

weather, it bequeathed to us a substantial legacy of 8 inches of snow, which caused great difficulty and discomfort in executing the concluding operations of the season; and though the snow in course of time disappeared on the lower levels, the higher ground was still covered with snow a fortnight after the storm. I heard afterwards that the half-breed hunters, who were in temporary camps hunting buffalo to the west of us, were also caught by the storm, and some of them were unable to find their way back to the camp, and were afterwards found frozen under the cover of some buffalo-hides, which they had stripped from the animals they had just killed. The melting snow fortunately filled up the low lying pools, and supplied water in places where it was greatly needed. The whole of the British Commission made good their retreat to Red River in independent detachments, as originally organised for the work of the season, the rearmost party arriving on the 31st of October; and three days previously the Red River was completely frozen over, having remained open for navigation for about six months. The sudden closing of the river, a fortnight earlier than usual, caused great inconvenience, and both steamers and small boats found themselves suddenly frozen in and compelled to pass the winter at places where they had made no preparation for winter-quarters, and where they were in great danger of being crushed by ice on the breaking-up of the winter. The horses and oxen of the Commission were housed in wintering stables, which were specially built half sunk in the ground. During the winter of 1873-4, the permanent staff of the Commission were fully occupied in revising astronomical calculations and preparing fair plans of the country surveyed during the previous summer and winter seasons, and special arrangements were made for the field operations of the ensuing season.

The operations of 1874 were arranged to be carried out in a similar manner to those of 1873; supply depôts were to be established at intervals of about 100 miles on the main line of communications, by which the working parties would procure supplies. As the work would, however, commence at a point 430 miles distant from Red River, and from there would gradually lengthen out in a direction generally due west, it was necessary to establish a new base from which the Commission would actually commence work, and in which they could fall back to winter, in case the work could not be completed to the Rocky Mountains during the summer of 1874. Woody Mountain was selected as the new base, and a contract was made with an enterprising American merchant of the Upper Missouri country, to deliver at Woody Mountain enough forage to meet the wants of the Commission for the first half of the working