

action. The whole time they were under musketry fire must have been under a quarter of an hour. So much for charging breechloaders."

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

ON BOARD A FLAT BOAT ON RED RIVER,
October 11th, 1870.

NO. III.

My last was written on the 7th inst., and noticed the fact that we had achieved something like a distance of eighty miles on our downward progress. At midnight we reached Goose River, and fifteen minutes after struck on a shoal at its mouth, which compelled the crew to take to the water, when, after a great deal of swearing and shouting, they managed to shove us over. As a matter of course, Red River flat boats are always loaded from four to six inches deeper than the dept of water on the bars over which they have to pass. This idiosyncrasy is not exclusively confined to Red River skippers alone, but is a common craze with all flat boatmen on the Mississippi and elsewhere. No remonstrance on the part of the supercargo or owner being available, as against the practice. It cost our crew half an hour's labor in very cold water, a fearful amount of swearing, with a corresponding quantity of shouting—a good deal of the objurgations being levelled at the head of the captain, who replied in equally choice and voluble language; indeed, in the latter quality he was only equalled by one of the crew, who seemed to be his special friend. The accident and our nearness to the Goose Rapids compelled us to moor or tie up for the night, it being impossible to run such heavy craft as ours during the hours of darkness. At 6 o'clock a.m. on the 8th we unmoored, and at 7.25 run over the first rapids, which is little better than eighteen inches in height, and only formidable from its extreme shallowness and the boulders in its clayey bed. Its general characteristics are the same as the other rapids of the series, they are four in number, extending over a distance from Goose River of six miles, are formed by a descent of about eighteen feet in the bed of the river, and consist of spurs of clay, gravel, and boulders, leaving a swift, narrow and shallow channel for navigable purposes. We could have easily cleared the whole in three hours, but our skipper or pilot thought proper to get beastly drunk in the forward boats, and his chum, who was abresives as well, followed his example; the rest of the crew, although working all day in water, nobly refused to follow the example, and with their aid and the very efficient assistance of Mr. F. T. Bradley, of Gloucester, we got all the boats down and clear of the rapids without damage at 4.30. We drifted down with the current till 6.30, about three miles, when we moored for the night, as there were a number of dangerous *chutes* to cross between the foot of Goose Rapids and the head of steamboat navigation at Frog's

Point. With the approbation of the forwarder's supercargo I disrated the pilot and took charge of the cargo without opposition. My friend's splendid physical proportions, and a quiet but very persuasive way he has of enforcing his ideas aiding considerably in the operation. He very quietly told the skipper's chum when that individual threatened to be impudent and violent, that if he heard another word he would throw him overboard, a threat the disregarding of which would have been very uncomfortable. The rest of the crew stood by us, and the pair had the choice of walking the plank—to the shore—and finding their way through forty miles of wilderness to the nearest settlement, or doing duty as ordinary hands in this latter alternative they had the only chance of retaining their character, and they took it, doing their regular turns of duty, and being strictly kept from whisky, which they got by broaching a cask on board one of the boats.

On Sunday the 9th instant, we left moorings at 6 o'clock, and after a run of three miles through an open channel about one hundred and fifty feet wide we crossed the first *chute*. Those small rapids are caused by the obstructions presented to the direct course of the river by high bluffs which deflect its course often at right angles, and at every such deflections two or three small islands are to be found so placed that the channel is often in the shape of the letter S, and less frequently in that of the letter C, the radius of each segment of the curves composing both forms not exceeding forty feet, so the great difficulty consists in steering through. There are altogether about twenty *chutes* to pass through in a distance of sixteen miles, and at 6.15 p.m. reached Frog Point, where a hut and a large platform for a look out has been erected by the Hudson Bay Company, whose steamboat, the "International," plies between this point and Fort Garry.

The distance by land from Fort Abercrombie to Frog Point is 98 miles, by water, 290. Our time, under unfavorable circumstances was 126 hours, or about two and a half miles per hour, but under good care and management three miles per hour ought to be made. Four miles below Frog Point we struck heavily on a shoal but got off by swinging the boats, and by six o'clock on Monday morning had made about fifty-one miles by water, equal to seventeen by land. But here the luck turned against us, for it came on to rain at nine o'clock, and continued till noon, when the wind, which had been from the southward, suddenly headed us, and chopped around to the north, bringing our heavily laden boats to a stand still in many cases. The river being deep and narrow prevented polling, so that our progress was very slow, and it was not till 1.15 a.m. on Tuesday morning that we made the mouth of Red Lake River, twenty-five miles below Frog Point, by land, but over seventy-

five by water. The character of the river about a mile above this junction is that of a high bluff banks, forty to seventy feet above the stream. It suddenly changes on the right bank to low land, timbered with cotton wood and poplar. Amongst those the Red Lake River come in from the east, about 60 feet in width, with a considerable volume of water. The general course of the two streams as united, being north-west. Those constitute the Red River proper—the main stream to this point being in reality the Otter Tail River.

Our good fortune hitherto with favorable wind and weather has forsaken us—a head wind from the north-west having set in stoutly after daylight compelling us to moor to the eastern shore at three o'clock, p.m. During the time we lay there I went ashore in Minnesota, found the timber to be about one fourth of a mile wide along the shore—the country open prairie of the usual character. We unmoored at four o'clock and passed the mouth of Bend Creek at five p.m. At twelve p.m. got aground on Turtle reefs but got off after some trouble. The said reefs are of mud, and are situated about eighteen miles by land below Red Lake River; the distance by water is twenty-seven miles.

On the 12th we passed Turtle River at 8 a.m.—thirty-two hours from Red Lake River and about the same distance by water, it is only twenty-three miles by land, the wind partly fair and partly heading us; the river is over 250 ft. wide, with banks as regular as a canal, thirty to forty feet above the level of the stream.

On the 13th we passed Big Salt River at 8.30, distant by land from the Turtle twenty-one miles, and by water about twenty-six miles; wind dead ahead. I landed early to-day and took a long march over the Dakota side of the river; the soil is black earth, as fine as the finest sand; in depth two to four feet. It is cracked deeply by the dry weather, but its fertility is undoubtedly greater than anything I have ever seen. The grass was as high as my waist, heavy, luxuriant, and evidently nutritious. Passed Sand Hill River at 10 o'clock p.m.; this river is in Minnesota.

On the 14th we passed the Little Salt River at 5.15 a.m., and Wishwash Creek, in Minnesota, at 7.49 a.m. The distance between Big and Little Salt Rivers being only eight miles, which it took us twenty-one hours to accomplish—the head winds here have been most annoying. At 3.30 p.m. we passed the steamer "International," with a barge in tow, going up to Frog Point. She is a fine vessel, but too large for the river, according to my ideas. She is one hundred and fifty feet in length and twenty-six feet beam, built in the style of the Mississippi steamboats, with a deal of top hamper, and draws eighteen inches of water. Her fault is her great length, which prevents her answering her helm quickly in a narrow chan-