

THE YUKON RIVER, ALASKA.

I.

Robert Campbell, Discoverer of the Yukon River.

Mr. Campbell is a survivor of the old school of explorers who, when the world was much more spacious than it is to-day, travelled far and endured much without advertising their achievements or posing as heroes on their return to civilization. Mr. Campbell's explorations in the far North-West date back to a period in which many even of the larger geographical outlines of the continent of North America remained undetermined, and may be placed in the same category with those of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser and other worthies of the latter part of the eighteenth and early decades of the present century. In these years the officers of the Hudson's Bay and North-West Companies were engaged in practically outlining the limits of what was afterwards to become the Dominion of Canada, much in the same way that the African pioneers are now fixing bounds for British rule in the newer continent of Africa. Often single-handed and almost alone, they enlarged the commercial boundaries of the fur companies, seeking new regions for trade, and enlarging the bounds of knowledge.

In 1838 Campbell volunteered his services to establish a trading post on the south-western sources of the Liard River. Leaving the Mackenzie, he eventually reached Deere Lake, in what is now the northern part of British Columbia, built houses and wintered there in the face of many hardships, and even of starvation. He and his men were obliged to eat the parchment windows, and their last meal before abandoning the post in the spring of 1839 consisted of the lacing of their snowshoes. Campbell was a fur trader, and not a miner, and thus it is not to be wondered at that though his winter quarters were situated in the centre of what afterwards became the Cassiar gold-field, from which several million dollars worth of bullion was obtained, he remained ignorant of this wealth.

In the spring of 1840 Mr. Campbell was commissioned by Sir George Simpson, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, to explore the north-west branch of the Liard River. This he ascended till he reached a fine lake at its head, which he named Frances Lake. Here he and his small party left their canoes, and shouldering their guns, upon which they depended for subsistence, struck overland through the mountains till they reached another large river, which then received the name Pelly, by which it is still known. This was in a north-westerly direction, and was in reality the upper part of the great Yukon River. In 1842, the Company resolved to follow up these discoveries. Birch bark for a large canoe was transported to the banks of the Pelly, and in the following year Campbell, launching upon the Pelly, descended it for several hundred miles, to the confluence of another wide river, which was named the Lewes. "Here," says Campbell, "we found a large camp of Indians. We took them by no ordinary surprise, as they had never seen white men before, and they looked upon us and everything about us with some awe as well as curiosity. We smoked the pipe of peace together and I distributed some presents. When we explained to them, as best we could, that we were going down stream, they all raised their voices against it. Among other dangers, they indicated that inhabiting the lower river were many tribes of bad Indians 'numerous as the sand,' who would not only kill us but eat us. We should never get back alive, and friends coming to look after us would unjustly blame them for our death. All this frightened our men to such a degree that I had reluctantly to consent to our return, which, under the circumstances, was the only alternative. I learned afterwards that it would have been madness in us to have made any further advance, unprepared as we were for such an enterprise."

It was not till the year 1848 that Campbell was enabled to determine whether the great river which he had discovered flowed. It had been conjectured that it was the Colville River, the mouth of which had been noted some years previously by Messrs. Dease and Simpson on the Arctic Coast, but this proved to be incorrect. In 1848 Campbell established a post, which he named Fort Selkirk, at the

place where he had formerly met the Indians, and continuing his voyage descended the stream to the confluence of the Porcupine River, which he ascended, crossing the Rocky Mountains within the Arctic Circle, and returning by the Mackenzie to Fort Simpson, the headquarters of the Mackenzie River district. Thus was the identity of the Pelly with the Yukon (which had been meanwhile reached by way of the Porcupine in 1846) established, and the knowledge gained that the Yukon itself was in reality the upper part of the Kwikhpok, discovered some years previously at its mouth on Behring Sea by the Russians.

In 1852 Fort Selkirk was raided and its slender garrison driven out, though without loss of life, by a party of Coast Indians. The forts on the Upper Pelly River and on Frances Lake had previously been abandoned in favour of those on the more easily travelled route of the Porcupine,

and the whole of this great country reverted to its pristine solitude. Even the geographical results of Campbell's journeys appear to have fallen out of sight; for though clearly shown on some of Arrowsmith's old maps, later geographers, ignoring these, had preferred to adopt hearsay accounts of the country, and on them to draw imaginary maps with new outlines. When, in 1887, Dr. G. M. Dawson, of the Geological Survey, determined to follow the old route to the head waters of the Yukon, Mr. Campbell's description and sketch of this route, which he gladly furnished, formed the best and only trustworthy authority, and proved to be essentially correct. The country was found, however, to be without inhabitants; no sign of the old trail from Frances Lake to the Pelly remained, and it was with some difficulty that even the overgrown sites of the old posts were recognised. The prospector in search of gold may be expected to be the next to investigate the numerous streams which drain toward the Liard and Pelly, for gold in greater or less quantity exists on all these rivers; but at a later date the fair country through which they flow is destined to be more thickly peopled with a hardy population and to form a not unimportant part of the Dominion.



MR. ROBERT CAMPBELL,
Discoverer of the Yukon River.

Mr. Balfour's Sudden Fame.

There is no instance in English political life of a still young man making such a rapid advance to a premier place as is supplied in the case of Mr. Balfour. Lord Randolph Churchill had a meteoric flight, but he had been for several sessions steadily forcing himself into prominence before, in the Parliament of 1886, he blossomed into Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. Up to the day when all the world wondered to hear that Mr. Balfour had been appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, he was a person of no political consequence, his rising evoked no interest in the House, and his name would not have drawn a full audience in St. James's Hall. Within twelve months, and in rapidly increasing degree within two years, he has gained for himself one of four principal places in debate in the House of Commons, and his name was one to conjure with in Conservative centres throughout the United Kingdom. In personal appearance and in manner no one could less resemble Cromwell than

the present ruler of Ireland. To look at Mr. Balfour as he glides with undulous stride to his place in the House of Commons, one would imagine rather that he had just dropped in from an exercise on the guitar than from the pursuit of his grim game with the Nationalist forces in Ireland. His movements are of almost womanly grace and his face is fair to look upon. Even when making his bitterest retorts to the enemy opposite, he preserves an outward bearing of almost deferential courtesy. Irish members may, if they please, use the bludgeon of Parliamentary conflict; for him the polished, lightly poised rapier suffices for all occasions. The very contrast of his unruffled mien presented to furious onslaughts of excitable persons like Mr. W. O'Brien adds to the bitterness of the wormwood and gall which his presence on the treasury bench mixes for Irish members. But if he is hated by the men some of whom he has put in prison, he is feared and in some sense, respected. In him is recognized the most perfect living example of the mailed hand under the silken glove.—*North American Review*.