although the current is very strong there are few interruptions to their navigation with canoes,



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TRACKING ON ATHABASCA RIVER



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York boats or small barges. It is impossible to make much headway however in going up stream by means of paddles or oars, so "tracking" is resorted to. This consists of towing the boat by means of a line, one end of which is attached to the bow of the craft while to the other are usually harnessed four men, who walk or run along the shore, often making three or four miles an hour. On one of the usual river craft, the crew consists, at least, of ten men, four pulling for about half an hour, while the other four are resting in the boat during that time, then changing places. In addition to these there is a bow man and a steersman, the latter being the Captain. From twenty to twenty-five miles a day are frequently made in this manner. The discipline and order are as good as on any ship of His Majesty's navy. The steersman's orders are never interfered with, even if an official of the "The Company" is on board. These men will undergo the most fatiguing labour "from early dawn to dewy eve," tugging away during those long northern summer days over slippery cut banks and fording or swimming tributary streams without murmur or complaint, and

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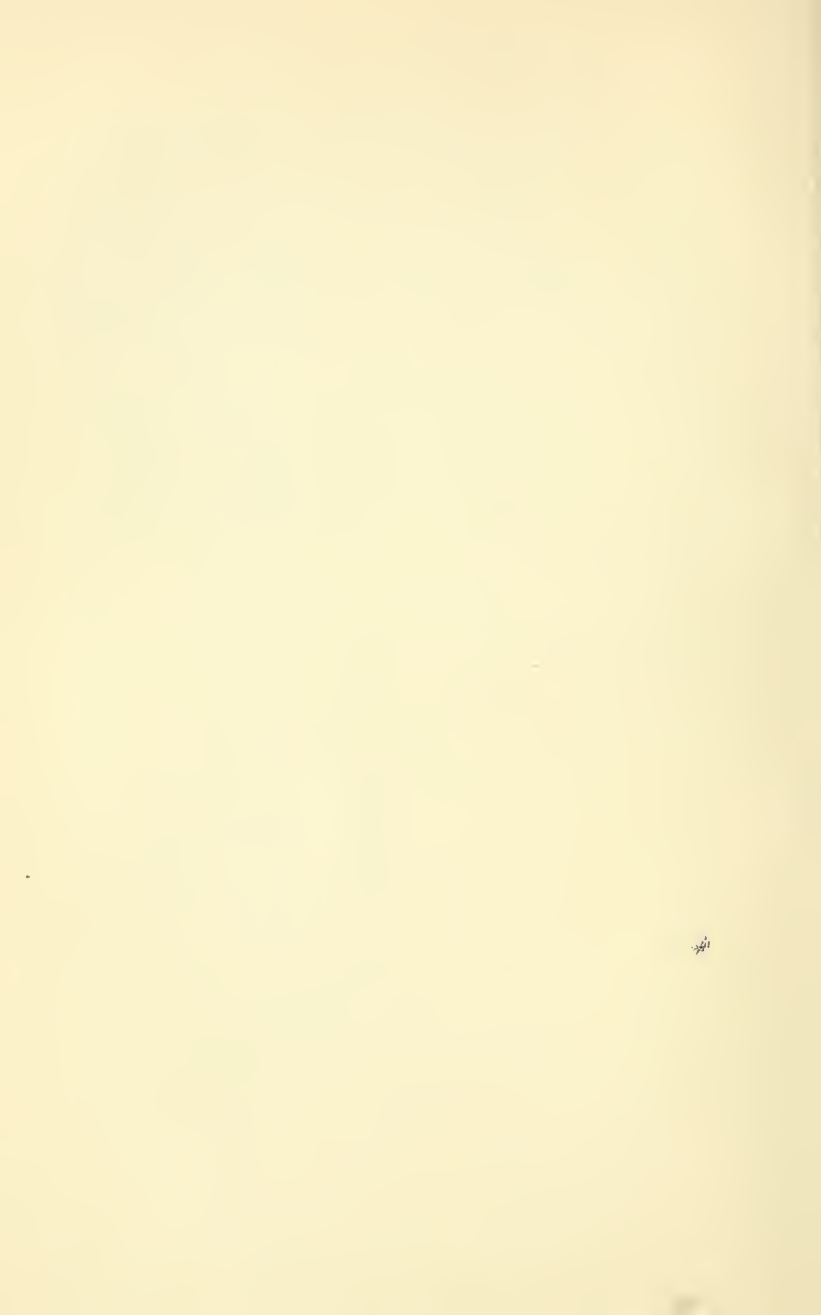
moreover without profanity. The half breed seems to take this as his work to do, and well it is that he is so persuaded, for few others would so cheerfully perform such labour. His reward comes on the return trip when the boat is simply left to drift down stream both night and day, and the time of making a journey down is often less than one quarter of that occupied by the up trip.

The land rises in terraces from the shore of the Athabaska to a height of from one to four hundred feet. In some places where the river is straight enough to give a vista of a mile or two, and where the fire has been merciful enough to leave the hill sides clothed with spruce, balsam, aspen and birch, with an occasional lobster standing up as a sentinel on the water's edge, the scenery, if not strikingly beautiful, is at least pleasing in effect. I might here mention that the lobster is always a curiosity to a new visitor. It will meet his view on his arrival at Athabaska Landing, and along the banks of all the rivers of the north, will be a familiar sight. It is a tree, usually a spruce, from which the branches have been trimmed off from a point, commencing, say

## AND UP THE YUKON

ten feet from the top and extending down the trunk for eight or ten feet. The tree chosen is generally a tall conspicuous one, standing on a point on the shore, and on it near the ground certain hieroglyphics are inscribed, which record the event for which the lobster was made.

In passing it may be observed that in my trip from Athabaska Landing to Fort McPherson, a distance of 1854 miles, no part of it was up stream, and consequently, the line was not used.





## CHAPTER III

From Athabaska Landing to Great Rapids : The  
*Midnight Sun* and its Voyage.

AT Athabaska Landing we found the H.B.C. Steamer, *Midnight Sun* loading with supplies, all going to the Northern posts. She also towed six small scows, each carrying from eight to ten tons. These scows are built from spruce lumber cut at a small saw mill here. They each cost about one hundred dollars and are seldom brought back up stream, but are broken up when unloaded and the lumber used for building purposes.

On the afternoon of June 8, we let loose from the shore, and assisted by the swift current, were soon moving down stream at a speed of about twelve miles an hour. The cargo of the *Midnight Sun* as well as that of the scows, contained almost every article found in a general country store, flour, bacon, tea, sugar, canned goods, guns, powder, shot, cartridges, blankets, kettles,

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

axes, clothing, in fact everything that goes to make life even endurable in those isolated regions. The whole population of the village was on the bank and waved us *bon voyage*. The steamer was a flat-bottomed craft, 120 ft. long by 20 ft. beam, and propelled by a stern wheel, and drew when loaded about 2 ft. 6 ins. of water.

Once on our way we soon began to look around and make acquaintance with our fellow passengers. Among others were Chief Trader Anderson, the Superintendent of the Mackenzie River District for the H.B.C., Mr. Stefansson, a scientist on his first voyage to the Arctic, and from whom it is probable the public will have an interesting account when he returns again from his study of Esquimaux life; four young men, on their way to Fort McMurray to bore for oil; a Miss Wilgriss, returning to resume her work at the Anglican Mission at Hay River on the West shore of Great Slave Lake; Rev. Mr. Winch, a young missionary, *en route* to Fort Norman to take charge of the Anglican Mission there; a tall gaunt white man, reminding one of Abe Lincoln in his early days, and about half a dozen

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half breeds, some of them on their way to different points along the river and others going to their homes in regions beyond, while of the crew, the captain, engineer and cooks were white men, the rest half breeds.

We had left "The Landing" at 1.30 P.M. and at seven in the evening tied up for the night at Calling River about fifty miles from our starting point, having passed the mouth of Lac La Biche River an hour before. A half breed, named Piche Prudens, had made a clearing here, where we found wheat and vegetables growing. He claimed that he raised as good wheat there as can be grown anywhere on the prairie. We found also in abundance the pest of all this north land—the mosquito.

The country all the way is forest, though its great enemy, fire has done its work and left its scars to disfigure the landscape. The timber consists of spruce, aspen and balsam—poplar, birch, tamarac and willow. The best spruce lines the river and its tributary streams. Some of it being large enough for lumber. The soil in many places is sandy though probably a fair percentage

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will be found capable of producing crops. There is very little showing of rock on the surface. The average width of the river between "The Landing" and Pelican Rapids, which we reached the second day at 4 P.M., is about sixty rods and of sufficient depth so far as to afford fair navigation to such a craft as ours.

We tied up for the second night at the upper end of Pelican Rapids, 120 miles below Athabaska Landing. With these rapids we met the first obstruction to free navigation. It will be seen that this was the beginning of many annoying delays caused by lack of sufficient water in the numerous rapids met with all the way to Fort McMurray.

Within a short distance from our mooring place was observed a gas well, sunk by the Dominion Government, from which issued a flame of fire some fifteen feet in height. A few years ago the Dominion Government sank several wells in the hope of finding oil on reaching the tar sands, which will be referred to later on. In this case, after reaching a depth of 837 ft., 87 ft. being through these tar sands, gas was struck of

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GRAND RAPIDS ON ATHABASKA RIVER



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such strength as to prevent further drilling. The Government also put down a hole at Victoria, Alberta, hoping also to strike oil on reaching the tar sands at a calculated depth of 2100 ft. At 1840 ft. the casing became wedged and the work was stopped. Another attempt was made at Athabaska Landing with a similar result at 1770 ft. and within 30 ft. of the calculated depth of the tar sands.

On Monday, June 11, we made a start down these rapids, but what with the strong current running rapidly over a boulder bottom, the speed of our boat being accelerated by a strong wind blowing down stream we soon feared for her safety and were rather pleased than otherwise when our pilot after an exciting experience of about an hour, ordered another halt, and we found ourselves again tied up to a tree on the bank.

Early the next morning, the wind having abated, we started again, but in less than an hour were again tied up. A stone had been stove through the planking of the bottom. After repairing the damage we made another attempt and reached House

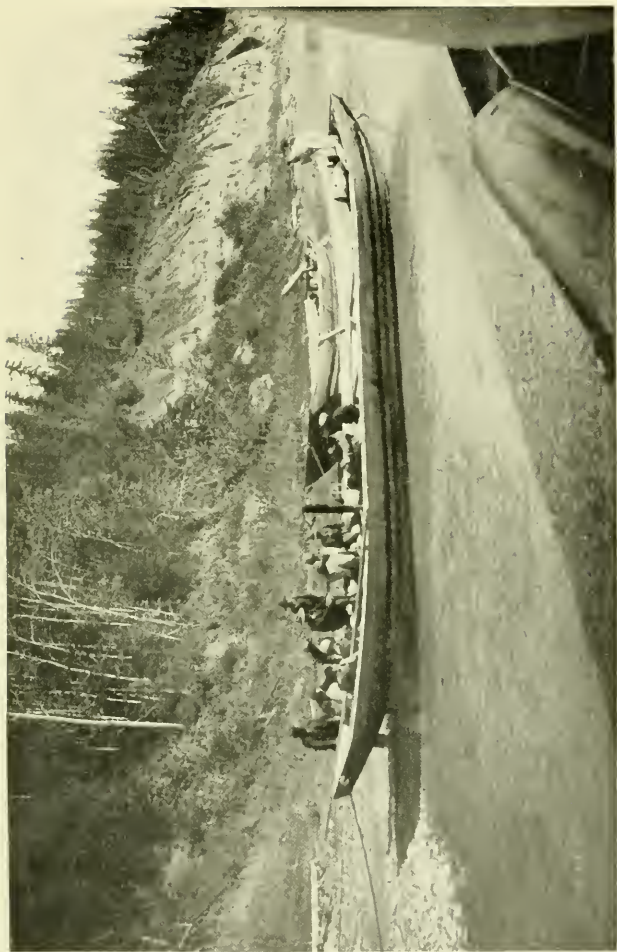
## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

River Rapid. We were now beginning to realise the fact that the Athabaska in this part of its course scarcely deserves to be called a navigable stream, except, perhaps when it is swollen by the sudden melting of the snows in the mountains at its source.

For the next four days we waited longingly for the spring flood to overtake us, and finally succeeded on June 16 in reaching a point about four miles above Grand Rapids. Here again we spent four more weary waiting days, while the men were busy transferring cargo from the steamer to scows, taking it down to the head of Grand Rapids, where it was conveyed across an island in the rapids on a tram car pushed by the men. The descent in these rapids is about fifty feet, and the length of them one mile.

On the morning of the 20th the steamer, now considerably lightened, made a last attempt and came down three miles further to the head of the Rapids. This ended our voyage on the *Midnight Sun*.





LUNCH TIME ON THE ATHABASKA RIVER



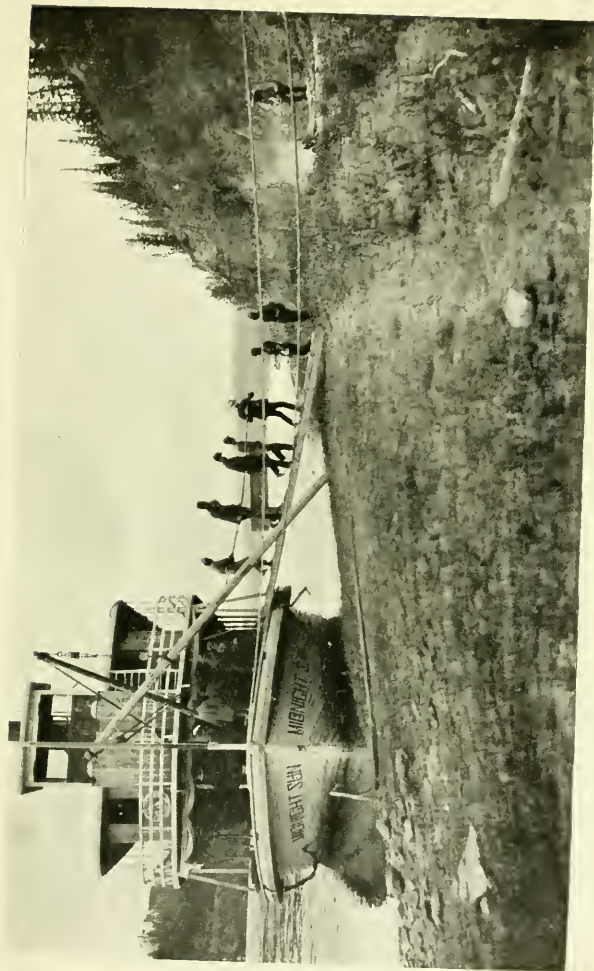
## CHAPTER IV

A Burial in the Wilderness ; From Grand Rapids to  
Fort McMurray ; Tar Sands.

ON Wednesday, June 20, about 9.30 P.M., as we were sitting around a smouldering fire on the bank close to where the steamer lay, and watching the day darkening into night, a gun shot was heard at the Rapids, which meant the return from Fort McMurray of some of the river men, and we were soon possessed of the very welcome news that the steamer *Grahame*, which plied between McMurray and Smith's Landing on the Slave River, was again in commission for the season, and would be waiting for us at McMurray as soon as we could get there. This news was very welcome, for it was the first tidings we had received regarding this boat. What if she had been burnt or had met some serious accident since she was last heard from the season before ? I do not know whether any of the other passengers had feared the

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

possibility of such a report, but now with only ninety miles in barges between us and McMurray, when we would be below the rapids and have smooth sailing, we all felt like rejoicing. In a few minutes, however, it was suddenly noticed that every voice on the steamer was hushed, and a moment later one of the crew came over the gang plank and whispered something to a man on the shore. We soon learned that the angel of death had visited the *Midnight Sun* and claimed as his victim Herbert Bray, our cook. We had just before listened to uncharitable words from one of the men to the effect that his illness was only feigned; that the night before he had seen him walking the deck when all were supposed to be asleep. While the poor fellow's condition was too serious to permit us to believe that he was only acting a part, we rather hoped that this story might be true, and it may have been that in his delirious state he had wandered during the night from his room, for he had no nurse to watch over him. He was a young Englishman of good appearance, who had been a few years out, living in the neighbourhood of Edmonton. Like many others in the



FUNERAL OF HERBERT BRAY ON THE ATHABASKA RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

country he had by camp experience learnt something of the culinary art, and had engaged in this capacity with the Company. Only a few days after leaving "The Landing" he was taken ill. Many were the remedies proposed and a number tried, but all to no effect. It was probably a case of appendicitis, which even in expert hands often proves fatal, but it caused us to realise our situation here in the wilderness where no medical attendance was obtainable.

The following day a rough coffin was made and we buried him on the bank of the river. I carved his name and date of death on a small tree near by and Mr. Stefansson made a lobster from a spruce growing higher up the bank. As the grave was being closed over him, one could not but think of his relatives in the old country, who probably at that moment were going through their ordinary round of daily duty, while this wanderer, impelled by the spirit of adventure, was destined to make his long sleep in this sylvan solitude.

At eight o'clock in the evening of the 21st, we all very gladly took leave of the *Midnight Sun*. We had been nearly two weeks on

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

board and had made but 160 miles. From this point to Fort McMurray the river is very rough and it was necessary to make the passage in scows. Two days were spent in getting the supplies over the Rapids, during which time a few of the men were out hunting and succeeded in killing a very large moose, the fresh meat of which was much relished, since it was the first we had tasted since leaving "The Landing."

Specimens of petrified wood are found along the banks in the neighbourhood of Grand Rapids. Here, too, are seen protruding from the high sandstone banks and lying along the beach, stones which are accretions of the same formation, but apparently of a harder texture but quite separated from the stratified rock. They are of a perfectly spherical shape and vary in size from two to ten feet in diameter, and when viewed from the river, one might fancy they were huge bells that had been shot into the banks by some gigantic mortar.

During the next eight days spent in reaching Fort McMurray, the weather was almost tropical, registering over 90° Fahrenheit in the shade, and the period of daylight





STONES ON THE ATHABASKA RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

was very long. The sun usually rose long before any of us, and in the evening lingered around the north-western horizon as if loath to sink below it. When finally the twilight set in, the ubiquitous mosquito never failed to sound his musical lay and to feast on his victims. It seems that as if to make up for the short summer in those northern latitudes, these pests are more industrious than farther south. They are certainly found in greater numbers as we go north, and are not less vicious in character. To illustrate their persistency it is only necessary to repeat the remark of a young Englishman of our party as he vigorously attempted to drive them away. He said they seemed "quite determined to not go awoye."

While it would be wearisome to relate the frequent delays on this part of the journey or to describe the numerous rapids that impeded our progress, I cannot refrain from mentioning the two cascades. The first appearance of limestone is met with near Boiler Rapid, about fifty-five miles below "Grand Rapids," and the scenery along the banks becomes more picturesque. Both the Upper and Lower Cascade are formed by the

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

cleavage in the limestone. It is as if some engineer had laid out a curved line entirely across the river, after which his workman had cut with a saw down into the rock, in one case, two feet, and in the other four, and then removed the rock below this point to that depth, causing the Cascades.

Owing to the dip of the rock formation, the limestone, which at "The Landing" is some 1800 feet beneath the surface, makes its first appearance at the surface of the river's bed some 220 miles below, where we first meet the tar sands. These sands bear a good percentage of bitumen. They extend for about ninety miles along the Athabaska. This bitumen is, the geologists tell us, an inspissated petroleum, derived from the subjacent limestones, and reports state that indications of its presence extend over an area of 1000 square miles of country. It is more than probable that some day this may be one of the greatest oil producing districts in the world, though up to this time I am not aware that it has yet been found in paying quantities, and I would be sorry that any words of mine should tempt the small capitalist to invest in prospective oil shares

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## AND UP THE YUKON

in that wilderness region till further developments have been made. An analysis of these sands made by the Geological Department at Ottawa gives the following result :

Bitumen	.	.	.	12.42%
Water	.	.	.	5.85%
Siliceous Sand	.	.	.	81.73%

and a cubic foot of this bituminous sand rock would give 41.59 pounds of bitumen. In the report accompanying the above analysis it is estimated that the area covered by this tar sand is, as I have stated, 1000 square miles in extent, and of sufficient depth to give a bulk of 6.50 cubic miles of bitumen. A further deduction is that the amount of petroleum, which must have issued from the underlying limestone, would produce by weight 4,700,000 tons of bitumen. I should say that in many places near McMurray the tar was oozing out along the banks of the river and emitted a very distinct odour.

It was the first of July, the natal day of the Dominion, that we arrived at Fort McMurray. Upwards of twenty large boats and barges, with boatmen and passengers numbering over 100 in all, made a rather imposing

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

appearance as we rowed and floated down the river on that bright and exceedingly hot morning. Every craft had some kind of a flag flying in honour of the day, which caused us to realise that though we were in a wilderness beyond the borders of civilisation, we were still in our own country and viewing our own possessions.

About noon, on rounding a point where the Clearwater joins the Athabaska, a welcome object came in view, the steamer *Grahame*, tied to the bank at McMurray.

We soon shook off the dust of travel and entered once more upon a civilised state of existence. We had now been over three weeks in making the journey from Athabaska Landing, a distance of only 252 miles, while before us on the route to Fort McPherson lay 1600 miles. Unless we should make better time henceforth, we would find ourselves just about in time to be frozen in for the long arctic winter on our arrival there. We were, however, assured that our difficulties were now over and that with the exception of one portage, which will be referred to later, we would have hereafter uninterrupted navigation all the way down, and I

## AND UP THE YUKON

may as well anticipate here by stating that on July 21, in precisely three weeks' time, we arrived at McPherson.

Fort McMurray, situated at the junction of the Clearwater with the Athabaska, is not at present a post of very much importance, but it has a history of considerable interest. It was here that the weary *voyageur* in the early days from far away Montreal, figuratively speaking threw down his pack and gave a sigh of relief as he reached one of the great tributaries of the Mackenzie. Let us follow him on his journey from his leaving his home under Mount Royal. We need not fear that our imagination is misleading us as we see him push his bark canoe out from the shore and ascend the St. Lawrence, to the junction of the Ottawa, thence turning northwards he soon encounters the rapids of St. Annes, whose beauties have been extolled in immortal verse by the Irish poet, Tom Moore, in his "Canadian Boat Song." Having made a portage here and offered up prayers to his patron saint in the little church hard by, he bids good-bye to his friends, who have accompanied him thus far. With his crew of canoemen as adventurous

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

as himself (singing those songs that may still be heard by his compatriots from the St. Lawrence to the Yukon) they urge their frail craft against the stream. For over 300 miles they ascend the Ottawa with the familiar Laurentides to the right. Then turning to the left, they enter the Mattawa, which they ascend to its source near Lake Nipissing. A portage is made here into the latter lake. Crossing this sheet of water, they follow its outlet, the French River, down many rapids and cascades to the Georgian Bay and Lake Huron; up Lake Huron to Sault Ste Marie; over the rapids here to the largest body of fresh water in the world, Lake Superior; up this lake, over 300 miles to Grand Portage; thence up the Pigeon River, and numerous tributary streams and inland lakes, till the height of land dividing the St. Lawrence basin from that of the Hudson Bay is passed; thence down streams and lakes little known even at the present day, till Rainy Lake is entered and passed; until he finds himself at Fort Frances. Here he meets canoes laden with furs from far away Chippewyan on the Lake of the Hills. They exchange cargoes and each crew starts on his



## AND UP THE YUKON

return journey, the one for Montreal with bales of peltries from the shadows of the Rocky Mountains, the other for the interior of the far North, his canoe laden with supplies, passes down that beautiful stream, the Rainy River, to the Lake of the Woods ; across that lake, down Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg ; up that lake to the mouth of the great Saskatchewan, thence up the latter to Cumberland House, and from there through lakes and rivers only known to him and the native Indian, till finally after a journey of 2500 miles he arrives at this far away post, McMurray.

But the name, McMurray, is now beginning to be heard in our Legislative Halls at Edmonton and at Ottawa. Politicians are commencing to search for it on the maps of the new Province of Alberta, and probably within two or three years, the whistle of the railway locomotive will awaken echoes on the surrounding hills. With a railroad completed from Edmonton to Fort McMurray, the easterner will be able to see the midnight sun within one month from the day he leaves Montreal or Toronto.



## CHAPTER V

Fort McMurray to Smith's Landing on the Slave River :  
The *Grahame* : Beauty of Northern Twilights : Fort  
Chippewyan : The Slave River : The Peace River  
Basin.

WE found the *Grahame* a much larger and more comfortable boat than the *Midnight Sun*, though constructed on the same lines, both being flat-bottomed craft and propelled by stern wheels.

It was late in the afternoon of another very hot day, July 2, when we resumed our journey, and sitting on the deck, I watched a panorama of rare beauty unrolled to view as we descended the river. The Clearwater mingled its contents slowly and reluctantly with those of the turbid Athabaska. Islands clothed with green spruce receded from view as others appeared in the distance.

It was after seven o'clock in the evening, when we left McMurray and yet we sat for hours taking no note of time, till some one

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

remarked it was getting late, though the sun, away around in the north-west, was still a little above the horizon, and seemed very loathe to sink below it. As in "The Lotos Eaters," it seemed "a land where it was always afternoon." There are two features that cannot fail to impress the stranger on his visit to these regions, especially in mid-summer; first, those northern twilights, and second, the profound silence that always seems to fall like a pall on the wilderness as the gathering shadows increase more and more till all nature is embraced in silent slumber.

Frequently we tied up to the shore for the few dark hours we enjoyed at this time and in this latitude, later we had none—and the death-like tranquillity of those approaching nights was almost bewildering in its intensity. One actually seemed to have approached very near to the heart of nature.

This sensation brought back to mind the words of George Eliot in the scene from *Adam Bede*, where she pictures the absolute calm which prevailed on that night when Adam was engaged long after midnight in making a coffin for his father, and when resting for a

## AND UP THE YUKON

moment, he looked across the starlit fields where "every blade of grass was asleep."

Here, we beheld the wilderness in its lethean repose. Occasionally the cry of a loon would float over the woods from some inland lake, or the hooting of an owl would be heard somewhere in the forest. These, however, seemed rather to add to, than detract from the loneliness that surrounded us. Those who have seen nature in repose will sympathise with me in my feeble attempt to convey an impression of that which is really beyond description.

After the junction of the Clearwater, the Athabaska becomes a stream varying from a quarter to half a mile in width. Some good spruce timber is seen on the way. Asphalt and coal are found along the banks below McMurray. Seams of soft coal of considerable thickness are found in the neighbourhood of Fort McKay, which is used by the blacksmiths at some of the posts.

During our stay at McMurray the first flood from the upper sources of the river overtook us, and on leaving this post the water had risen about two feet. This accelerated our speed, and from here on we

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

were running races with this mountain water. Sometimes we were with it, and then after several hours' run we would leave it behind till we made another halt, when it would again overtake us. There was no mistaking it, as the colour of the new water was much more muddy than that of the original, which had in its slower course parted with a good portion of its alluvial matter.

In the course of some twenty-four hours' run from McMurray the traveller finds evidences that he is approaching the mouth of the river. The stream increases to double or treble the width it is above McMurray. The banks become lower. Willows take the place of the poplar and spruce. Islands on every hand seem almost to block the passage. Then drowned land and great marshes, the home of wild fowl innumerable, stretch away to the horizon and at last the waters of the Lake of the Hills, now Lake Athabaska, are seen glistening to the east, while hills of red granite stretch far away to the north and below these along the shore, the white-washed buildings of Fort Chippewyan appear.

By reference to my diary, I find that it was July 4 that we reached Chippewyan, and I



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FORT CHIPPEWYAN ON ATHABASKA LAKE





## AND UP THE YUKON

remember rising before four o'clock, so eager was I to catch the first glimpse of the lake. We had been for nearly a month following down a river through a wilderness, where the range of our vision was limited by the high banks on either side, and it was like entering a larger world and was really restful when we beheld a great expanse of blue water extending off to the east as far as the eye could reach. But here, too, was "loneliness unbroken." Another of those excessively hot days, too, that had pursued us for some time, was again with us. The lake was as smooth as glass, but the most powerful telescope revealed nothing of life on its surface, save a few wild fowl, perfectly secure, for no fowler was in sight.

Lake Athabaska is about 200 miles in length from Chippewyan on the west to Fond du Lac on the east, while its average width is probably about twenty miles.

The appearance of Chippewyan was quite picturesque as we approached it from the south.

The Hudson Bay Company's buildings are in the form of a quadrangle and appear very attractive from a distance. Those of the

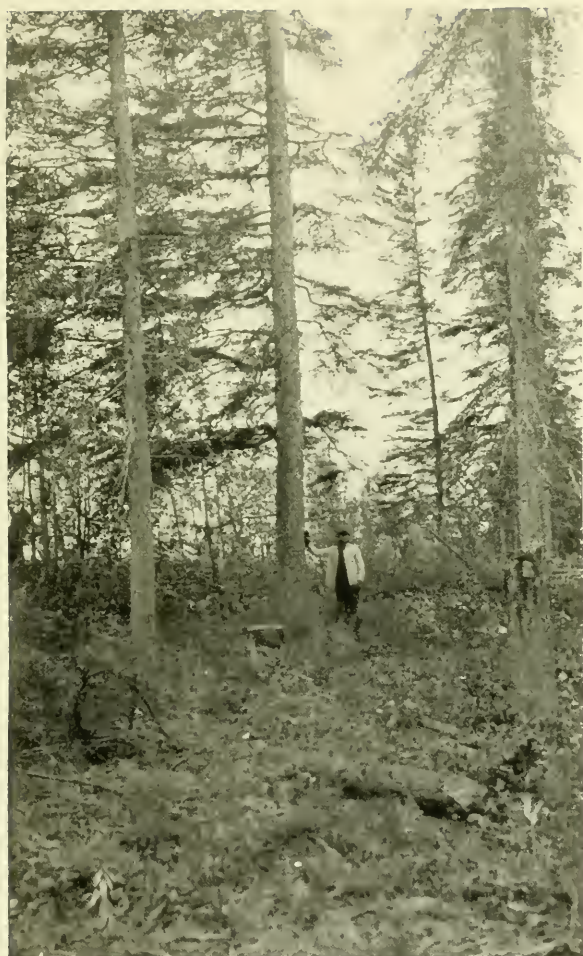
## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

Roman Catholic Mission are quite imposing but lose some of their effect through being painted a very dull colour.

We only remained at Chippewyan about twelve hours and then started for the entrance of Slave River and Great Slave Lake. The distance from the mouth of Athabaska River to the entrance of Slave River is only eight or ten miles.

For the first ten miles after entering the Slave, the channel, or rather the one we took, winds in and out between islands and submerged land, covered with grass. These drowned lands and marshes extend apparently a long distance west, between the Athabaska and Peace River, which latter stream joins the Slave about twenty miles down the latter from the Lake. This is a hunter's paradise, and when the railway reaches McMurray the wild goose will soon find its present security disturbed by the sportsman from the south.

At 10 P.M. the steamer tied up for the night. This had been the hottest day yet experienced. The mercury stood at 100 in the shade at Chippewyan, but the appearance of the sky portended rain, and as we retired we



SPRUCE TIMBER ON THE SLAVE RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

heard rumblings of thunder and some lightning was to be seen. A little later, the welcome drops were heard pattering on the decks. All welcomed a relief from weather that would be more suitable to the tropics than to this latitude of 59 degrees north. On waking the following morning, July 5, we found the air refreshingly cool. It had rained nearly all night, and from this on we had no more such heat as we had heretofore experienced. At a distance of some fifteen miles from Chippewyan, the land becomes higher and is covered with timber, considerable quantities of which are seen from the river; the varieties being spruce, poplar, birch, tamarac and willow; some of the first named being of good quality, running in size up to twenty inches at the stump. This timber continues somewhat irregularly throughout the whole course of the Slave from here to Great Slave Lake.

At about twenty miles below Lake Athabaska, the Slave receives the Peace River, and the former at once becomes an immense stream, averaging perhaps a mile in width. The Peace itself is really a great river: rising on the eastern slope of that great Atlas chain

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

of North America, the Rocky Mountains, it flows easterly and northerly for some 800 miles till finally at this junction its waters mingle with those coming from the same watershed via the Athabaska.

Ever since the mountain water overtook us, we had witnessed considerable drift timber, but immediately after passing the junction of the Peace this greatly increased ; and cast up by previous floods on the shores, sand bars and islands were thousands upon thousands of spruce trees, sufficiently large for lumbering purposes.

The Peace River deserves more than a passing reference. It is much the largest of the many tributary streams whose waters find an outlet to the Arctic Sea through the Mackenzie. In fact, it and the Slave might be regarded as the Upper Mackenzie with Great Slave Lake as an immense expansion. It is something in the neighbourhood of 800 miles from where the Finlay and the Parsnip, under the shadow of the Rockies, join to form the Peace, and from here to its mouth it flows through a valley containing a large percentage of exceedingly fertile land. There have been different opinions as to the

## AND UP THE YUKON

future of this valley as an agricultural district, but it is probable that with the exception of that portion near the source, where the elevation is considerable, the basin of the Peace will not be behind that of the North Saskatchewan in its yield of cereals and vegetables and quite equal to any portion of the great west as a grazing country, though it must be remembered that it is more or less wooded.

In the year 1902, I visited the Upper Peace, as before stated, and on September 16, at a point nearly 500 miles above the mouth, wheat was already cut, oats mostly cut, and I was informed that this was about the usual time of harvesting. I also saw at the Roman Catholic Mission, a few miles above Peace River Crossing, and almost opposite the mouth of Smokey River, potatoes, cabbage, beets, onions, pumpkins, tomatoes, muskmelons, etc., and also tobacco. The latter may not be equal to the famed Havanna leaf, but it possesses sufficient nicotine to gratify the appetite of those dependent on it for their supply.

The river at this point is considerably over a quarter of a mile wide, and the water at this

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

season was clear and blue. The valley, which is here over two miles wide, about one mile on each side of the stream itself, is six or seven hundred feet lower than the table land above.

On the way in from Lesser Slave Lake, I had been told to have my camera ready as we approached the descent at Peace River Crossing. Even the stolid half breed who accompanied me was almost enthusiastic in his description of the view that awaited us, so that I was quite prepared for what I apprehended would be something like the view of Niagara River from Queenston Heights. It resembled more the Grand Canyon of Arizona. All at once there appeared before us something so gigantic in its dimensions and so bewildering in the beauty of the vista which it revealed, that I feel any words that I can pen would rather conceal than reveal any true conception of this wonderful picture. Looking from the upland in every direction and on both sides of the valley, the table land seemed to the eye as level as the proverbial billiard table, while beneath and extending east and west for distances which I hesitate to estimate, lay

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RAPIIDS ON THE SLAVE RIVER AT THE SECOND FORTAGE



## AND UP THE YUKON

this great excavation, for such it really is, and far below, the blue water of the river was seen threading its way along the base, at times dividing itself between islands and sand bars and then reuniting in its hurried flow ever onward and downward in its course. A few miles above "The Smoky" was seen threading its way through a similar valley, while farther and farther away were other tributary streams flowing through other valleys till the vision was only lost by the interception of the horizon. One can form but a feeble conception of the energy that nature has expended in excavating this great canyon, through which now flows a navigable stream with but one obstruction in its course for some 700 miles. Evidently this has been accomplished simply by the water from the mountains seeking ever a lower level. The swift current of the stream was not only sufficient to delve out the enormous quantity of earth embraced in this valley over two miles wide and to the depth I have stated, but also to transport it for hundreds of miles down stream where it was deposited, forming sand bars and islands all the way to Great Slave Lake.

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

At the source of the Danube River at Donoueschingen stand two statuary figures, the one representing the country and the other, the river. The former is indicating to the latter the route to be taken, and the injunction is "Go this way and open the wilderness."

Here we have a valley even greater than that through which the Danube flows, and the injunction is being obeyed in the opening up of a region of inestimable value for the benefit of those who will yet seek their homes in this part of our possessions.

We will now resume our narrative by returning to the Slave River, which connects Lake Athabaska with Great Slake Lake. It is about 300 miles in length, but navigation is obstructed by rapids that commence at Smith's Landing, 100 miles from Athabaska, and extend down stream to Fort Smith, a distance of sixteen miles. For this reason, the steamer *Grahame*, with the scows that she had in tow from McMurray, proceeded no farther than the former place, and the cargo was freighted overland to Fort Smith on wagons drawn by oxen, which delayed us about a week. Most of the country passed



SMITH'S LANDING ON SLAVE RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

over on this portage is very sandy, which made very heavy drawing. This will be spanned one of these days by an electric tramway, the motive power for which can easily be obtained from the rapids near by.

The prevailing rock formation between Chippewyan and Smith's Landing is granite; that about Chippewyan being of a red colour, while as Smith's Landing is approached it is grey, and the soil covering noted on this section of our journey proved less inviting to the agriculturist than that either above or below it, where there is a good deposit of alluvial soil.

At La Bute, forty miles above Smith's Landing, we saw a good deposit of tar in the limestone rock on the west side of the river.

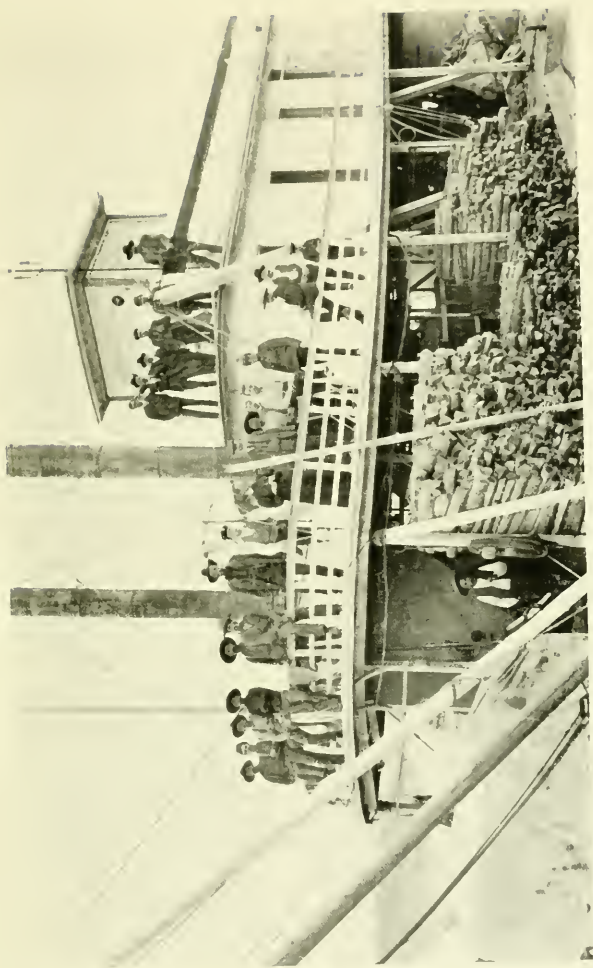
While we were staying at Smith's Landing awaiting the transport of the cargo across the portage to Fort Smith, a tug towing several scows which we had passed farther up the river arrived. They were accompanied by Bishop Grouard and were the property of the Roman Catholic Church over which he presides in this district, and also in that of the Peace River country. I was glad of

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

having an opportunity of meeting him again, especially as he had some years before made the trip which I proposed to take from Fort McPherson to Fort Yukon.

On July 9, we crossed the sixteen mile portage to Fort Smith just below the rapids. We had a comfortable carriage drawn by horses and made the trip in about three hours. Here we boarded the trim-built little steamer, *Wrigley*, which we found much smaller than the *Grahame*, but on the whole fairly comfortable. She differed from the *Grahame* and the *Midnight Sun*, being built on a different model, the former being like the Mississippi steamers, with flat bottoms, and drawing only about two feet of water, while the *Wrigley* is similar in construction to the steamers of the lower lakes of Canada, with a screw wheel, and drawing nearly six feet when loaded.





STEAMER "GRAHAME" AT SMITH'S LANDING



## CHAPTER VI

More About the Slave River ; On Steamer *Wrigley* ;  
Fine Gardens at Resolution ; A Nasty Experience ;  
Bishop Reeves Comes Aboard for a Round Trip ; Miss  
Wilgriss Leaves ; Hay River ; Fort Prudence ; The  
Little Lake ; Fort Simpson ; A Pathetic Incident ;  
An Imaginary Cabinet ; We Reach Fort Wrigley.

THE cargo having all been carted over the portage and loaded on the *Wrigley* and her consorts, we left Fort Smith at 3.15 P.M., Mountain or Pacific time, on this last stage of our journey to Fort McPherson, in round numbers, 1300 miles distant. The day was cloudy and quite cool. We were at last clear of all obstructions to navigation. Throughout the whole remaining distance there would also be very little darkness, and the steamer was to run both night and day. The country becomes more level than above the rapids. The banks at first thirty or forty feet high become gradually lower with the descent of the river, and the soil reveals a rich alluvial

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

deposit, similar in appearance to that of the Western prairies. We passed Salt River at 5.30 P.M. and Bell Rock a little after, and later Gravel Point, where we saw the last gravel to be met with on these waters.

*Thursday, July 12.* The boat ran all night and at 8.30 A.M. we were well down the river, being opposite McConnell Island. After leaving Fort Smith the river expands to probably an average width of a mile and a half, in some places much more, with numerous islands on the way. As it widens out the current decreases and the soil held in solution yields to the law of gravity and is deposited, forming numerous islands all the way to the lake. The earth, that once rested securely along the present course of "the Peace" before the waters from the mountains found their way in that direction and commenced that great excavation, is here found in these islands, and the newly formed land that is pushing the southern shore line of Great Slave Lake near the mouth of this river, farther and farther north. How applicable to this situation are the words of Tennyson :



LEAVING FORT SMITH ON THE SLAVE RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

*“The sound of streams that swift or slow  
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow  
The dust of continents to be.”*

The land falls gradually away till it is submerged. Islands innumerable have been formed while others in embryo exist in the sand bars extending for long distances in the neighbourhood of the channel. It was difficult to follow the outlet and we grounded several times after we were well into the lake. However, by appliances peculiar to such navigation, we finally got into deep water, and an hour's run brought us to a fine bay on the shore of which we beheld another whitewashed village with a hundred or more Indian lodges in the foreground. This was Fort Resolution, and the lodges were the temporary habitations of the Chippewyan and Slavey Indians, who were assembled here for the payment of “treaty,” as they call it, that is to say, the Federal Government's grant to Indian tribes. It was late in the afternoon when we entered the lake. We lost two or three hours on the sand bars and another in putting on wood, so that when we went ashore at Resolution, it

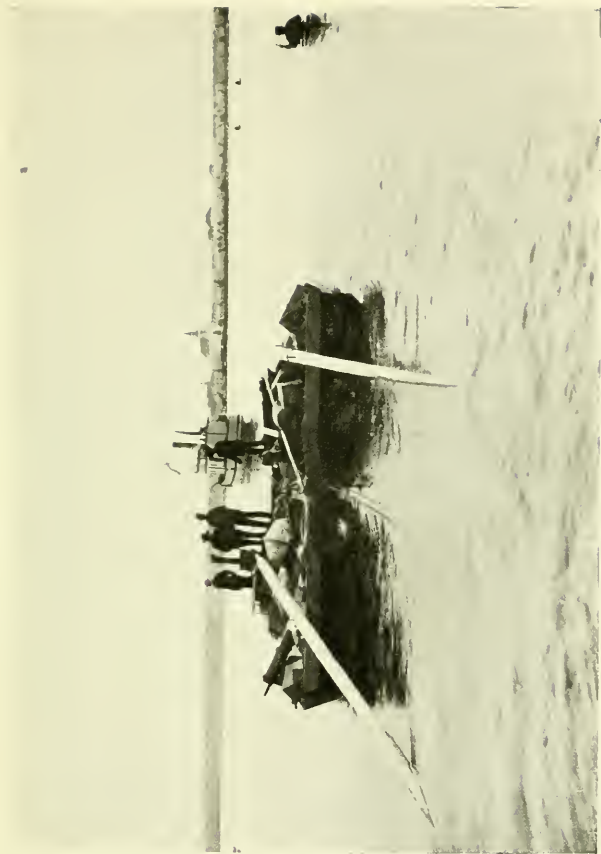
## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

was near eleven o'clock at night. I remember thinking that we would have to make our journey short so as to get back before dark; but what with a visit to the tent of Indian Commissioner Conroy and Dr. West, and the exchange of information from outside which we possessed, for that of the interior which they could furnish, and with a visit to the Indian camps, I was astonished to find that we had passed from one day into another without having experienced any intervening night. A dull twilight was giving way to a bright dawn as we went aboard our ship after midnight. This was the beginning of constant daylight, that remained with us for several weeks.

I noticed some very well cultivated gardens at Resolution, containing most of the vegetables we would find in the gardens of Eastern Canada—potatoes, turnips, peas, cabbage, beets, etc. The potatoes were particularly good, and so far advanced that by August 1 they would certainly be fit for use. There were no evidences either that the "potato bug" had yet visited this district.

We had before us, between here and Hay River, a large sheet of open water of over





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FORT RESOLUTION ON GREAT SLAVE LAKE



## AND UP THE YUKON

seventy miles to traverse, and delays are frequently experienced here, especially when a steamer has, as in our case, several heavily-laden scows in tow.

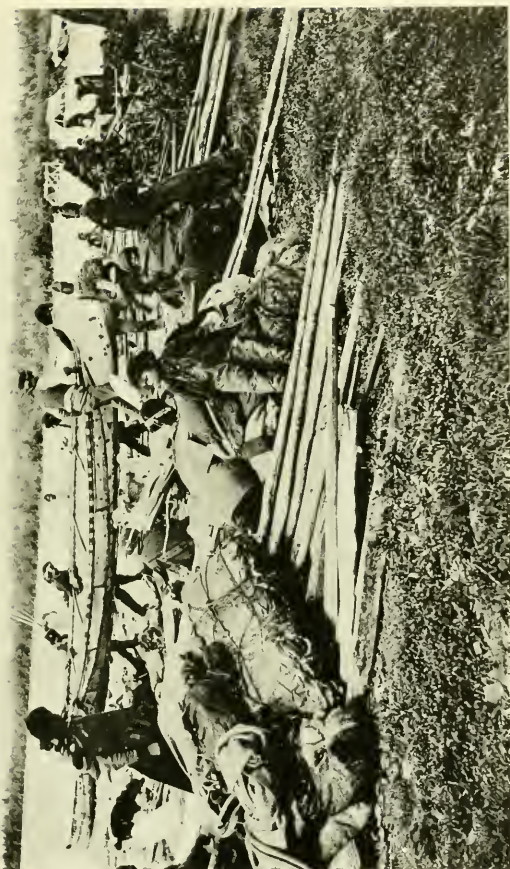
We left Resolution at 2 o'clock on the morning of July 13, but had soon to seek shelter under an island and wait for the sea to subside, which it did sufficiently to allow us to start again about 4 P.M., but for several hours it seemed doubtful if one of the scows which was leaking badly could be kept afloat till we should reach Hay River, and we were glad to find when we arose in the morning that the crew of the leaky craft had been rewarded for their toil. She was among the other boats lying along the bank, and without showing much damage either to the scow itself or to the cargo. The latter was much the more important, as it contained food and other necessities brought such long distances and at such great expense, and besides there were anxious men, women, and children in far outlying posts in this great wilderness, whose very existence depended on supplies reaching them in good condition.

Awakening early in the morning and before

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

the crew or inhabitants of the village had risen, I walked up the bank of the river, and finding a sandy beach was soon enjoying a bath. While engaged in this luxury, I noticed that I had attracted the attention of half a dozen rather large-sized and very hungry-looking husky dogs, that came rushing down the bank barking furiously, evidently thinking me a legitimate object of prey. In the whole course of my journey this is the only instance where I was the subject of an attack of any kind, and I must confess I felt greatly alarmed as I realised my situation, and cannot help thinking that had it not been for some Indians, the owners of the dogs, suddenly appearing in a canoe around a point in the river, paddling quickly to my rescue, the consequences might have been serious. The hungry creatures probably thought I was some animal from the forest who was trying to escape them by swimming the river.

Bishop Reeve, of the Anglican Diocese of the Mackenzie River, came aboard at Hay River for a round trip to McPherson and return, and Miss Wilgriss left us to resume her position at the Mission here. We were all impressed with the zeal of this lady in her



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DOG-RIBBED INDIANS ON GREAT SLAVE LAKE



## AND UP THE YUKON

work, which is certainly one of self-sacrificing devotion to a great cause.

Hay River is a stream of considerable size which enters Great Slave Lake from the west at a distance of some forty miles south of the entrance to the Mackenzie.

The morning was fine. The wind had subsided, and the great lake, which serves as a filtering basin for the turbid waters entering it from the Slave River, was here as clear as that of the great inland lakes of Eastern Canada—Huron, Erie or Ontario. Wherever a river contains muddy water, you may at once conclude that it has no large lake expansions above it. In nearly every stream pouring its waters into the great clear water lakes of the St. Lawrence basin the water is dark and more or less impure; very different both in quality and appearance from that which it assumes after having had a little time to settle. This is, of course, due to the process of precipitation which the river currents have previously prevented. The Saskatchewan, the Missouri and the Mississippi are streams whose waters are similar in appearance to that of the "Yellow Tiber" at Rome. So, also, are those of the Columbia

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

and the Fraser of the Pacific slope, and in each case you will search in vain for any large lake expansions in their courses.

A few hours' run brought us to a bay with many islands, which gradually contracted to a width of two or three miles and we now had entered the great river, the Mackenzie, into which all the waters we had traversed flow. No more delays were now anticipated, no lakes to cross, no rapids to encounter, and no darkness to delay us on our course for the rest of our journey, a thousand miles in all, to the delta of the Mackenzie.

Great Slave Lake impresses the visitor by its size, which approximates to that of the great lakes of Eastern Canada. For some time we were entirely out of sight of land. There is a bar at the mouth of the river which our steamer struck once or twice as she also did in two or three other places farther down.

After passing what might be called the entrance, the river widens out into expansions which deserve and receive the distinction of lakes. Islands covered with green timber are numerous, and the appearance is suggestive of the lower St.

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## AND UP THE YUKON

Lawrence. We had some difficulty in following the channel at the mouth of one of these expansions, named Beaver Lake, where we grounded twice on a soft bottom. This did no damage to the steamer but caused us several hours' delay.

The blowing of the whistle of the *Wrigley* early on Sunday morning of July 15 announced that we were approaching Fort Providence, and as the boat rounded an island in the river, exclamations of astonishment at the beauty of the picture that lay before us were heard on every hand. There on the right bank of the river, its waters as clear as those of the St. Lawrence, lay a village, so strikingly similar in appearance to those along that familiar stream that we could almost forget the long distances we had journeyed and fancy ourselves approaching one of the parishes of old Quebec. The church bells were ringing out a call to the Sunday morning service. The convent hard by was decorated with flags betokening some joyful occasion, while the Indian pupils in their pretty costumes accompanied by their teachers, the sisters of the Mission, lined the bank to welcome the founder of the

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

school, Sister Ward, of Montreal, who had accompanied us this far.

This devoted woman first went into the country upwards of forty years ago, where she became instrumental in organising this and several other schools during a residence there of more than thirty years. She was at this time making a visit of inspection to them, intending to return before the season closed, to the home of her novitiate, the Convent of the Grey Nuns of Montreal.

The banks of the river here are about thirty feet high. The land is level and the soil a rich clay loam, and this is the general character of the soil along the whole of this great river. In the Mission garden here were found at this time peas fit for use, potatoes in blossom, tomatoes, rhubarb, beets, cabbages, onions, in fact about the same type of kitchen garden as would be seen a thousand miles farther south. Besides the vegetables, were cultivated flowers and also fruit such as red currants, gooseberries, strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons, and more surprising still, near by, was a small field of wheat in the milk, the grain being fully formed, the seed of which had been sown on



FORT PROVIDENCE ON THE MACKENZIE RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

May 20. I was anxious to know whether this grain would ripen, and was fortunate enough to learn later from one of the passengers, who, returning by the *Wrigley*, visited this field again on July 28, that it had been harvested before the latter date, probably about two months after the sowing. This seems almost incredible to those who live in lower latitudes, but when we remember that during this whole period the earth had been subjected to almost constant sunlight and heat, coupled with constant moisture from the frozen ground beneath, the reason for its rapid, hot house growth is obvious.

Leaving Fort Providence at 10.40 A.M. we soon entered "The Little Lake," one of the numerous expansions of the Upper Mackenzie, and at 10 P.M. reached a point known as "The End of the Line," so named from being the place where the boatmen coming up the river could dispense with the tracking line. As the river widens above this point, the current decreases so that boats and canoes can be propelled without outside assistance, while below here till the river widens again near its mouth, a distance of over 800 miles, the current is

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

too strong for the general use of oar or paddle, and the line is necessary for the greater part of the distance. With no interruption from rapids or delay from darkness and assisted by the current, we reached Fort Simpson on the following morning at seven o'clock, the run from Providence, 161 miles distant, having been made in about twenty hours.

Fort Simpson is 1078 miles distant by the route we had taken from Athabaska Landing or 1175 miles from Edmonton. The latitude is  $61^{\circ} 52' N.$ ; in other words it is 900 miles due north of the international boundary. It is prettily situated on the left bank of the Mackenzie just below the mouth of the Liard. Evidently the waters of the latter stream have no filtering basin such as the Mackenzie has in Great Slave Lake, for instead of the clear waters through which we have passed so far on the Mackenzie, we see this great tributary coming from the west carrying down a segregated mixture of water and yellow soil which perceptibly changes the colour of the Mackenzie from here all the way to its mouth. We saw no more the clear sparkling waters of a greenish

## AND UP THE YUKON

blue, so similar to that of the ocean, that had been before our eyes for the last 300 miles. The banks of the river at Fort Simpson are about thirty feet high and the stream here must be at least two miles wide.

Though the hour of our arrival was early, the bank was lined with the men, women and children of the village, all apparently delighted to see again the return of the *Wrigley*. Among others I noticed a well-dressed white man hurrying down from the Hudson Bay Company's store, evidently looking for some one among the passengers. Though I had never seen him before, I at once surmised that this was Charlie Christie, whose wife was buried at Edmonton a few days before our departure. During the whole of our journey the thought of the message we were carrying to the expectant husband was ever with us, and the nearer we approached his home, the sadder seemed this message. How the information was to be broken to him had been talked over many times, but with his hurried steps up the gang plank and eager inquiry if his wife were aboard, evidently disappointed at not seeing her among the passengers, all plans

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

were forgotten and the answer to his inquiry was in a few words which, though uttered in a sympathetic tone, went like a bullet to the heart of the poor man who had waited through the long months of the former autumn, winter and spring for the return of the mother of his children. Such is one of the tragic phases of life in this wilderness.

I have mentioned that Fort Simpson is about 900 miles in a due course north of the international boundary, and I repeat it in connection with the fact that the great staple of our north-west possessions is grown here, to a sufficient extent to show that we may, in calculating the width of the wheat zone, reckon it at least that width from north to south. I do not of course mean that all the land lying between the forty-ninth parallel and this latitude should be considered arable, but it is something to know that the climatic conditions up to this latitude are not too severe for the production of this cereal.

The soil resembles that at Fort Providence and the vegetable gardens are similar to those seen there. The increased sunlight of the summer months as we proceed north



## AND UP THE YUKON

counterbalances the disadvantages of the higher latitude. This, however, does not continue indefinitely. Even at points far south of Simpson the frost never leaves the ground at certain depths and this depth decreases till it approaches so near the surface in the far north as to prevent the ripening of either cereals or vegetables.

Fort Simpson has been regarded for many years as the most noted of the H.B. Company's posts in the north, and, though it has now, I believe, lost some of its importance, it is still a centre of trade for a wide district of country.

It was here that the supplies were distributed, not only to the outlying posts farther down the river, but also to those up the Liard and to numerous inland stations. From here, too, the "Coureurs Du Bois" or "Trippers" were sent out in winter to the Indian hunting grounds, carrying with them by dog trains, ammunition and blankets and bringing back the furs of the country.

It is the last point visited on the journey northward, containing the vestiges of modern civilised life. The village, which probably contains 300 or 400 inhabitants,

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

can boast of a system of electric lighting, a needless luxury for a considerable part of the year when there is scarcely any darkness, but later when the sun declines so low in the heavens as almost to refuse to dispel the darkness even at noonday, it serves to somewhat lessen the gloom of the long winter night. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the plant was installed by "The Company." They have also established a museum here, containing stuffed exhibits of the animals and birds of the country. That of the latter is well arranged, and I presume gives a good representation of the feathered tribe of this north region. Of the former, scarcely as much can be said, though I remember among them a black bear that was very creditably set up. In the "Big House," in other words, the Agent's residence, we also found the unusual luxury of a small billiard table, which it must have cost a goodly sum to transport so far.

The principal buildings in this sub-Arctic "metropolis" are, of course, those of "The Company," and the second those connected with the Anglican Mission. The latter con-

## AND UP THE YUKON

sist of a good dwelling, occupied by the Rector of the parish, and which also serves as a schoolroom, while near by is the chapel, a very pretty edifice and creditable to the enterprise of those who erected it in this far away place.

The buildings of the village are of logs, the better ones being sided up with lumber and whitewashed. Much of this lumber I was informed had been cut with a whip saw, though a small mill was in operation for a time. I saw at Simpson some of the finest porcupine quill work that is made anywhere in the country, the women of one tribe of this region being famed as experts in this work.

We found the timber, since crossing Great Slave Lake, somewhat smaller in size, though lumber cut here and used in the buildings at Simpson is some twelve inches wide, but this is exceptional. One cannot but be struck with the vast quantities of spruce along the route that is a little under size for lumber, but which would make excellent pulpwood. The drift wood coming down the Liard is similar to that from the Peace, and indicates timber of a larger size

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

farther up the stream than is found growing at its mouth.

Since leaving Fort Smith, we had been traversing territory beyond the north limit of the Province of Alberta. The sixtieth degree of latitude forms the north boundary of that Province and it is supposed to pass very near Fort Smith.

To wile away the weary hours, some one conceived the idea of forming a provisional government for this unorganised territory. Mr. Thos. Anderson, the Company's Superintendent for this district who was with us, was, by popular acclaim, made Lieutenant-Governor. He immediately selected his cabinet from among those on board the *Wrigley*. The pilot, a very worthy Cree Indian, was chosen as Minister of Marine, while a countryman of his, who was of a somewhat martial appearance, was made Minister of War: the tall lank white man, before referred to as the counterpart of Abraham Lincoln in his rail-splitting days, was called to the high office of Minister of Justice. The latter had his blankets tied up with a long rope and His Honour gave as one reason for his selecting Mr. Leigh



BISHOP REEVE, STEFANSSON AND RESIDENT CLEI GYMAN AT SIMPSON



## AND UP THE YUKON

(for such was his name) to be that he carried with him the very article which has served to enforce British justice the world over.

After subscribing to a declaration in which allegiance to "The Company" (not the King) was the principal article, a cabinet council was held. Numerous grievances under which this fair portion of Canada had long suffered were discussed. All were of one mind regarding the existence of these disabilities, but there was a wide divergence of opinion as to how they were to be remedied. However, on one subject there was entire unanimity.

Those who travelled in what were known as the North-West Territories before the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were organised, will remember that intoxicating beverages were prohibited by the laws of the Dominion. This "tyrannical rule" obtains even at the present day in this Mackenzie District, and we soon realised that even if the cabinet had not been personally favourable to the free importation of this essential article, it would have been impossible for them to command the confidence of the people unless they passed an

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

ordinance abolishing this legislation. This was at once done, and received the immediate assent of the Lieutenant-Governor.

This bit of pleasantry was continued for some time, till it began to seem almost real, and in some measure to resemble the initial stages of the uprising many years before of Riel on the banks of the Red River. The Indian is not incapable of a kind of dry humour, but, at the same time, he does not always discern whether you are in earnest or merely jesting, and the result was that the Lieutenant-Governor, in the name of the Company, dismissed all his Ministers and resumed the intelligent autocratic control, which he had long exercised over the country.

## A CHANGE OF SCENERY

After remaining about twenty-four hours at Simpson, we resumed our journey at five o'clock in the morning, and at nine caught the first sight of the Rocky Mountains (Nahanni Range) with their snow-capped peaks, which attain a height of 5000 ft. above sea level. This change of scenery



## AND UP THE YUKON

was welcomed after six weeks of travel through a vast wilderness of comparatively level land.

The weather had continued quite hot, with only an exception of a day or two, from our start, but whether from the effect of the mountains or not, we experienced a very decided change in the temperature immediately we reached their vicinity, and from this on we suffered no more from the excessive heat, which had been as unpleasant as it was unexpected. We had counted on escaping the usual July heat, but for the greater part it had really been more oppressive and certainly more constant, extending right through the long twenty-four-hour day, than I had ever before experienced.

It strikes the observer as extraordinary that the Mackenzie in its way to the sea from Great Slave Lake should bear off to the west, so far as to necessitate its cutting its way between two ranges of the Rocky Mountains, where a much shorter course and apparently one through a more level country lay open to the east into Coronation Gulf.

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

I do not know the opinion of geologists, but it seems probable that the original outlet of Great Slave Lake has been changed from this course to the longer one now followed, in the same way as the Niagara has become the outlet of the waters of Lake Huron instead of the Northern River of past ages, which flowed directly across country from the Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario.

At the distance of 136 miles below Simpson, we reach Fort Wrigley. This is a new post ; the old one of the same name twenty-five miles above having been abandoned owing to its unhealthy locality. The country about Fort Wrigley is fairly well wooded. I noticed a spruce log, cut in the vicinity which measured twenty inches in diameter.

The Nahanni river, which is a considerable stream, flows from the west and joins the Mackenzie about halfway between Simpson and Wrigley. Just north of it rises Mount Camsell, a snow-clad peak 5000 ft. high.

Below Wrigley the river narrows to from a half to three quarters of a mile in width. This continues for some distance and then widens out as we proceed down the stream.

## AND UP THE YUKON

Two noted mountain peaks, Mount Bompas and Mount Wrigley, are seen between Wrigley and Norman. About twenty miles above Fort Norman and on the left side of the river the clay banks assume a very red appearance, and the people use the earth as paint. This condition of the earth has been produced by fire in the coal seams. For several miles along the route the fire is now apparently extinct, but as we reached a point eight miles above Fort Norman, for upwards of two miles along the right bank of the river smoke was distinctly observed from fires still burning far down in the seams of coal. It is worthy of note that Sir Alexander Mackenzie makes mention of these fires in his narrative, as existing in 1789 when he explored and gave his name to the river.

About sixty miles below Wrigley we passed the mouth of Salt river which flows from the east. It is so named from deposits of salt that exist some miles above the mouth. Rock salt is said to exist on the Great Bear river above Norman, but the salt in use in the country is from another Salt River sixteen miles below Fort Smith.

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

At 7 P.M., July 18, we reached Fort Norman at the mouth of the Great Bear River which is the outlet of Great Bear Lake. Fort Norman is distant from Fort Wrigley 184 miles and 1398 miles from Athabaska Landing. Its situation is very picturesque. The mountain peaks stand up in bold relief out of a vast level plain. Bear Mountain on the north side of Great Bear River and east of the Mackenzie is the most conspicuous.

While the steamer lay at Fort Norman, I started down the shore hoping to reach Great Bear River, but I soon found it dangerous to attempt to walk along the water's edge owing to the banks being in some places too precipitous. I then tried the land farther up from the shore but was unable to find a trail and soon got into a wet swamp and had, very much to my regret, to give up the attempt. The width of the river, I understand to be some 150 or 200 yards and the water clear. This might be expected as it is the outlet of a lake with an area nearly if not quite that of Great Slave Lake.

At Fort Norman a fellow passenger in

## AND UP THE YUKON

the person of Rev. H. C. Winch, left us to assume his duties here as a Missionary of the Anglican Church. He had been my room mate on the *Wrigley*, all the way from Fort Smith.

In company with several of the passengers I went up to the little house which was to be his home and remained till about eleven o'clock at night, and as we bade him good-bye in the twilight the loneliness of the life that was before him impressed itself on my mind.

Fancy the weird situation here in this wilderness with none but the native Indians and a few half breeds for companions. This during the few summer months when the days were long and when the birds and the wild geese had not left for the South might not be altogether unpleasant, but when the days would grow short, when the canoeing on the river was over and the long nights of winter approached, it certainly would require a good deal of fortitude to bear the part that he was to endure.



## CHAPTER VII

Leaving Fort Norman : A Sad Case : In Arctic  
Regions : Arrival at Fort McPherson.

WE left Fort Norman about midnight ; had a good run, and on rising the next morning the 19th, were more than half way to Fort Good Hope. At 2 P.M. and at a distance of about six miles above Fort Good Hope we noticed that all our fellow-passengers who knew the river were on deck. This meant something, and as we looked forward and on each side it seemed as if we were in a cul-de-sac. We knew the river must find a passage somewhere but so far as one could see it seemed impossible that there could be an opening anywhere of sufficient size to permit the escape of the waters of this mighty stream. As we were watching and wondering where the outlet could be the steamer suddenly turned sharply to starboard and before us lay a narrow strip of shining water apparently only a few hundred

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

feet in width. Down this we glided at great speed between cliffs of limestone on either side of great heights. We had reached the upper ramparts of the Mackenzie. These walls of perpendicular sandstone resemble huge fortifications, like another Gibraltar but one which no enemy is likely to approach.

For about four miles we were hurried down this great gorge at almost railway speed, so it was not long till the waters again expanded to a width of a mile or more and revealed on the right bank another picturesque white-washed village, Fort Good Hope. Its situation on a level plateau is charming. The banks are about thirty feet high and the soil is similar to that all along the river, being a rich deposit very much resembling that of our great prairies. I saw potatoes in blossom, cabbage, onions and other vegetables in the gardens here, but this was the last we saw going North. As we proceeded farther the frost in the soil reached too near the surface to permit their maturing. Spruce timber of sufficient size for sawing into lumber is obtained on an island in the river.





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THE RAMPARTS, MACKENZIE RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

### A SAD CASE

Some time in April before leaving home I received a letter from an old friend named Slean. It had been written on Christmas Day from Arctic Red River Post, some 300 miles beyond Fort Good Hope. The writer, who had gone north the previous summer from Edmonton was engaged with an independent fur trading company, and being a young man of good education was desirous of having some diversion from the everlasting talk of "Furs and Supplies," to beguile his lonely life and requested me to endeavour to get the Government to establish a Meteorological Office there, and to say that if they would send him a few instruments and the necessary forms he would be glad to report as frequently as possible, adding a most unusual proposition for an applicant for a government position that he would not expect any salary. This request I forwarded on to my friend Mr. Stupart, Director of the Meteorological Observatory, and on my way down I had the satisfaction of seeing these requisites en route.

I did not reply to the letter inasmuch as

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

I was going by the first transport and would reach his post in person at the same time as a letter would, and I looked forward with a good deal of pleasure to surprising him in his distant home.

Just as we were entering Great Slave Lake, a week before reaching Good Hope, we passed the scows owned by Slean's Company, also going North as far as Fort Good Hope, which point we would reach some time before they would. I was informed by the man in charge that Slean would probably come up to Good Hope to get the scow containing his supplies which they pointed out to me as "No. 11," and that he would likely be there on our arrival.

Our steamer had been expected at Fort Good Hope for several days and her arrival was anxiously looked for, so that when she did appear at a convenient hour all the village was on the bank to greet us. I looked anxiously among the dusky faces to see the fair complexion of my friend but he was not present, so I inquired for the buildings of his Company. A few whitewashed houses were pointed out a little down the river to which I at once repaired, and on inquiry

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## AND UP THE YUKON

from a white man whom I met was informed that my friend was in one of the houses, but that he was very ill. On entering I was told that he had reached Good Hope two weeks previously from his own post after a ten days' journey up stream, but in such a weak condition that he had to be helped up the bank from his canoe. Since that time he had continued to get worse and that there was no hope of his recovery. I was informed that he was sleeping in an adjoining room. A few moments later he awoke and I entered the room. It had little the appearance of a sick room except that of the occupant. We are so accustomed to associate with the sick chamber clean linen, comfortable bedding, with all the little delicacies of nourishment and soothing cordials, that the contrast in this case was disheartening. Not that his two white friends were not less attentive than a trained nurse would have been. On the contrary they were doing all that mortals could under the circumstances. One of these men was a Mr. Darrell, who had accompanied Hanbury, on his trip around the shore of the Arctic Sea a year or two before, and

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

whose excellent qualities are mentioned in Hanbury's narrative of that expedition, and I know he refused a good offer for the season rather than leave the sick man. The other young man, Slater, who was also with him I have no reason to think was less attentive, but it was impossible to obtain, especially before the arrival of the supplies which our boat brought, food that would tempt the palate of a white man even in good health. He recognised me at once and commenced his conversation by informing me in broken accents that he had taken a little cold on his way up the river but that he was all right and would get up the next morning, take a good cold bath and be around again; but I saw at once that he was in a delirious condition and that in all human probability his wanderings would soon be over. I spent an hour with him which I repeated before our steamer left at midnight. His death came even sooner than I expected, for I afterwards learned that he passed away the next day, and when our steamer called on her return trip shortly after, the passengers visited a lonely grave in the Catholic Cemetery in which lay the remains of

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## AND UP THE YUKON

William John Slean. This was another reminder that the bright Arctic summer days sometimes have their dark shadows.

It was a little after midnight of July 20, when we left Good Hope and on rising next morning I found we had passed the Arctic Circle. The river is now widening, the banks are getting lower and the timber is growing smaller, all these indicate that we are fast drifting down towards the Arctic Sea. Some time in the evening we stopped at Arctic Red River at the entrance of a stream of the same name. It certainly was the least desirable place for any civilised man to choose for a home, that I had yet seen in all this Northland. A few houses, the church and the graveyard were all crowded on the side of a hill rising abruptly from the river. Perpetual frost was found only a foot beneath the surface of the soil, and we no longer beheld the emblems of civilised life, the vegetable and flower gardens, that go so far to make many of those lonely posts seem somewhat cheerful.

I wandered up to the log shack which poor Slean had occupied during the previous winter and which he had left only a few weeks

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

before. A more dreary habitation it would be difficult to imagine. I looked around the room to see if there was any memento that I might carry home to his friends, but the only thing I could see was a little green flag pinned to the wall, a touching tribute of patriotic devotion to the far away island which had given him birth. It seemed like desecration to remove it, so I allowed it to remain where he had placed it.

We only stopped an hour or two at this dreary place and then started for our last and the most northerly post in the country, Fort McPherson. At 1.30 the next morning, July 21, I rose as we were rounding Point Separation, so named from the parting here of Sir John Franklin and Dr. Richardson in 1825, when they separated for their perilous trips around the shores of the frozen ocean, Franklin going west from the mouth of the Mackenzie, and Richardson, coasting easterly towards Coronation Gulf. The sun was just skirting the northern horizon and I endeavoured to get a photo of it which I am sorry proved rather a failure.

Point Separation lies at the junction of the Peel River with the Mackenzie, and is in

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THE MIDNIGHT SUN



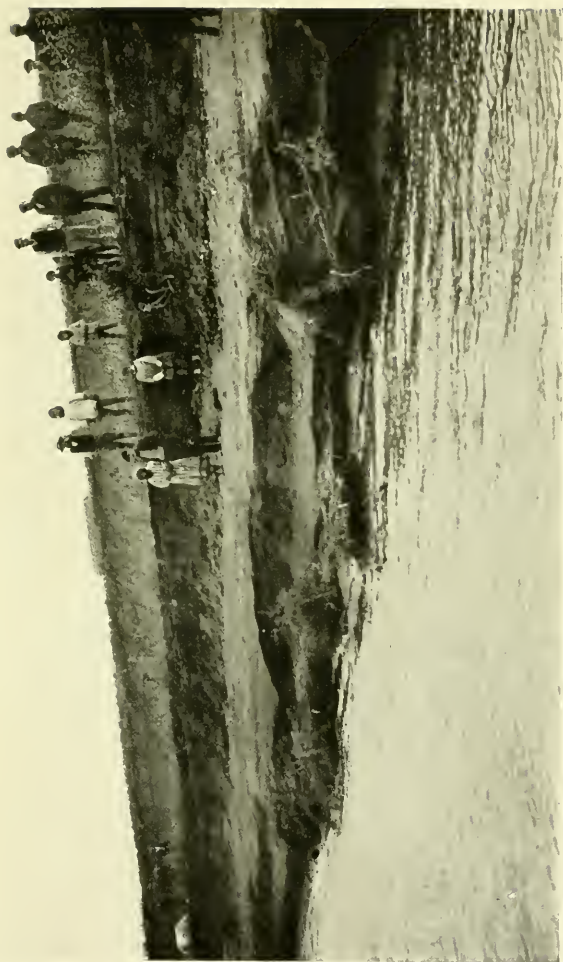
## AND UP THE YUKON

latitude about  $67^{\circ} 50'$  N. Below this point lies the delta of the Mackenzie which is many miles in width, with numerous islands between here and the sea about 100 miles distant. At the point where Franklin and Richardson camped two spruce trees were pointed out marked as lobstersticks which are said to have been so marked by them in commemoration of the event. Both are still standing, though one is now dead. The Indians have a tradition that a quantity of spirits were cached somewhere in this vicinity, which they say they have never been able to discover. Personally, I have very grave doubts of the accuracy of this report. The Indian is a good hunter, and I know of nothing that would excite him to greater activity than the prospect of such a reward.

After rounding Point Separation we enter the Peel River which at this point is over a mile wide. We soon noticed that our speed was much slower than heretofore and the reason was obvious. For the first time in our long journey of over 1800 miles we were going against the current. Heretofore we have been constantly sailing down the Arctic slope. Shortly after entering the

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

Peel our steamer stopped to take on wood, this reminded me of the frequent habit of railway trains which, after running for hundreds of miles on time stop all at once just outside the station of their destination. We were all anxious to see this far northern village at the end of our long river journey and anxiously waited for a final start. After about two hours' delay a start was made, and soon after we beheld in the distance on the high bank of the east side of the Peel, the houses of Fort McPherson with the white tents of the Esquimaux on the beach below. These Esquimaux had come over in their whale boats from Herschel Island in the Arctic Sea to meet the *Wrigley*. Their complexion is almost white with a dash of ruddy colour that indicates health. They are very cheerful and good natured, are not at all diffident like so many of our Indian tribes. On the contrary, they are very inquisitive and disposed to make themselves almost too familiar. They are of fair stature and do not show any of the marks of the struggle for existence that is so observable in their neighbours, the Indians, in this part of the country.



AT MCPHERSON : INDIANS, HALF-BREEDS AND ESQUIMAUX IN FOREGROUND



## AND UP THE YUKON

At Fort McPherson, as at all points visited in the last 1300 miles of our journey, no news from the outside world had been received since the last winter mail in March. For over four months the news passed on from post to post was purely local, hunting parties returning from their winter quarters, whose accounts frequently were of hardships endured, among which the phrase, "short of meat," were familiar words even in the mouths of natives who knew very little English. Another item would come from the ice bound whalers out on the Arctic Sea.

We were the first to inform them of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and of the San Francisco earthquake both of which had happened months before. Another message was one of sadness to all throughout the Mackenzie and Yukon Valleys, namely, the death of Bishop Bompas, truly named the Apostle of the North, who was familiarly known to every inhabitant and as universally esteemed.

Fort McPherson is as stated the most northerly of the Hudson Bay Company's Posts. Its latitude is  $67^{\circ} 25'$  and it is truly an Arctic Village. For six weeks in summer

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the sun never sets and is constantly below the horizon for the same time in winter. The thermometer went as low as 68° below zero (Fahrenheit) the winter before. The inhabitants are in close touch with the Esquimaux of the Arctic Sea and with the whaling ships that annually visit these waters. These whalers are mostly from San Francisco, coming up through Behring Strait in the early summer and returning in the autumn. In the season of 1905 most of them were trapped in the ice that blocked the Straits and were compelled to remain there till the next season. They went into winter quarters at Herschel Island where there is a detachment of the Royal North-West Mounted Police. They were not sufficiently supplied with provisions for this emergency, and they, too, soon became familiar with the common phrase, "short of meat," and had to rely largely on what could be obtained in the country. They engaged the Indians of the Mainland to supply them with meat from the chase with the result that the shipment of fur from McPherson for that season was very much smaller than usual.



## CHAPTER VIII

### Ice Conditions of the Summer of 1905.

THE report by the whalers of the ice conditions of the summer of 1905 is of interest to Arctic navigators. They say that the ice that drove into Behring's sea from the north-east and prevented their exit left that part of the ocean almost free of ice, a very unusual thing; and one of the captains is reported to have said that he was strongly tempted to set sail for the pole, as in his experience of twenty or twenty-five years he had never seen what seemed so good an opportunity of winning fame by such a venture. But on consideration he decided to stick to his commission which was to capture whales and not the Pole. That these reports are correct is borne out by the fact that Captain Amundsen, who has since discovered the South Pole, was exploring along the north-east coast, in 1905, finding open water to the west set sail in

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that direction, and to his surprise soon found himself in the company of these whalers near the mouth of the Mackenzie. He was compelled to go into winter quarters, and laid up with them at Herschel Island till the summer of my visit when he succeeded in getting out through Behring's Strait, being the first to make the entire north-west passage. During the previous winter he made an overland journey out to the Yukon and returned again to his ship, the *Gjoa*.

The following season he succeeded along with the whalers in navigating Behring's Strait into the Pacific and thence proceeded around Cape Horn and back to Denmark.

Strange to say that after so many attempts to make the north-west passage it was accomplished at last quite unexpectedly. Captain Amundsen's Mission into these Arctic waters was made for the purpose of locating the position of the magnetic pole. He succeeded in this and found it where Ross had located it many years before.

The arrival of the *Wrigley* was hailed with great rejoicing by the people of the village, but the arrival of the "Permits,"

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accompanied also by the article permitted rather demoralised the community during my few days' sojourn there, but I was informed that the limited supply brought in had been exhausted before I left, and that for the next twelve months McPherson would be a model prohibition town.

The Indian thinks not of the morrow and certainly obeys the injunction not to lay up treasures on earth whatever provisions he may make for his future home.

The *Wrigley* was to remain only a couple of days at this post and then start back on her return trip, and the time had not arrived when I had to decide whether I would return with her or find my way back to civilisation by a different route. I chose the latter, fully realising that in one sense my journey was only now commencing, and as I watched her disappear from sight and walked alone up the bank at midnight the weirdness of the situation seemed all at once to dawn vividly upon me. The sun just a few degrees below the horizon cast its after-glow all over the northern sky. The old familiar polestar barely discernible hung high in the Arctic heavens, while other stars unfamiliar

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to me lay low along the northern horizon. I was now here alone, and certainly in a strange land. Turning to the south I could not help reflecting on the vastness of the wilderness, made up of mountains and plain, of forest, lake and river that lay between this lonely village and the settlements of this Dominion 2000 miles away, occupying a mere fringe along the southern border of our possessions.



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FORT MCPHERSON



## CHAPTER IX

From Fort McPherson to Rampart House : Crossing  
the Peel River : An Attempt at Intimidation : The  
Summit of the Rocky Mountains : In Pacific Waters :  
The Porcupine : John Quatlot Departs.

THE following day I commenced to make preparations for the next stage in my trip.

I had hoped to be able to proceed first up Rat Creek to near the summit of the Rocky Mountains where I would make a portage of some ten miles over the summit into the waters of the Bell River, a tributary of the Porcupine, the latter a tributary of the Yukon, all flowing to the Pacific, and I had brought along a good Peterborough canoe for the purpose.

There were a few Indians at McPherson who had recently come over from near Rampart House on the Alaskan boundary and who were willing to engage in assisting me on my way, but they said that owing to the low state of the water it would take

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us three weeks to get to Bell River via Rat Creek with my canoe. They had come over the long portage of eighty miles leaving their birch bark canoes at Bell River, and they advised me to allow them to carry my outfit and supplies over this trail to their landing place, and that as one of their canoes was a large one I could have room in it while making the journey down to Rampart House. This seemed a wise course and I arranged with them for the trip.

On Tuesday, July 24, at 3.30 P.M., we crossed the Peel River to where the trail starts. Here we made up our packs. Altogether our party consisted of four Indians and one squaw. The latter carried only a small pack but took charge of our three dogs, the latter also each carrying a pack of about thirty pounds.

It was 5.30 P.M. when all was arranged and we climbed up the steep bank of the Peel and commenced our overland journey. The weather was sultry and threatened rain which finally overtook us. Our path was for a few miles through a rather stunted forest which to a certain extent protected us, but as we got away from the river the



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trees became smaller and more scattered till finally at about ten o'clock we found ahead of us a dreary Arctic swamp covered only with a short growth of grass mixed with low shrubbery. This was the tundra so often mentioned by Arctic travellers. The grass grows in hummocks known as *tête de femme* (woman's head). The trail is generally covered with some water, and one is often tempted to try to step from one to another of these tufts of grass, but as the somewhat larger head rests on a slender neck you will soon prefer to wade along the narrow path, after perhaps having a few tumbles, which, to any one loaded with a pack, is not a pleasant experience.

Before entering the open at about 10 P.M. and seven miles from our starting-point, as the rain was increasing, we determined to camp for the night. This was accomplished with some difficulty as the wind had great strength as it blew uninterruptedly in from the dreary waste stretching away to the north and west of us. However, with the assistance of Mr. Stefansson, who accompanied me this far we finally succeeded in getting my tent up and made fast in the swampy soil.

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I have already referred to Mr. Stefansson, as one who no doubt will be heard more of in the future. It is now over five years since we bade each other good-bye on that dreary night, and ever since he has lived almost constantly along the Arctic coast, collecting information which it is hoped he may return to publish. He is at present somewhere in that barren region busily studying the ethnological characteristics of that strange race which probably at some time in its past history was driven by its enemies beyond the habitable land to seek shelter on these islands and capes which they have now grown to love so dearly that they would not exchange them for any other.

There seems no reason for this except the sentiment that is enshrined in the word "Home." A sentiment that is world wide and which every race on earth holds dear.

*"The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone  
Proclaims the happiest land his own,  
The naked negro panting on the line  
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine."*

It rained all night and during the early

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morning, but cleared up about ten o'clock when we prepared to resume our journey.

I had engaged the Indians to carry my outfit across the portage, thence in their canoes to Rampart House, for a certain sum, and had paid them in advance at Fort McPherson. In addition to the four Indians and squaw whom I have mentioned, a young man had joined the party on starting, and assisted thus far on the journey.

While we were packing up in the morning this individual in a rather defiant manner approached me and in fair English informed me that it would be impossible, without his assistance, for the others to carry all that I was bringing; at the same time asking me what I proposed to pay him for helping them across. I realised that I had to act firmly. I would gladly have engaged him, but I felt that it was, to use a common phrase, "a hold up," and that if I allowed him to intimidate me at this early stage in the journey there was no telling what he might attempt next. My authority with the others would be weakened and they would look on him rather than myself as leader of the party. I told him that all the loads had been

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weighed before starting from the post, that his people had been given all they asked for the work, and that if they wanted his assistance it rested with them to pay him. In a somewhat angry tone he said "that was not the way for a white man to talk, and that if I did not pay him he would go ahead light and make the journey in half the time we would." I then told him that he must provide for himself, as I did not want him in our party. With this he hurriedly gathered up his blankets and a little dried meat he had, and with his gun started ahead, and we saw no more of him. I felt greatly relieved when he left, and after this I heard not the slightest complaint from any one of the party, though they were heavily loaded; so much so that I could not refrain from assisting them myself, and the fact was that from this point across I believe I bore my fair share with the rest, according to my strength, though in real weight I only took a small fraction of what one of the men carried. This particular Indian and his wife, who was with us, were really fine specimens of their race. Both were young, of splendid stature, and really good looking, and though he must have

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carried over 100 pounds across that eighty miles, it was all done without any show of irritability but with the utmost good nature, while the wife also bore her share without complaint.

We did not get started on this, our second day on the trail, till 11 o'clock, but travelled till 8.30 P.M. and camped on the bank of a small stream flowing southerly and emptying into a larger one flowing easterly into the Peel. The latter is known as La Pierre or "Stony Creek," and our trail lay in the valley of this stream all the way to the "great divide." The small stream where we camped was at this time only two rods wide and fifteen inches deep, but evidently is one of considerable size at other seasons of the year.

The weather was hot till late in the afternoon, when it turned cooler. My Indians informed me that on their trip across this portage a few weeks before they had suffered with the intense heat and lost some of their dogs in consequence of it.

This was about the same time that we had experienced the excessive heat on the Athabaska. Perhaps the reader will recall the

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extreme hot weather that I am informed was general throughout what I may call Southern Canada as well as the United States in the early part of July 1906. It would seem that this hot wave had extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean.

During this second day's journey the trail was generally through what might be called an Arctic swamp, but occasionally we would ascend an eminence, and on each occasion I cast a glance back where I could see Fort McPherson, but each successive time it grew more indistinct, till finally it was lost to view and the last link with civilisation in that direction was broken. It had seemed to me up to this time that something might happen which would prevent my getting across the portage and cause me to return to McPherson by the same route which I had previously taken. But the return would not have been by steamers, but in my canoe, which was still at McPherson. From now on, however, there was fortunately no looking backward.

On July 26 we started at 9 A.M. and travelled till 7 P.M., making about eighteen miles, and crossing another small stream in

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the afternoon. Our course still lay westerly up the same valley, with Stony Creek far below us to the left. The day was quite cool and the night decidedly so. We were now well up the mountains and some snow was seen in the ravines. This was the most fatiguing day of the trip. Though there was really no mountain climbing in the usual sense of the term, the continual gradual ascent was most wearisome, and right glad was I when the Indians threw off their packs on the bank of another small creek.

We left camp at 8.30 A.M. on Friday the 27th, and at 1 P.M. reached "the summit" of the Rocky Mountains at a height of 2600 feet above sea level in the pass, though the mountains on each side are from two to three thousand feet higher. Shortly after this we crossed a stream which flowed into one further south, similar in size to Stony Creek, but, of course, flowing westerly with its waters coursing on their way into the Pacific Ocean.

Immediately after crossing the height of land we found the travelling much easier, for we were now on the descent and though to the eye this was scarcely discernible, and the

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swamp was just as wet as before, yet, when we rested for the night I was by no means so tired as on the previous night, though we had travelled several miles farther. The weather was cool and (blessed boon) there were no mosquitoes. We passed over some snow on the hill sides, but without the least difficulty, as it was almost as hard as ice.

On Saturday the 28th we started at 8 A.M. and immediately forded the stream by which we had camped and in the valley of which we had been travelling since crossing the summit; it was of considerable size, but at this season was easily forded. Four miles further on we crossed the same stream again. The mountain scenery here was very beautiful, though the peaks are not so high as further south, though they probably attain an elevation of 5000 feet above sea level. No large glaciers are to be seen in this region, but considerable snow remains the year round on some of the peaks. At noon a high mountain lay directly in front of us to the west with great valleys both north and south of it. Following our trail as it bore off to the north to avoid this mountain, we finally came to the same stream again which



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we now crossed for the last time, now flowing to the north. It had evidently received a tributary since our last crossing, for its contents were much greater, and though its depth was not over eighteen inches the current was very rapid, and without the assistance of one of the Indians I fear I would have had trouble in making the ford. We camped immediately after crossing.

So far we had experienced no rain after the first night out, but this afternoon showed symptoms of an approaching storm, which I greatly feared, the swamps being bad enough even in dry weather. As we were wading through one of these the squaw asked me if I would travel the next day (Sunday). I did not wish to show them a bad example, while at the same time I disliked halting a whole day when the weather was threatening and our supplies of food were growing short, so I told her they could do as they chose in the matter. She immediately replied that Archdeacon Macdonald always told them it was not wrong to walk on Sunday when they were short of "grub." I told her Archdeacon Macdonald was a good man. She said "yes," and I knew then what they would do.

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On the following morning old John Quatlot, as faithful a man as I ever met, was up at an unusually early hour and had breakfast ready by about six o'clock. After this was over and before starting, I walked down along the stream a short distance, and, on my way back heard an old familiar hymn, and on approaching found all had joined in the religious service for this particular day. Each of them had his prayer and hymn book, while one who was a lay reader had with him Archdeacon Macdonald's translation of a portion of the scriptures. After the service was concluded they shouldered their packs and started again on the trail, and soon entered one of the worst swamps we had encountered. After this we made a slight ascent and then commenced the descent of a steep hill partially wooded, at the foot of which flowed the Bell River. We had at last, in less than five days, reached the end of the portage, the length of which was, as has been previously said, about eighty miles. I have only one further word to say about this trail, and it is to warn any one not to attempt the journey without a guide, even in summer, for there is very little travel over

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it, and the marks made in the swamps one year will be almost obliterated the next. In many places the path is covered with water, but there is no fear of miring anywhere, as perpetual frost is found less than a foot below the surface.

On the bank of the Bell we left the Indian, Charlie Fox, and his wife with their dogs, he having given us his canoe. After resting a day or two he intended to build a raft on which they would float down stream over a hundred and fifty miles to his home, at the junction of the Old Crow River with the Porcupine.

It was a pleasant sight to behold the calm waters of the Bell in front of us and to realise that by our journey of less than five days we had reached the waters flowing into the Pacific Ocean, but this pleasure was soon marred when I saw the canoes in which we were about to embark.

I had been assured that one of the three was a large craft capable of carrying two men with a lot of "dunnage," I had also expected that this one would be constructed on lines similar to those used in the east, where my man would sit in the stern and

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steer while I would have the pleasure of a comfortable seat in the bow and be able to assist with my paddle. But I soon realised that this would be impossible, as this canoe was built on the same lines as those I had seen at McPherson and at other points along the Mackenzie. They are very long and narrow with the bow and stern decked over similar to the Esquimaux kayak. In other respects they resemble a single scull without the sliding seat. The Captain, and the propeller of the craft, took his seat near the centre, and I was assigned one immediately behind him, so near him as to make it impossible for me to use a paddle. All I had to do was to sit perfectly still while my man did all the paddling and steering. The latter was done by his making about four strokes on one side and then changing his paddle to the other side. However, before starting, at my instance, they lashed the three canoes together by cross pieces, making a sort of catamaran, and we were soon gliding down stream at the rate of about four miles an hour, without any danger of capsizing, but with some feelings for poor Charlie Fox and his wife, who waved us good-bye until a turn

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in the river hid them from view. But this feeling of security did not last long. After a couple of hours we went ashore for lunch, and, to my dismay, on starting they insisted on disengaging the canoes and by no manner nor means could I induce them to desist from this determination. Finally we compromised on their agreeing to try how they would go separately, and if not satisfactory to again lash them together. With great reluctance I took my place in the largest canoe, weighed down in the centre to about three inches of the water. In a steady craft this would have been ample, but ours was about the most cranky of its species. On starting I thought it would be utterly impossible for us to continue this, but, once under way, the impetus made it a little steadier, and, as the water this afternoon was perfectly calm, we succeeded in making a landing in the evening without any accident, but with the firm determination on my part that we would revert to our former plan the next morning. In the evening we discussed the matter as best we could, considering their limited knowledge of English and my ignorance of their language. They tried to persuade me that there was less

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danger separately than when hitched together if the water became rough, as in that case it would splash up between the canoes and swamp them, but I soon learned that the real reason for their refusal was that they could go much faster separately, and they were in a great hurry to get to their homes before the run of the salmon was over.

### GAME AND FISH

Heretofore the principal talk all down the Mackenzie Valley has been of the bear, the moose and the caribou but once the Pacific waters are reached the salmon occupies the same place with the natives that the wheat crop does with the prairie settler. It forms the great staple of the country and stands between the inhabitants and starvation. Sir Alexander Mackenzie tells us of how he intimidated an Indian chief near the Pacific by informing him that Great Britain owned the ocean and that unless he treated him properly he would inform his king, who would stop the salmon from coming up the rivers. His threat had the desired effect.

The day was cloudy with some rain, but

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the men paddled hard and on till ten o'clock at night, and when we went ashore we were probably between twenty-five and thirty miles from where we started with the canoes.

The next morning, finding it useless to try to persuade them to connect their canoes, and seeing that they were making such fast time with them separated, I docilely took my place again, but I can never forget the few days during which I occupied this position. I was aware that there was perhaps little danger if I sat perfectly still, providing we did not strike a rock or snag in the river, but to sit perfectly still for about sixteen hours out of the twenty-four was most trying. If I made the slightest move my man would look round and though he said nothing there was an expression on his face which conveyed at once a reproof and a warning. If I could have had anything to do it would have been a great relief, but to sit upright without moving was exceedingly wearisome and moreover, after the fatiguing trip across the portage, once I was relieved of exercise, the monotony of the river journey made it almost impossible for me to resist falling asleep. This I dared not do, for the chances

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would be that once consciousness was gone I would make a move that would upset our frail craft. I have since read an account of a canoe trip made across Great Slave Lake over a hundred years ago, by one of the early traders, in a craft of the same kind, which graphically describes a similar experience, and in which the difficulty of keeping awake is emphasised.

Shortly after starting on the first day the Indians killed three wild geese, which made us an excellent meal, and, strange to say, during the excitement of the shooting, notwithstanding the greater risk, I forgot all sense of danger that was otherwise constantly with me.

We reached the mouth of the Bell and entered the Porcupine about 10 o'clock of the second day. The Bell at our start was perhaps a hundred yards or less in width, which increased as we approached its mouth, while the Porcupine where we entered it must have been three or four times as large. The colour of the water in the Bell, too, is darker than in the larger stream. Both streams, following the character of many of these northern rivers, have strong currents,



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but very few rapids. So much is this the case that even with our small canoes we had not a single portage to make all the way from our starting point down to Rampart House on the Alaska boundary, a distance of not less than 225 miles. Not only this, but from Rampart House down to the Yukon, a distance equally great, was made in a small row boat without a single interruption.

A fringe of small timber, principally spruce, lines the banks of both streams but does not extend far back.

The day was cool and cloudy with occasional light showers. The Indians, however, cared not for these, but paddled very hard all day, and till 9.30 at night, when we went ashore and camped at the mouth of Driftwood River, having made probably sixty miles. The land along the route so far was clay and gravel, but no matter what its quality the climate forbids successful agriculture. At less than a foot below the surface the ground is constantly frozen, even during the hottest summer months. The Indians killed several wild geese with very little effort. Most of them, notwithstanding the fact that they were full size, were unable to fly, owing to

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their wings not having yet attained sufficient strength. They merely chased the fowls to the shore and killed them when they attempted to climb the steep banks of the river.

On Tuesday, July 31, we left camp at 7 A.M. and made another long journey about the same distance as the day before, arriving at Old Crow River at 7 P.M., and killing eight or ten geese on the way; another twelve wearisome and uneasy hours. A raw wind with showers made travelling very uncomfortable during the whole day, but the Indians had set their hearts on reaching their home that night and nothing would stop them.

Both the Bell and Porcupine are very crooked, so much so that the distance is probably three times as great by following the windings of the stream as it would be in a straight line, and while the wind assisted us on certain stretches, this was more than counter-balanced by the delay it caused us on others, and I was in almost constant fear that our canoes would be swamped.

The high cut banks of the Porcupine when seen at a distance through a haze or light fog take on the most fantastic shapes,

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frequently resembling great buildings of all styles of architecture, and it is impossible for me to adequately describe an illusion of this kind that met our view as we approached the Indian encampment at the mouth of the Old Crow River.

It was a cloudy hazy evening with a stiff wind from the north and, as we rounded a point leading up to the encampment, a great city apparently lay a few miles away, with piers and vessels in front and buildings of various kinds extending far back from the shore. There was a church with its spire so real in its appearance as almost to persuade me that my Indians had been over modest in not informing me of their skill in architecture. It was a most bewildering sensation and gave me some anxious thoughts. Could it be that the strain that I had undergone, especially during those last few days, produced by fear and anxiety, was causing such visions to appear, or was it the prelude of a catastrophe that seemed any moment likely to happen as our little canoe was at this very time attempting to ride waves on this stretch of the river which it seemed foolhardy to attempt?

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Altogether the situation was to me most perplexing.

This illusion was kept up for fully half an hour, though varying somewhat in appearance. I watched the panorama till finally through the haze one portion of the high bank after another gave up its fancied appearance and resumed its true character, when, instead of the castellated city, which in this vision I had pictured as the home of the Indians, I saw only about forty half-starved creatures out on the bank to welcome us, while behind among the trees were a dozen dilapidated tents; the entire surroundings indicating want and starvation, sickness and a struggle for existence known only to those who are condemned to live in this Arctic land.

### AN INDIAN CAMP

Before reaching the village one of my men fired off his gun as a signal of our approach. This was quickly answered, and shortly after our three canoes landed and John Tizzard, his son Jacob, and old John Quatlot, my three companions, were welcomed by their friends.

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One old squaw, the wife of John Quatlot, instead of exhibiting joy at their return seemed overcome with grief and commenced a fearful tale of woe, which led me to think that some, if not all their family had died during her husband's absence. I soon perceived that old John paid little attention to what she said. I had not yet become acquainted with the practice of these people on meeting each other, which is first to tell all the troubles they have had since parting.

The first thing done was to make tea. Then all partook of a meal, which under the circumstances was a very scanty one indeed. Then a hymn was sung and a thanksgiving service offered up, which certainly seemed very appropriate. After this there was so much to relate that the short twilight had given place to the dawning of another day before they retired to rest.

So anxious were they all to hear the news on our arrival that I had difficulty in getting any assistance in putting up my tent. Finally a young man came over and helped me for a few moments and then hurried back, evidently anxious not to miss any of the

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news. Of course I understood but little of what was said, but I heard over and over again the names of Bishop Bompas and Mary Christie, for they all knew the late beloved Bishop and some of them were related to the young wife whose death at Edmonton I have already mentioned. My supplies were nearly exhausted and dry bread and tea had to suffice for my supper.

The Indian always expects a feast when a white man visits him, and great was their disappointment when I failed to gratify their anticipations.

The weather cleared up during the night, and when I awoke in the morning and walked out from my tent with the sun shining in all its Arctic splendour the view was more than charming. Our camp was on a point some forty feet above the river, and, below, the calm waters glistened in the sunlight like a sea of glass. What a change from the night before; when the same waters, angered by the north wind, threatened our little canoes and caused me an hour of downright fear such as I had never before experienced. For miles and miles the river could be traced, winding through the valley land, while far

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beyond were the mountains with their snow capped peaks, one beyond the other as far as the eye could reach.

What a smiling morning! All nature was so tranquil, that any forebodings for the future were too pessimistic, and one could scarcely even feel lonely or isolated. To add to the picture the Indians were seen out on the river in their little canoes, at home in their favoured vocation—fishing for the salmon. Altogether it was such a scene that the contemplation of it even yet brings the keenest enjoyment.

When the canoes came ashore they were fairly well laden with the choicest of fish. Owing to the state of my larder I was particularly glad of their success. I bought a few, giving them money and a little tea in exchange and promised them that when I got to Rampart House, where I expected to get fresh supplies, I would send them a present, especially of tea and tobacco. An Indian camp is always in a starving condition if it is out of these two articles. The order of supplies are, first tea, next tobacco, then meat and lastly flour.

In every Indian village along the whole

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route it was disheartening to see so many of the people sick and without any means of getting medical treatment, but this encampment was perhaps the worst of any in this respect, and the appeals for medicine were most urgent. They know nothing as to what remedies should be taken for any specific ailment, but think that any kind of medicine should cure any disease in the calendar. I remember an incident at Fort Frances many years ago. A young Indian who had a sprained wrist, insisted that by taking painkiller inwardly he was greatly relieved, saying that it went down his throat and then right down to his wrist. Probably the spirits in this remedy was what he liked most, but I have known them to take other remedies that certainly were not palatable, where the effect was as remote from the ailment as in the former case.

During our trip I heard much from John Quatlot regarding his son Elias. The poor old Indian seemed very proud of his boy, as well as of his given name, which he took pains to tell me was in the Bible. John Tizzard seemed to regard this as a boast, and on one occasion made the remark that the

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name Jacob, by which his own son was known, was also in the Bible.

Quatlot informed me, too, that his son had other accomplishments. He was a good hunter, a good Christian, and he could talk to me in English. I was further informed that he was an expert canoe man, and of this I would have proof as he intended having him take me in his big canoe from Old Crow to Rampart House, the old man explaining that he was tired and needed a rest after his long journey.

My expectations, however, were doomed to disappointment on several points. Elias spoke sufficient English to ask me how much I intended to give him for his proposed services. I had already paid considerably more than I had promised, and the agreement was that they should take me to Rampart House, so I told him that in this case he was taking the place of his father, who needed a rest; that I was not anxious that he should come except to relieve his father; and that it rested with himself to say whether he wished to come or not. At this he seemed very much displeased, and the old man himself made ready to start. It was really pain-

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ful to see how chagrined he felt at his son's conduct ; not so much for the work he was compelled to do, as for the unfavourable impression which he knew I had formed regarding his boy. He said very little for some time, but his affection for Elias was stronger than his resentment, and in his very broken English he at length tried to make excuses for him, saying he was a good boy but that he was not well enough to come.

### A VISIT TO RAMPART HOUSE

About ten o'clock in the morning we started. Our party now consisting of Jacob in a single canoe and old John and I in another, John Tizzard remaining with his people at the Old Crow encampment. There was no big canoe, however, and I took my place behind the old man in the same one that had carried me before, but as it was not quite so heavily loaded I felt more comfortable. The day continued fine throughout, the water was without a ripple, the current strong, and we glided down the tortuous course of the stream at almost steamboat speed. At night we reached a

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point near the entrance of Blue Fish River, a long distance from our start in the morning, and camped on the beach. The Porcupine is here about sixty rods wide, and the water becomes clearer as the stream descends. The night was clear and calm. This was the first of August, over a month beyond the summer solstice. Consequently the period of perpetual daylight was passed and the stars were faintly visible for an hour or more before and after midnight.

I had a restful and refreshing sleep with less forebodings of accident than I had enjoyed since starting with the canoes. Tomorrow we should reach Rampart House if all should go well. There is one point, however, on this stretch of the river which we were told at McPherson might prove dangerous because of a partially submerged rock in a short rapid. I talked this over as best I could with my two men, but they told me there would be no danger at the existing depth of the water. This we afterwards found to be the case.

On Thursday, August 2, another lovely summer day, we left camp at 8.45 A.M. In a few hours the river narrowed to less than

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half its usual width, and the current correspondingly increased, carrying us along at great speed. We were now in the upper ramparts of the Porcupine. Though not to be compared in grandeur with those of the Mackenzie, they nevertheless possess characteristics that are entirely unique. The stream winds around between sandstone banks, and at every turn in the descent, new scenes open up to view that are very tempting to the photographer. At noon we saw a tent on the beach, and as we approached found it occupied by a white man, the first we had seen since leaving McPherson. He was engaged in fishing, laying up his winter supply for himself and his dogs.

I soon learned that he was a member of a distinguished family of Eastern Canada, the son of a man to the foresight and energy of whom the city and Port of Montreal are greatly indebted. He had wandered far from his old home and associates through this northern wilderness, strangely infatuated with the wild life and the charm which it possesses. He informed me that he was expecting an appointment as Customs officer from the Dominion Government for Rampart House

## AND UP THE YUKON

on the Alaska boundary, and I told him that I had seen what was undoubtedly his commission with the forms appertaining to his office many times on our way down to Fort McPherson, as the mail bag was opened at the different posts, and that it was then awaiting him at the Fort on Peel River. Whether he received these precious documents or not I am unable to say. About an hour after we beheld a few log buildings on the right bank of the river, and were greeted by the barking of dogs and a cordial welcome from the inhabitants of this isolated village, Rampart House. We had looked anxiously forward to our arrival here for two reasons: first because our supplies of food were all but entirely exhausted, and secondly it was here where I hoped to be able to discard those cockle shells of canoes for more comfortable craft.

The white man whom we met an hour before, however, while holding out some hopes of my getting a row boat from a half breed, conveyed to me the unwelcome information that the season's provisions had not yet reached the post, and that I would probably have to be satisfied with obtaining

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only a little dried meat; that they might have a little tea and tobacco left also, but that they were absolutely out of flour, the very article I was needing most.

Just as we reached the landing I saw a large row boat tied up at the shore, on which were a few white men. They were bound for the Upper Porcupine, where they intended to spend the autumn and winter in trapping, and also in exploring for mineral in that region. I saw one of the men sitting in his boat with an Indian at his side, busily obtaining such information as he could get of the geography of the upper river country, with which he was a stranger. From the instruction given him he was endeavouring to construct a map, which I soon saw would be of little service to him. It so happened I had with me a lithographed map conveying just the information he needed. Here was my opportunity, and it was not long till we had made a bargain. For a few pounds of flour I handed over the map, which was of no further use to me, but which I had little doubt would be of great service to him; a good illustration of the fact that barter between individuals is frequently profitable to both parties.

## AND UP THE YUKON

Rampart House is in Canadian territory, but the 141st meridian which divides our territory from that of Alaska is only a few hundred yards west of the post. In fact the surveyed line between the two is within sight of the village. It was formerly a post of the Hudson Bay Company, but is now occupied by Mr. Dan Cadzow, an independent trader. He was at this time absent from his post, having gone to Dawson City some time before for his winter's stock of supplies. He was expected back any day, and his return was eagerly looked for by the few people of the post as well as by the Indian hunters of the district, all of whom were dependent on him for many of the necessaries of life.

A French Canadian, bearing the Hibernian name of Healy, was the only white man at the post during Cadzow's absence and was in charge of the store—if such it could be called. Shortly after my arrival, on learning that I was from Ottawa, he confidentially informed me that he was expecting the appointment of Customs officer and beseeched me to urge his claims for the position. The fact of there being two aspirants for an office that certainly could not be a remunerative

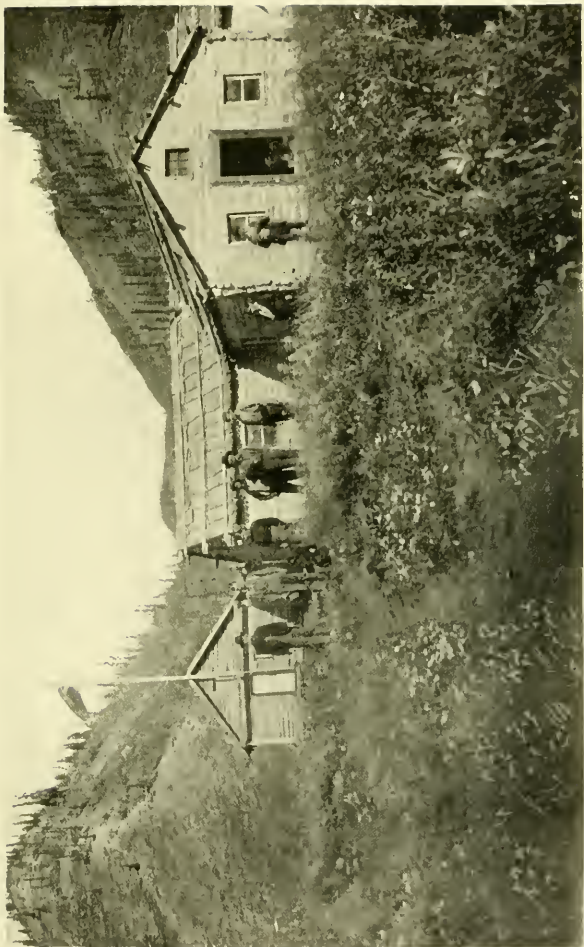
## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

one was a reminder that I was approaching civilisation. Beyond the prestige that the office might give to the holder among the Indians and half breeds of the district, I could not see why any one should wish to hold it. Healy could not speak the Loucheaux tongue, the language of the country himself, but his better half, an Indian woman, known by the "classic name" of Big Mary, possessed as he said "Les Deux Langues," and was the interpreter for the post.

It was difficult for me to realise that within the comparatively short period of nine days I had travelled fully 300 miles through a most inhospitable wilderness, and it was a relief to know that from here on I would probably have no longer to endure the anxiety that had attended me from day to day ever since leaving the Peel river at McPherson.

Great news greeted us on our arrival here. Some hunters had come in from the mountains to the North bearing a report that the caribou had arrived. They had already shot eleven and could have had many more but that they were short of ammunition. It was pleasant to see how this information cheered





RAMPART HOUSE ON THE PORCUPINE RIVER



## AND UP THE YUKON

up the poor natives. Instead of the sad and hopeless expression which had characterised nearly every one we had heretofore met, all now looked happy in anticipation of what was to come. The words which we had so often heard and which meant "short of meat," were now changed to "*plenty caribou*," the latter spoken in English.

Old John Quatlot spoke more English than I ever thought him capable of, as he made me understand that he was going to leave his canoe here and that he and Jacob would go back to their home over the mountains, where they would be sure to meet the caribou and lay in a winter's supply of meat.

Right glad was I to leave him in such a cheerful mood. Surely, if there is anything in the law of compensation, such a noble disposition as his deserved some recompense. I have long contended that there is just as great a diversity of character in individuals in savage as in civilised life, and this ignorant Loucheaux Indian possessed qualities that would adorn the life of the best in any society. As I bade him good-bye he took my hand in his and said that I would go

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away off to my home in the south while he would return to his at "Old Crow"; that by-and-by he would die and I would die, and that then we would make a long journey through the air; that finally we would meet, and the Great Spirit would join our hands again. Such simple childlike faith, coupled with such a warmth of feeling, was almost sublime.

## CHAPTER X

From Rampart House to Fort Yukon ; In Alaska :  
With Dan Cadzow's Party.

HAVING rested two days at Rampart House I hired a half breed with a row boat and started down stream at noon on August 4 and immediately crossed the 141st meridian and entered Alaska. We will now be under the flag of the United States for several hundred miles. It was a great relief to have a boat in which I could move about freely without any danger of upsetting it. Taking a seat in the stern I steered, and paddled also when I wished, while my man and a boy, whom he engaged, did the rowing.

About 5 P.M., at a distance of some twenty-seven miles, we passed the site of Old Rampart House, now abandoned, and at ten miles farther down we saw a tent on the beach, which proved to belong to a party of United States Geological Surveyors in charge of a Mr. Kindle of Washington, D.C. We camped

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here for the night and greatly enjoyed the company of our American cousins. We at once felt that, though still in this Arctic wilderness we had left behind us the misery and want as well as the dull monotony of semi-civilised life.

Starting the next morning at nine o'clock we soon left the Upper Ramparts of the Porcupine, those walls of rock which had enclosed the river for the last forty or fifty miles. The current was strong, and, though we camped earlier than usual on account of rain, we must have gone at least forty miles in eight hours' time.

The next morning, August 6, we left camp at seven o'clock and soon entered the Lower Ramparts, which extended for only five miles but were very beautiful. After this the country becomes level, the banks get lower, and the river widens considerably. The timber, principally of spruce, improves, resembling in size that growing along the Peel at McPherson.

This was a fine day and we made about sixty miles, camping at eleven o'clock, after sixteen hours of almost constant rowing and paddling. Notwithstanding this I felt much

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less fatigued than on any one of those anxious days of the week before, when my part was to do absolutely nothing.

On Tuesday, August 7, we started at 6 A.M. It proved a windy day, which somewhat retarded our speed. All appearances seemed to indicate that we were approaching a lake. The banks became low and the country flat. Instead of the fringe of spruce there was grass growing, often down to the water's edge, and, looking on either side, the appearance was different from anything we had seen for over 2000 miles. It resembled very much the flat prairie of the Red River below Selkirk but without the fertile soil. Instead of a lake, however, we were really approaching the Yukon Flats, but at the same time I venture the opinion that appearances were not very misleading, for in no very remote period a lake evidently had covered a large area in the neighbourhood of the junction of the Porcupine and Yukon.

There was during the forenoon a difference of opinion between my two men regarding our distance from Fort Yukon. One said that we could not reach there for two days,

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while the other, who had been twice over the route, contended that we should be at the mouth of the river that same night. My experience had taught me not to underrate distances, and I had about made up my mind that we should do well if we saw the Fort at any time the following day, but, to my surprise and satisfaction, on rounding an elbow in the stream, some well-known landmark appeared, and both men agreed that we were only a half day's journey from our objective point, so the oars were plied more vigorously than ever.

At about six o'clock in the evening, as we looked down the river and across the level land bounding it, we observed a sail in the distance, and an hour later we were taking a meal with Dan Cadzow's party.

They had camped for the night on a point in the river only a mile from its mouth, and had a very large boat laden with the supplies that had been so long looked for at Rampart House. They had come from Dawson City, nearly four hundred miles up the Yukon, but thus far they had been going with the current, whereas from now on for most of

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the remaining distance of over two hundred miles the towline would have to be used. This necessitated Cadzow's having with him a party of about a dozen men. My men were greatly pleased. Each day since we started they had expected to meet this party, and they certainly had luck with them, for they at once engaged with Cadzow, who would make a start up the river on the following morning. Instead of having to "track" their own boat back they would hitch it behind the larger craft, and not only earn wages on their home trip, but what they valued even more, participate in the food with which this outfit was well supplied. It is difficult for the inexperienced dweller in old settled parts to understand the sense of satisfaction that these men felt when they realised that instead of working their own boat back with a little dried meat as the principal food, and with only a blanket apiece to cover them during the nights that were now becoming cold, they would not only be paid for their work, but also have an abundance of food prepared by one whom they said was the best cook in the country. Besides, they were supplied with large tents

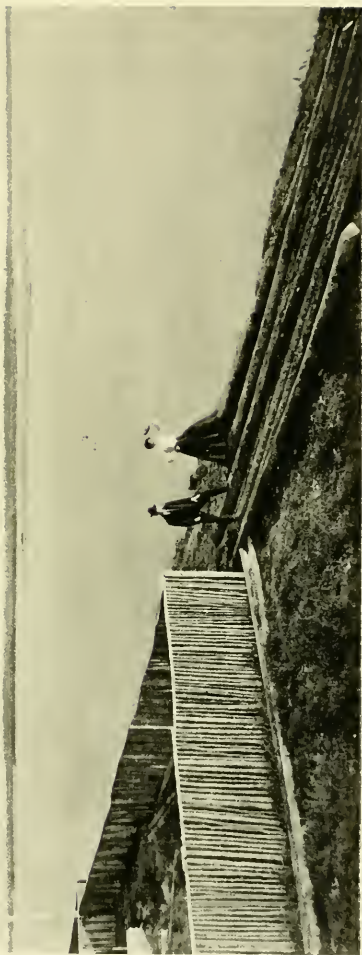
## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

and an abundance of blankets, and added to all was the company of their fellow men, which these people enjoy equally with those in other conditions of life. Their four days' hard rowing had gained for them a good reward.

After a good dinner we started again, Cadzow having to return to Fort Yukon for something he had forgotten there, accompanied us. It only took a few minutes to reach the mouth of the river, but as Fort Yukon lies on the Yukon River about two miles above the mouth of the Porcupine we soon realised the difference in going up instead of down stream.

It will have been noticed that in our whole course hitherto from Athabaska Landing to this point we had never once, with the exception of about thirty miles on the Peel river, had to contend with adverse river currents, but immediately we entered the Yukon conditions were entirely changed, and it took us fully an hour and a half of hard pulling and some tracking to make these two miles.

We reached Fort Yukon near midnight, just two weeks after leaving Fort McPher-



YUKON RIVER AT FORT YUKON



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son, and the reader can well imagine how pleased I was that I had again arrived at a point where steam navigation, with a short rail trip, would make the remaining journey less arduous.



## CHAPTER XI

The Ramparts of the Porcupine : An Unoccupied House ; A Girl's Unhappiness ; Awaiting an Upgoing Steamer : From Fort Yukon to Dawson City.

A FURTHER reference to the ramparts of the Porcupine may be permissible here. They are very picturesque, often rising to heights varying from fifty to two hundred feet. Frequently the river narrows to from five to eight hundred feet, in some cases much less ; and with frequent abrupt changes in the direction of the stream, they often appear when looking ahead, completely to block the river, and with the sunlight glistening on the rocks, and a haze rising from the water they exhibit the peculiar appearances already noticed.

The upper ramparts begin about ten or twelve miles above the Alaska boundary and extend down stream some forty or fifty miles. The rock formation as we descend is for the first twenty-five miles a hard sandstone and

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

quartzite, then changes to basalt for some distance, and below this, limestone and shale penetrate upwards through the basalt.

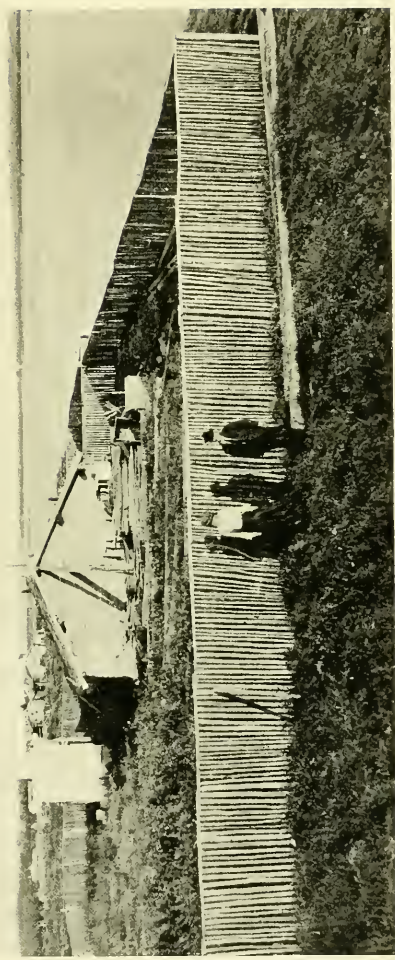
The lower ramparts begin some twenty or twenty-five miles below the end of the upper ramparts. The formation of the former is principally magnesian limestone and shales, the limestone being the predominant rock. The banks of the river between the upper and lower ramparts are composed of clay, sand, and gravel.

When at Rampart House I had learned something of what to expect in the way of accommodation at Fort Yukon. Under ordinary circumstances it would not have been anything to look forward to with very much pleasure, but compared with what I had recently experienced it was quite reassuring. Jim Healy was kind enough to give me a key to an unoccupied road house which he said he owned and where I could sleep. He also informed me that I could probably get my meals at the home of a half breed who was a relative of his wife.

On ascending the bank we were greeted by the usual barking of dogs, and shortly after a few Indians and one white man, the



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FORT YUKON IN ALASKA



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latter a storekeeper, came down to the landing, but it was growing dark, and I felt like getting to rest for the night. I repaired to the road house, unlocked the door, and fortunately found an old coal oil lamp by the light of which I explored the premises, then unpacking my blankets and spreading them on a cot in one of the rooms, I was soon prepared for a much-needed sleep. It was some time, however, before unconsciousness came to me, but it was delightful and refreshing to reflect that I had at last, after just a fortnight's hard work, succeeded in reaching a point where all I had to do was simply to wait for a steamer in order to continue my journey. Finally I fell asleep and did not waken till about eight o'clock the next morning. The sun was shining in all its Arctic brilliancy; the sky was without a cloud and the great river in front flowed swiftly on without a breeze to disturb its glassy surface. I found my temporary home was one of perhaps thirty log houses which, with a few frame buildings, mostly all unoccupied, comprised the village.

My first task was to look around for a meal, and, naturally, I went for information

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to the white storekeeper, thinking he might be able to favour me, but it was the old story. His supplies had not yet arrived, and he was on short rations himself. I then informed him that I had been recommended to apply to a half breed family, but he advised me to try at the other store farther down the river, as the lady of this house was a white woman whose cooking would probably be more to my taste than what I could get at the other place. I took his advice, and soon after presented myself at the door of the house, which, to my surprise, was opened by a good looking and well dressed young lady, and on telling her the object of my visit she said they were also short of supplies, but that she would be glad to accommodate me as best she could during my short stay in the village.

I was asked in and introduced to the Post Office Inspector for Alaska—the ubiquitous government official again. He was also waiting for the first boat to Dawson City, and in the meantime was occupying another road house, but receiving his meals here also. Though we had to do without meat, we had canned salmon and fresh fish in abundance

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with some vegetables such as peas, potatoes, lettuce, beans, beets, &c. These were grown in a little garden on the south side of the building. This is worthy of mention, as Fort Yukon is a few miles north of the Arctic Circle and farther north than I had seen any such growth east of the mountains.

We meet young men, enticed by the love of adventure or of gold in nearly every border settlement and in regions even more remote than these, who, in their early years, knew only the luxuries of city life, but who now are enduring hardships undreamed of by their parents at home. But to find a young woman scarcely passed the period of girlhood condemned to a life of exile such as my hostess was enduring is rare indeed.

How came she here ?

I can only give the story as told to me.

In one of the wholesale stores in New York City on a certain day in midsummer, when the heat was almost intolerable, a customer presented himself ; his object being to make purchases for his establishment in far away Alaska.

Instead of being in the garb of a frontiersman he was faultlessly attired in the latest

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fashions of the great metropolis. Instead of the blanket coat and toque, he wore a frock coat and silk hat and carried a cane, the shaggy hair and long beard which had helped to protect him from the Arctic winds of the far north were carefully trimmed, and by artificial means changed from their natural colour becoming a man of over seventy years to one of less than half that age. In short, to use an expression common in the north-west, he was "properly toggled out for business."

After making some selection in other departments he was introduced by the proprietor to the young lady in charge of the millinery branch. The first topic of conversation was, of course, the weather and the depressing heat of the city. This opened to him a chance to boast of the "cool breezes" for which his country is justly famed. He then drew a romantic picture of his beautiful home on the bank of the Yukon. All of which had its desired effect, with the result that within a fortnight a newly-married but mismated couple were on their way to the land of the midnight sun, but rumour had it that the romance was ended long before

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they reached the palatial residence of which she had heard so much. It proved to be a long shanty fairly well furnished for such a locality, but without a single attractive feature in the surroundings save the great river, which flowed by the door, and reminded her somewhat of her old home. His sons and daughters by a former wife, who were older than herself, failed to recognise her, and through their influence even the half breeds mistrusted her.

Such I understood was the state of affairs at the time of my visit. Evidently this could not last and I subsequently learned that taking advantage of the absence of the Lord of the Manor on a certain day, she boarded a passing steamer for the outside world, and she has probably ere this resumed her former vocation either in her native city or somewhere else, but far from the land, the lure of which had captivated her youthful fancy.

I have already stated that Fort Yukon is a few miles north of the Arctic Circle. Its longitude is also a little over 145 degrees west of Greenwich, and the local time is about four and a half hours slower than at

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Ottawa. Perhaps many who are tolerably familiar with the geography of Canada would be surprised to learn that even Fort McPherson, which lies east of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains is much farther west than any part of Vancouver Island, while Fort Yukon is ten degrees farther west still. Even in our journey to Fort McPherson we changed time twice, about half an hour each time, and notwithstanding this on our arrival there we found the local time an hour slower than that used in the most westerly part of Canada. The reason is apparent. Our general course down the Mackenzie had been considerably west of north, and as we ascend towards the pole the convergence of the meridians so increases that a degree is soon passed over.

I watched eagerly for the arrival of an up-going steamer, but three days passed without anything appearing larger than a canoe; then finally, a large steam craft appeared, and I made preparations for leaving, but it was soon revealed that she was only going a part of the way to Dawson and it was useless to take passage on her. After five days of patient waiting, on a Saturday afternoon,

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a whistle was heard, and at once the *Lavelle Young*, from Tanana, a mining town down the river, appeared in view. I was not long in securing a passage and soon took leave of this sleepy village.

The Yukon River for seventy-five miles below Fort Yukon, and probably as far above, is many miles in width, forming what is known as the Yukon Flats. This portion of the river is almost filled with islands and partly submerged land, and it would be unwise for any one unacquainted with the proper courses to attempt its ascent without a guide, as he would be almost certain to get into wrong channels. As before stated, these flats have evidently once formed the basin of a large inland lake.

The Yukon is a swift flowing stream, especially after leaving the flats, and as the machinery of our steamer was partially disabled we were five days in making the trip to Dawson. The passengers were largely made up of miners from down the river. I secured a state room along with two other men, who, however, left me as sole occupant during each night, they being busily employed at playing cards in the cabin, and I

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

understood one of them succeeded in ridding himself of the greater part of the results of his two years' hard labour in the mines before we arrived at our destination.

We crossed the international boundary on the forenoon of August 17 and again entered Canadian territory which I had left at Rampart House twelve days before, and at five o'clock of the same day arrived at the most important place on the river, the far-famed Dawson City.

## CHAPTER XII

Dawson City ; In Civilisation Once More ; High  
Prices ; To Whitehorse on the *Dawson* ; Gamblers'  
Tricks.

SOME one has defined enjoyment as the reflex of successful effort, and another has said that pleasure is largely a matter of comparison. That there is much truth in both remarks is unquestionable and the five days I remained at Dawson were the most serene and restful I had ever experienced. To be sure there were many stages where conditions had constantly improved since that anxious and wearisome time in the canoes ; first the visit at Rampart House, next the trip in the row boat to Fort Yukon, then the rest in the road house there, followed by the trip on the *Lavelle Young*. The few days' passage on the latter should have been pleasant but unfortunately this ship had seen her best days, and very soon after starting it was

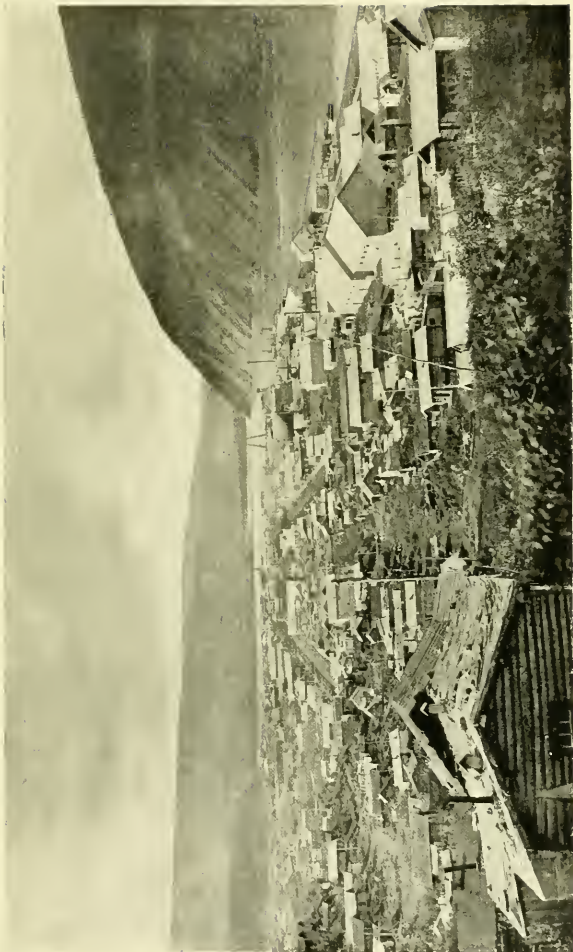
## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

noticed that through the opening of some old break the lower deck was half filled with steam, and the farther we went the worse it got. This not only lessened her speed by one half but caused us considerable uneasiness during nearly the whole passage. It was not pleasant to contemplate that after all, my trip might end up by a boiler explosion.

But here at Dawson I had again reached civilisation, where I received letters from home, the first since leaving Edmonton nearly three months previously. I also availed myself of the telegraph and set at rest any anxiety that my friends at home may have felt for my safety.

There were minor things that were necessary to transform me from the bushman of the north to a passable member of Dawson society. First the barber devoted his attention to me to the extent of a dollar and a half. I suppose it was worth it. On returning from the enjoyment of this civilising process I noticed in a shop window some newspapers presumably for sale, and it dawned on me that something might have occurred in the outside world during my

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DAWSON CITY



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absence, so I bought a copy of a *Toronto Journal* about two weeks old and one of *Vancouver* of the week before, for which I paid the moderate sum of fifty cents. This reminded me that I was in a golden city. It also reminded me of the early days in Winnipeg before the copper coins were introduced. It was during the boom of 1882, when every one in Ontario thought himself unfortunate if he were not the possessor of some soil in the west. On a certain morning a gentleman who had only arrived in Winnipeg the night before stepped out from his hotel and met a newsboy from whom he took a copy of the *Manitoba Free Press* handing the vendor a cent in payment. The youngster looked at the coin and then handed it back with the remark for him to keep it as he might need it when he went back to Ontario. In Dawson they look with disdain on any currency of a smaller denomination than "two bits"—twenty-five cents.

I remained five days at Dawson waiting for a boat to Whitehorse, and, during that time had an opportunity of visiting the mines in its vicinity and of hearing the wonderful stories of the fortunes made by the pioneers from

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

the sands of the Klondike and its tributaries. But the day for the hand miner with his rocker has passed and instead hydraulic mining and dredging has taken its place. The Guggenheims and others have purchased most of the old claims and it is interesting to witness the great streams of water tearing down the earth of the hillsides and revealing the old cribbing which the former proprietor had erected when the Dawson camp was the wonder of the continent.

The pioneers, as they deserved, got wonderful returns of coarse gold and exhausted the richest earth, but the men of capital still find sufficient left to reward them liberally for operations on a larger scale. The bed rock along the streams and the bottom land along each side is a soft mica schist easily scooped out with dredges; this almost invariably carries a fair percentage of gold, quite sufficient to bring a good margin of profit when so worked whereas it would not pay expenses if worked under the old system. What struck me very forcibly was the way in which the timber had been completely stripped from the hills, the larger for building purposes, for mining props and



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for fuel, and the brush for building embankments to hold the tailings. Look in whatever direction you would and scarcely a green twig could be seen, and spruce wood for fuel was selling when I was there for thirteen dollars a cord.

The journey from Dawson City to Whitehorse, some 460 miles, was comfortably made on a well equipped steamer, the *Dawson*. She left on Wednesday evening, August 22, and we arrived at Whitehorse on Sunday afternoon, August 26, and on the following morning at 9.30 we took the train for Skagway, arriving there at 4.30 P.M.

This road, which is 111 miles in length, is a narrow gauge, but the road bed is good and the cars comfortable. Along the route as far as the south end of Lake Bennet there is nothing specially worthy of note. The soil is generally sandy. Jackpine and spruce, of little value for lumber, are seen along the track. After leaving Bennet, the road winds up the mountain to the summit of the pass, which is 2897 feet above the sea. Here we pass again into United States territory. The road descends twenty-one miles with a very steep grade to Skagway,

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

at tidewater on an arm of the Lynn canal. The trip between Bennet and Skagway affords some exceedingly fine mountain scenery. In many places we pass near the snow line, and from Skagway a large glacier is visible. The country is almost devoid of timber. The rocks are granite, and in no part have I seen a more desolate landscape. Looking out of the car window as we glided swiftly down grade following a little mountain stream, we could see across the ravine the old trail of 1897, clinging close to the mountainside, while at short intervals were the abandoned bunk houses where the weary gold seeker sought shelter at night and freely parted with his coin for the privilege of spreading his blankets on a rough wooden floor.

Along this trail passed men from every country in Europe and America as well as a number from Eastern Asia each speaking a different tongue but all pressing forward to the Mecca of their hope and all with the one idea that of gaining riches from this great Northern Eldorado. If those old buildings could speak what tragedies they would reveal. Many a young man, so the story

## AND UP THE YUKON

goes, seeing his purse so depleted when he had reached Skagway that it would be impossible for him to reach his destination, soon beheld by the wayside a gambler's chance of escape from his difficulties. There was always on hand an engaging young man to sympathise with him and to relate an experience similar to his own.

Then would come the interesting story of his success at cards through having learned the gamblers' tricks. These he would impart to his new found friend who would introduce him to his comrades. There is no use pursuing the story further. The poor victim with an empty pocket book, and finding his hopes and dreams of great wealth all shattered, frequently the battle ended in a tragedy. The stories of those days, as sometimes related by the pioneers, are sad indeed.



## CHAPTER XIII

From Skagway to Vancouver ; On the *Princess May* :  
Fort Simpson ; Prince Rupert ; End of the Journey.

THE ocean voyage between Skagway and Vancouver is so well known that I need only refer to it briefly. Nearly the whole course is so sheltered on the one side by the main land, and on the other by islands, almost innumerable, that it was easier to fancy that we were back on the *Wrigley* threading the islands of the Mackenzie rather than that we were on the waters of the great Pacific.

The fine C.P.R. steamer *Princess May* was waiting at the dock at Skagway when we arrived, and at 8 P.M. on Monday, August 27, we started for Vancouver. I was sorry that the trip down the Lynn canal was made at night, and a very dark one at that, which prevented our having a view of the glaciers that otherwise would have been visible. Tuesday was a dull, rainy day

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

without anything of interest to record. The steamer called at Fort Simpson early on Wednesday morning, and passed Kaein Island, the site of the future city Prince Rupert, in the forenoon, but did not stop. A little later we called at Port Essington but the tide was out and our steamer was unable to reach the dock. Further on we called at Caxton where there is a very large cannery and where we took on a quantity of canned salmon. On Thursday, at 6 A.M., we called at Bella Bella, and at 3 P.M. at Alert Bay on Vancouver Island, to see the totem poles of the Indian village there.

Fort Simpson deserves more than a passing reference. It was for many years the chief place on the west coast north of Victoria, and it had for some time great hopes of being the western terminus of the G.T.P. Railway. This last aspiration has, however, been blasted by the selection of Prince Rupert, twenty-five miles farther south, but, as in many other small places, the few residents have an abiding faith that their town will yet be a great city outrivalling any other from San Francisco north, and they now pin their faith on the Canadian Northern

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INDIAN CHILDREN AT FORT SIMPSON





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Railway making this their northern ocean port.

Fort Simpson enjoys the distinction of being the home of a band of Indians who surpass any I have ever seen in the east in general intelligence as well as in their advancement in civilisation. Fully three fourths of the inhabitants of the village are native Indians of the Tsimpsonian tribe. They are not only industrious but also frugal; live in good frame houses painted white and all numbered. In front of the dwelling usually stands a totem pole with its strange hieroglyphics. These dwellings are for the most part comfortably furnished. I had not the privilege of seeing the interior of a very fine looking house owned by the chief of the band, but was informed that the furniture cost several thousand dollars.

In addition to the village house most of the families have a small plot of land outside the town with a small house erected on it where they spend part of the summer cultivating vegetables for their use. The community owns a saw mill that supplies them with lumber. The affairs of the village are managed by a council presided over by

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their chief. I am unable to say whether they manage their public affairs as well as some of our municipalities do. They could scarcely be managed worse than some are. They can all speak English, but conversation among themselves is usually in their own tongue. They build and equip their own fishing and sail boats, of sufficient size to weather the heavy seas and tidal currents of the coast.

In the early spring they move out to their garden plot generally in a small valley sloping down to the sea. Here they plant their potatoes and other vegetables. Next comes the fishing season and the canneries rely largely on the catch made by these people. When the run of the salmon is plentiful, the money earned by a family with a good boat and plenty of nets is quite equal to the proceeds from an ordinary farm. The fishing season over, they next go south to the valleys of southern British Columbia and Washington State where they further increase their earnings by assisting in the hop fields there.

Then they return home in time to store their vegetables before the wet weather sets

## AND UP THE YUKON

in. Finally, the year is rounded off by the winter hunt. The result is that scarcely a family is without some ready money, while many have considerable, either kept safely at home or deposited in banks at Victoria or Vancouver.

Thanks to the enterprise of the early missionaries in establishing schools among these people they are now fairly well educated. The Anglican and Methodist churches were early in the field and the fruit of their labour is apparent.

Prince Rupert from its geographical position might be called the Canadian Vladivostock. Each city is the ocean terminus of a great transcontinental railway. Each can boast of a high northern latitude, and consequently lessened distances between meridians. Prince Rupert however, has a great advantage over its *vis-à-vis* in one particular. The Siberian Port is practically closed during the whole of the winter season, while the magnificent harbour at Prince Rupert, though many degrees farther north, is open the year round.

The Grand Trunk Pacific engineers searched diligently along this northern coast

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

to find a harbour worthy of such a railway. There were many places offering special advantages of situation but which perhaps lacked some essential qualification. Those of first importance were a depth of water covering a large area; shelter from the ocean; ease of access both by rail and water, and (on this coast, the most difficult of all) a good shore line for wharves with at least some adjacent land where a city could be built. It was finally decided that the north and east coast of Kaien Island fulfilled the requirements more nearly than any other point and the present site of Prince Rupert was selected. There is no question that few ports in the world offer greater attraction to the mariner; the area is large enough to accommodate the navies of the world, the approach is easy, and with few currents to trouble the navigator. The shelter is secure; the water deep and the wharves convenient. The approach by the railway too in the vicinity of the port is for miles along the sea almost on a level.

It has been said that the greater portion of British Columbia "stands on end," and certainly to no portion of the Province does

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this more aptly apply than to this northern coast, and there, perhaps, was never a case in the history of the world, a case where the initial cost in the building of a city was as great as it is there to-day. The land for about a mile and a quarter back from the shore is a succession of rock ridges with swampy land intervening. At the present time in order to make streets these rocks are being levelled down to afford a passable grade. In most cases this necessitates the cutting down of the adjacent lots to get a frontage on the street level. The amount of explosives being used for this purpose must be very great. Blasting is constantly going on and the visitor can easily fancy himself in a besieged town.

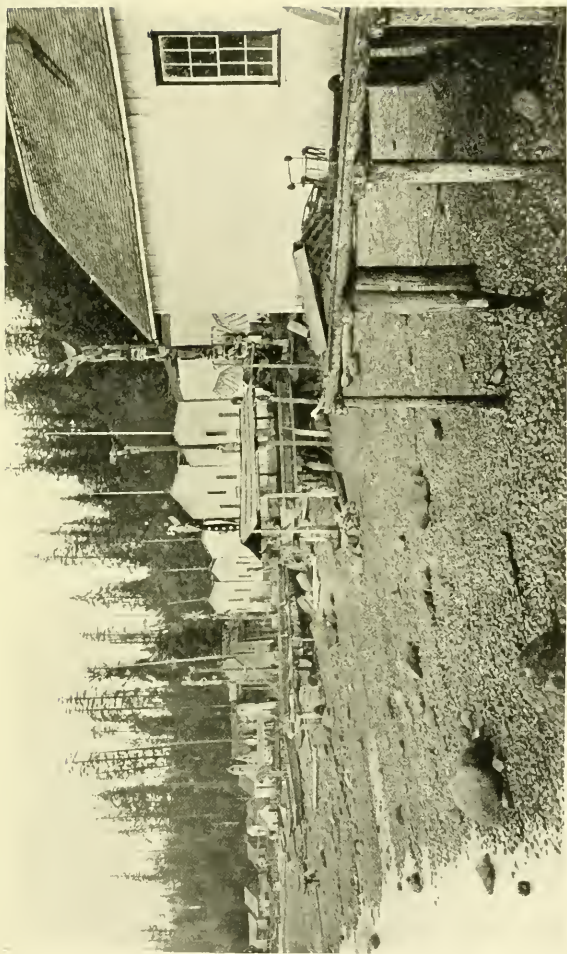
On waking on Friday morning, August 31, I found we were approaching Vancouver. It was a delightful morning, and as we entered the narrows and then passed around Brockton Point and entered Burrard inlet, we beheld that great modern city which, in a few years has risen from a small village to one of the foremost places in the Dominion. I felt that at last I was practically home again. The distance I had travelled from

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

Edmonton to this point was about 4250 miles, and had occupied a few days less than three months.

I had now time to look over my diary and to recall to memory many incidents which had received little attention at the time. In fact nothing counted for much then that did not aid me in what I had undertaken. My one idea was by some means to make the trip to the Arctic and return exactly as I had planned it, and in doing so every day had brought its duties, and there was little time to recall what was past. The present and the future took all our immediate attention. But now there was time and with it the inclination, to retrace every foot of the journey from start to finish.

What a panorama opened to view. There was the wearisome journey on the Athabaska ending at the "Lake of the Hills." Then opened to the mental vision the Slave River, Slave Lake and the Mackenzie ending at that strange but interesting Arctic village, McPherson. Then those anxious days on the trail over the mountains. Then the canoe trip on the Bell and Porcupine with three Indians. The encampment at Old



TOTUM POLES AT ALERT BAY ON VANCOUVER ISLAND





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Crow and next the arrival at Rampart House.

Then the somewhat pleasant trip still down the Porcupine till Fort Yukon is reached. The road house there. The slow trip up the Yukon to Dawson and finally the journey from Dawson to Vancouver. All these with the numerous incidents on the way passed before the vision. It was like the developing of a picture without the aid of any camera except that furnished by the human eye and recorded in the mind of the observer. And even yet, though several years have elapsed, those impressions of places, of people and of events frequently pass vividly in review before my mental vision. These impressions I have, with a feeble pen, attempted to develop for any who have had the patience to follow this review, but I am painfully conscious of my failure to pass on to my indulgent readers anything more than the bare outlines of a picture which to my own mind is not only vivid but intensely fascinating.



## PART II



## FOREWORD

IT may be well for me to add to the foregoing narrative a few brief general observations on certain characteristics and productions of the country, such as the climate, the soil, the minerals, the timber; of the animals, the fish, the wild fowl, that migrate there and breed during the summer months; and, lastly, of the native inhabitants, as well as the traders and missionaries who have for the last century or more made their home in the country.



## SECTION I

### CLIMATE

I HAVE already referred to the extreme heat which we experienced along the Athabaska River and at Fort Chippewyan, and that this hot wave extended beyond the Arctic Circle was testified to by Indians who suffered the loss of some of their dogs from this cause, on crossing the portage between the Bell River and Fort McPherson. Of course this was exceptional and lasted only a few days, but nevertheless, there is no question that for a couple of months in midsummer the aggregate amount of heat which is imparted by the sun's rays interrupted only for a few hours out of the twenty-four, and shining through a wonderfully clear atmosphere goes far to counter-balance what is lost by their refraction owing to the obliquity of their course in reaching the earth. The law of compensation here makes heroic efforts to assert its claim, and though it fails

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in giving to those regions an equality of heat, it does succeed to the last fraction in bestowing on every portion of the globe an equality of light, the great luminary gives to the Esquimaux exactly as much sunlight during the entire year as the dweller on the far off Amazon or the Nile. There is as much truth as poetry in the lines of the old song: "For taking the year all round my dear, There isn't more night than day."

We found it difficult when we got below the last obstruction to navigation, and began to make rapid progress to the north, to accustom ourselves to the changed conditions and to seek rest at the old accustomed hours, and frequently while waiting for the darkness, the midnight hour was passed and the northern dawn was upon us before we realised that the evening and morning twilight were not separated by any perceptible intervening darkness. The wonderful beauty of the tropical dawn has been told by every traveller in the equatorial regions, but in these regions only a few minutes elapses from the time it begins till the sun asserts its supremacy and dispels the brilliant colouring. In the sub-Arctic regions there is no

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ESKIMOX IN THEIR KAYAKS



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such haste. When the glittering rays no longer reach us we can watch their reflection in the clear ethereal spaces above during the whole of that period we call night. But I have dwelt, perhaps, too long and too frequently on this subject, and my only apology is that this portion of time was to me always a recompense for any of the labours or hardships of the previous day, and one is apt to be garrulous over what has afforded him pleasure.

It was difficult on those exceedingly hot days of midsummer to realise that in a few months' time the ice king would reign supreme over all the land. But this is a country of extremes, and even in some of the hottest days when the wind would turn suddenly to the north and angry clouds would arise from the horizon and spread across the heavens obscuring the sun from view, one could form a faint idea of what would happen a few months later.

After entering the Mackenzie we noticed the constant dropping of earth from the banks causing a dull splash in the water. This was caused by the melting of the frozen earth along the shore of the stream. In

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some cases the action of the water had worn deep caverns into the perpendicular clay banks. When these caverns had become so large as to remove the support of the superincumbent mass, an earth slide of considerable magnitude would occur. In the greater part of this whole country frost is found at varying depths during the whole year, and of course the distance below the surface decreases as we go north. On our journey across from McPherson to Bell River we found it a little less than a foot to perpetual frost.

Some one has suggested the building of a line of railway between the Peel and Bell Rivers. All I would say of this visionary enterprise is that a solid ice foundation for the roadbed will certainly be found without much excavation. Bearing on this subject a well authenticated story is told. Some years ago an agent of the Hudson Bay Company died at Fort McPherson, and, being a man of some importance a deep grave was excavated for his remains out of the frozen earth. Some time after stories were told of strange appearances around this grave. As the years went by one after

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another of the inhabitants of the place imagined that he saw something uncanny around the resting place of the former master of the post. Finally, it became the settled belief of the community, that the lonely grave had frequent visits from unearthly beings. This went so far as to menace the existence of the post, and the company at length concluded either to move it to another locality or to remove the cause of the trouble to another resting place. It was finally decided that it would be better to take the remains up to Fort Simpson and inter them in the churchyard there where no uncanny visitor would dare to approach.

The winter season was chosen for the removal. An escort of natives with a team of dogs hitched to a toboggan was engaged for the work. After considerable difficulty the frozen earth was removed and the rude coffin taken up when the occupant was found just as he had been when placed there some twenty years before, in a perfect state of preservation. The grave had been made below the perpetual frost line and an eternity of years would

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under such conditions have failed to render literally applicable the words "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return."

The winter previous to my visit, viz., that of 1905-6 was a particularly cold one. The thermometer went as low as sixty-eight degrees below zero, Fahrenheit, and added to this there was a great deal of wind, but, not having had an opportunity of experiencing a winter in those latitudes, I shall leave to others the task of describing it.

In Captain McClintock's narrative "The Voyage of the *Fox* in Arctic Seas" there is found incidentally a most graphic word picture of an Arctic winter night. It will be remembered that Captain McClintock commanded the expedition sent out by Lady Franklin in 1857, in search of her husband, Sir John Franklin. The author makes no attempt at anything more than giving the occurrences as they took place from day to day, as recorded in his diary, but one paragraph headed "Burial in the Pack" is given in words that paint the scene in colours that remain in the mind of the reader, and I shall quote a couple of extracts which read as follows :

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*December 4, 1857.*—" I have just returned on board from the performance of the most solemn duty a commander can be called upon to fulfil. A funeral at sea is always peculiarly impressive ; but this evening as we gathered around the sad remains of poor Scott, reposing under a Union Jack, and read the burial service by the light of lanterns, the effect could not fail to awaken serious emotions.

The greater part of the church service was read on board, under shelter of the housing ; the body was then placed upon a sledge, and drawn by the messmates of the deceased to a distance from the ship, where a hole through the ice had been cut ; it was then ' committed to the deep,' and the service completed. What a scene it was ; I shall never forget it. The *Lonely Fox*, almost buried in snow, completely isolated from the habitable world, her colours half-mast with the bell mournfully tolling ; our little procession slowly marching over the rough surface of the frozen deep, guided by lanterns and direction posts amid the dreary darkness of an Arctic winter ; the deathlike stillness around, the intense cold,

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and the threatening aspect of a murky overcast sky ; and all this heightened by one of those strange lunar phenomena which are but seldom seen even here, a complete halo encircling the moon, through which passed a horizontal band of pale light that encompassed the heavens ; above the moon appeared the segments of two other halos, and there were also mock moons or paraselenæ to the number of six. The misty atmosphere lent a very ghastly hue to this singular display, which lasted for rather more than an hour.

Scarcely had the burial service been completed, when our poor dogs, discovering that the ship was deserted, set up a most dismal unearthly moaning, continuing it until we returned on board. Coming to us from a distance across the ice, at such a solemn moment, this most strange and mournful sound was both startling and impressive.”

Again on the eleventh he says : “ Position 74 degrees, 31 N 68·21 W. Calm, clear weather, pleasant for exercise, but steadily cold ; thermometer varies between twenty and thirty degrees below zero. At noon



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the blush of dawn tints the southern horizon, to the north the sky remains inky blue, whilst overhead it is bright and clear, the stars shining, and the pole star near the zenith very distinct. Although there is a light north wind, thin mackerel clouds are passing from south to north and the temperature has risen ten degrees.”

What a contrast to this a few months' time will bring when the king of the universe has again appeared in constant view, dispelling all the darkness and bringing warmth in his rays. Then the wild fowl will come up in myriads from the south to build their nests and rear their young in rivers, creeks and pools in this boreal land. Then too, the Esquimaux will lay aside the snow sled for the kaiak. The tent will take the place of the iglo and his period of real enjoyment will have begun.

These are, no doubt, the conditions that appeal to him as ideal and which no other latitude could afford, and so it is that he prefers his home to that of any other.



## SECTION II

### SOIL

I HAVE already made frequent reference to the soil conditions as observed on my line of travel. Of course I had little opportunity of forming more than a general idea. Before any accurate report can be given on this subject it will be necessary for the Government to have an exploration survey made by men competent to give an authoritative opinion. For many years I have been impressed with the idea that Canada has failed to realise what it is losing year after year from its lack of information of its unoccupied areas.

What would be thought of the settler who built his house and commenced to clear and till his land on the front of his lot without ever taking the trouble to examine the rest of his possessions? The chances are that he would afterwards find that much of his labour had been mis-

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directed. In many parts of the country land has been surveyed and opened up for settlement that was unfit for Agriculture, and which should have been left for the growth of timber for which it was well suited. Frequently this land looked attractive to the inexperienced, and in many cases the settler spent years of hard labour only to find at last that beneath the few inches of humus there was nothing but barren sand.

Our governments are wisely spending much public money in bringing agricultural immigrants into the country, and their next step should be to direct them to fields where their labour will receive its just reward.

On the great plains of our north-west this was perhaps not so necessary, but in the country under consideration, which is mostly wooded like our eastern Provinces, such supervision should not be neglected.

Extending from Lesser Slave Lake through to the valley of the Peace River, and throughout the whole course of that stream, as well as down the Slave River and the

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Mackenzie even to the delta of the latter, the soil appears to be a rich alluvial deposit, broken in some cases by rocky land and in others by sandy ridges. East of this we may expect to find more exposed rock, and probably less land which would be attractive to the agriculturist. I am well aware, however, that north of the North Saskatchewan, to east of the district I have named, and in perhaps some instances extending well up to the barren lands, may be many valleys that will yet be inhabited, but it remains for the Government to ascertain where these lie in order to direct the incoming settler aright. The life of the tiller of the soil is arduous enough in any case, and in a country such as ours there is no reason why his labour need be in vain.

Beyond the watershed of the North Saskatchewan there are millions upon millions of acres in the aggregate fully as suitable for settlement as many parts of Northern Europe which now afford homes for a prosperous people. Of course this being a wooded country and the climate more severe, it does not offer the same attractions as

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

the rich prairies farther south, but after these have been settled the emigrant from Scandinavia and Russia will find here a new home similar to the one he has left.

## SECTION III

### MINERALS

REFERENCE has already been made to the tar sands along the Athabaska River which evidence the presence of bitumen in great abundance, to coal along the same river and also on the banks of the Mackenzie near Fort Norman ; to salt at different points on the Slave and Mackenzie Rivers, and to copper on the Coppermine River near the Arctic Sea. But these are probably only a few out of many varieties that exist in that vast unknown region.

The gold of the Yukon and of Alaska in America and the various mineral products of Siberia in Northern Europe and Asia prove that neither the precious or baser metals are confined to the lower latitudes, and it is more than probable that sub-Arctic Canada may yet be heard from as the depository of what are now hidden treasures.

I have perhaps already wearied the reader

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with reiterating the need of more exploration work in Northern Canada. The work of the geological survey is worthy of all praise, but the annual appropriations for this department are entirely inadequate to compass so vast a field.

The output of gold in the neighbourhood of Dawson City on the Yukon with the more recent discoveries of silver at Cobalt, and of gold at the Porcupine will lure the adventurous explorer into far northern fields, where much of his time will be spent in not only acquiring a knowledge of the geology of the country but also in tracing the courses of unknown rivers and locating great mountain ranges, which information will be for the benefit of Canada as a whole, and which she herself should supply in advance.

The press of the country is just now publishing accounts of the preparation of a vessel to be named the *Princess Patricia*, which will sail shortly from Newfoundland in quest of gold and coal in Northern Baffin Land. This expedition is being undertaken by a Canadian named A. W. Scott, usually known as "Lucky Scott," and is the result of a report of Captain Robert S. Janes who



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was second officer in command of the Canadian Government steamer *Arctic* which returned from northern waters in the summer of 1911.

Captain Janes will be the guide of the expedition and it is his discoveries which will be examined. The following extracts are from Captain Janes' report :

“ The *Arctic* wintered in the north and in December 1910, Captain Janes was sent by Captain Bernier the commander to North-East Baffin Land with three Esquimaux, three comatocks, and thirty Esquimaux dogs for the purpose of exploring that section. During the months of January and February little work could be done owing to the Arctic night being on, and the sun only came back in February little by little, but the intense frost and short days prevented anything being done before April of 1911. From that time till August, however, Captain Janes was employed in exploring that section of Northern Baffin Land.”

His report says, “ We found in May a coal field extending about thirty miles from the coast and eight miles from navigable waters. Along the strike of this outcrop

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coal could be easily picked up anywhere and I discovered and staked one coal seam fifteen feet thick without a break. I burned this coal in a cook stove and it gave forth a tremendous heat with very little smoke and very little ash. In June I found another coal field 100 miles north-west. This coal bed extends right to the water's edge. I pitched coal from it right into my boat which was tied at the beach. I think it would be perfectly feasible to transport the coal by water to a point on the south-east coast of Baffin Land at the entrance to the Hudson Straits, where it could be used to coal the grain-carrying fleet which will pass there when the Hudson Bay Railway is built."

## SECTION IV

### PLACER GOLD

CAPTAIN JANES also reports the discovery of placer gold. He says that he found gold quartz with gold in it on the bank of a river and regarding this he writes as follows :

“ I washed out the nuggets and small particles of gold which I brought back with me, from a dark sand mixed with fine pebbles, found on the edge of this river. Close to this I found specimens of block tin, copper and iron. In other districts I also discovered graphite in abundance. I also discovered a very peculiar and heavy stone or metal which resembled lead, in the same district in which the coal was located. This material when put on the coal fire threw off an excessive amount of sulphur. This includes only a small section of Baffin Land that I had a chance to prospect. There is a large area that I had not time to examine.”

Captain Janes further states : “ Game of

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

all descriptions is in abundance and many fur-bearing foxes, white and blue which the natives trap in great numbers. There is also plenty of bear, musk ox, walrus, seal and narwhale, which latter is valuable for its ivories.

“On June 1 the whole country becomes alive. Birds of all descriptions including ducks and geese immigrate from the south. I killed several white bear myself and saw many interesting bear fights.” He concludes as follows :

“I have sailed for twenty years on my own vessel as master on the coast of Newfoundland, Labrador, and in northern waters in the seal and fishing industry, and I am expecting that this expedition will be a great success.”

If Captain Janes' report is verified it is very probable that Canada's hinterland will soon furnish the unique spectacle of great mining enterprises in operation, in regions beyond the Arctic Circle.

## SECTION V

### TIMBER

As we go north the varieties of trees greatly decrease in number, and in the sub-Arctic forest belt they are reduced to eight species, namely, white spruce (*pices Canadensis*), black spruce (*picea Mauana*), larch or tamarac (*larix Americana*), jack or Banksian pine (*pinus banksiana*), Canada Balsam (*abies balsamea*), aspen or white poplar (*populus tremuloides*), balsam poplar or balm of Gilead (*populus balsamea*), and canoe birch (*betula Papyrifera*).

The first five of these belong to the coniferous family, while the last three, namely the aspen, the balsam poplar, and the canoe birch, are of the broad leaf variety.

In addition to these are various species of willow, extending throughout the whole region, but they are too small in size to be classed as trees.

The larch or tamarac continues pretty

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

well north to prefer the swampy land, but as we approach the Arctic regions it attains its best growth on higher ground.

The black spruce also follows the example of the tamarac in this respect, while the white spruce thrives best on the higher and drier land and throughout the whole of the sub-Arctic watershed. The tamarac vies with the white spruce in enduring the Arctic climate, and is found almost to the limit of tree growth.

The wood of the tamarac is harder and better than the spruce for purposes where strength and durability are required. It is also the best, perhaps excepting the birch of these northern species, for fuel. Though widely distributed it is only found in little quantities here and there in scattered patches, whereas the spruces of different varieties are found in almost every part of Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the southern boundary of the Dominion to the tundra and frozen land beyond the Arctic Circle.

It would undoubtedly be misleading with our limited knowledge of the greater part of the country, to attempt to define the areas

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that may, with the settlement of the country, offer profitable fields to the lumberman. It is true that there has been for many years a good deal of travel through the country, but the routes taken are mostly confined to the great water courses. While in the country I made diligent inquiries from those I met who are engaged by the companies, and who take the place of the old *coureurs du bois*, of the early days in "tripping" in winter, visiting the hunting lodges of the Indians to get furs. Occasionally some of the information obtained seemed valuable, but even these routes or dog trails are always chosen where there is the least timber to obstruct the course, generally along the lakes and rivers, or through level and sparsely timbered muskegs. The Indians being interested in the fish and game of the country, can give reliable information concerning them, but it would be unwise to make any calculations from what information can be gained from them regarding either the quantity or quality of timber in the country.

So far as our present knowledge affords us a means of judging, the whole of the Arctic basin, except the barren lands of the far

## DOWN THE MACKENZIE

north and certain limited areas in the watersheds of the Athabaska and Peace Rivers, which latter are prairie, may be correctly described as forest land.

It must not be inferred that the whole of the vast area is timbered in the same sense that Ontario and Quebec were in their primeval state. The timber is not as large, and by no means as evenly distributed. Very frequently after proceeding a mile or less from one of the large rivers we will enter a muskeg with only a few small scattered spruce and tamarac here and there dotting the landscape.

This will probably continue till we approach a small stream draining the muskeg, and as we pass down such a stream we will frequently find very good spruce, poplar and birch along the banks and extending for varying distances to the right and left.

From the information at hand I think it is quite safe to assert that the largest extent of timber in the Mackenzie basin as well as the largest in size, is to be found along the tributaries of the Mackenzie which flow from the west, such as the Athabaska, Peace, Laird, Nahanni and others. It must be

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remembered that these are themselves great rivers with many tributary streams and the aggregate quantity of spruce suitable for lumber which is the principal timber tree in that region, must be very large; while trees of the same variety large enough for pulpwood are found in great quantities throughout the whole of the Mackenzie waters extending all the way down to the delta of that river.

This spruce is of two varieties, namely, the white and black spruce; the former is the larger and more valuable. Both varieties when accessible are now becoming very valuable, as they furnish the best material for the manufacture of pulp, and this district contains a world's supply of such timber of sufficient size for that purpose. At present there is no outlet for this supply, but if a railway were built between Athabaska Lake and Fort Churchill it would open a pulp district extending from tide water to the Rocky Mountains.



## SECTION VI

### ANIMALS

ONE of the resources to which I have not yet referred is the native wild animals that find a home in the wilderness. Among them are, the moose, the caribou, the bear, the wood buffalo, and the musk ox, and the experiments recently made in Alaska and on the Labrador Coast by the introduction of the Lapland reindeer indicate that the semi-barren lands may yet furnish meat for export.

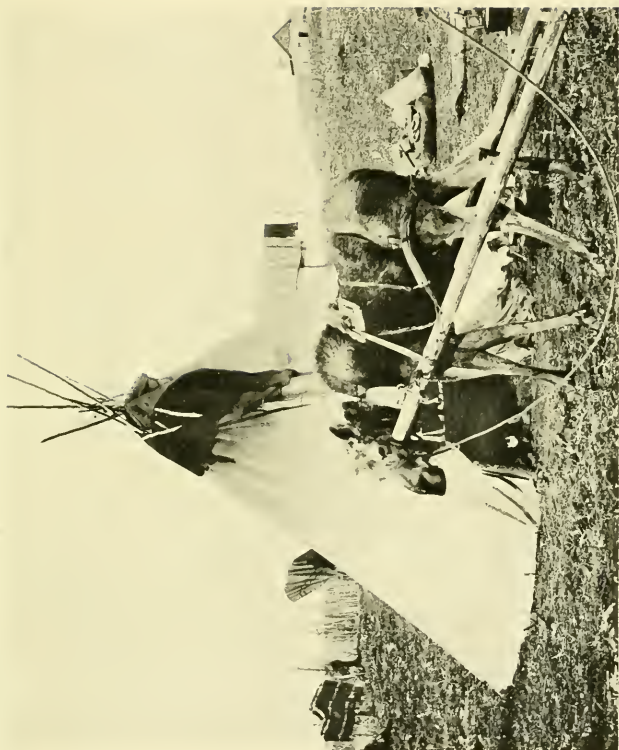
To these must be added the fur-bearing animals for which the country is already famous. The beaver, martin, fox and mink are only a few of the varieties with which the country abounds. It is unnecessary to say that but for the fur that these produce it is probable that the country would never have been visited except by a few adventurous explorers and missionaries. Attracted, however, by the value of these furs, the North-West Company and "The Honourable The

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Hudson's Bay Company," were early in the field, and to-day in addition to the latter there are a large number of independent traders whose agents traverse practically the whole of the country, and if records of their journeyings were collected, very interesting information of great value would be obtained. I might remark that at certain of the Hudson's Bay posts diaries written by the agents may be seen which record the most interesting events that have come under their notice almost from the establishment of these stations. Some of them convey graphic descriptions of every day life in those regions. Here is a virgin field for any adventurous author who wishes to gather details at first hand.

As one observes on a winter's day in our cities and towns the great quantity of furs that are worn practically by all classes of our population, most of which come from this north country, he cannot but be impressed by the fact that we owe a debt of gratitude to that country and to those who endure its rigours for our comfort. Whether this supply will diminish in the future is a question of very great importance to us. Though I

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have already stated that certain parts of this region will probably in time be settled, there is yet a vast proportion of it that will remain probably for all time uninhabited, and there seems no reason why in those parts the productiveness of the valuable furs may not only be maintained but greatly increased if judicious supervision is established and proper methods adopted. The forest reserves should be utilised as game preserves and it can be scarcely doubted, considering the rapidly increasing value of the fur product, that they could be made to yield a splendid profit.





## SECTION VII

### FISH

THE fish found in those cool northern waters are, as might be expected, for the most part of excellent quality. They are found in abundance in all the northern lakes and rivers ; the whitefish (*coregonus*) being the most widely distributed. The pike (*lucius*) is also common in most of the waters. The fresh-water linge (*lota*) and the Arctic trout, sometimes called Back's trout, are found in many of the lakes and streams. The inconnu (*stenodus*) is peculiar to the Mackenzie River. It was named *Inconnu* (unknown) by Sir Alexander Mackenzie's exploring party, as it was to them an unfamiliar fish. It is of excellent quality and is also the largest of any of the species found in the Arctic watershed.

The salmon is the great fish of the Pacific waters, and of it there are a great many species. Among them are the King salmon,

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in Alaska and the Yukon; the spring salmon and the sock eye or blue back, called also the red fish of British Columbia. The last named is the most valuable for canning purposes, on account of its flavour and for the deep red colour of its flesh. Another species called the coho, or silver sides, is of less importance than the sock eye on account of the colour. It is generally frozen for use. The dog salmon reaches a considerable size. It is chiefly salted for the Japanese market. The hump back is seldom over five or six pounds in weight. It is chiefly used by the Indians. One of the very best fish found on the coast is the steel head. It is large, weighing from twenty to forty pounds. It is unlike in appearance any of the other salmon of the west, and exactly resembles the salmon of Eastern Canada and Europe. It is very good for cooking and is pronounced one of the most delicious of fish.

## SECTION VIII

### WILD FOWL

THE forest of America in the far north is essentially a solitude. In winter the stillness is deathlike and profound. In summer a few birds may be seen in the woods bordering on the great wilderness, but like man, they do not penetrate beyond its outskirts. It is true that the loon seeks out unfrequented lakes and his doleful cry may be heard where it is the only thing to indicate the existence of animal life. The visitor from more southern latitudes will certainly miss the melodious bird songs with which he is familiar.

However, in certain localities where marshes are found and where feeding grounds exist, these are visited by ducks and wild geese in vast numbers during the summer months. Here they build their nests and rear their young. I have already referred to the great area of drowned land and marsh lying

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along the west shore of Athabaska Lake and extending from the Athabaska River on the south to the Peace River on the north. This is one of the favourite resorts for both ducks and wild geese and will yet be known as the fowlers' paradise.

This great lagoon resembles those on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico south of Vera Cruz, and it may be that these two localities are the homes, in alternate seasons, of members of this favoured division of the animal creation.

It is a fortunate thing for the native to have his home in a country where fish and wild fowl abound, and without these it is doubtful if the native Indian could have preserved his existence. True it is that the caribou comes somewhat irregularly up from the barren lands and then there is abundance of meat. The moose and the bear also at times serve to keep starvation from the wigwam, but frequently they all fail to appear, but the wild fowl come as regularly as the seasons, and the fish is a constant occupant of the lakes and streams.

On our trip down the Porcupine we saw very few duck but the wild goose was there

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in great quantities. The young brood almost full grown, but with wings not yet strong enough to fly, were, as has been previously described, chased to the shore and killed in their attempt to climb the steep banks of the stream, without the waste of the precious ammunition. They were young and tender and had no fishy taste, as one would expect, at least I did not detect any. I have often wondered since whether under different conditions my taste would have been more delicate. However, I will always remember gratefully the manner in which they came to our aid when our food supplies were rapidly growing near to the vanishing point ; and ever since, when in the spring I see these wonderful creatures wending their unerring way in the upper air to their summer home in the far north, I am not only impressed with the thought of that marvellous instinct that guides them in their flight, but also with the knowledge that they are going to supply food to some of those poor natives who depend on them to supply them on their journeys through the country.

Though, as I have stated, it was an easy matter to capture all we required, here in

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their summer home, it is a very different matter to attempt to intercept them on their journey either to or from the country. To be sure they have certain resting places where they can get a food supply. This is obtained from the wild rice growing in shallow water in the marshes, in the uncultivated districts, and from the grain fields farther south; here they are often shot in great numbers, but to bring down a flock from a high altitude when engaged in making their long journey, one would perhaps think impossible. However, I have seen this done. The desire for companionship is a very wide law in creation, and the Indian is an adept in imitating the sounds made by the wild animals with which he is familiar, as well as those of the bird tribe; and these he often employs to attract those he wishes to capture. On one occasion I saw this gift exercised with great success where I thought at first the attempt was useless. It was on the Little Slave River near the lake of the same name.

We saw a flock of wild geese in the distance at a very high altitude going south. At once the Indians ran the boat into some

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rushes along the shore, and we all lay flat and motionless in the bottom, while one commenced in a loud voice to imitate the cry of the goose. The flock were ranged up in their usual triangular manner with the leader in front. Presently we saw that the sound had reached them, their direction was immediately changed and we could also see that they were coming nearer the earth. Our Indian kept on in the vernacular of the goose, which was answered back by the latter. It was most interesting to see that the leader of the flock was unable to detect exactly from what particular direction the sound came. Two or three circles were made around us, each one smaller than the other. Evidently they were surprised at not finding the others where the sound came from. Finally the circle narrowed, and the altitude decreased till it was brought within gunshot range, when two of their number were shot and went to furnish our evening meal.

After this their broken ranks were reformed, and under the same leader they resumed their flight.





## SECTION IX

### INHABITANTS

INTERESTING as are the natural characteristics of the country and its undeveloped resources, the inhabitants who make their home there should demand from us first consideration.

The Indian, the Esquimaux, the half breed, the white trader and the missionary constitute the different classes of the very scattered population of that vast region between the borders of civilisation on the south and the Arctic sea on the north.

In the region traversed between Edmonton and Fort Yukon we meet with several tribes of Indians speaking as many different tongues. The first of these as we go north are the Wood Crees, the Knisteneaux, of Mackenzie. Then as we reach Athabaska Lake we have the Chippewyan; next the Slaves, and lastly the Loucheaux or Squint Eyes.

The Cree, the Chippewyan and the Slave

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though differing somewhat in speech resemble each other in character and in appearance, but when we come to the Loucheaux we seem to have reached a different type and one more closely allied to the eastern Asiatic than to the American Indian. They inhabit the country of the lower Mackenzie, the Porcupine and the lower Yukon. They are of rather small stature and dark colour; are very inquisitive and much disposed to imitate the white man in several particulars. In one characteristic, however, that of cleanliness, perhaps from lack of example on the part of our race, they have made very little progress. They are very devout in their religious observances, most of them being members of the Anglican Church, and, so far as I could judge, they lived a life quite as consistent with its teachings as their white brethren. In the following reference to Indian character and characteristics I wish it understood that I refer to the other tribes not including the Loucheaux. On account of my short acquaintance with the latter it would be presumptuous for me to say anything further.

The ordinary Indian is usually considered



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COMING IN FROM THE NORTH



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stoical and unsympathetic. In the first of these qualities he certainly in some respects deserves a place not second to his Greek prototype. He will endure torture as a matter of pride that would shock the sensitive. His self-denial in some cases also is almost heroic. To rob a cache, even when he is enduring extreme hunger would be to him an unworthy act if he knew that the owner were depending on it for his own use.

I wish also to qualify this by the statement that I am speaking of the race as a whole and not of every individual constituting it. There is diversity of individual character among the uncivilised equal to that found in civilised society. It is incorrect also to deny to the native Indian the possession of any measure of human sympathy. It is quite true that he may sometimes seem to us cold and indifferent, but this is more in appearance than in reality.

When fortune favours the hunter and he brings home a moose to his wigwam, the first thing he does is to send a piece of the meat to his neighbours. These may be many miles away. I remember on one

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occasion in winter I engaged an Indian with two teams of dogs and toboggans to bring me from the northern boundary of Ontario out to the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It had happened that just before starting he had shot two moose. On the route were a few wigwams at long distances apart, and at every one of these a present of fresh venison was made. In some cases no one was in the wigwams at the hour of our visit, but nevertheless, a portion of the meat was always left; a pleasant surprise for the occupant on his return.

Their affection for their kindred and for their children is quite equal to that of the ordinary white man. There is something very morose in this affection. It was my fortune to spend a winter on Rainy River many years ago before the railway had entered any part of Canada beyond Lake Superior. There were several Indian settlements along the stream. Wild game, especially the caribou and moose, were plentiful in the woods and fish abundant in the river, so they were seldom in actual want of food such as they were accustomed to. Very little sickness among them was

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then heard of, but years after I went up the same river in a steamer and sad were the stories told of the misfortunes that had come upon these people. With the white settlers came the contagious diseases such as smallpox, measles, scarlet fever, and others of even a worse nature with the result that their settlements were practically wiped out, and the graveyards, with their numerous little wooden houses built over each grave, showed where the stalwart braves with their wives and children had gone.

We noticed one old man who had lost all his family in one of those epidemics, walking aimlessly among the graves, and we were told that he spent most of his time there, no doubt in fancied communication with the spirits of the departed.

The grief of the Indian woman at the loss of her child is very touching. On one occasion I remember seeing at a distance two Indians and a squaw pulling a little sleigh up the bank of a river, and curiosity prompted me to join them when I saw them stop at a little open space where there was a new made open grave. Then I noticed on the sleigh the dead child which they

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proceeded to bury. The mother was perfectly quiet until the men commenced to cover up the grave when she uttered a wild shriek which revealed the depth of her maternal feelings. She seemed to protest at what the men were doing, and on inquiring from them I learned that she belonged to a tribe who buried their young children in trees. This was done by cutting out a section of the tree of sufficient size to receive the body and then closing it up again, their belief being that the child would in some way enjoy the life of the tree. Their ideas of these matters are vague and undefined, but the grief of this poor mother at the thought that her child was smothered in the earth instead of in some way living another form of life in conjunction with the tree, showed that ages of struggle for existence in the wilderness had failed to obliterate those finer feelings of the soul.

On another occasion an Indian, residing on one of the reserves on the Spanish River in Northern Ontario was engaged on a tug that towed scows on that stream during the construction of the Algoma branch of the C.P.R. His wife, living at



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their home on the bank of the river, seeing the boat with her barges coming down stream hurriedly, gathered up her husband's laundry garments which she had ready, and picking up her baby rushed down to her birch bark canoe, placed the little infant in its wooden cradle in the bottom of the canoe and soon reached the barge, but as she came in contact with it her canoe was upset. The tug was stopped and a boat quickly launched and the mother rescued and taken ashore while the upset canoe went floating down stream. Immediately she recovered consciousness her first words were "Where is my baby?" This was the first the men knew that the baby had been with her and they at once paddled out to the canoe, and on turning it over found the little one was there uninjured, between two cross pieces in the canoe the baby in the wooden cradle was supported. They, of course, lost no time in bringing it to its mother who received it with all the affection possible, and during the whole of the afternoon she would laugh and then burst out crying, uttering words in her own tongue which meant "I thought I lost my baby."

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Turning from the serious and sentimental to the humorous or droll we will find that the Indian is by no means lacking in his sense of the ludicrous, neither is he slow in imitating by word and action any individual who excites his mirth. He is really a born mimic and the rehearsals around the camp fire are often as humorous as one would find in any comic play. There comes now to my mind a dirty little Indian boy who could easily make his mark in any of our theatres. He had the gift of portraying the appearance, the actions and the walk of others and of imitating the voice in a manner which I have never seen surpassed. He had attended a mission school for some time, and one evening I overheard him at their camp fire, intoning the English Church service in a manner so like the Oxford graduate that it was difficult to believe that the beautifully modulated sentences were uttered by this little ragamuffin.

Let no white man who has any peculiarities of action or speech (and who has not), visit an Indian settlement without expecting to have these dramatised by the wit of the band.

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They have also the gift of inventing names for individuals which aptly hit off their character. For instance, during the long period in office of the late Sir John A. Macdonald he was frequently visited by deputations of Indians, which, like most deputations, asked for more than could be conveniently given. Sir John was too astute to make any definite promise that he knew could not be fulfilled, and too wise to refuse them point blank, so he usually told them that he would consult the great Queen Mother who was a good friend of the red man and that they could go home trusting that they would be well treated.

These visits were repeated frequently without the desired result. As one of the members expressed it, it was always to be done to-morrow, till finally, Sir John was given the name "Old To-morrow."

Another individual who occupied a prominent government position in the early days, in the country west of Lake Superior was the late Simon J. Dawson, the originator of the Dawson route between Thunder Bay and the Red River of the North. He was known by every Indian between Fort William

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and Fort Garry and from his official position they regarded him practically as the government, and in fact it was not uncommon for them to call him "Government," but he, too, earned from them a derisive name. Mr. Dawson was also a man of tact who lived up to the maxim that a "soft answer turneth away wrath." The Indians were not slow in detecting this characteristic, and they humorously applied to him the name of "Old Smoothbore," and it would have been impossible to choose a name that fitted his character so well.

At one time I had in my employ on the Saskatchewan River a number of men, some of whom were Indians. One day on the trail the Indians were conversing among themselves in the Cree language, and the word "Mooneas," which really means greenhorn, was frequently repeated. One of the white men, a Canadian, could not restrain his curiosity, and inquired from one of the Indians who spoke English as to the meaning of the word. The reply came quickly with a chuckle "Canadian," which was followed by a shout of laughter.

They are also quick to detect anything

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in an argument or discourse that to them does not seem logical. On one occasion a young clergyman arrived at Norway House, north-east of Lake Winnipeg where he became the guest of the agent of the post. The Indians were asked on Sunday morning to come into the big room for Divine service. Obedient to the invitation the Chief appeared with his people and listened attentively to the sermon which was made intelligible to them through an interpreter. The minister took for his text "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." After the return to the post the agent made bold to tell the young man that he thought his text rather inapplicable to his audience; that the hoarding up of treasures could scarcely be called the besetting sin of the native Indian, that in fact, his own efforts and also those of the company, were constantly exercised in urging them to provide for the morrow. The young man replied that this phase of the situation had not presented itself to him but that he would the following Sunday morning endeavour to correct the evident mistake. So on the next occasion before the same audience he

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prefaced his remarks by a few observations on his previous sermon by stating—that what he had previously said was not to be taken literally but figuratively; but when this reached the ears of the Chief through the interpreter it meant that what he had said the former Sunday was not true. Immediately this sermon was concluded the chief gathered his men around him and told them that this man told lies; that he had just told them that what he had said before was not true and that he did not want to hear him any more.

On a Sunday morning in summer at Fort Simpson, the Roman Catholic population of the little village were assembled at early mass in obedience to the call of the visiting priest he would be with them the following Sunday, and that he wished all his children to come prepared to contribute liberally to a special collection that would then be taken. On the following Saturday an Indian, or perhaps more properly a half breed, for though practically an Indian he had inherited sufficient French blood to entitle him to the name of Antoine, visited the priest and asked him to lend him two

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dollars in hard money (silver), stating that he would soon return it. The priest knowing that Antoine always had a good account at the Company's store readily gave him the money. Antoine accompanied by his sweetheart was in attendance the next day at the service and astonished the congregation by ostentatiously drooping two dollars on the collection plate. Some time passed without Antoine offering to return the money. Finally, one day as the priest was preparing to leave on one of his periodical visits to other members of his flock he accidentally met Antoine and reminded him of the fact, to which the latter replied that he had already paid him in church. The priest informed that this money was not for him but for God. To this Antoine replied that God did not need the money, that he was rich, at the same time reminding the priest of a recent sermon of his, in which he had stated that where God lived all the streets were made of gold, and ended by advising the priest to keep the money and not be foolish.

It is a very noted characteristic of the Indian not to exhibit surprise under any

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circumstance. Whether this is owing to his indifference or whether it is an instance of his restraint born of his stoical nature I am unable to say.

I had a young man of the Ojibway tribe in my employ for a whole winter on one occasion. Fully fifteen years afterwards I requested the agent at a post of a Hudson's Bay Company to engage an Indian with his canoe for me for a few days. On the following morning a middle-aged man appeared. He spoke fair English and conversed freely as we paddled around among the islands in the Lake of the Woods till noon when we went ashore and had lunch ; after which we resumed work and continued till evening. On leaving for his camp he inquired if I wished him for the following day, to which I replied in the affirmative. On the following day at the noon hour I asked him his name. His reply was simply "John." I told him I knew that, but asked for his full name to which his reply was "John Begg." I told him that I had had a young man of that name many years before who worked several months for me on the Rainy River, and asked

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him if he knew him. His reply was simply "Was me."

After this he talked very freely and recalled to my memory many incidents of the former period that I had almost forgotten, but I have little doubt that though he knew me from the start if I had not made the advance he would have left me without revealing his identity.

One other very similar case comes to my mind. When I was a boy, my father used to employ, at certain times of the year, Indians living on a reserve near by. Among these was a boy who spoke good English and who was known by and answered to the euphonious name of "Hickory Jackson." For several successive summers he was almost a companion to my brother and myself. As time went on my place of residence was changed and probably twenty years after on visiting my old home I was taking a stroll along the banks of a very familiar stream in the dusk of a summer evening. The time and place served to call up many incidents of my early days. When absorbed in such reminiscences I barely noticed in the twilight the figure of an

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Indian with a boy walking behind him on the opposite side of the road, who, in a dull monotone uttered the words intended for me, "where you going," and without halting passed on out of sight. This was "Hickory Jackson" whom I had not seen since I was a boy and never since. Though he manifested this indifference I have little doubt knowing his character that when he reached his wigwam this incident would be related to his family coupled with that of many others of past years.

There is to my mind something very fascinating in the contemplation of the characteristics, of the impulses and modes of thought, so to speak, of those members of the human family who have not come under the influence of civilised life where the Divine spark has had only nature for its tutor.

Sitting by the camp fire I have often watched the immobile countenance of the savage, (if such a name is applicable), and refrained from making any suggestion as I wondered what was passing through his mind; whether his thoughts were simply of the earth earthy, or whether there was

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enjoyment in the contemplation of higher things. Does nature, of which he is a child, furnish him with her richer gifts? If so, then he should seldom be without enjoyment, for certainly his life is spent close to her very heart.

Without pretending to answer these questions I am not unwilling to reaffirm what I have said before, that in the uncivilised man we have just as great a divergence of character as we have in civilised society.

That some among them take pleasure in and are appreciative of the beautiful in nature is certain, and few there are who do not enjoy melody, whether expressed in the semi-religious chants or the more melodious songs of the feathered creation.

I must refer to one other characteristic which seems common to the North American Indian irrespective of the tribe to which he may belong, and that is his superiority over most civilised nations in his good humour. It is very rare indeed to find any quarrelling among them, and rarer still is such a thing as fighting among individuals unless they are under the influence of spirits.



## SECTION X

### HALF BREEDS

THE term "Half breed" is applied throughout Western Canada in a general and indifferent way to the individual in whose veins there is an admixture of Indian and European blood. In some cases the proportion may be very largely that of the native race and in others quite the reverse; but in each case the individual is quite content to be classed under the general name.

In the early days the country along the Red River and the Assiniboine in the Province of Manitoba was divided into parishes, in some of which the inhabitants were almost all Scotch in others English and in others still French, and from each of these races in alliance with the native red men sprang the Scotch, English or French half breeds all having certain similar characteristics combined in their several cases

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with others as different as the several nationalities referred to.

The Frenchman coming principally from the Province of Quebec, where his ancestors had already during two centuries become inured to forest life, more readily adopted the life of the wigwam, and his children became frequently Indians in many respects, while the English and Scotch settler coming direct from the old land made a somewhat unsuccessful attempt to bring up the children of his native wife as Scotchmen or Englishmen. In nothing is this difference more noticeable than in the speech of these different inheritors of Indian blood. Even to-day in the parish of Kildonan, below Winnipeg, where there are many descendants of the union of the Scotchman with native Indian women you will hear a strange dialect, but still with sufficient similarity to that spoken in certain shires in old Scotia to indicate its origin. The terms "boy" and "whatever," the latter peculiarly characteristic of the Highlands of Scotland, are here used with great freedom, no matter what the age or station of the party so addressed may be.

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On one occasion the Bishop of Saskatchewan who was somewhat irreverently called "Saskatchewan Jack" had in his employ a half breed boy as his valet. I am not aware that this individual ever dared, at least in his Lordship's presence, to use the latter term, but in the most reverential tone he invariably addressed him as "boy My Lord."

On one occasion I had in my employ one of these Scottish half breeds whose constant reiteration of the word "whatever" became wearisome, and I asked him why he employed it so frequently. To which he replied "We use the word because we could not express ourselves without it whatever." Then rather piqued at my criticism he asked "Is it not a correct word, whatever?" I said that it was correct in certain cases but unnecessary in nine out of ten where he used it. To this he replied that if it was a correct word he could see no objection to using it "whatever!" This ended the conversation for the time.

The half breed whether of English, Scotch or French descent has inherited from the Indian side certain qualities peculiar to that

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race. While he has in many cases lost to a degree some of the higher qualities of his untutored ancestor of the wilderness such as absolute honesty, for which the latter was once famous, he has retained the quality of enduring the greatest privations without complaint. He has also usually a better physique than his native Indian cousin, and in many instances is possessed of great strength. The loads that men of his type frequently carry for great distances on rough trails, over hills and even mountains is truly remarkable. On the other hand they have little idea of the value of time—and are never in a hurry. This they inherit from the Indian whose boast is that he has no need to be in a hurry; that he owns all the time there is, and will tell you that the white man acts as if there were no to-morrow. This characteristic has also impressed itself on the few white men whose lot has been to pass their existence in the lonely outposts. The dull monotony of life at a trading post in unsettled Canada could hardly fail to have this effect. Procrastination is common enough everywhere, but the complacent way in which these people,



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whether Indian, half breed or white, will allow the opportune moments to escape, frequently results in far greater work for them in the future, and is very trying if not exasperating to the ambitious traveller, delayed by their deliberate methods. As an example of this I once had a journey to make in a very rough country but where there was a chain of lakes leading out to my destination. With the lakes open, a pleasure trip was possible, but winter was fast setting in, and from the time the ice began to take on the lakes, till it would be safe to travel over it, weeks might elapse, and as there were no trails overland this would be our only alternative. I had arranged with some Indians and half breeds who possessed bark canoes to commence the trip on a certain morning. We were up early and waiting for them to arrive. The morning was passing without their appearance and precious time was being lost. We all longed to be on our journey back to civilisation after months in the woods. But there was no sign of their arrival. Finally I took a small canoe, only capable of carrying two persons, and went in search of our Indians. On

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arriving at a small lake we found them having rare sport with some loons. The latter would dive and after several minutes come to the surface when the men would try their luck with their rifles. In this way they had spent a full half day at our expense. What mattered to them if the lakes froze over that night? They were at their home and had indulged in a forenoon's sport which apparently had afforded them great enjoyment. For days after they talked and laughed like children over this adventure.

## SECTION XI

### THE TRADERS

I HAVE already referred to the two great trading companies which a century ago held undisputed sway over the whole north country of what is now known as Canada.

After the union of these corporations under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company many years elapsed before the merged enterprises had much opposition. During these years they established many posts some of which were enclosed by a wall or stockade and dignified by the name of fort. The officers at the more important posts were generally men brought out from the Old Country largely from the North of Scotland and the Orkney Islands. Most of them reached the country by way of Hudson's Bay and had had no opportunity of seeing the older Canadian Provinces.

Some of these men were of good families at home and had received a fair education

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before leaving. All were honest and their loyalty to the Company even surpassed that which they owed to their sovereign. It was looked upon by them as treason almost worthy of death for any employee of the Company to traffic in furs except for the Company, and the independent trader was an Ishmael in the land.

These days have now changed. In addition to the great French House of "Revillon et Frères" which has recently established posts at most of the important points in the wild lands of Canada, there are a number of other companies who have their tugs and barges on the rivers and lakes which transport their supplies to their stores scattered here and there along the route. Still the old Company with its organised staff and well equipped service does by far the largest business in the peltries of the country. Whatever may be said to the contrary the Hudson's Bay Company has much to its credit for its honourable dealings with the Indians. As a result of its policy the Indian grew to respect the white man and in a measure to acknowledge his authority so that when



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TRADING WITH THE ESQUIMAUX



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the Canadian Government took over the north-west in the early seventies the transition of authority from the Company to the latter was made without difficulty, and the pioneer settler suffered little at the hands of the red man. How different the history of pioneer life in the Western States where massacres of the white settlers constantly occurred! This I think should be largely attributed to the policy and conduct of this pioneer Company.

A post of this historic corporation is a veritable house of refuge to the weary traveller through the great wilderness. The agent is proverbial for his hospitality and the traveller from the outside world is royally welcomed, especially if he comes accredited by some one of authority belonging to the "Company." None but the traveller who has been so favoured can appreciate the comfort that he experiences on being welcomed by a fellow white man at one of these posts after perhaps weeks of travel; over a rough trail in winter, or through dangerous rapids in summer. This enjoyment too, is not lessened by the consciousness which he feels that his visit is welcome.

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He can on his part afford some enjoyment to his entertainers in the way of furnishing news of what has recently occurred in the outside world, for the agent and his family have little to break the dull monotony of their lives.

If you want to enjoy absolute quiet for a season you can have it with a few days' travel by visiting one of those posts just outside the borders of Canadian civilisation.

No rumblings of carriages, no screeching of whistles, no ringing of bells greet you in the morning. You may perchance hear a cow bell somewhere, but it is in perfect keeping with the tranquil surroundings. In summer if the post is on a lake or river as it usually is you may amuse yourself by paddling or fishing and shooting. But whatever you do it will be in no haste. Even the sun seems to move so slowly, and the days—especially the afternoon—seem loathe to give way to the evenings; and the evenings never end till you have succumbed to somnolent influences and have entered the land of dreams. If I were a physician I would send my over wrought and brain racked patients to one of these posts, and



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would guarantee a cure of all ordinary mental troubles.

On the Lower Mackenzie the great event of the year is the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer which makes but one trip a year to Fort McPherson. This steamer takes in the year's supplies and brings out the furs that have been gathered during the past season from all the surrounding country. In addition to this she brings the "permits." This term includes not only *permission* for the individual named to receive ardent spirits but also the article itself which accompanies the permit.

The quantity allowed any one person is supposed to be sufficient to last him till the boat returns again a year hence, but with the improvidence so characteristic of the native, and which the half breed and white trader seem to have copied, this supply is usually consumed in a few days. In some cases the agent at the post may retain a little of the much prized article to treat his brother officers on state occasions, but even this is exceptional.

The story is told of a meeting of officials at one of these posts on a certain occasion

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after the annual supply had long since been exhausted. During the preceding summer the post had been visited by a party of entomologists who, on leaving for home had left a small jar containing a liquid necessary for their work. After the ordinary business had been attended to, the resident agent expressed his regret at not having the wherewithal properly to entertain his guests. This important and rather unexpected announcement caused a feeling of sadness and disappointment to pass over the visitors which was plainly visible as well as painful to the host, when all at once he remembered that the summer visitors had left something that might in combination with a liberal amount of water act as a substitute for the "real stuff." The jar was at once sent for and minutely inspected, but whether it would be even safe to taste it, was a question. One of the party expressed himself very strongly that it was nothing "whatever" but deadly poison.

The host however, was very resourceful and just at the psychological moment he saw one of his men, a faithful Scotch half breed, passing with a team of dogs. He at once

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hailed him and asked him into the august presence of the great men of the company. Archie, with cap in hand, greatly surprised at such conduct on the part of his master, wondered at first what fearful act of insubordination he had committed. To his surprise, however, he was asked to help himself to a decoction which the agent prepared. Archie was then asked to sit down and smoke his pipe before starting out on his long journey with his dog team. The assembly watched eagerly to see the effects on him but none appeared, when the agent filled his glass again making the mixture stronger than before. Sufficient time was then given to show that no evil effects were to follow, when Archie was told that his dogs would be getting cold and that he could go. What happened after this need not be stated !



## SECTION XII

### MISSIONARIES

THE different religious denominations have left to the Roman Catholic and the Anglican the vast field included in the Arctic slope drained by the Mackenzie and its tributaries, as well as that of the Porcupine country to the west and the shores of the Arctic Sea to the north.

At several points here and there over this vast area these two bodies have established missions and schools. Both bodies have been represented by Bishops whose names will not be forgotten by this or the succeeding generation. Bompas of the Anglicans and Grouard of the Roman Catholics well deserve to rank among the greatest of modern missionaries. The former came out from England many years ago, and at once entered this far away field. He soon became proficient in the different languages of the country and lived a life of toil and privation

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of which but little is known, for it is said he seldom spoke of such things. He died at Carcross on the Upper Yukon in 1906 a few months before I was there. His life work has been well portrayed in a recent publication by one of his clergy to which I would refer any one who wishes to be informed on the life and work of this "Great Apostle of the North."

On our journey from Hay River to Fort McPherson we had as a fellow passenger Bishop Reeves who, for many years had been a co-worker with Bishop Bompas, and his many accounts of the self-sacrificing devotion of the latter prevented our learning much of his own experiences of which he seemed too modest to speak, though it is well known that his best days were spent in the country from which he has recently returned, and is now Coadjutor Bishop of Toronto.

Bishop Grouard, though now well advanced in years, continues a work very similar to that of his great contemporary. Both were familiar with all the great streams of the north. Each had trodden over the same trails, each knew as few others did

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the natives for whose welfare they had both in their early life relinquished pleasant surroundings in the Old World, for both belonged to influential if not noble families. Bompas in England and Grouard in France.

I met Bishop Grouard only twice. First *en route* on the Upper Athabaska on my way back from Peace River, and a few years later at Smith's Landing on the Slave River. At first he was far from his home, visiting his scattered flock and superintending the work of his clergy over a diocese much larger than the whole of his native country.

On the last occasion he was hurrying back to his head-quarters before starting for a journey to Rome where he expected to be in about six weeks, but only for a short time, for circumstances compelled him to be back with his charge before the long winter set in.

It is said that politics make strange bed-fellows. The same may be said of travelling in the sparsely settled districts of the north. More particularly in what might be called the border land between the pioneer settlements and the wilderness. When a journey

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is to be made in the latter, one goes prepared with his own tent and camp equipment and in most cases he is much more comfortable than when he is approaching civilisation where there are certain houses of accommodation called "sleeping places," but usually pronounced without the sound of the final "g" in the first word.

Once I had the honour of occupying a place on a wide bed made on the floor of one of these road houses. Among the company thus accommodated were Bishop Young of Athabaska Landing, the late Bishop Holmes, then Archdeacon of Lesser Slave Lake, a Roman Catholic priest from Peace River and several half breeds. Bishop Young and I agreed to "double up" under the same blankets while the Archdeacon and Père Lazaret made the same arrangement.

After each of the men of Holy Orders had offered up his evening devotions in his own forms, the priest and the Archdeacon, who were neighbours in the mission field, commenced a conversation, not in the native language of either the one or the other but in the Cree tongue. There was no affectation in this on the part of either. Father



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Lazaret was of course familiar with French his mother tongue but knew very little English, while the Archdeacon, an Englishman by birth, was not particularly fluent in *la langue Française* ; but a common ground of communication was found in the tongue of the Cree Indian in which both were equally at home.

Father Lazaret was at this time fifty-four years of age. Twenty-seven years before he had come out from France as a young missionary at once entering the field in the neighbourhood of Peace River, and this was the first time that he had ventured out even as far as Edmonton. As we approached this modern city in the evening with its lighted streets and throngs of busy people and he mentally compared it with the little port of the lonely post twenty-seven years before, his surprise at the change can well be imagined. He was then on his way back to visit his aged mother and to bid her a last farewell ; then to return again to end his days on the banks of the Peace ; for him at least, so happily named.

Speaking of the use of different languages reminds me of the case of a lay brother of

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the Oblate Brotherhood whom we met at the Roman Catholic mission at Fort Good Hope near the Arctic Circle on the Mackenzie. Forty years before he had left Ireland and joined the members of his order in that distant field. Most of the clergy were French and it was seldom indeed that he heard his mother tongue. The consequence was that while he spoke French fluently, with a Hibernian accent, and also the language of the Indian tribes of the country he informed me that it was with great difficulty that he could remember how to express himself in the tongue of his fathers. Thus do men of the older civilisations sacrifice themselves for the sake of the most lofty ideal the world has ever known.

## CONCLUSION

### AN APPEAL

I CANNOT close without calling public attention to a matter that impressed me very forcibly on my journey and which has ever since been before my mind, and that is the great need for the establishment of a hospital somewhere in that vast region of the Mackenzie watershed and its vicinity. Here is a country sparsely populated to be sure, but of vast extent compared with which most European countries are insignificant. Between Edmonton and the Arctic Sea we pass over sixteen degrees of latitude, while the distance by the travelled route is over 2000 miles. Again from the Rocky Mountains on the west to the Hudson Bay on the east the distance is almost equally as great.

At Athabaska Landing and at Peace River on the southern fringe of this great wilderness a few physicians have now established

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themselves but beyond these places the only medical aid available is from an occasional visit of the Government physician and what the missionaries are able to furnish. At practically every post and Indian village on our way we were besieged for medicine by the afflicted. In many cases they were the victims of chronic diseases which would undoubtedly yield to surgical treatment provided proper means were afforded for attendance and nursing.

A few of the missionaries have some knowledge. One of them, perhaps the most proficient in this respect, informed me that appendicitis was quite as prevalent among the Indians of those regions as it is in the outside world, but that he felt incompetent to attempt an operation, and, moreover, even if such operations were properly performed, the conditions of life in the wigwam would afford poor chances for an ultimate recovery.

If a small hospital properly equipped were established say at Fort Simpson, at the junction of the Laird and Mackenzie Rivers, or at some point on Great Slave Lake, it could be reached by canoes in summer from

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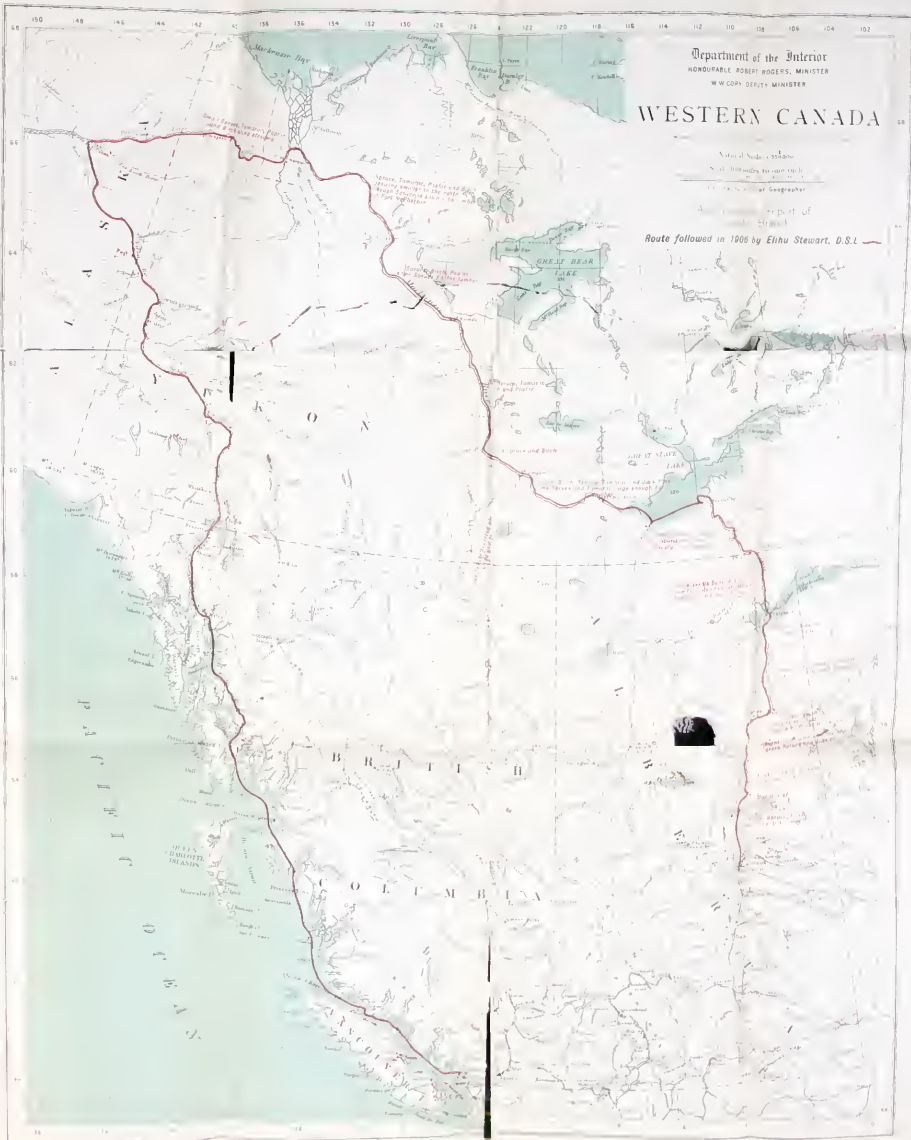
points all along the Mackenzie even down to the sea on the north as well as the country to the south along the Athabaska and Great Slave Lakes and their tributary streams. By this means the poor people who are at present compelled to live out a life of suffering till death comes to their relief, would have the benefits that modern science affords to the afflicted in civilised life.

All know the splendid results that have attended similar efforts on the Atlantic Coast between Newfoundland and Hudson's Straits through the agency of Dr. Grenfell. Here is a field even greater than that of the Labrador but where no such a benefactor has yet appeared, and my last words in this connection must be an appeal to our people on both sides of the Atlantic to unite in what would really be a most beneficent work for suffering humanity. I cannot but believe that if this want were generally known it would not be long till the charitably disposed would come to the relief of those lonely and helpless people.

I have now concluded an imperfect narrative of a hasty trip through the country, and I may as well confess that it is doubtful

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if I would have sought the public ear through this publication had I not thought it my duty to call attention to this matter, and if words of mine should aid in bringing about an amelioration of the sufferings of those dwelling in that lone wilderness, I shall feel well rewarded for having attempted an unfamiliar task in the preparation of this narrative.



Department of the Interior  
 HONOURABLE ROBERT HOODS, MINISTER  
 W. COPE, DEPUTY MINISTER

# WESTERN CANADA

Notes of Scale & Symbols  
 N. of 1000000 feet scale 1:100000  
 W. of 1000000 feet scale 1:100000  
 W. of 1000000 feet scale 1:100000

Route followed in 1906 by Elinu Stewart, D.S.I.









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