

IN NORTH-WESTERN WILDS.

The Narrative of a 2,500 Mile Journey of Exploration in the great Mackenzie River basin.

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I.

By the terms of Union with the Dominion, British Columbia, in May, 1871, conveyed to Canada, in trust, a belt of land, not to exceed twenty miles, on each side of the projected Canadian Pacific Railway line. It was found that much of the land in such a belt had already been conveyed by the Province to settlers and others, and to compensate for this, 3,500,000 acres in the northern corner of this Province, adjacent to Peace River, was granted to the Dominion.

Some material changes in this arrangement were proposed by the Government of British Columbia; in view of which, and to gather some information required for the proper selection of the 3,500,000 acres in question, the Dominion Government determined to make an examination of this part of the Province lying between the Liard and Peace Rivers.

To make this examination, the writer was selected, and received his instructions therefor on the 5th of June, 1891. A special canoe had to be made for the purpose, and shipped to Calgary by the Canadian Pacific Railway. This delayed his departure from Ottawa until the night of the 30th of June, or the morning of the 1st of July.

As the thriving little town of Edmonton has now, and had very nearly then, railway connection with the rest of the world, I will begin with it the account of the journey.

The name of this place recalls a ridiculous item copied by an Ottawa paper some weeks ago, from, if I recollect aright, a Minneapolis paper, giving an account of the travels of

three men who had left that city to hunt buffalo in the so-called frozen north. These men had not been heard of for some time, and the paper proceeded to give a sensational account of their presumed wanderings, picturing them as Arctic travellers, and wound up by the expression—"When last heard from they were at Edmonton." Altogether, the item sought to convey the impression that these men were attempting something almost unprecedented for hardship and cold. Now, I can safely venture the assertion that any ordinary civilized being could spend his life about as happily and comfortably in Edmonton as in Minneapolis—any way, as much so as in any town of the same size in the State of Minnesota. Edmonton is a town of several hundred inhabitants, and four or five churches, good schools, two lines of telegraph connecting it with both the east and west, several doctors, lawyers, and surveyors, and members of other professions. With several grist and saw mills, numerous stores and hotels, and lighted by electricity; with a large coal mine just outside the limits, and railway communication putting it within *three days of Minneapolis*, it was not a bad place in which to be "last heard from."

Edmonton is, to use a stereotyped phrase, "beautifully situated" on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River; though, since the railway reached it, in 1891, quite a town has started on the south bank. The river here is about 300 yards wide, and, except at very low water, permits the ascent of the ordinary flat-bottomed stern-wheeled steamers, such as navigate the Missouri and other

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