

through the middle of the unexplored country, arriving at Ile à la Crosse as the September equinoxials set in, having been absent in the north three months, and having carried all the provisions that we needed for the journey.

During this season I learned, in talking with Chippewyans, of three canoe-routes into the far northern country, followed by the Indians in their search for deer, as these animals come from the north down to the edge of the woods. These routes led across the height of land to unknown rivers flowing towards the north, but to what ocean the rivers flowed the Indians had no idea.

These routes seemed to furnish a means of entrance into the great unknown country, of 178,000 square miles, lying west of Hudson Bay, an area as large as Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Kentucky put together; or three times as large as England and Wales. This area includes the south-eastern and eastern part of the barren lands of Canada, an area of 350,000 square miles, of which almost the only reliable information that we possessed was derived from the explorations of Franklin, Back and Richardson, made in the early part of the present century. Throughout this whole region there is not a single white inhabitant, and the explorer must depend for provisions solely on what he is able to carry with him, or on his net and gun.

This country lies entirely north of the possible limit of successful agriculture, and if it possesses any considerable wealth that wealth must be in its minerals. Consequently any exploration that stands a chance of being of economic value must be carried out by the geologist and the prospector.

In the spring of 1893 I was instructed to explore this unknown country, and the route northward from Black Lake on Stone river was chosen as the one most likely to lead through the very centre of the great unexplored area on the west side of Hudson Bay.

Descending Athabasca river, loaded with supplies for the whole summer, we reached Fort Chippewyan about the 18th of June, and on the 21st we left it with our three canoes loaded down to the gunwales, for there was no prospect of again