

"It's not the country you're so much in love with."

"Who said I loved anything?" he retorted. "Don't be so sentimental."

We agreed to disagree. Next morning early I got what few items belonged to me out of the camp-truck that Mahoney was to sell—advancing the ten dollars as my share—and boarded the bus-stage for a two-days' drive from Battleford to all there was then of Saskatoon. It was a beautifully lonesome journey with a dismal ending. Saskatoon in 1901 was enough to give a blind man the blues. I took the first train out to Regina—which in those days was very little better, and in two weeks I was back in the East, wishing to heaven I had never agreed with Mahoney to leave Edmonton. For in a few years there would be a railway into that village. It was all a matter of waiting.

And I wondered if I should ever see Mahoney again.

BACK TO EDMONTON.

SEVERAL years later I went back to Edmonton. It was a strange experience. After I got past Winnipeg, I found myself by accident in a Pullman state-room which I mistook for a smoker. In a few minutes the occupant came in, a shrewd, business-looking chap, who said:

"Please sit still. There's plenty of room."

It was his first trip to the West. He was intensely, immensely voluble. The sensation of pounding up

the Saskatchewan Valley in a Pullman excited him. It also excited me. Second day out, meeting him again, I told him the story of my trip out with Mahoney.

He seemed to know who Mahoney was.

"Quite impossible!" I suggested. "He went back to Loon Lake to study telegraphy. He's probably living in a shack now. He's nothing but a delightful old roundabout with a big dog. He's probably married; but I'll bet he's still a pagan."

I spoke enthusiastically. Never had the vision of old Mahoney seemed so vivid. All the way up the valley I was thinking of that scalawag, hoping I might see him with Jim the dog at some station to see the train come in, even though he hated railways. I saw all the land through which I had come on the gorge of the river seven years before. And this railway with a stop every ten miles was the road that in 1901 had just been crawling up from somewhere down below. How it got there was all Greek to me—as it probably was to Mahoney, who hated railways. But already it was carrying a large number of well-dressed, civilized people up the Saskatchewan Valley, plus a few carloads of folk who were trekking in for the first time to make homes. The packing-case and the water-tank were dotted all along the route. The old glamour was gone. A new glamour had taken its place. Carloads of goods and chattels were going in now, week by week spilling themselves out along the new railway. These people were all building something, and they were

all part of a spectacle of strange, bewildering interest.

When I got to Edmonton in the early morning I needed a guide to show me over the town. Walls were going up—

But this is no boost for any particular place. I went to a modern hotel, several blocks from the old hostelry immortalized in Mahoney's verses on "the stony busted bummer." I was just getting used to the clock of a new civilization when a large but very aged wolf-hound came wheezing and clawing across the rotunda.

"By gum! It's old Jim," I gasped. "How the——?"

"—— devil are you?" said a voice.

And I'm blest if it wasn't Mahoney, clean-shaven, togged in business tweeds, neat boots, and a Stetson cowboy hat! He shook hands with the warmth of a grizzly bear.

"Yes, it's me," he said. "I didn't learn telegraphy."

"No, you old fakir, you got married and——"

"I'm living with my family in Edmonton," he broke in. "I've made \$20,000 in——"

"Real estate," I interrupted.

"And I want to tell you that this town is——"

"Yes, yes of course, the greatest place in the world. I know it. Any man that's made \$20,000 without working any harder than you do on an average is entitled to think so."

"All the same, I'll be glad to have you come up to the house," he said.

And of course I went.

NOW is the busy season in the Top Country. Summer travel has set in, and all the through roads are carrying northbound traffic. That isn't romancing. Did you know that it is possible to buy a ticket, or a series of tickets, that will take you very comfortably from Montreal, say, to the edge of the Arctic Ocean, and by as fine a route as there is in all Canada? It does not appear in the standard timetables yet, but if you want it all you have to do is to ask for it.

Rail to Edmonton, of course. But also rail now past Edmonton, to Peace River Crossing. Then steamer down the Peace River to Slave River. Finally a long, soul-satisfying, eye-opening sail down the Mackenzie to the end of the line, into the Land of the Midnight Sun. A good trip all the way through, productive of thrills, suggestive of wilderness pioneering, filled with novelty, but as safe as a pleasure jaunt on the St. Lawrence.

If you really wish a deeper colouring of adventure and rough-riding excitement, you may have it by varying the route to read via the Athabasca River. That is the way the old fur transports went and came, and the chances are you'll find all the sport you desire in its rapids and on its portages. The average traveler to the North will prefer, however, to go the other way; it has less of adventure, but makes quicker connection with the Top.

The Mackenzie is hardly a tourist route yet. Scenery, interest, and comfort are not lacking, but it is laid out on such a scale of magnificent distances that only leisured people seem likely to patronize it. From Smith Landing on Slave River, where the Arctic sailings properly begin, to Fort Macpherson, the farthest north post, is 1,315 miles, and the round trip takes five weeks. With the Peace River connections, this means two months from Edmonton, and the steamship fare alone is \$240, plus meals. But in that time and for that money one covers a total of 3,982 miles of wonderful waterway, the like of which does not exist in any other part of the world.

As it is now, the trip to the Top is scheduled for one month less than in former years, because of the new railway connection; but not a great deal can be looked for in further shortening of the time except by a possible margin of a week or two. To visit the Arctic one must make up his mind to a long holiday.

There are two boats on the route, and each makes but one round trip in the season, covering practically the months of June and July. They are well built, comfortably appointed, electric lighted boats, and give a service surprisingly up-to-date for so far north. It is true that their frequent stops along the way to load up fire-wood for their own fuel are likely to recall the old Mississippi riverboat days, but otherwise they are fully modern. The larger one of them is operated by the Hudson's Bay Company, and the other by the Northern Trading Company. As yet the two have been able to take care of the traffic.

Business on the Arctic route is expected to be fairly good this summer. The fur trade, which in 1914-15 was seriously affected by the war, has been picking up, chiefly through a new demand from the

ON THE WAY TO THE TOP By AUBREY FULLERTON



The Phantom Ship on Lake Athabasca.



Passenger Traffic Along the Arctic Coast.

American markets, and the wilderness is busy again. The one lean year was a hard jolt to the Indian trappers, who were compelled to deny themselves the white man's sugar and tea and tobacco because they could not sell their furs; but they came through it, and now are trafficking as before. It is the fur trade, of course, that creates the business of the Mackenzie. Merchandise goes in for the trading-posts, and the accumulated stocks of raw furs come out; there is little other traffic but the carriage of supplies for the Mounted Police and the northern missions. As to freight rates, the charge from the end of the rail to Fort Macpherson is \$13.75 per hundred pounds.

The ingoing freight for the North this year, now already on its way, is of about the same quantity as last year. When the slump in the fur trade came, the northern posts were all heavily stocked, and the orders from head office to close down hard on credit, and at the same time to stop buying, meant that for that first winter the stocks were but slightly reduced. For that reason the new supplies since sent in have been only of average proportions, notwithstanding the present good times in the North. A much more valuable lot of furs will come back in exchange for them, on the return trips of the boats. It will run up into many thousands of dollars—just how many will depend upon how busily the Indian and Eskimo trappers plied their wilderness trade last winter.

His Majesty's Mails also go on one of these Arctic-bound carriers. Fort Smith, 550 miles north of Edmonton, is now a postal depot for the Top Country, and the mails for down the Mackenzie are there made up and dispatched. From Fort Smith north there are but two mail deliveries a year, and that going by the summer water route is much the heavier, including all the papers and second-class matter that ever get to the Top. What with mail and new supplies, it isn't to be wondered at that the northerners look for the coming of the steamers with as much eagerness as a youngster looks for Christmas.

By way of special features in this season's activity in the Arctic, there is the trip down the Mackenzie of Captain Lane, the American adventurer who hopes to find Stefansson and bring him back to civilization. That intrepid explorer, who was given up for lost and then reported himself safe and happy, is now about due to come out of his circumpolar haunts, and we shall all be glad to hear his story when Lane brings him within reach.

There is also the exploring expedition of the Anglican Church Mission, belonging to the diocese of Bishop Lucas. A party from the mission at Fort Macpherson is to make a thousand-mile trip along the Arctic Coast in a motor-boat, for the purpose of spying out new fields for missionary work, and especially in the hope of locating the mysterious tribe of blonde Eskimos who live somewhere in the vicinity of the Coppermine River. What the natives along the top coast will think and say when they see this chugging power-boat is not known yet; certainly it will be an innovation in waters usually traveled only by their own one-passenger kyacks.