

## THE EDMONTON ROUTE.

### True Account of a Trip Via McKenzie and Porcupine.

#### Eighteen Months of Terrible Travel—Fearful Rapids—Exposure—Starvation—Scurvy.

(The following is compiled by a traveler from a diary kept for a year and a half, which was required to reach Dawson. The matter of fact way in which the story is told carries conviction with it. Many of the matters treated are entirely new, as for instance, the abundance of coal oil in certain districts. The length of the article requires its publication in several chapters.)

#### CHAPTER III.

It now became necessary to exercise the utmost care. We had passed from the lee of goose island, and between us and the mainland were two small islands. Knowing that it meant destruction to attempt a landing on the mainland owing to its rocky nature and the huge billows which were breaking thereon, I determined to run for shelter under the lee of the nearest island. On nearing this island we saw a Peterborough floating bottom upwards, and on getting alongside of her we found her to be the "Mabel." For our own safety we could not take her in tow and we left her drifting fast to leeward with her long painter attached to an empty box. When close on the island we began to ship a considerable amount of water, but we succeeded in bringing up safely under its lee. A description of this island will give the reader a fair idea of what the many islands in this lake are like. We landed on the island in blinding sheets of rain and it was bitterly cold. The island was composed chiefly of dark granite, streaked here and there with veins of white quartz.

From a few patches of surface soil here and there the spruce and cottonwood tree were growing. On making a closer search I found several different kinds of mosses and at least a dozen different sorts of wild flowers, among which I noticed the wild raspberry, the strawberry, the snowy mesphalis, or amalanchier canadensis. The texture of some of the mosses was exceedingly delicate and fit to adorn the palace of a king, while the stones and pebbles on the shore were of every conceivable color, among which were many agates. The wind having abated toward evening, we ran into a small sheltered bay on the mainland. My companions being anxious to know our exact whereabouts set out in the Peterborough in an easterly direction in search of Fort Chipewyan. They were gone the whole night and returned at 5 o'clock next morning. I knew our actual position was east of Fort Chipewyan some 13 miles, and I persuaded them to go west, but it was of no avail. They had no sooner returned than it came on to blow again with great force, and during the night the water receding, our scow was left high and dry on the rocks. Bad weather continued and we were obliged to remain here for two more days. Sleep was out of the question, for the deluge threatened to wash everything away. We managed to keep a fire burning all the time, using up every piece of driftwood we could find on the shore. We found that much of our provisions was damaged, losing half of our sugar. I made a hasty survey of the shore hereabouts and found that among other things there grew the Chinese honeysuckle, and juniperus virginiana or common juniper which was everywhere loaded with berries. Another boat was in company with us here, called the "May Ella," containing three men. We were visited here by three husky dogs, evidently on the prowl for something to eat. To make our position more desolate the sun obscured himself for 60 hours. At 9 p. m. on the third day we left this inhospitable place and steering west arrived at Fort Chipewyan at midnight. We brought up alongside of Trader Nagles' boats, which we learned were leaving at 2 a. m. for Great Slave Lake. We decided to pull out with them. Between here and Smith's landing the rain poured down in torrents. The wind being ahead we made fast to the bank. On jumping ashore the first thing I noticed was a squirrel perched on a log. I could see that he was busily engaged devouring something. I discovered this to be a mouse. I mention this fact, as I was not aware that squirrels were carnivorous. We arrived at Smith's landing June 26th. It is difficult for me to

express what relief I felt on arrival here, for several days had now elapsed since I had taken any sleep. But, that rain; it continued to descend for two weeks longer from the time of our arrival. Here was a place wretched in the extreme. No firewood and no water fit to drink. An Indian camp and two or three traders' cabins are located here. Here were also a few cattle and horses. Bulldog flies, mosquitos, sand flies and other poisonous insects were flying in myriads, stinging and biting every living thing. I wondered how man could exist in such a place, but men there were, or rather what remained of them. The approach to this place is not dangerous, but care should be exercised in sighting the landing to keep in close to the left bank, otherwise the boat would be drawn into one of the numerous large eddies which exist here, entailing a great amount of unnecessary work.

There are two ways of reaching Fort Smith from here. One by way of the Hudson Bay trail, 16 miles, and the other by way of Smith's rapids. The Hudson Bay Co. were carrying freight over this trail at \$1 per 100 pounds. By way of Smith's rapids there are four portages averaging one-half mile each, thus avoiding the most dangerous places through which man has never passed. These rapids are claimed to be the most dangerous in existence. The approach to the first portage is by a most intricate passage, winding in and out of rocks, over which the water rushes at lightning speed. In making this passage one bad rapid has to be run, the channel being on the right hand side. Here is the shortest portage of this series, the distance being only about 300 yards. After the outfit is portaged over come the boats. Here, as at the other three portages, all parties double up and help one another with the boats. This is accomplished by means of rollers laid at short distances apart all along the trail. Some of the Indian packers take enormous loads over these portages. I have seen them going along with 300 or 400 pounds with comparative ease. They bargain beforehand to carry so much stuff over the four portages. A white man on the average takes 100 pounds. This is quite sufficient, seeing that one has to fight against the millions of mosquitos all the time.

The various channels connecting all the portages are of the same tortuous and intricate nature, and none but the most daring and skillful can navigate them in safety. To attempt such an undertaking without the aid of a guide would mean certain death. The second portage is the longest, being over one-half mile long, and is up and down hill. Two creeks have to be crossed. Like the first one the formation is red granite. The third is Mountain portage, over a very steep sand hill. From the summit of this hill is obtained the finest view yet seen on the journey. Looking from the summit we see some of the dangerous rapids which we have avoided and others, through which we are destined to pass. Pelicans may be seen in great numbers flying around or perched on the numerous rocks among the breaking waters bent upon catching fish. The carcasses of several of these birds were to be seen, lying about, having evidently been shot by Klondikers. The fourth and last of these portages is about one-half mile long by a narrow trail through the bush. On reaching this portage the largest boats are unloaded while only a part is taken out of the smaller ones. The boats here are not taken overland, but are taken round a winding and rocky channel to the end of the portage. The mosquitos here were terribly numerous. The boats being again loaded no time is lost in crossing over to Fort Smith, a distance of two miles through much breaking water. One of my companions and myself were the first to run these rapids in a Peterborough canoe, taking 1200 pounds of the outfit along with us. Fort Smith is situated high up on the left bank at the foot of a great rapid. Here is the usual Hudson Bay post and a Catholic mission. The Hudson Bay factor entertains the Indians here at Christmas time with a substantial dinner and dance. On New Year's Day the Indians return again, shake hands with everybody, while the squaws kiss all the men on both cheeks as a token of good will. Many parties remained here to caulk and repair their boats after the battle with the rapids just passed.

Our boat on arrival here was in a very bad condition, and half full of water. The dogs here are trained thieves. I saw one swimming close to the canoe. Suspecting him of theft I seized the rifle which, lucky for him, was not loaded. This is the last place north of the N. W. M. P. Early the next morning the 15th, we left Fort Smith behind, my two companions taking charge of the Peterborough, while I remained the sole occupant of the boat containing the main part of the outfit. The next place we call at is Salt river, 18 miles below Fort Smith. Several islands are passed in this distance and

on rounding the bend in close proximity to Salt river an uninterrupted view of Slave river is obtained for some 35 miles in a straight reach. On reaching Salt river we found all the Indians there were busy fishing. The conney was the principal fish caught, but the jack fish were very numerous. Having previously heard from Hudson Bay Indians that much salt existed some 35 miles up Salt river my two companions set out with the Peterborough with the intention of securing some. They were absent nearly three days. I was left entirely alone, my duty being to pitch and caulk the boat and get everything dried out. Here a most unpleasant incident occurred to me. On the second night after my companions' departure I lay down to rest, with my back against the roots of a large tree which had been washed up on the shore. It was between lights, a dim twilight, for no real night existed at this time. When half asleep and half awake, for sleep was out of the question in this wild place, I was suddenly aroused by a jarring of the log, and on looking around my worst fears were realized. There stood a huge brown bear fresh from the bush. He had walked over the log, having, no doubt, been attracted hither by the smell of the bacon which I had laid out on a sail to dry. My companions had taken the rifle along with them and I knew I dare not attack such a formidable foe with a shotgun. I was at my wits' end to know what to do. It was no time for thinking, so I grasped hold of the gun and decided to remain on the defensive. This was my only hope, as I knew what a dreadful weapon a shot gun was at close quarters. Instead of attacking me he walked quietly away in a half circle toward the river and wheeling round he made his way again into the bush. I told the first Indians who came down to haul their nets and they set off on his trail but whether they ever overtook him I was unable to learn. My companions returned on the evening of the 18th bringing with them 250 pounds of salt and 50 pounds of jack fish, which I cleaned and smoked. The salt is found in large quantities on the banks of the small creeks flowing into Salt river. It is of excellent quality. Some distance from Salt river and 40 miles from Fort Smith, in a southwest direction, is a creek rising in swamps and flowing into Great Buffalo river. This creek opens as early as February. Thither the Indians repair, where they catch immense quantities of fish, which are dipped up by bushels in scoop nets. This is a providential provision for these poor people, many of whom at this time of the year are bordering on starvation. It is supposed that the salt held in solution is the cause of this creek opening so soon, for the rivers here do not break up before the end of April. On the 19th we pulled out from here for Fort Resolution. In running this distance down we encountered strong gales dead ahead, which often caused us to tie up our boat. On Sunday, the 23d, we were obliged to lay up all day owing to the fierce wind which threatened to blow us up stream. On making a general survey of the place I found a beautiful and remarkable flower. I gathered some of the blooms and showed it to other Klondikers who all said it was quite new to them. On the 25th, we had made the entrance to Great Slave Lake, but were obliged to lay up for the greater part of the day owing to a strong head wind. Here we fell in with a trader's party just returned from Fort Rae, a trading post on the north shore of the lake. They were driven in here to seek refuge from the storm before proceeding to Fort Resolution. They were bound for Edmonton and were gathering up their fur from the various trading posts en route. The wind moderating toward evening, and another party of Klondikers having joined us, we left for Fort Resolution. After getting out a few miles in the lake the wind freshened, causing high waves to run. The rocky nature of the shore would not permit us to land. At 8 p. m. we had the Fort well in sight.

The wind had now become so strong that the seas were breaking over the boat. We were making about one mile an hour and arrived at the fort at midnight. This place commands a splendid view of the lake, but stands on a bleak and wind-swept spot. Here are a Roman Catholic mission, Hudson Bay post, one or two traders' quarters and a Protestant mission, the latter of which has fallen into desuetude.

During three days' stay here the weather became gradually settled and on the evening of the 28th we pulled out for Fort Providence, distant about 120 miles on the northwest shores. The safest plan to adopt in crossing this great inland sea, is to make from headland to headland, of which there are seven always keeping the west shore on the left. Some follow the chain of islands lying to the east of this course, but it is not admissible. We were fortunate to get such fine weather for the crossing of this lake is most treacherous, and heavy storms sweep down be-

fore one is aware of their presence, and the seas at times run mountains high.

The Sunday before our arrival at Resolution one of these great storms was raging and a boat containing two men and a woman was swamped. The boat drifted broadside on and the woman's husband was washed away in front of her eyes, never afterwards to be seen.

If the course which I recommend is pursued the greatest dangers are avoided, as one is enabled to run into one of the many small bays which extend the whole distance to Hay river. We called in at Great Buffalo river. On going a little distance up the shore with the intention of fishing, I came to an Indian encampment, but owing to the menacing attitude of some sixty or seventy fierce husky dogs I was obliged to beat a retreat. I learned afterwards at Hay river that one man had narrowly escaped with his life from these brutes.

The shores of this lake are thickly strewn with a very small shell much resembling the East Indian corrie. Enormous quantities of driftwood and loose rocks are here piled up and at night when storms are raging, this driftwood is set on fire to act as a beacon to any unfortunate wayfarer who may chance to be on the lake. Our next point of call is Hay river, which we reached on the night of August 1st. I had the pleasure here to witness two of the most gorgeous sunsets it is possible to imagine. They occurred on two consecutive nights, July 31st and August 1st. I have seen grand sunsets in the tropics, but none to equal either of these. The one of August 1st was the most magnificent, not a cloud was to be seen while the sun which was blood red, seemed to be falling into the lake, and the whole of the heavens were pink.

(To be Continued.)

#### DIPLOMACY OF LITTLE TOBE.

##### How He Settled a Dispute Concerning Gen. Shafter's Color.

Three newspaper boys, one undoubtedly black, the others presumably white when the dirt was washed off, stood in front of a store window yesterday and feasted their eyes on a gaudily colored lithograph of the capture of San Juan hill, in which a company of negro soldiers were depicted as gallantly storming a blockhouse which literally belched smoke and flame. With rapt faces they gazed. At length the little son of Ham broke the silence:

"Say, dem colored fellers was brave, wasn't they?"

"What did dey do, Slim?" asked the smallest of the white boys, in immeasurable scorn.

"Do? Why, dey took San Jew'n hill, that what they did!"

"Oh, hully gee! Hear der kid! Took nawthin'. Why, de niggers wasn't roun' w'en San Jew'n was took; was dey, Tobe?"

The eldest lad maintained a discreet silence. The negro took courage.

"Yah! What was Gin'ral Shafter? Wa'n't he a colored gen'man?"

"Oh, say, Slim, you're dead crazy; you're a stiff, dat's wat you're is! Why, nigger, Shafter's white man, Shafter is!"

"No, sir," cried the other, excitedly. "Shafter is de colored gin'ral. Guess I know!"

"I leave it to Tobe," yelled the white boy. "Wasn't Shafter a white man, Tobe?"

"Wa'n't he colored, Tobe?" echoed the little black boy.

Tobe was plainly disconcerted. His eyes shifted uncertainly up the street and he remained gazing at a beer sign in deep abstraction while you might have counted ten. His reputation was at stake, and he knew it.

"Wa'n't he a nigger, Tobe?" anxiously repeated the negro boy.

Then Tobe's gaze drifted back and rested scornfully on the faces of the two contestants. He sniffed loudly.

"Gin'ral Shafter wan't a nigger," he pronounced, calmly.

The smaller white lad danced a step.

"An' he wan't a white man!"

The dancer paused and the negro yelled in triumph.

"Den w'at was he, I'd like ter know," cried the former, suspiciously.

Tobe's reputation trembled in the balance, but he was equal to the crisis.

"Gin'ral Shafter," pronounced Tobe, with judicial serenity, "Gin'ral Shafter was a merlatter!"

There was a moment of intense and audible silence. Then, "Yah!" yelled the white boy, and "What I tol' yer?" cried his black mate.—Chicago Inter-Ocean.

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