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IN THE NEW NORTH OF ONTARIO AND QUEBEC

(By Fred D. Farnsworth)

North Bay, which is the old stepping off place to the new north of Ontario, lies sprawled out over a broad area of big boulders that rise up out of the ground surface at front doors and back doors and in gardens and wood yards, stretching away to the east and north and south in bluish lumps so that, at a little distance, grass scarce shows between them.

Down a gentle slope to the westward the waters of Lake Nipissing reach a barrier of these rocks and are halted there; and all along the shore line that stretches its sinuous length to the horizon, rocks stand at the water's edge where waves are shattered against them and silvery spray goes flying over their lofty tops.

At North Bay begins the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway on its rough and picturesque journey up through Redwater and Cobalt and Haileybury, and away on to Cochrane. Through a country that was, until a few years ago, as rugged a wilderness of forest and lake and rock, with here and there a valley asleep under the hills, as one could well find. It still retains its rugged grandeur; but man has come along with his houses and mills and mine buildings so that now the traveller does not only vision its wild romance, but sees also the activity of its human element.

Leaving North Bay and travelling northward through Mulock and along up Timagami way the country is rough to be sure; but in many places valleys open out, and saw-mills are busy by lake-sides. Up on the hillsides a settler or two has built his house and barn, rough looking and without paint, and around these narrow fields show green where a cow grazes.

On northward past Timagami, and near Latchford which lies part way between the former place and Cobalt, our train ran out from between two hills into one of the many valleys of great natural beauty. The railway ran along its western side probably thirty feet above a lake and twice as far back from its shore, varying these distances but little along the whole length of it.

The lake lay there like a shining ribbon reflecting the forest growth on the opposite side away out to its middle. On that side a range of hills, as high as our North Mountain, rose steeply from the water's edge, extremely beautiful in summer's coloring.

Near the southern end of the lake, and equidistant from either shore, an island of a couple of acres in area rose gently out of its surface. Tamarac and spruce trees covered it, thinned out systematically to let the earth feel the summer sun.

At the highest level of the island a bungalow stood, built from the round timbers of the neighboring forest with moss chinked in between them. A wisp of blue, wood smoke rose lazily from the chimney top as we passed along, and on a wide verandah a girl swung easily in her hammock with a book hanging down by her side. Out in the lake near by two young fellows, in a birch-bark canoe, were fishing. Then the fleeting picture vanished as we rolled on past it and out into a gloomy muskeg where stunted spruce, with moss hanging to their trunks, grew scarce taller than a man's head.

Beyond this the country becomes more irregular in contour, and ranges of hills twist in and out, and narrow lakes wind sinuously below them.

We were running along between two of these rough, tree-clad hills when I noticed, on the slope of the eastern range, great patches of bluish-gray where a junk of living forest seemed to have been litted out, and a blast of lightning smitten the bare rock, leaving a ragged scar as big as a house. Our train came quite close to one of these, and near to what looked like an enormous cave a great wooden derrick stood, and I saw rusty things lying about where a deserted shack stood near by with open door.

More of these caves came into view, some high up on the hillside, and below each of them were great piles of grey earth where men, with derricks and buckets, had toiled long with high hope in the air; and then, when no discovery had rewarded their labors, had still toiled; now in doubt, but still hoping on until hope had died, and they passed on to new claims, leaving their ugly monuments of unreward behind them.

"Cobalt country" I thought, and presently Cobalt Lake, with its muddy surface flicked by raindrops, came out on our right. A hill of bare and solid rock rises steeply up from the lake shore on that side and then slopes more gently back to its broad summit—an immense fortress of nature whose whole face from lofty summit to submerged base, seems to have been smoothed off, with a downward sweep by some giant's trowel.

On the slope of this broad hill stand many groups of immense mine buildings with steam issuing from pipes, and smoke rolling from lofty stacks. They are all built of corrugated iron, and stand there sombre looking in gray paint that blends in coloring with the bluish-gray of that sweep of hill-side. Nearer the lake a group of bungalows stand perched upon the sloping rock. Their colors are pretty though, and lend the only pleasing note of contrast to the interminable gray.

Spanning the lake, a hundred feet above it, swings an immense steel cable along which are run huge buckets, on trolleys, carrying silver for shipment from the railway station on the western side.

On that western side also, on a more gently rising hillside, are the stores and post-office and streets of Cobalt. The buildings here are of brick and wood, and solid looking enough, while at the northern end of the town are scores of rusty, corrugated iron dwellings of extremely modest dimension and design, where miners live.

Running northward from Cobalt these great hills of bare, gray rock obstruct broad view on every side, and the sky seems to come very near where their towering summits stand silhouetted against it, looking like the edge of the world.

A macadam road and street-car line run from Cobalt through North Cobalt and Haileybury to New Liskeard. Passing out beyond the former place the solid rock is cut through at intervals, and where these cuttings are—the lowest elevations—the rock rises sheer to a height of forty feet or more.

Farther on, and just on the left of the railway running northward, lies a smaller hill looking out of place there and alone of its kind. It's whole surface a gentle contour sloping towards the south. Grasses grow there, and flowers bloom, and here and there a weeping willow droops its foliage to a grassy grave. A few marble headstones stand out in clear outline against the verdure; but mostly, wooden crosses, gray and unpainted, are passing monuments to the memory of pioneers of this virile industry that, in by-gone days, drew legions of dauntless men, like a magnet, to the lure of its gambling greatness.

A few miles farther on North Cobalt stands—gray looking like the hills off to the south of it. And here the conformation of the earth's surface changes remarkably. Looking back, one sees only stretches of high, gray hills, where the rim of the earth seems to have been crumpled up and left that way, without any caressing touch. While ahead, gentle undulations trail off to level lands clothed in the green of trees and fields.

Then the broad waters of Lake Temiskaming come into view; and away off to the north, where the Ottawa River flows into it, the shores come close together and look, in the distance, not unlike Digby Gut.

Coming near to the lake, we swing off westward and run along its pretty shore for several miles to Haileybury which, with its several imposing churches, spacious school buildings, and new, modern dwellings—all in painted attire and clean looking, as buildings look in the morning after a rain—exhibits its comely profile for half a mile or more, close along the southwestern shore. Just past the western edge of the town are new tennis courts; and new golf links, with club house, stretch away on level fields close to the lake shore where waves gently bathe the summer sands, and canoes glide through mirrored foliage.

A few miles north is New Liskeard, close to Lake Temiskaming also and on the west side, where the railway passes. Just beyond it a range of hills, clothed in thick forest, rises from the very edge of the lake and makes off westward. On the eastern shore, rising steeply, too, and looking in the distance like a broad band of mottled plush, stands another range of nature's fortifications, sweeping around the lake's edge on that side in a broad arc, and densely clothed in the green of hardwood trees and the darker green of spruce and hemlock; stretching away off to the south for miles; to the distant horizon and beyond; down beside the valley of the River Ottawa.

On farther north, up Englehart way, is the height of land where, in this longitude, the drainage of the continent divides. Brooks take their source here and begin their slow flow northward, growing gradually into rivers that merge into other rivers and finally empty into James' Bay on the broad bosoms of the Rivers of the Moose and Harricanaw. And around about here other brooks begin their meandering journey southward; taking their source, perhaps, from a little lake that empties both north and south. They, too, grow into rivers in the course of distance and flow down to Lake Timagami; or away farther south to Lake Nipissing; or away further still, to the deep waters of the great Lake Huron.

At the height of land no mountain or hill lifts its lofty back to divide the rains that fall. Instead, the land stretches away on all sides with little undulation—covered in forest. This is the Great Clay Belt that, free from mineral and rock—save where an isolated hill lifts its humped and rocky back above the tree tops in defiance of extinction there—spreads itself out into the north for seven hundred miles, and a thousand miles diagonally east and west—home sites for future millions.

As we journey northward the forest becomes broken at intervals where, over broad areas, piles of stumps are on fire, and bare-armed men, with ox teams, are chopping and hauling more out of the blackened earth. Now broad fields, with blackened stumps sticking up through growing wheat, stretch out on either side where men have come into this new north and from the forest's dominion have claimed the right of home. Hewing its timbers and letting the sunlight in; plowing and sowing and reaping. So that now, half a mile and a mile back from the railway, stand sturdy farmhouses and barns snuggled in amongst groves of spreading trees that have been left standing there for a shade in summer time and a protection from the winds of winter.

All along now as far as Cochrane, little villages or groups of buildings stand near stations, and between stations broad, level fields in growing grass and grain, with their accompanying farm buildings, suggest an older conquest of the wilderness.

Cochrane has not yet recovered the magnitude of its past greatness. Two disastrous fires have swept its business section so that, to-day, along the street that parallels the railway tracks on the north side, gaunt cellars, with concrete walls, mark the tombs of many buildings.

Neither can any part of the town boast of compactness. This is due in part, I thought, to the fires. But in every one of the dozen blocks are vacant lots where grasses grow, and where buildings have never stood. North of the tracks, where all the town lies, the land slopes quietly up in that direction, and in the width of three blocks dips down to a little lake that rests between the slopes in crescent shaped stillness. Beyond this a few more blocks of scattered residences stand, and when I passed that way the hammers of carpenters were busy on several more.

Hotel accommodation is very inadequate, and the best one, to which I had been directed, has no dining room. On enquiry, guests are directed to a Chinese restaurant three blocks away where table linen shows egg stains that have survived the diligence of innumerable flies for a week; where the only serviettes are of paper; and where a morsel of cold chicken costs seventy-five cents.

My mission necessitated my going east into the province of Quebec along the line of the National Transcontinental Railway, whose junction with the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway is, of course, at Cochrane.

For sixty miles or so east, this new north can hardly be said to have emerged from the state of wilderness. Except for a few wood camps sentinelled along the right of way, where men in mackinaws and moccasins were chopping and sawing, and young fire rangers passed by on patrol, there was no sign that these leagues of forest are coming into the habitable estate of their neighbor leagues off to the east and south.

Finally this vast wilderness breaks, and Lake Abitibi comes out upon the vision with unexpected suddenness. The forest opens out, and there right beside the railway, on the south side, the broad lake stretches away in unobscured distance.

Near its western end, as we rolled

(Continued on Page Six)

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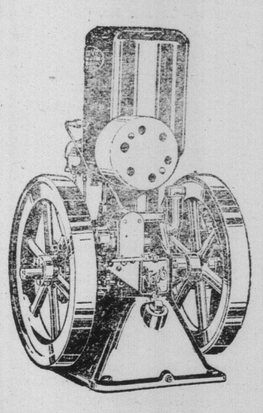

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