

THE BEST ROUTE TO FINDLAY RIVER.

CONCERNING THE BEST ROUTE to Findlay River, different parties appear to have widely differing opinions. The MINING RECORD has no opinion, its editor having no personal knowledge and at present no thoroughly dependable informant other than the contributor of an article published in its issue of October, 1899—Mr. J. H. McGregor, P.L.S., of Victoria, who contributed to this journal an account of a trip up the Skeena and beyond he made in that year. Simply with the object of placing at the disposal of any of its readers who desire information relative to routes to the Findlay, the MINING RECORD here reprints part of Mr. McGregor's article and reproduces two of the views (see pp. 142 and 144) that were used to illustrate it in 1899. Similarly Mr. Gavin Hamilton's letter to the Vancouver *News-Advertiser* of quite recent date is reprinted. Those interested must, therefore, make further enquiries, so as to satisfy themselves which route it will be best to take should they determine to visit the locality of the reported gold find on the Ingenica.

Mr. McGregor wrote, in part: "There are two main routes to the Omineca—one by way of the Cariboo wagon road from Ashcroft to Quesnelle and then by trail to Stuart Lake and thence north to the diggings; the other by coast steamer to Port Simpson or Port Essington, thence by river steamer to Hazelton, and then by trail around the north end of Babine Lake, and eastward, crossing Taela Lake by ferry. As to which is the better route opinions differ. Those of us who went in from the coast this year are all for the interior route, while those who travelled the latter are unanimously in favour of the Hazelton trail. It was a bad, backward season for travel. We left Port Simpson in a snowstorm, on April 26, on board the Hudson Bay Company's steamer 'Caledonia,' a handsome and comfortable river boat, with accommodation for about 40 passengers; and after visiting old Metlakahla, Inverness and Port Essington, in the wide tidal mouth of the Skeena, we started up stream on the 28th. We were three weeks on the river.

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"From Hazelton run three trails of some importance. One, up the main river to Kispiox and Kispiox, is travelled chiefly by Indians, and last year by Ashcroft pilgrims. A second follows the valley of the Bulkley to its head, and so on to Quesnelle. The third, which we followed, is the route over which the Hudson's Bay Company passes its supplies to Babine, Stuart Lake and interior points. As trails go it is a good one, but at the high-water season there is much mud and several hard streams to cross. Good bridges are needed at Nine-Mile and Twenty-Mile Creeks (from Hazelton), and again at Salmon Creek, nine miles beyond Babine Lake. The spring was very backward this year, and as late as June 25 there was heavy snow wading for our horses on the Babine summit, 3,600 ft. above the Forks. At Ba-

bine we were most kindly entertained by Mr. French, the chief of the Hudson's Bay fort at this point. Here we found vegetables and fruit growing in rich profusion, though the staple industry of the lake is fishing. The salmon catch is so rich that the company is able to ship dried salmon to the coast and compete with the Fraser River for the dog-food trade. The dried fish retail here at 5 cents, making a cheap food for man and beast.

"From Babine we drove our horses through a desolate series of hills, some 40 miles, to Taela Lake, where a ferry (run by 'Bear Lake Tom') is always ready, weather permitting, to transport horses and packs to the trail on the other side, about one and a half miles. Our desires not lying in that direction we paid off our pack train and hired canoes—cottonwood dug-outs, not to be compared with the coast cedar canoe, but fairly well shaped and decidedly serviceable. Our Indian cook, Jimmy, came with us to captain one canoe, and 12 miles up the lake we hired two more guides, Teegu and Hansen. Hansen was a big, black, heavy stage-villain, with a chronic scowl, whose voice and general appearance reminded one of an angry bear. We called him Adam Zad for short, but before he left us we voted him a diamond of the first water and good stuff all through. Teegu, baptized Daniel, was slighter in build and in moral fibre, of an insinuating manner and a calculating habit of mind; he will probably acquire wealth and many blankets before his end comes, which will not be by drowning. As a canoe man, however, he was perfect, and I have no doubt that when he reaches the Styx he will make himself so useful to Charon that he will obtain a permanent billet on the ferry instead of going to his proper 'illahce.'

"We paddled across the placid lake, passing the ruins of the Buckley House, where one of the old Telegraph parties wintered their stock 30 years ago, and turned into the swollen Driftwood, 100 yd. wide at the mouth, and so wound our way northward, following the loops and curls of the river as it turned and corkscrewed between dense hedges of willow and wild grasses. Our paddling changed from the easy stroke of the lake traveller to a hard and harder struggle with the current. At night we camped, tired and wet, on a pleasant park-like flat, an old Hudson's Bay camping ground, and here we cut and prepared poles 'and bitterly thought of the morrow.' From this time on our voyage up the river was a long series of heart-breaking efforts with pole and paddle, to which we were relentlessly spurred by our pitiless hired men. Up the river lay our course, north and west in a general way, though the winding of the river directed us to every point of of the compass many times a day. Up and up till the current was only less steep than the Falls of Niagara. Then we ran into a little creek with no current and no hard work. The creek turned to a small stream, the stream to a ditch, and the ditch to a portage. Then through ponds covered with water lilies, and more streams and ditches, till we made