

abating. It is better, however, to be sure than sorry; and the prospect of a break-up in a lake ten fathoms deep, is not one to be coveted.

LETTER XVIII.

WIND-BOUND AT CEDAR LAKE—THE CROSSING—
THE DEMICHARS—HOW RAPIDS AND SHOALS
ARE OVERCOME—RUNNING THE GRAND RAPIDS
—THE STEAMER COLVILLE—LAKE WINNIPEG—
THE ICELANDIC SETTLEMENT—THE RUN
THROUGH LAKE WINNIPEG.

ON LAKE WINNIPEG, 13th September, 1879.

To our agreeable surprise, on Thursday evening, at about five o'clock, the steamer moved off from the point where we had remained all day and started for Cedar Lake. It was to some extent an experiment, for, although the wind had abated somewhat of its force, it had by no means entirely gone down. Five miles brought us to the lake, and we made the venture, hugging the shore as much as possible with a view of taking what is called the York boat route, instead of going, as is customary with the steamer, straight across. We had reason very soon to congratulate ourselves upon this decision. When about three-quarters of an hour out, a regular squall broke upon us, the wind whistling, and the waves rising in a manner anything but pleasant. The captain headed for an island, which has before this served him as a refuge in similar straits. We reached it safely, and tied up under its shelter, with the prospect, so far as an angry-looking sunset and weird clouds could be taken as indications, of being detained there for some time. The steamer, we were told, had been detained there as long as three days waiting for a calm lake to cross to the other side, a distance at this point of about twelve miles. We turned in, however, in the true Mark Tapley style, resolved that whatever our regrets, we should not permit them to affect our spirits. There was but one thought which troubled us. We were due in Winnipeg on the 10th or 12th, and as there is no means of communication, and has been none since we passed the Humbolt telegraph station, of the success of our messages from which point in getting through we had no assurance, delays we felt might cause some anxiety to friends at home.

At about three o'clock I was awakened by what appeared the preparations for a start; and at twenty minutes after three the steamer left her moorings for the venture across. The wind, which the morning before had been from the north-west, had completely veered round, and was blowing a pretty stiff breeze from the south-east, almost directly in our teeth in crossing. The moon had just risen, and reflected some light; but as we proceeded the clouds thickened, the moon disappeared, and the wind increased in force. Though not favorable to the speed of the steamer, it was the most favorable for her safety, and in an hour and a half we came abreast of Rabbit Point; the lake was crossed, all danger and chance of detention from wind was over, and the prospect of reaching Winnipeg not later than Sunday was an almost assured one. A little after reaching Rabbit Point, we passed through a very narrow gateway, formed of islands, and then into the open water for ten miles, when we emerged from the lake, and resumed our acquaintance with river navigation. The country is rocky, the shores presenting a front of limestone. There is some good spruce timber on each side of the river; the appearance of the country, in fact, changing very materially. The water, too, is clear, the first clear water we have seen in the Northwest, Cedar lake acting as a filtering basin for the waters of the Saskatchewan passing through it.

The leading feature of the navigation between Cedar Lake and the Grand Rapids which separate us from Lake Winnipeg, are the Demichars rapids, situated fifteen miles from the portage. They are the most serious obstruction to the navigation of the river, and as many as three days have been occupied in making the fifteen miles from Grand Rapids to the head of the Demichars. The steamer has to be hauled up by a rope of nearly a mile and a half long, fastened to the trees on the bank above, and then by means of the capstans, or as they are called here, the niggers, the steamer is pulled through. When heavily laden it is often a most serious undertaking, and at the last trip up, the larger nigger was broken, involving serious delay, and some injury to one of the men. The rigging of the Northcote for getting over rapids and shoals is very ingenious. On each side, in the forepart of the boat, are derricks or upright timbers of about twenty feet long, from which are slung round heavy pieces of timber of equal length. These