

speeding for some forty or fifty miles over as pleasing a rural scene as the eyes could wish to see entered the more broken and sparsely settled fringes of the wilderness.

At every stop the scene now became the same. Each little nucleus of what may some day be a stirring town or city consists now merely of a rude general store over which the post office sign stands out in prominence and around which all manner of boxes and implements are scattered. Each received its little quota from the train. Swarthy sun-burnt homesteaders were on hand to greet their families or the less fortunate bachelor to view with envy such proceedings and perchance attempt to hide his real feelings with the excuse of looking for a hired man. No time was lost by these sturdy pioneers. Purchases were hastily loaded into the wagons ranged around the central store, while the new arrivals, with their baggage, could be seen climbing aboard and often before the leisurely moving train had once more gotten under way, the winding trails diverging from the little center had swallowed up the quaint procession and only the rattle of the wagon over the stretches of corduroy or the shouts of the driver who had not yet come to the point of replacing his oxen with horses could be heard growing fainter in the distance.

Night found us at Lac la Biche, a fairly prosperous pioneer settlement, chiefly French, on the shores of a beautiful lake surrounded by fairly heavy woods of spruce and poplar. This settlement marks the limit of any degree of active pioneering. A modern summer hotel has been erected on the shores of the lake added to which a number of summer cottages, the natural beauty of the spot, the excellent boating and fishing all tend to attract large numbers of holiday seekers from Edmonton. The soil of the district is good though the labour of clearing it is considerable, yet good progress is being made and a few years will see a flourishing agricultural section. Here we lost the remainder of our travelling companions with the exception of half a dozen traders and railroad workers. From this point on the "roughing it" began in many interesting forms.

Accompanying us to the end of steel was my good friend G. J. Loneragan, D.L.S., Inspector of Surveys, who was taking up an empty stock car to bring back government horses from the end of steel. We inquired from the railroad officials what time the train would continue on its journey and were informed that they expected to pull out any time about daylight. In this latitude and in the month of June daylight comes early, somewhere around three o'clock. We did not care to go to bed at an hotel and run chances of missing our train, neither did we relish the idea of sleeping in the one disreputable day coach. "Any port in a storm" is an old adage but none the less true, and in our extremity we cast longing eyes on our empty stock car. Confiding our ideas to the conductor, he willingly allowed us to move our possessions into this car. Having broken open a bale of hay and spread it on the floor and erected our mosquito tent to ward off the pest of flies and mosquitoes that would otherwise make sleep impossible, we spread our blankets and laid down to rest in perfect content in our side door pullman, quite satisfied that the train should start any time it pleased.

Early next morning it was under way. The track was rough and unballasted and the rails full of kinks and waves. Several attempts made to negotiate the first grade were successful only after the dew had dried from the rails. A few miles brought us beyond the last straggling habitation into the wilderness of spruce swamps and jackpine sand ridges which extend without interruption or break from Lac la Biche to Fort McMurray. From the first break of dawn until after the lingering twilight had faded we proceeded on our way and succeeded in making some one hundred and eleven miles. Twice the tender jumped the track and twice the crew put it back with perfect composure. During the afternoon the old coach trailing behind mutinied at going any farther over such a road and took to the ditch where in disgust it was left. The only break