

THE EDMONTON ROUTE.

True Account of a Trip Via McKenzie and Porcupine.

Eighteen Months of Terrible Travel—Fearful Rapids—Exposure—Starvation—Scurvy.

(The following is compiled by a traveler from a diary kept for a year and a half, which was required to reach Dawson. The matter of fact way in which the story is told carries conviction with it. Many of the matters treated are entirely new, as for instance, the abundance of coal oil in certain districts. The length of the article requires its publication in several chapters.)

CHAPTER IV.
I had little time to gather much information at Hay river as after eating a hasty meal we again set out. What a contrast the sky in the meantime had assumed a most threatening aspect, but the expected storm did not burst. Thirty miles from Hay river the Mackenzie current begins to make itself manifest. From Hay river to this point is the most dangerous part of the crossing as a landing cannot be effected on account of the shallow water and rocks. It took us five days actual traveling to cross from Fort Resolution to Fort Providence. We reached the latter fort on August 6th. With regard to prospecting on the shores of this lake I was informed at Fort Resolution that a party of Frenchmen had discovered some rich silver ore on the north shores and that they had returned to civilization in order to secure the necessary plant and outfit to work the same. Another batch of prospectors, comprising a few members of several outfits, returned to Resolution the day before we left, from a prospecting trip to the north shores after an absence of one month. They reported the discovery of silver, copper, mica, and indications only of gold. Around Fort Providence we saw large quantities of ducks. We now enter Beaver lake, which is 30 miles long and 15 miles wide. There was not a breath of wind and the sun was scorching hot. Pulling in on the left shore we cooked a substantial meal of ducks. While we were lying here the Hudson Bay steamer Wrigley passed on her way to Fort Resolution. We were praying for a breath of air, and in less than an hour after our start our wish was gratified. The sky showed indications of much wind. The breeze came light, in cat's paws, but increased till it blew with great force, being most unsteady and coming in squalls. It was lucky for us that the wind was on the quarter, otherwise we should have been swamped. At 9:30 a. m. on August 7th Fort Simpson was reached, where we land to register our names. Here the mail is divided, some for the Liard and the rest for Fort McPherson and other intervening posts. Many tales were rife here respecting the bad behavior of some of the parties bound north. We heard that one party had stolen a bearskin and other property.

It appears that during their winter stay here they had found this bear in a trap. They skinned the bear and left the carcass in the trap. The Indians were most incensed at this behavior and followed the guilty parties as far as Fort Norman, but were unable to obtain any satisfaction. The same party have the reputation of shooting at an Indian guide whom they had engaged to pilot them through the McDougall pass. This incident occurred in the night, and the guide narrowly escaped with his life. Our stay here was of short duration. Mid-day saw our departure and at 6:30 p. m. we were in sight of mountains. The scenery here becomes most picturesque. From here onwards one notices the scarcity of driftwood, the long reaches, steeper shores, good landing places and the abundance of water fowl. Fort Wrigley was reached at 6:30 p. m. on the 8th. There is some very swift water on approaching this fort. This same night we passed a large fire on the west bank, light opposite a high bluff, some 400 feet high. On the early morning of the 9th, high mountains were on either hand. The banks here become very steep and the scenery cannot be surpassed. Next day we had the misfortune to run our boat onto a reef, and shortly afterwards we were drawn into a rapid in mid-stream, but came out all right. We found the Indians here were great beggars. The wind being favorable we moved along at great speed. Three miles above Fort Norman we passed the burning coal field. We learned from the oldest In-

dians at Fort Norman that this field had been burning for upwards of 100 years. The interior from the west bank between Wrigley and Norman is totally unexplored and is covered with a dense growth of spruce, well nigh impenetrable. The glare of the sun now becomes most hurtful to the eyes. My eyes became so bad that large drops of blood flowed from them. On arrival at Fort Norman we heard from Trader Nagles' agent that we had broken all records for actual traveling from Hay river. Fort Norman stands at the junction of Bear river and the Mackenzie. Here we unloaded our entire outfit and took the empty boats around into Bear river for the wind was blowing with hurricane force. The shore here is composed of loose rock and sand, while the conglomerate or pudding stone is in strong evidence. The water in Bear river is as clear as crystal and icy cold. This may be partly accounted for by the fact that Great Bear lake is never free of ice. My companions traded here for moose hides. Twenty miles below Fort Norman the river is over a mile wide. Much oil finds its way into the river between the latter place and Fort Good Hope. Some 15 miles south of this fort the rapids are reached, the entrance to which is very wide, with a reef of ironstone rocks extending into mid-stream from the west bank. The current here is very swift, and there is a perfect confusion of water. The rapids are composed of limestone cliffs some 100 feet high and extend over eight miles. After emerging from the rapids there are many sand bars and the river becomes very wide. Good Hope was passed on the night of the 16th. The Arctic circle was crossed on the early morning of the 17th and the same day we passed a glacial bank in mid-stream, the ice being covered with about seven feet of sand. The sun now became paler each day and we noticed a scarcity of birds. The solitude also was extremely great, while timber became more slender and very little driftwood was to be seen.

Traveling onwards we passed several Indian camps and log cabins. We struck Peel river on the 20th. Onwards for some distance is a complete maze of waters. Sometimes one is traveling up stream, sometimes down. Many parties here took the wrong channels and went to Fort McPherson instead of Rat river and vice versa. We were fortunate in taking the right channels. From the mouth of Rat river a hard task begins, that is, tracking to its headwaters. This river is about as mean as can be imagined—some 80 miles long and possessing upwards of 100 rapids. Thirty miles up from its mouth was the main camp originally designated Little Dawson, but later on was called Destruction City. No rapids exist till Destruction City is reached, but shallow water appears in places. West of the Rockies has had a name for mosquitos, but they are nothing as compared with the myriads which exist on the east side, especially in the Rat and Husky river district. Ten cabins were built at Destruction City, where about 50 men remain during a great part of the winter.

My companions finding it was impossible to reach Fort Yukon during this fall, and seeing that their provisions would not last us the entire winter, abandoned me to my fate, without giving me an ounce of food or a particle of clothing. No organized miners' laws were yet in force at Destruction City. What could I do, a lone man without any means of subsistence and an arctic winter staring me in the face?

Firstly, I proceeded some 18 miles up river, where I wandered for four days existing on berries. In crossing the river I was swept away by one of the numerous rapids. I narrowly escaped with my life. The water was extremely cold, much snow having recently melted on the mountains. At the end of four days I returned again to Destruction City. I had made up my mind to go to Herschel island, or Fort McPherson. Owing to the lateness of the season I abandoned the idea of going to the former place, and on September 9th I left in an empty boat for Fort McPherson. On arrival at the junction of the Rat and Husky rivers I met an old time trapper who invited me to take a lunch with him. He had been busy fishing here and had killed many fine salmon trout, some weighing as heavy as 20 pounds. I shall never forget the day I met this man for I was starving and he could see it. Outside of his fish he had a very scanty supply of provisions. After prevailing upon me to stay with him for the winter we dropped several miles down the Husky, where we built a shack. We pitched at this particular spot, as we saw many fresh bear and moose tracks and we chiefly depended upon the meat of the latter to carry us over the winter. On October 9th small particles of ice were floating on the Husky and on the night of the 11th the river was frozen over.

The winter prior to this, all the rivers about here were frozen up on September 11th. On November 2d we made a tour of

Waterer's lake, which is about three miles long and over one-half mile wide. The month of November was extremely cold. Indians paid us frequent visits, their tale being always the same—"very hungry." As time went on our stock of provisions got lower and lower, till at last we were reduced to one meal a day, consisting of a small bannock. We ate rats, mice and owls as long as they were about, but when the weather became severe these delicacies disappeared. It is impossible to describe how we suffered, and what hardships we endured from this time onward till we reached Fort McPherson.

The sun disappeared on Dec. 5th, which was the commencement of the dark days. At this time the Indians set out for the winter hunt, which they continue till spring sets in, when they make for the trading posts, often to exchange fur for provisions, provender, etc. A few years ago the Hudson Bay Co., used to supply the Indians with long barreled rifles to procure one of which the Indian had to bring in enough beaver skins to reach from the ground to the muzzle of the rifle. I found the Indians in these latitudes to be as good as their word.

Being short of ax handles we asked an Indian to procure us a couple. We paid him before hand, but he turned up next day with three. He had over 30 miles to travel to find birch. The winters here come on slow but sure, and arrive while the brush is still wearing its summer foliage. During summer the red and black currants and raspberry grow in abundance, but they do not ripen before September. It is strange to see these ripe berries hanging on the bushes frozen solid and natural long after winter sets in. We gathered many of these berries when the thermometer was many degrees below zero. Butterflies and moths, wasps and bees may also be seen in great numbers. The white fish, blue fish, jack, loach, canny and salmon trout are the chief fish the latter of which is the finest fish I have ever eaten. They came in from the Arctic ocean and are not caught till the end of the summer. Indians who know their runs up small creeks cut them off with nets and capture them in large quantities. It was a bad season for fish when we were there, causing many Indians who did not go to the hunt to starve. Every seven years rabbits and other small fur animals almost entirely disappear from some cause which has not yet been accounted for. This was the first year after the seventh and but few of these animals could be obtained. I noticed, however, that the ermine was exceedingly plentiful.

(To be continued.)

Fillipino Prisoner Pardoned.
Washington, Nov. 1.—For saving the life of an American soldier General Otis has granted a full pardon to Domingo Magno, a Filipino prisoner, who was sentenced by a Spanish court in 1897 to penal servitude for six years for robbery. Magno suffered confinement for the alleged offense for four years prior to his trial and conviction.

During the attack on Manila last February by the insurgent, the prisoner saved the life of an American soldier, and the provost marshal reported that he had displayed good conduct during the time he had been under surveillance by Americans.

Queen Won't Interfere.
Rome, Nov. 1.—The Italia Arena and other journals say the pope recently sent another letter to Queen Victoria, appealing to her on humanitarian grounds to use her influence in the direction of peace. The queen is credited with replying courteously to the effect that it was beyond her power to go against popular opinion in Great Britain or to interfere with the prerogative of the constitutional ministry.

May Arrest President Snow.
Salt Lake, Utah, Nov. 1.—An affidavit was filed with the county attorney today charging President Snow, head of the Mormon church, with unlawful cohabitation. It is alleged that Minnie Jensen, a plural wife of the president, gave birth to an illegitimate child on Jan. 1, 1897, and that he has cohabited with other women also. The county attorney took the matter of issuing a warrant for Snow's arrest under advisement until Wednesday. Snow is 85 years of age, and has seven wives, it is alleged.

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