

came to the edge of a rapid stream, about 30 feet wide, and unfordable. The going on the banks of this was a little better, and after another half mile we got on to sounder ground, and amongst high timber again. It was a terrible muskeg, and the thought of having to go back through it frightened us. One could not tell how deep it was in places, and always expected to go overhead every step. The roots of the alders, too, made it very difficult walking. We followed the trail for another mile or two through forest, but saw nothing but occasional scraps of clothing or hide. It was very nervous work, for we expected to be shot at every minute, and could not see more than 40 or 50 yards ahead, so, as we had only a small party of scouts, we returned to the main body. The General decided not to follow any farther, on account of the danger of having the muskeg in our rear. It was probable that we had been able to cross because the winter ice was only thawed out about two feet in depth, but, of course, it would be continually getting deeper, and might become quite impassable. We, therefore, returned by the way we had come to Fort Pitt.

We found that General Strange had gone up in a north-westerly direction, past Frog Lake and the Beaver river, to Cold Lake, and reported that he had information about Big Bear's band. General Middleton, therefore, determined to go with all the mounted men to reinforce him, and we started on this trip on the 13th June. The grass had now grown, and was up to our horses' bellies, and so thick that it was with difficulty one could force a way through it. When it dries in the autumn, to be caught in a prairie fire would be very dangerous. In the early part of the campaign we were in several prairie fires, but the grass had been so beaten down by the winter that the flames never rose to a dangerous height. Our path, however, soon led us out of the grass country into the thick forest of pines, firs, birch, maple, and poplar, which stretches from Lake Winnipeg, or even Hudson's Bay, to the Rockies. It is curious what an enormous extent of this country has been moulded by beavers, and how lasting their work is. Our way lay for the most part along beaver dams, which crossed every hollow, the trees above it being killed out by the water. In most cases, however, the dams were old and cut through, having to be bridged with trunks, whilst where the beaver pools had been were now narrow marshy meadows. We often came across fresh beaver traces, and in one instance crossed a hollow just below a fresh beaver dam, with three beaver houses in it. The dam was bow-shaped, about 8 feet high, and 30 yards long, of trunks plastered with clay. It had a peculiar feature: in the centre of the bow the dam was double, leaving a narrow pond of water in the middle. Its object I could not ascertain. We never saw any musquash houses where there were beavers, but elsewhere their conical heaps of sticks was the usual sign of a pond being a permanent one. In three days' march we came to the Beaver river, where we found a flat-bottomed screw, freshly built by General