

sleighs carrying freight to the trading posts of the far north.

The Slave River is a narrow stream, being only about two hundred feet in width, crooked, rapid and shallow, so that it is not an ideal stream for navigation. However, in winter, it gives the freighters a road to haul their loads on that is of course superior in every way to any road that could be cut through the forest and muskeg country that lies on either side. It is a treacherous stream for the unwary, as the swiftness of the water does not allow it to freeze to any thickness, and one must be well acquainted with it before it is wise to tackle it with a heavy load of freight.

Traffic is easier when Lesser Slave Lake is reached. This splendid sheet of water affords the traveller, for about a hundred miles, an easy road to travel, both in summer and in winter. With a good wind, a York boat will cover the entire distance in less

than a day, and on the ice in winter an ordinary team can easily pull a heavy load along at the rate of thirty-five miles a day.

The scenery on this little lake is very beautiful, more especially so at the eastern end, where the water lies in a valley of the Swan Hills, and as the width is only from ten to fifteen miles, one can easily see across its entire breadth. There is only one island in the entire length of the lake and that lies about two miles out from the mouth of the Little Slave River, and being of a horse-shoe shape it is a splendid harbor for boats when the lake is agitated by one of the sudden and fierce squalls to which it is so subject.

At the upper end of the lake is situated the Hudson's Bay Company's post, surrounded by quite a settlement. Here also there are two other trading posts, at any of which places the settlers are able to obtain all of the

necessities and a few of the comforts of life.

On the south side of the lake, in the valleys of the Swan and Prairie rivers, there is a very considerable area of fine, fertile soil, capable of producing excellent crops or of supporting large herds of horses and cattle. There are already several white settlers at Prairie River, and no doubt in a short time, when the country becomes better known, it will rapidly fill up. To anyone desiring to homestead in the Northwest, this tract of country, while at present very much out of the way of the ordinary land-seeker, will repay investigation. The valleys of both the Swan and Prairie rivers contain thousands of acres of the very best farming or ranching land, and the writer feels almost inclined to state that this tract will prove



R.C. Mission Buildings, Lesser Slave Lake.

to be one of the best districts that has ever been opened up in the Northwest.

On the north side of the lake the land is not quite so good, being more of a forest country, and somewhat more inclined toward the nature of the muskeg. Here for the most part one finds forest covering the country, spruce and poplar being the principal species of timber.

This winter a company has been engaged in the fish trade, drawing their supply from this lake, and it is the intention of the same company to continue operations there next winter. The Indians and settlers are very much worked up over this, as it is feared the supply of fish in the lake will soon become played out. The Indians de-



Mr. Harvey, In charge of H. B. Co.'s Post, Slave Lake.

pend very largely on whitefish for their winter food, and as it has happened that some years they could scarcely get sufficient fish to put them over the winter, they naturally resent the coming of such a company to what they consider their natural heritage.

At the west end of the lake, adjacent to the principal settlement, two prosperous missions are established, one under the charge of the English Church and the other under that of the Roman Catholic. Both these missions are provided with excellent schools and teachers for the education of the Indian children, and good work is being done, not only amongst the younger ones, but also amongst their fathers and mothers as well.

At each of these missions there is a saw-mill, and it is a great comfort to the settlers to be able to get sawed lumber for the insides of their dwellings, lacking which they would have to be content with split slabs, which, to say the best of them, make very uneven floors and poorly matched walls.

Collected around the shores of Slave Lake is one of the largest settlements in the far north. One would naturally imagine that the lives of these people would be very quiet and uneventful, but the half-breed of the north does not allow it to become so. He turns the seasons into a round of gaiety, and goes laughing through life, care-free and regardless of what most people consider a serious affair—the future.

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