

THE WINNIPEG.

On reference to the memorandum on a preceding page, it will be seen that this river presents a series of lake-like reaches with short intervals of rapid water between them. It is in volume not inferior to the Ottawa—perhaps greater, after it receives its chief tributary the English River which joins it just above Portage de L'Île from the east. Some of the navigable sections are like the Chats and Duchene Lakes on the Ottawa, differing only in the circumstance of being full of islands. This river had long been used as a highway for the boats of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the carrying places were found to be well opened and in good order. At certain stages of the water some of the portages are difficult of approach, but when the expedition passed the water was low, and the worst places had quite lost their terrors. The distance from Rat Portage at the outlet of the Lake of the Woods to Fort Alexander on Lake Winnipeg is one hundred and forty-nine miles. The portages are numerous but short; their aggregate length at high water amounting only to three miles and six chains. The water, however, was so low when the Expedition passed that at several places, such as the Cave, the Seven Sortages and Silver Falls, much of the land carriage was avoided by keeping in the bed of the river and lifting the boats over rocky points. Upon the whole, the Expedition experienced no difficulty whatever on the Winnipeg. Guides had been obtained at Fort Frances and Rat Portage, where the Indians are numerous, and some few of the voyageurs, who had not distinguished themselves, were sent back from the former station and their places supplied with Indians well acquainted with the route. I should mention that Mr. Boyd, a merchant in the Red River Settlement, and now a member of the Government of Manitoba, together with some other settlers, sent six Hudson's Bay boats to meet the Expedition. This afforded an opportunity of comparing these boats with those which had been provided in Ontario and Quebec, and I have some satisfaction in saying that the latter proved to be the fastest sailers, the most easily managed in the portages and rapids and in every way the best adapted to the purposes of the Expedition.

From Fort Alexander to Lower Fort Garry (Stone Fort) the distance is 60 miles, and in this section there is no impediment whatever to the navigation.

The route, generally, between the terminus of the Thunder Bay road, Shebandowan Lake and Lake Winnipeg, will compare very favorably with any other canoe or boat route of equal length in British North America. The entire distance is four hundred and eighty-eight miles, with some forty portages (more or less according to the stage of water) having an aggregate length of seven miles. Between these portages, the navigation, excepting for a few miles in a narrow brook at French Portage, is the easiest conceivable. There are no difficult rapids to run. In fact, except on the the Maligne already referred to, and at a few places on the Winnipeg, as regards the facility of getting over them with boats or canoes, the rapids are the merest ripples.

The force, in getting through, had just seven miles of land carriage to get over with light boats, 60 days rations gradually diminishing, and their ammunition, and this in short sections, so far separated as to make the fatigue less than it would have been had the portages been longer and fewer in number.

The labor on the portages was, no doubt, trying to men unaccustomed to such work, but it did not last long at a time, and all besides was the smoothest sailing conceivable.

Let, now, the route which could afford such easy transport be compared with other known routes of similar character, on which many Canadians are engaged in occupations involving the constant practice of work of the same nature as that which the Expeditionary Force had to perform, and first, as regards the Ottawa, it is not necessary to refer to the time when articles had to be carted from Carillon to Grenville, when voyageurs had to portage their canoes past the Chaudiere and Duchene, struggle up the Chats Rapids and toil for weeks in powerful whirlpools or on the long portages between the Chineux and the Calumet. The labor involved in getting from the Joachim, the upper limit of steam navigation, to Lake Temiscamisque a distance of a hundred and twenty miles, is vastly greater than on the whole route to Red River,—a greater length of land carriage, and rapids more powerful and difficult to overcome. But if the difficulties on the