

in the monotony of the level swamp was at the crossing of the Christina river which flows through a grassy valley winding through these swamps. After crossing the river we encountered a land slide of mud, stones and small trees at the foot of the opposite bank. A halt was made and crew and passengers quickly cleared the track. The end of the day found us at mile 224; the end of the run of the Edmonton train.

A fresh engine appeared on the scene and after a brief survey of the situation the conductor informed us that it could only handle part of the load. The stock car was to be left behind temporarily. We therefore moved into an empty box car in which we continued our journey the next morning. Our progress now became slower and slower as the train crept over the flimsy skeleton of track floating on the muskeg. We put a number of the stops to good advantage by building fires at the end of the ties and making tea. In these repasts we were frequently joined by members of the crew and in this novel way banished our impatience. Night found us at mile 261.

The next morning it was reported that a sink-hole would bar our progress for the day. Our train backed down to mile 253 and waited on a side track while repairs were being carried out. All day long train loads of ballast were sent up and dumped in the hole only to disappear like water. Before night brush and poles were being substituted. Next morning our cars were pulled forward with a dinky engine and we had an opportunity of viewing the sink-hole. It occurred where the track passes between two shallow lakes on what appeared to be little better than a floating bog. Apparently when the frost came out the track simply sank. After some seven or eight cars of brush and long poles had been piled in, the ties and rails were again laid and the little engine ran across. The improvised track sank at least six feet and nothing but the holding together of the rail ends to form a suspension bridge enabled a passage to be made. A stop was made for dinner at mile 274, while the track ahead was being cleared of cars and at 3.30 P.M. the end of steel at mile 275 was reached.

At this point the right-of-way just breaks out from the wilderness of swamps on to the high and dry banks of the Christina overlooking its junction with the Clearwater. There still remain about sixteen or seventeen miles of track to be completed which follows along the southerly banks of these rivers and makes a side hill descent into Fort McMurray. The right-of-way has been cleared and graded over this remaining lap and the bridge crews were busy at work driving piles where several ravines cut through on their way to join the Clearwater. About the end of steel are clustered a few make-shift tents and stables and from this point all goods for Fort McMurray have to be packed or freighted down a steep and primitive roadway to the water's edge at the junction of the Christina and Clearwater, there to be transferred to water craft. An alternative wagon road leads directly through to Fort McMurray. We chose the former and Mr. Lonergan's packers and horses being kindly placed at our disposal we lost no time in moving down and pitching camp amid the large spruce and cottonwood of the Clearwater valley. At high water stage the Athabaska steamboats manage to come up the Clearwater to this point, and here we found large stores of goods waiting for shipment to northern points.

We awoke next morning to find it raining and rain continued to fall nearly all day so that we did not venture far from camp but contented ourselves with examining the valleys of the Christina and Clearwater in our immediate vicinity. The woods in the flats and on the hill sides are fairly heavy. Some good spruce is found but the greater quantity consists of cottonwood which is of an inferior quality. Small areas of hay and grass were seen but both good timber and agricultural land are very limited.

We also found time during the day to sum up our individual impressions of the district we had just passed through north of Lac la Biche, to compare notes and try to arrive at a just verdict. For this distance and to a depth of fifteen