

A Journey to Hudson Bay.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, is the divine teaching in regard to the course of providential events in our world. Were we encumbered with all our future trials during all periods of our lives the burden would be more than we could bear.

Trials often come, like the tornado, without warning, and before we have time fairly to collect our thoughts, we are so engaged in buffetting the storm that the very effort takes away half its terrors whereas, had we leisure to survey its approach, and estimate its probable force, we would be in inspired with tenfold dread and terror.

In the Spring of 1854 I was appointed to the mission work in the Hudson Bay region. The distance we must travel rendered it necessary to leave all our household effects behind, and the nature of the country rendered it advisable to leave the elder members of our family also. It was a sore trial. I well recollect the time that our family circle was broken, never more to be all united on earth. It was the 7th of June in that year. Our eldest had just reached his majority, and as we entered the cars I bade him farewell. "God bless thee my son, my first born." Since that day we have not seen him. Our two eldest daughters were put to school, and another one with an aunt, so that we had but two remaining to accompany us to the far north. One of these, a daughter of 18 months, was very feeble, and her aged grandpa said as he kissed her for the last time, "poor thing, they will likely leave you in some sand bank on the way," the tears streaming like rain down his furrowed face. But we did not, for our journey of two months through the solitary wilds of our continent, exposed to the sun and rain by day, and camping by night, rather improved her health than otherwise, and she still lives.

Between the internal conflicts and the physical exposures and hardships it required no small amount of firmness and endurance to bear up under it all. These long journeys have been productive of much sacrifice as well as hardship and exposure. This was the fifth time in the course of our missionary labors that we had been compelled to break up our domestic establishment, and dispose of our effects, and then commence anew when we arrived at our field of labor. The collection of years were thus scattered: among other things, I emptied a bushel or two of my less valuable books on the floor, and told my friends to help themselves.—I miss some of them, now that I am settled again. But without these experiences we must have comparatively limited views of the worlds we live in; worlds I say, for there are more worlds than this physical one with all its wealth, beauty, and glory.

With the arrangements made for our journey, it was no great affair to reach Fort William by steamer and sailing vessel. This was once a place of note as the center of trade for the North West Company. It is on the north bank of the Dog River, called by the Indians Kahwahne-kwayah. The bad river, and well named it is. At this place there is a little good land, the first that is met with on this coast going westward for 300 miles. When all the traders from the interior met at this place, and exchanged furs for the goods brought by a brigade of bark canoes from Montreal, Fort William presented a busy, bustling scene. The spacious dining hall that would accommodate 100 gentlemen at table at once, was standing a few years ago. This has been the scene of many a revel, for music and dancing was a matter of course when thus assembled. Their beauties to grace the occasion were the best they could get from

the wilderness, and, I dare say, as good as could be found anywhere. No men ever enjoyed practical joking better than these traders. This dining hall has a history of its own.—Some few years since a Catholic priest was celebrating worship in it, when the floor gave way and precipitated the whole company to the ground. It was never repaired; and when last there the whole building had disappeared.

We remained twelve days at Fort William, waiting for the arrival of canoes from the interior to take us on our journey. There were three canoes, and there were three families of us with our luggage. The families were all unequal and also the amount of luggage each had; but each canoe must have an equal load. This took some time to adjust. At last, however, all was adjusted, and we started with flags streaming, and to the sound of the Frenchman's boat song. These French voyageurs remind me of the old fashioned stage drivers:—however slow they might go on the road, they were always sure to crack their whips and go at great speed both on leaving and arriving at a place. We went moderately enough as soon as we turned a point of land and were fairly out of sight of the port. There is good land along the bank of this river for about 40 miles. The current is rather gentle. There was oak, elm, and other hard wood, along the bank; but the prevailing timber is spruce, balsam, and poplar. The first rapid, or barrier to the navigation is a fall of about 100 feet in perpendicular height.—At this point the whole face of the country undergoes a complete change. The bare plutonic rocks are seen every where with a stunted growth of dwarf evergreens. In coming to a portage all is carried over on the backs of the men; this, however, is much sooner accomplished than could be supposed, and really after a time it was a relief to come to a portage that we might be freed for a time from our cramped, confined position in the canoe. There was always a little strife among the men to see who would be most expeditious. Rapid and cascade followed each other in quick succession; the land rose rapidly until we had reached a point about midway in the stream when I observed all the voyageurs simultaneously throw their poles overboard. We had now reached the granite region, and there were no more rapids that could be surmounted. The country now spread out into lakes and bogs, and the stream was getting narrow, when in the midst of a morass we took up a small stream almost hidden by the reeds and rushes. There was a phenomenon in this little stream I never saw anywhere else: during the whole way the odor of the skunk was very strong, but an Indian took up some of the grass found in the bottom of the stream, and held it toward me, and this was our skunk. We were glad to see the high land before us, and in a short time we entered a small lake of very pure water, bubbling up over nearly the whole extent of the lake, which was not more than two feet deep, and very pure. We landed at the very head of the lake. There are many streams in this region, up which a small boat or canoe can be taken to their very sources. It is this fact that makes water communication so easy throughout all this region. There is a perfect contrast in this respect be-

tween the water courses of this part of our continent as compared with the prairies of the west. The Kansas and Nebraska rivers very often cannot be navigated six or eight miles from their sources. To account for this state of things we have to take several facts into the calculation. Were Lake Superior transported bodily to the South West, it would soon dry up, but in its present position it would remain a lake, and have a stream flowing from it, even if every stream flowing into it were cut off. Among all the geographical and isothermal lines determined by scientific men. I have never seen any allusion to this which is to me an interesting problem. In what portions of our globe does the amount of rain exceed the amount of evaporation?

I must return from this digression to our journey. We had now reached the height of land that separates between the waters of the St. Lawrence and those that flow to the Hudson Bay. It is a high sandy ridge, some 3 or 4 miles broad, stretching away on either hand, and entirely different as to quality of soil from the region east and west. It appeared as tho' at one time this ridge just rose above the ocean, and that the waves from the opposite sides had beat for ages along this line, and made a shore for them, where often having traversed half or more of our water globe, they might at find a place to end their weary journey in swells, and foam and roar.

We camped on the farther side of this great water shed and looked out on a boundless expanse beyond mostly of bog. I stood beside an Indian raised in the region, and he pointed out to me a chain of small lakes in a morass; that, said he, is the head of the river we descend.—These others lakes to the north form another river and flow northward until it becomes a great river.

We now commenced our downward course. We had been six days in tracking this river from its mouth to one of its sources, and we were now to descend another. We crossed small lakes and muddy portages until we come to the great swampy portage some two or three miles in extent. This was considered the most trying part of our journey especially for women and children; so taking the youngest child on my back, we started on this long dreaded portage; we plunged, and waded, laughed and cheered each other, determined to brave it thro'. Sooner than I anticipated we saw light beyond, and came out to the opposite side where there was a little dry land much sooner than we expected. The fact was we had screwed up our courage to such a pitch that we had a surplus on hand when the thing was over, and thought it no great affair of a swamp. Like some careful souls in other things, so careful of a deficiency that they always have a surplus on hand.

It was the 12th of July we camped here, and the next morning we found there had been a heavy frost during the night.