

then down he comes with a thud, or splash, as the case may be. How one loves that little quivering heap of flesh and feathers! As a friend of mine—an excellent shot and keen sportsman—used enthusiastically to say: "You long to pick it up and rapturously kiss it!" And, upon my honour, kind reader, you do! I do not know a moment in life more replete with satisfaction than that short moment of triumph.

After my breakfast of pork and hard tack, to which I do, as you may believe, ample justice, I loll about smoking and sketching.

A light east wind has arisen, which stirs, with a gentle whispering, the tall pine tops. A chipmunk (ground squirrel) runs pattering over the dry leaves some ten feet away, picks up a scattered crumb of bread, and, with shrill shriek, half joy, half fear, scampers to the far end of a log, where, his bright nervous eyes watching me, he seats himself to enjoy at leisure the 'lucky find.



"Hang it! I might have taken my time"

Back he comes in a few moments ever growing bolder. How quick his movements! No hidden crumb escapes the keen little nose! Now he has found another, quick as thought he seats himself within a few feet of me! His shrewd little mind tells him that that great, ugly, ragged-looking animal—your humble servant—will do him no harm. See how deftly he turns the crumb in his forepaws! Watch his little jaws, like machinery, how rapidly, how steadily they move! How his cheeks stand out! His round black eyes, how watchful! What a feast he is having—greedy little chap! But now he has finished his meal and is carrying away a bit, quite as big as his head, to store in his nest for the cold winter that is even now stalking down from the desolate north. For did I not see, no longer ago than yesterday, his herald, the strong Golden-eye*—hardest of ducks—in showy plumage, with hollow whistling sound, pass by? Even in the feel of this east wind, that makes such pleasant music in the tree tops, is there not a promise of cold days to come—days when nor-westerns will howl over a land white with snow, when the cariboo will gather closely together on the hill tops, and, with strong hoof, scrape the deep white covering aside in search of the lichen, which they love?

In pleasant idleness I pass the morning till about noon, when, picking up my axe, I start out to cut more wood for my evening camp-fire. There is abundance of small dry pine and poplar standing about, and in half an hour or so I have more than enough cut and carried.

About three in the afternoon I start out again to await the ducks coming in for their evening meal. I try the river mouth this time where I frightened them yesterday, taking a half dozen that I shot in the morning to use as decoys. These I place in the shallow, muddy water (with a stick run through the neck of each up into the head to keep them in position, the other end of the stick being stuck into the soft mud bottom), about twenty-five yards from the grassy banks and opposite a blind, or hide, built by some Indian. Then concealing my canoe in a clump of willows, I seat myself in the hide, and lighting my pipe, feel thoroughly prepared for any duck-shooting emergency.

My first shot is at a wood-duck, that seems to drop from the skies to within twenty feet or so of the decoys, sees its mistake and passes over them with a whizz like a rocket. Jumping to my feet, I fire both barrels hurriedly, and miss in grand style. "Hang it! might have taken my time," I mutter to myself, feeling thankful that thou, oh, D—n R—n, art not there to laugh thy lean sides sore, or with merry chuckle to wipe my eye—which certainly requires it—comforting me with fond prophecies of wondrous shots to be made in the very near future, while the shadow of silent laughter lights up thy weather-beaten old phiz!

But here, by Jove! are three more—fine black fellows, too. Through a crevice in the hide I see them. On they come—in another second the wings are steadied—now they are over the decoys! I jump to my feet. The old ten bore does his work this time. The leader drops. Number two, with broken wing, soars round in a half circle, turns a picturesque double summersault and falls with a splash some seventy yards away. Pushing out my canoe I soon settle it with another charge, and picking up the dead one return to my hide. For the rest of that afternoon I remain there bagging in all fifteen, principally black-duck and teal, only getting a couple of wood-duck.

Towards the end of the afternoon the clouds gradually disperse and the wind drops. The sun sinks cold and clear below the dark line of woods. Just as surrounding objects are beginning to look hazy and indistinct, I gather my birds

together and paddle quietly up the river. How lonely and desolate the marshes always look at this time, as the day is declining and night coming on! The birds have gone to their rest. A solemn stillness reigns, that you seem afraid to break. Suddenly from the dark line of woods comes the weird hooting of an owl, which dies with faint echo away, to leave a silence even more oppressive. The great *rampikes* stand stark and black against the evening sky, towering against the second-growth, sapless and dead in the midst of those green young trees.

There is a feeling as of departed life in the wilderness at this time—a strange solemnity. It seems hard to believe that the sun will rise again in a few short hours, and the woods, rivers and marshes be filled with a living brightness. What is that dark, gaunt object which stalks ghostlike to the water's edge, then crouches low at sight of the canoe with its solitary occupant? Noiselessly the paddle is laid across the gunwales, but before there is time to replace the

"No. 5" with a load of buckshot, silently as it came, swiftly, phantom-like, it disappears into the deep gloom of the alders.

A little while later my canoe is unloaded and lying bottom upwards, my camp-fire crackling, my kettle hissing merrily suspended on that green stake, while savoury bacon is sputtering in the frying-pan. And after supper comes the well-earned smoke, then bedtime, and the sleep that only bushmen know.

Thus the 21st, too, comes to an end, and for the present, at least, dear reader, and jovial sportsmen all, this pleasant *reminiscing*.

Ottawa, December, 1889.

YUKON AND MACKENZIE EXPLORATION.

In 1887 Mr. Wm. Ogilvie was sent in charge of a survey party to explore the Yukon district. Starting from Victoria in the spring of that year, he crossed from Chilkoot Inlet to the head waters of the Yukon, and went down the latter to a point near the international boundary between Alaska and Canada, where he spent the greater part of the winter making astronomical observations for the purpose of ascertaining the position of the 141st degree of longitude, the international boundary at that point. His observations have not yet been completely reduced, but an approximate calculation shows that the boundary is nearly ninety miles below the point where it is marked on the United States maps. This is of great importance, as the line passes through the best gold-bearing districts yet discovered in the country.

In the first days of March, 1888, Mr. Ogilvie left his winter quarters for the mouth of the Mackenzie River, following a route never travelled before by any white man and probably by no Indian. He ascended the Ta-ton-duc, a river flowing from the north into the Yukon; and then crossing a mountain range, he discovered the true sources of the Porcupine River. From this he went to Fort McPherson, crossed the Rocky Mountains to the Mackenzie, by which he returned south, thus accomplishing a journey of 2,500 miles, through a country hitherto very little known.

The Yukon district appears to have a much greater value than was previously supposed. It would seem that for gold the best paying streams so far as discovered are in Canadian territory. About 300 miners were in the country in the summer of 1887, but it is difficult to say what amount of gold they have taken out, as they are somewhat reticent on the subject. They all agree, however, that \$8 per day is poor pay, hardly enough to cover expenses. Taking this as an average, they cannot have made less than \$500 each, or \$150,000 altogether. Obtained with the crudest and most primitive appliances, this result shows what may be expected so soon as communication with the interior becomes more easy, and the importation of improved mining machinery possible. Drift coal was found at various places, indicating the existence of seams further up. Salmon abound in the rivers, but after ascending so far from the sea, it is not fit to become an article of export, although good enough as food for the Indians. The fur trade is confined to a few points; there are immense districts, teeming with game and fur-bearing animals of all kinds, where Indians never go. Part of the miners' supplies are pro-

cured in the country. The lowest estimate of this trade for 1887, is \$60,000.

The whole distance travelled during Mr. Ogilvie's explorations, from Ottawa back to Ottawa was upwards of 9,000 miles. Of this, about 5,000 was by rail; about 1,000 by steamship up the Pacific, from Victoria; nearly 200 by wagon, and the balance, about 3,000 miles, in canoes or on foot. Those canoes travelled about 3,000 miles by rail; then about 1,000 by steamer; were then carried about twenty miles to the point from which they made the descent of the Lewes river to the boundary (about 700 miles); they were then drawn on toboggans made for the purpose by one of the party, about 140 miles, and again were carried over the Rocky Mountains, eight miles, after which they made the ascent of the Mackenzie river, 1,400 miles. They were sold at Fort Chipewyan, and are good for some years' service yet. During the winter on the Yukon the thermometer was very seldom above zero, and often 50° below. Taking astronomical observations when it is 40° and 50° below is very trying work; more especially when it is continued for more than an hour, as all the observations taken were. In the month of February, while marking the boundary on Forty-mile river, a tramp of over 120 miles had to be made on snowshoes in deep soft snow, in which one sank to the knees every step. Food and bedding for the trip were drawn on two toboggans; of course all the time this was being done the party had to live outside without even the shelter of a tent, as two men could not do more than draw the necessary instruments, food and bedding for the occasion. The work being in the valley of the river, the sun never rose above the visible horizon, and as the thermometer was most of the time 30° or 40° below zero the comforts and pleasures of the trip can be imagined better than described. In March, while crossing from the Yukon to the Mackenzie the same hardships were suffered, but over a more extended time, stretching over a period of six weeks of extremely hard labor and cold weather; as instance, the 11th March the temperature was 53° below zero, and the party had to sleep outside in that. As the whole outfit to be moved amounted to about 3,000 pounds and there were only five men to do it, the progress was necessarily very slow, and very laborious. In the soft deep snow the weight of a man would sink the snowshoe into the snow up to the knee, and the exertion of pulling the toboggan would sink it more. This was extremely fatiguing and wearying, and although the thermometer was generally down about 25° and 30° below zero the perspiration would, under the exertion of drawing the heavy loads, flow as freely as in July at 90° in the shade. One would think that cooling off after a day's exertion of that kind, when the thermometer was about 30° or 40° below would be sure to bring on at least a cold, more especially as there was no shelter to cool off in, but fortunately for the success of the expedition not one of the party had the slightest touch of any ailment while absent. Under the provocation of exercise of that kind the stomach becomes very active and will dispose of about three times as much food as under ordinary circumstances. The quantity of tea one would drink, too, would surprise a prize beer drinker. Coming up the Mackenzie river had to be done by what is locally called tracking, that is hauling the canoe by a string, the party doing so walking, or rather running along the shore; this is no easy labour, as any one who has tried to pull a loaded boat faster than a slow speed knows. This was done by each member of the party in his regular turn, and as a rule the man on shore had not a very happy time, and his misery was a source of fun for the ones in the canoe, they in their turn took the chaffing of the "passengers" good-humouredly, knowing that "revenge" was coming soon. On the way out from Lake Athabasca, in December, dogs were used to haul the necessary provisions for the party, and their own food. As a rule a team of dogs—four—will haul about 400 or 500 pounds weight, and as each dog will eat from six to eight pounds of fish each day, one can see that as a means of freighting their usefulness is limited. A rule is that four fair dogs can haul

*See Audubon on American birds.