

boundary-line to the Rocky Mountains in another season. The autumn being well advanced—for it was now the 8th of October—by previous agreement surveying operations were suspended for the year, and a general retreat towards Red River was ordered; 408 miles of boundary having been continuously surveyed and marked by the Joint Commission during the four and a half months of the summer season, and at the same time a map was made by the British Commission of a belt of country throughout, for an average distance of 6 miles north of the boundary.

The latter part of the autumn season had not passed without one or two incidents worthy of record. The heat of the sun and the excessive drought during the summer had completely parched the prairie-grass, and the soil was fissured in all directions. Although the greatest vigilance was practised, the occurrence of prairie-fires seemed inevitable, and towards the end of August a pillar of smoke visible to the north, a great distance off, gave warning that before many days were past, the whole of the Great Plains would be swept by fire. The course of the fire was most capricious, and often turned by a ravine, or by a slight change in the wind, into a new course. The onward progress of the fire was noticed for many days by the gradually-increasing temperature of the air, and soon by the smell of the burning grass. The various parties of the Boundary Commission being scattered over 400 miles of longitude at the same time, experienced very varied fortune in their encounter with the fire. A surveying party working in one of the ravines 5 or 6 miles from their camp, found that the fire had swept round behind them and threatened their camp with destruction. They had just time to reach their camp, and to tear down their tents, and to plunge everything into an adjoining pool to save their camp-equipage, and much was partially destroyed. A commissariat waggon-train, drawn by oxen, was also overtaken by the fire, and though a burnt patch of ground was prepared, and the oxen released from the waggons and driven to it, the unfortunate animals were too much alarmed to remain quiet, but rushed about wildly in the flames and were badly singed about the legs. One of the men had the hair on his face burnt, and in the rush of wind accompanying the passage of the fire, his hat went away, adding fuel to the flames. At one of the astronomical camps one of the officers, seeing the onward progress of the fire, employed all the men in the camp to meet the fire and save as much grass as possible by burning a strip; this was so far successful that about 400 acres of grass were saved, which were of incalculable value to the transport-animals on the final retreat; but the fire that had been started with this object at last got beyond control, and swept back