

is the kind of man that was made for the trail. He is a bundle of wire nerves. When he hits a trail he hits it hard. To him there is no discomfort in travelling. He is just the sort of man that prefers to see things to being talked about.

What was there beyond the Peace River which is already being tracked up by the settler? The landseeker will soon begin to ask. It is Mr. Oliver's business to answer.

"I can see the beginning of the end in the prairie country," he said fixedly. "Free land in the Saskatchewan valley will soon be over. It's the business of my department to find out what lies beyond."

And he went on to trace his journey. From Athabasca Landing down the Athabasca river 160 miles to Grand Rapids; down to Fort McMurray rough water by scow, canoe on board; 200 miles easy water to Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca; 100 miles per small steamer to Smith's Landing with a 16-mile portage to Fort Smith, where the Minister and his secretary began the open journey by steamer of Hislop and Nagle, traders, to Fort Resolution, on Great Slave Lake. Here the Roman Catholic mission steamer carried the two men and the canoe clear down to the Arctic Red river beyond the Arctic Circle; past Forts Providence, Simpson, Wrigley and Norman, and Fort Good Hope. Where the Arctic Red joins the Mackenzie is the farthest north Roman Catholic mission in the world. From here the ministerial canoe was towed on, down the Mackenzie by a Hudson Bay Company's steam launch up the Peel to Fort Macpherson, most northerly post of the Hudson Bay Company, and down to the great Mackenzie delta. It was in the middle of the three-weeks day under the midnight sun when Mr. Oliver and his secretary, with a corps of Locheux Indians, and R. N. W. M. P. Sergeant Ackland from Dawson—who had pushed down the Yukon and up the Bell and the Porcupine to Macpherson—began to traverse the Yukon River system that wriggles out of the sub-Arctic Rockies clear away from the basin of the Mackenzie. Here began the sixty-mile portage to Lapierre's House, on the Bell River, heading north and west to the Porcupine, that gets the Yukon still within the circle; from Fort Yukon up the Yukon to Dawson, where civilisation has been squatted for ten years, and where any ordinary traveller can get out to the known world providing he has the price of a ticket. From Dawson to White Horse by steamer five days put the minister and his secretary aboard a train; an eight-hours' run to Skagway, where they took the Princess Royal to Vancouver, calling at Prince Rupert.

So that when the House of Commons assembles on November 17 there will be no man in the House, whether from north, south, east or west, who has seen hinterland Canada so well as the Minister of the Interior. Up among the Locheux he found men that were strange to him; clear from Athabasca to Macpherson the odd, nomadic tribes of the variegated red men who are his wards; of whom the Locheux are the northernmost and next to the Eskimos.

"And what do you think of the Locheux?" he was asked.

"A fine lot of Indians. You know the name means 'Slant-eye'; and you see at a glance that some time in the history of the ages these men got some-

how mixed up with the Orientals. Two of our packers from Macpherson were almost typical Japs as far as Indians can be; the other two were almost typical Chinese. You see the same resemblances clear down among the coast tribes."

"Is there any future for the red men up there?"

"Nothing particular. They'll hang on as long as possible about the same way they have been doing for centuries, except that they have all been missionised."

"Did you have any experiences similar to the overland Klondikers?"

"Oh, no; not exactly. You see our problem was altogether different. They had to freight in a huge amount of supplies over a long journey. We travelled light and so made good time. The slowest going we had was over the sixty-mile portage to the Bell. It took us four days to do the sixty miles."

"What made it so slow?"

"Niggerheads," he said abruptly; "the hardest thing to tackle in the way of pedestrianism that I know. You've seen bunch-grass? Well, 'niggerheads' grow something like that; in detached clumps, each clump about two feet high, and at the top spreading out into a sort of grass that tangles into a mat. Well, you try to walk on the tops of these things, and you either break them down or you slip off the edge, which you can't see for the grass. You walk among them as we had to do, and your boots wedge between the 'niggerhead' stems."

Navigation on the Mackenzie.

"Now as to the Mackenzie River itself, what?"

"For navigation purposes there can be none better. It's a marvellous thing to reflect that there in the furthest north is a river that breaks up in the latter part of May and stays open till late in September; a great moving upland sea from a mile to two miles wide, capable of carrying large ships; not subject to shifting sandbars like the Saskatchewan or the Mississippi. No, it varies in depth very little, because it's fed by reservoirs at different latitudes that break up and discharge their contents at varying intervals; though it sometimes floods."

"So far as you can see, any probability of trade development along the Mackenzie?"

"Immediately very little; that is so far as local freight for the fur posts is concerned. A whole year's traffic into that country bulks up to only eight hundred tons at present, and fur post trade is not likely to develop very much. You see the fur trader has no particular interest in developing the country; just because to him a fur country is naturally a preserve; and the moment civilisation invades it the fur business is sure to decline."

"But are there evidences of mineral wealth likely to create trade in that country?"

"Some useful minerals—yes; such as coal, tar-sand and rock salt. Nobody knows, of course, what precious minerals may lie inland from the rivers. Of course there is any quantity of copper; but copper has become such a drug on the market that it's not likely to develop much in that country for an enormously long while yet. They are smelting copper two hundred tons a day in the Yukon, however."

"But what of possible agricultural development?"

"A good deal. As far north as Fort Simpson there seems to be no reason why cattle and grain should not be raised much as they are on the

prairie. Even with what scratch farming is done in that part of the country vegetation thrives. All up the Liard river there are evidences of agricultural possibility."

"All down the Mackenzie you see good timber; mainly spruce and black poplar. No, the banks are not rocky, as some people imagine, though they range from a hundred to two hundred feet high. The soil is mainly clay, which seems to be common everywhere. There is no black mould or humus, such as is found on the prairie. Down at the delta of the Mackenzie we saw spruce as good as any in the lower country. The growth is much more rapid than on the prairie. The heat is intense. There is neither spring nor fall. The country jumps clear from winter into summer at a bound. The hot weather is on long before the snow goes off."

He mentioned great bushes of wild roses which he had seen in the far north as fine as any on the prairie.

"As to winter temperature, what?"

"So far as I am told no worse in actual low temperature than down on the inland prairies; though, of course, a longer winter season with much shorter days and longer nights; fully made up for in the summer, when for a while the sun never sets. Trade is bound to develop gradually along that great waterway of the Mackenzie; just to what extent no man can foresee at present. But the waterway is there. It seems hardly credible that it should not support some form of navigation more extended than at present. From Edmonton to the mouth of the Mackenzie is a long reach in travel; but the worst part of it all is the reach between Edmonton and Fort McMurray. Once a railway bridges that over and obviates the rapids of those lower rivers there is nothing to prevent a traveller, and freight traffic along with him, from making his way up and out by that great artery of waterways to the land of the whale. But I'm not prophesying. It will take a great deal of knowledge and exploration long after this generation is gone to discover what the possibilities may be. Already my department is conducting investigations along the Athabasca that we may find out what parts of that enormous territory should be surveyed and thrown open to the homesteader in days to come as the great land trek pushes farther north. That will do us for a while."

Questioned as to the possibility of trade between the Yukon and the Mackenzie, the minister replied that already from steamboat to steamboat between the head waters of the Yukon river and the tributaries of the Mackenzie is a mere sixty miles.

"But the people up there are not worrying about that. The furposters never have considered it their business to boom any new part of the country. It's the way everywhere. As it has been, so let it be; till the landseekers push up from the south and the east and begin to make developments. Freight rates in the Yukon? Oh, yes, they are as high now as they ever were I suppose. But what else could you expect? I tell you this," and he twinkled with that far cunning of the man who has been a long while on the edges of things, "when I think of the millions of wealth that pour out of the Yukon in a year under the present handicap of freight conditions, I am willing to say that if southern British Columbia had similar conditions to contend with there would be mighty little done in southern British Columbia."

RIFLE-SHOOTING AND AFTERNOON TEA AT LONG BRANCH, TORONTO



Toronto ladies have been practising rifle-shooting indoors for some time.

Last week they held their first outdoor shoot at the Long Branch ranges.