

II.

Lake Athabasca is the smallest of the fresh-water seas which stretch like a chain from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Arctic Ocean, east of the Mississippi, the Red River of the North, and the Athabasca-Mackenzie system.

It is 230 miles long by twenty miles broad, and about 600 feet above the level of the Arctic Ocean, according to the observations of General Sir J. H. Lefroy. The position of Fort Chipewyan, the headquarters of the district, is $58^{\circ} 43' N.$ lat., and $111^{\circ} 18' 32'' W.$ long.; that of Fort Fond-du-Lac is $59^{\circ} 20' N.$ lat. and $107^{\circ} 25' W.$ long.

Like a number of other lakes in this region, it is a crystal sheet of water lying in a deep bed, granitic at the north end, and with sandy and muddy deposits at the south. Three of its sides are granite, and a great number of granite islands thickly set with pines dot its surface. But there are no mountains there, and Hearne, the first explorer in 1771, would have been more correct in naming it Lake of the Isles than Lake of the Hills, as the abundance of islands strikes the traveller at the first glance.

I have already explained the Cree meaning of Athabasca. The present inhabitants, the Chipewyan Tinneys, call it "Yétapè-t'ué" (Lake Superior), or more habitually "Kkpay-t'èlè-kkè," or Willow bed, alluding, doubtless, to the deltas. This was also the name of an old trading-fort at the mouth of the Athabasca river, where willows were the dominant feature of the vegetation, only conifers and aspens being visible elsewhere.

The nature of the soil of the lake is therefore identical with that of the great lakes tributary to Hudson's Bay, such as Lakes Wollaston, Caribou, Beaver, and Bear, the Lake of the Woods, and Lake Winnipeg, and of those which drain to the Atlantic, as the Canadian lakes proper.

The fishes of the lake are *Coregonus lucidus* or white-fish, salmon-trout (which there, as in more northern waters, reaches thirty-five lbs. and over), Canadian trout, *Catostomus reticulatus*, maskinongé (*Esox estor*), grey and red sucking-carps, sandre (*Lucioperca Americana*, called doré by the Canadians), the golden-eyed lakèche, lamprey, methy (*Lota maculosa*), &c. I only refer here to the larger species, for the very sufficient reason that the smaller ones are entirely unknown.