

Mackenzie river. To the right the mountains extend away far to the east, presenting a rather abrupt face to the lower country, and unbroken by any great valleys except that of the Bonnet Plume river. Westward they stretch away to the Little Wind river, beyond which they swing round to the north, and cross the Peel river near the mouth of the Hart river, thus forming a great semi-circular basin enclosing the lower parts of the Wind and Bonnet Plume rivers, and in which a few isolated outliers of the mountains break the monotonous level of the region, and rise to a height of about 2,000 feet.

The plateau itself is well wooded with small spruce and tamarack, and dotted here and there with numerous lakes. The surface is covered with a deep growth of sphagnum, making it a huge mass typical of the Mackenzie valley.

As it leaves the mountains the bed of the stream quickly expands to a width of almost a mile, and for three miles the water spreads all over this in numerous shallow channels. Large sheets of ice were yet remaining on the bars, and on these several caribou were seen.

Beyond this expansion the stream becomes more confined, and flows between steep banks 150 feet in height, composed of horizontal or gently inclined sandstone beds, until it is joined by the Little Wind river at a distance of eighteen miles below. Two miles above the Little Wind river the valley gradually contracts and approaches more to the nature of a cañon, the stream is swifter and bordered by high cliffs of limestone. The Iltyd range of mountains, the highest point of which rises 2,600 above the river, here crosses the river diagonally striking a few degrees west of north.

The Little Wind river was not explored, though from the tops of two of the hills of the Iltyd range its course was sketched in for a distance of twenty miles. It joins the Wind river from the west, emptying a volume of water about two-thirds as large as the main stream. Its water is much dirtier, and the temperature one degree lower (49°). It emerges from the mountains twenty miles above its mouth, and flows with a swift current in a wide valley cut into the rolling plateau. The banks are from fifty to a hundred feet high, and the stream is divided by gravel bars into several channels. It forks just at the edge of the mountains, and it was down the west branch that the North-west Mounted Police patrol travelled in January, 1902, on their way to Fort McPherson.

Shortly below its junction with the Little Wind river the bed of the main stream again expands, and down to within a mile of its junction with the Peel river it keeps an average width of half a mile. This, however, is taken up largely with willow islands and gravel bars, through which the stream has cut numerous small channels.

