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## THE WATERWAYS OF THE MACKENZIE RIVER BASIN\*

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### INTRODUCTION.

The Mackenzie is one of the great rivers of the earth, with a drainage basin covering about one-fifth of the total area of Canada, exclusive of the islands of the Arctic. The subject, therefore, is too big a one to discuss in all its details within the limits of a short paper such as this, and I will make no attempt to do so. I wish, however, to draw particular attention to what I consider one of the most important features of the region, and one on which, to a very large extent, its future development depends, namely, its navigable waterways. The importance of these waterways, first in the exploration of the region and later in its settlement and the development of its natural resources, cannot be overestimated, and these waterways can and will be used far beyond the limited extent to which they are used at present.

I have selected the Mackenzie river region for two reasons. In the first place, I am familiar with much of its geography, its natural resources and its inhabitants, and I am able to speak of them with some degree of knowledge gathered throughout many years of residence in the region. For many years I wandered over much of the northern part of the region, from the barren lands on the east to the Pacific coast on the west, travelling in summer by canoe and in winter on snowshoes. During these years I travelled over nearly all the main routes, besides some that had not previously been explored.

In the second place, the Mackenzie river region is at present beginning to attract a good deal of attention among men who are anxious to develop its natural resources in minerals

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\*Paper read at the meeting of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club on March 10th. 1914.