

ever, the winter routes, at the present time, all follow the river courses, either horses or dogs being used, in different parts. The winter mail that is sent down the Mackenzie valley by the Government to the various posts eventually reaches Herschel island, in the Arctic ocean, and for the whole of the distance from the end of the railway line at Athabasca landing—a distance of about 2,000 miles—the route is over the ice of the Athabasca, Slave and Mackenzie rivers, and the conveyance in toboggans drawn by dog teams.

Again the waterways are of importance, because the natural resources that are known to exist on them, and those which will in the natural course of events be developed first, are to be found along them. The best agricultural land, and that which will be first utilized, is situated along the banks of the streams where the drainage is good. There is undoubtedly much that lies back from the stream courses, but this will not be taken up and worked until the available area along the valleys is occupied. The best timber also is situated on the banks of the streams.

Not only are the waterways of the Mackenzie basin important from the point of view of navigation and transportation, but because of the quantity and variety of food fishes which they contain.

The fisheries of the Great Lakes of the Mackenzie basin—namely, those of Athabasca, Great Slave and Great Bear lakes—are among the most valuable of the assets of the region. Hundreds of thousands of excellent whitefish are caught in Athabasca and Great Slave lakes every year. A great many more were caught annually a few years ago, when the trading posts were more dependent on the native food supply than they are now, and McConnell's estimate of half a million pounds of whitefish being taken from Great Slave lake in the autumn fishery of 1887 is not too large. The fisheries of Athabasca lake are equally good in proportion to its size, but both of these lakes are outdone by Great Bear lake in the size, quality and variety of its fish. Whitefish there go up to 12 pounds in weight and trout to 50 pounds or more, besides which there is the herring, which is not found in either of the other lakes. Even at present, whitefish form a very important item in the diet of the natives, and it has been proved by long years of experience that a man can live and thrive on a diet of whitefish, and whitefish alone. He will tire of any other kind of fish, even of trout, but the whitefish never. In fact, the taste for whitefish increases with the use of it.

Other natural resources which will be developed by means of the water routes are the minerals, among which are oil and