

not far from the sources of the Saskatchewan, Fraser, and Columbia rivers, and a little south of the Yellow Head Pass. I do not know the exact length of the Athabasca from its source, but it cannot be less than 500 or 600 miles. There are 240 miles of its Slave River course from Fort Chipewyan to Fort Resolution on the Great Slave Lake, and the Mackenzie is reckoned as 1045 miles; this would give nearly 2000 miles for the entire river system.

From its source to the confluence of the Clear-water ("Washé-Kamaw" in the Cree dialect, but more commonly called "Sipisis" or Little River) the general direction of the Athabasca is from south-west to north-east; from that point, after two very abrupt angles to the east and south-east, it goes almost straight north to the Athabasca Lake.

For my purpose, we are only interested in the river after its receiving the drainage of the Lesser Slave Lake, at which point it enters the district of Athabasca. Before that point it receives five small rivers, the Miette, Bonhomme, Baptiste, Macleod, and Pembina. This last name, or rather "Nipi-mina," is a Cree word for elk-berries (the fruit of a guelder rose, *Viburnum edule*, which grows there).

I should observe that the name Elk River, applied to the Athabasca, is not only unknown in the north-west, even to British settlers, but is incorrect, since it refers to the elk (moose) or "original" (*Alces americanus*), whilst the Athabasca bears the name of the "corf bossu" of Canada (the wapiti),* called "biche" by the Canadians (the name of the female). The Crees call the wapiti "Wawaskisieu," and the Chipewyans "Thé-zil," or Reindeer of the Rocks, both tribes also applying these names to the great water system of which I am treating, and which should therefore be called the Great Red-deer River.

A little below the outlet of the drainage of the Lesser Slave Lake, the Athabasca receives the waters of another river, also called La Biche, which drains the pretty lake of the same name. Still lower, on the right bank, are the confluences of the Crying River ("Kitou Sipi") and Wide River ("Kaministi Kwéya"), and on the left bank the Pelican River ("Tsatsakin Sipi"), and Lake Wabasca. The right bank also receives the Houses River ("Waskaigan Sipi"); then, before reaching the turbulent cascades and foaming sheets called the Great Rapid, the right bank is again broken by the "Miyotinaw," and the left by the "Nistaukam" (Mustuch or Bison River), whilst another Red-deer or La Biche River, at least the sixth of the name in the district, also enters the Rapid on the left bank.

The large Clear-water river affluent is called "Otthap-dès," or River of the Groves, by the Chipewyans, and "Little Athabasca" by the Canadians. Inclosed between sandy banks 400 feet high, which it washes and eats away, revealing base rocks of the most picturesque character conceivable, this fresh and limpid stream is literally buried

* It is a common error in North America to call the wapiti by the name of elk.