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LAKE MISTASSINI.

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Covering the higher ground, at the southern end, white spruce, pop-^{Trees.}lar, balsam-spruce and white birch trees were found, some of which had a diameter of eighteen inches, three feet from the ground. The swamps are covered with a thick growth of small-sized black spruce and tamarac, and the small areas of burned land are generally clad with a second-growth of banksian pine.

Mr. Macoun, in his report, also gives a list of the birds found about the lake. The waters of Mistassini and all the adjoining large lakes are full of fish. The principal kinds are lake-trout, river-trout, white-Fish, fish, pike, pickerel, and sucker, all of large size and fine quality. These fisheries would be of considerable commercial value if access could be had to them by railway.

Fish is the chief article of food of the Indians around the lake. During the spawning season in the autumn, when the fish come into the shallow water, large numbers are caught in nets, then cleaned and smoked for the winter supply. In the winter, the fish are caught on hooks through holes in the ice. The Hudson Bay Company's people also catch and salt a large quantity.

There are twenty-six families of Indians, about one hundred and ^{In Indians.} twenty-five persons in all, living around the lake and trading with the Hudson Bay Company there. These Indians speak a dialect of the Algonkin language, and belong to the Mistassini tribe of that great family. They are mostly short, and of poor physique, although there are exceptions to the rule. Very few of them are now of pure Indian blood. They live by hunting fur-bearing animals during the winter, the skins of which they barter with the Hudson Bay Company for flour and other provisions, and articles of clothing.

As there are no longer any deer in the country, and small game, such as rabbits and partridges, are scarce; if it were not for the provisions supplied by the Company, these Indians would be unable to live. As it is, cases of death by starvation are by no means uncommon during the winter. In the summer, all the able-bodied men descend the Rupert River in large canoes to Rupert House, with the furs taken during the winter, and return with supplies for the ensuing year.

The greater part of these Indians can read and write in the Cree characters, and have several books printed in that form. They all profess Christianity, although it is mingled with their old beliefs, as they still have their sorcerers, who profess to be able to do many things by the aid of evil spirits. A missionary, under the Church Missionary Society of England, comes inland from Hudson Bay once in two or three years, and performs the ceremonies of marriage and christening as required. During his absence, one of the Indians conducts the church service at all gatherings.