

## A Short Cut to Europe

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The war has obscured a piece of work the accomplishment of which has been a dream of Western farmers for a generation, the construction of a railroad to the Hudson Bay, by which they can reduce the distance between their granaries and the docks of Liverpool by at least one thousand miles, and that one thousand miles of expensive railway haul. That dream is not far from realization.

It is a little over three hundred years since Henry Hudson, in company with eleven others, of whom one was his son John, set sail from England in a little ship fitted out by a company of traders, for China, via Greenland and what was called for many years the Northwest Passage. China was a rich field for the adventurous trader of the day, but the old route was so long that much of the profit of the expeditioners was lost in the amount of time necessary to make the journey. Hudson was right in thinking that if he kept sufficiently far north he could sail round the great continent that had effectually stayed Christopher Columbus in his journey one hundred and fifty years before. He did not know that ice and snow storms and extreme cold could defeat his purpose as easily as the solid continent overcame Columbus.

Nevertheless, we owe to Henry Hudson's indomitable spirit, the discovery of what Earl Grey called the Mediterranean of Canada, and the short cut from the grain fields of Western Canada and the North-western States to Liverpool, and what may ultimately be the short cut from Europe to China.

It was the short cut to China that he was really searching for and his faith in the project as well as his iron heart are shown in the facts that he made four attempts and perished in the fourth. On May 1, 1607, he set sail with his first little expedition. Six weeks later he was battling with the ice drifts and fog off the coast of Greenland. There was soon added to these two relentless foes the mutinous refusal of the crew to risk being frozen to death on the ice or ground to pieces by it, and three months and a half later they were all back in England.

One failure did not break the spirit of the adventurer. If there was a short road to China, he was determined to find it and the next summer found him in the same unequal contest, one man and a well grown boy in an uneven struggle with ice drifts, chilling fog and a mutinous crew. Again he returned to England.

Hudson's faith in the ultimate success of the venture and the rich market at the other end of the road, impelled a group of Dutch traders to employ him to make a third attempt. In the hope of avoiding the river of ice by sailing farther south and then going north on the west side of the ice drifts, he found himself in the rich country drained by the river which now bears his name. For the third time he was beaten by his crew, who would not allow him to return to Holland, and compelled him to disembark at an English port.

On his fourth attempt Hudson thought he had made the great discovery. The miscalculation he made was in planning the conquest of the straits in the early summer, the only season of the year when they are dangerously filled with ice which forms in the winter and floats to the Atlantic in May, June and the early days of July. Nevertheless, after incredible hardships, he made his way against a very river of ice and by August first was in clear water and sailing south in search of the warm winds which would waft him to China. For eight hundred miles he followed the coast line of the east shore of the great bay and found, instead of the short road to China, the marshy shores of James Bay.

The darkness then falls upon the adventurer. The fourth crew mutinied and this time they won. Hudson and his son and one or two loyal sailors were cast adrift. What was the nature of the end, how the brave man died, no one knows. Nothing remains but some Indian legends. His monument is the bay he discovered, and the straits through which he struggled.

The Dominion of Canada has a railroad almost completed, by which this short

road from Western Canada to Europe, which Hudson discovered three hundred years ago, can be used. The Hudson Bay Railroad running from The Pas to Nelson will be practically completed by the end of 1916. Nelson is the name given to the port at the mouth of the river by Sir Thomas Button, who was sent out by the British government the year following Hudson's misadventures to search for the explorer, in honor of his first mate, who died there during the long winter they were compelled to spend in the Bay. For two hundred years it has been the shipping point of the fur industry and promises now to be a great wheat shipping port. The right of way is already cleared to the port, the grading is done to a point forty-two miles distant, and steel is laid as far as the first crossing of the Nelson River two hundred and forty miles from The Pas. The rails are of eighty pound steel, for it is expected that this will be a great traffic carrying road.

Farming in Western Canada is greatly handicapped by the long distance to a shipping point on the Atlantic coast.

Here is Nelson, the same distance from Liverpool as Montreal, as near to the edge of the present wheat growing area as Montreal is to London, Ontario, with a first class modern railroad on the one side and an open passage for several months of the year on the other. The first white settlement of Western Canada, known as the Kildonan settlement on the banks of the Red River near the present site of Winnipeg, came from Scotland via the Hudson Straits and Hudson Bay. For years, Western farmers have dreamed of sending their wheat and cattle to Europe along the route followed by Selkirk's settlers.

All that this new road to Europe will mean cannot be stated. For how many months in the year can navigation be safely piloted through the straits? What can a steel-clad, steam-driven boat do in the fogs and currents that were so dangerous an obstacle to Hudson? From early in July to the end of October the straits are practically free of ice. In the early summer it is probable they are impassable. How far into the winter they can be used with modern vessels no one knows. The difficulties are mainly in the four hundred miles of straits. The mouth of the Nelson is never frozen over, and the temperature of the bay is several degrees higher than that of Lake Superior.

Hudson was searching for a short cut to China. The shortest road from England to the Chinese ports is via Nelson and Prince Rupert.

Mrs. Waldo (of Boston): "I have a letter from your uncle James, Penelope, who wants me to spend the summer on his farm."

Penelope (dubiously): "Is there any society in the neighborhood?"

Mrs. Waldo: "I've heard him speak of the Holsteins and Guernseys. I presume they are pleasant people."

"In my young days," says Mr. A. J. Swinburne in "Memories of a School Inspector," "a rural schoolmistress entirely misinterpreted my kindness, which was prompted by a desire to quiet her nervousness."

"I asked her in as pleasant a voice as I could summon if she could have the children recite on the 'Reindeer.'"

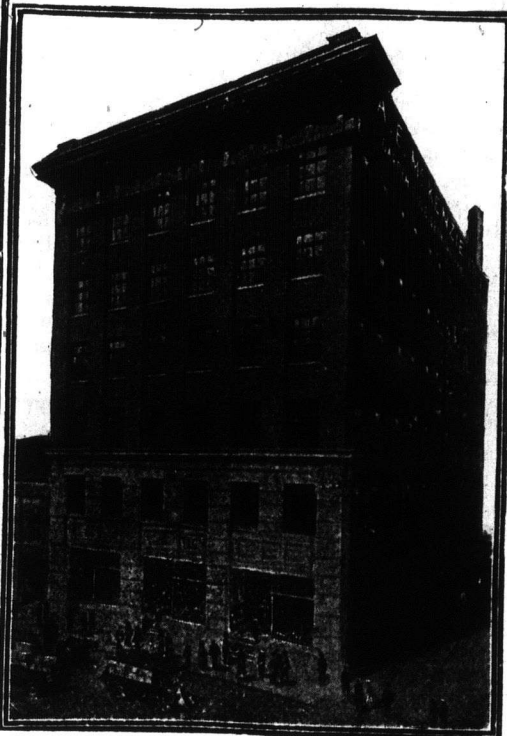
"She replied, simpering, 'I have a lesson on clouds and one on mist, but I'm sorry I have none on rain.'"

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