

# THE EDMONTON ROUTE.

## True Account of a Trip Via McKenzie and Porcupine.

**Eighteen Months of Terrible Travel—Fearful Rapids—Exposure—Starvation—Scurvy.**

(The following is compiled by a traveler from a diary kept for a year and a half, which was required to reach Dawson. The matter of fact way in which the story is told carries conviction with it. Many of the matters treated are entirely new, as for instance, the abundance of coal oil in certain districts. The length of the article requires its publication in several chapters.)

### CHAPTER II.

Just below here again is a small Indian encampment where one may engage a guide if required. Some 40 miles above this I omitted to state, the steamer Sparrow was tied up to the right bank having sent a boat down to this camp for a guide. The Pelican rapids are not dangerous if a good look out is kept. The most dangerous part of these Rapids is the third one, known as Big Stone rapid. During the summer of 1897 two boats got into trouble at this rapid. One escaped with difficulty and part of the outfit was lost, while the other, a Peterborough canoe, was entirely lost, including the whole outfit. Again in this quarter are many fossils of all kinds. From here onward to Grand Rapids numerous sand bars are encountered and an occasional rock, but no serious obstacles are met with.

One cannot but admire the dense foliage on either bank, for on all hands flourish the poplar, the birch, cottonwood, the spruce and many other sorts of forest trees, while occasionally the eyes are fixed on a modest cross denoting that some unfortunate traveler is sound asleep in the arms of his Maker.

The country generally between Athabasca Landing and Grand Rapids is somewhat hilly. We passed many creeks which were still covered with ice and snow. On June 21 we reached Grand Rapids, which constitutes the first serious obstacle of the journey. We made our boat fast to the right bank about 1 1/2 miles from the head of Grand Rapids.

All parties pull in hereabouts in order to gain information as to the best means of navigating this series of rapids, which are ten in number. Every party who can afford it takes a guide here.

To make sure of a good one, it is best to get one recommended by the police, who are thoroughly acquainted with all of them. From the head of Grand Rapids to Fort McMurray a guide charges from \$40 to \$100. The guide is paid one-half the charge before starting and the half is deposited with the police, the same being handed over to the guide on his return, allowing him to furnish a satisfactory report from the party whom he has piloted. During this summer on the Athabasca, the water was lower than it was ever before known to have been. This state of affairs greatly increased the dangers, for huge rocks appeared where none were supposed to exist, while miniature rapids existed here and there between the great ones. On approaching Grand Rapids the water becomes swifter and swifter, and directly at the head of it is an island which splits the rapid into two parts. It is on the right side of this island that the descent is made, the left side being altogether too dangerous. To describe this rapid you may imagine a stretch of water one-half mile long running with a very swift current, some 700 or 800 yards wide and covered with enormous boulders weighing many tons. Remembering that millions of tons of water are tearing down this incline to reach the foot, you will have a fairly good idea of this great rapid, or rather, mighty torrent.

The greatest care and vigilance must be exercised in descending this rapid, otherwise a safe arrival at its foot would be out of the question. All boats are lowered down here by means of long bow and stern lines. Several men get into the boats at the head, each holding a long pole in his hands for the purpose of warding the boat off rocks, while a number of men follow down the shore holding the lines. When halfway down the boat is pulled in to the shore, where one-half or sometime all the contents are landed. Whence they are portaged to the foot of the rapids. The boat is then lowered down the remaining distance, where she receives her cargo and prepares for another start.

This operation sometimes occupies three days. The Hudson Bay Co. employ many Indians here as all their traffic to the north has to come through this channel. Their boats are capable of carrying 10 tons and a crew of 10 men.

It is a most interesting sight to watch these large boats descending the rapids, and one not easily to be forgotten. These boats are empty when descending, their cargoes being transferred across the island on a tramway belonging to the company. The cargo is placed in the boats again at the foot. We experienced great difficulty in lowering down our Peterborough. This is no place for a Peterborough. They are good only on small lakes or rivers where there is no impediment to their progress. Many parties took their outfits over the island, thus escaping the risk of loss by way of the rapid. During our stay here the weather was exceedingly hot, the heat of the sun reflecting from the burning sand tanned us as black as Indians. Sometimes this great heat was tempered by a refreshing breeze, when one was enabled to enjoy a bath in the ice cold water without being bothered much by mosquitoes. The unusually long length of day here at this time of year is succeeded only by the shortest night or rather dim twilight, when the lightning bugs appear upon the scene, emitting millions of electric sparks from their tiny bodies. Fossils here again are in evidence, the most remarkable of all are the gigantic stones resembling the petrified remains of huge land tortoises. An old timer from California picked up a piece of silver ore here, at the same time exclaiming that if he knew where it came from he would not want to go to the Klondike, as he declared it to be the richest ore he had ever seen. The N.W.M.P. here have similar duties to perform as at Athabasca Landing. Taken altogether, Grand Rapids presented a scene of hustle and animation, and one not easily to be forgotten. We possessed no money where with to procure a guide, so on the 7th, after having firmly secured the canoe to the side of the scow, we set forth (without a guide) to run these mighty rapids, which lie between here and Fort McMurray, a distance of about 100 miles. These rapids are ten in number. It is impossible for anybody to state how these rapids should be run excepting at highest water when they may be run with safety by taking any part of the river. Indians alone who are continually running these rapids can furnish the best information respecting them. I was informed that some of the Hudson Bay boats held the record for running these rapids, having traversed the whole series in the space of 15 hours.

Our first narrow escape occurred when our boat struck a large rock close in on the left bank at Little Grand Rapids, where the water was swiftest, but we did not strike hard enough to cause any serious damage. After emerging from the rough waters at the foot of this rapid we saw the remains of two shattered Peterboroughs on the bank. These had no doubt come to grief at the last named rapid and had been washed ashore. Some 23 miles lower down we came to the Brule rapid, at the head of which is a chute. The boat, dropping down several feet, is immediately swept onward by the surging waters. We ran this rapid on the right side, and when about one-half way through, a strong current from the middle of the stream carried us right on to the bank, which is composed of ironstone rock.

I thought as we were dashed into the bank that all must surely be lost. I was pulling the bow oar, and by backing water in the nick of time saved us from entire destruction. Many narrow escapes followed this one, owing chiefly to bad steering. Next we come to the Boiler rapid. This is a long rapid, commencing at its head with some very swift water and terminating in a bend in the river, the water at its foot being exceedingly rough and dangerous. A few hours detention at the head of this rapid gave time and opportunity to examine the immediate surroundings. All I could discover worthy of mention were a lily somewhat resembling the common tiger lily, though smaller, and two sorts of orchids. It was late in the evening when we ran this rapid and we came through safe after shipping a great quantity of water which damaged much of the flour. We camped at its foot for the night in company with several other parties. About 2 o'clock on the following morning we were literally washed out of our blankets by torrents of rain, the storm lasting till 6 a. m. The thunder was very heavy and the lightning extremely vivid. It was with difficulty we secured enough dry wood to get breakfast with. This meal, as usual, was eaten in great haste, when we made another start running through the Drowned rapid without incident.

We now come to Long rapid. This is a succession of rapids extending over four miles and is more or less rocky during the entire distance. We struck three rocks in rapid succession, but we

managed to get through after shipping a great quantity of water.

The next point of interest brings us to the cascades, of which there are two, the Little cascade and Cascade proper.

Both of these partake of the nature of water falls. Boats are lowered over these by means of lines. Sometimes it is necessary here to take out part of the cargo at low state of water. The large cascade is composed of a reef of rocks in the shape of a horseshoe extending from bank to bank about one-half mile wide. High limestone banks may here be seen from which large quantities of oil ooze in all directions, thoroughly impregnating the air with its strong odor. One party here wounded a moose, but could not lose time in following it up. Now we come to Crooked rapid, the most remarkable of this series of rapids. It describes almost a circle. The left bank composed of lime stone, has the appearance of a marine wall, as if it had been chiseled out by the hand of man. The foot of this rapid is the most dangerous where the course brings us in close under the wall. Much oil may be seen oozing from the black dirt above the limestone, and in one place it may be seen running out in a stream. The next rapid is Mountain rapid. Here we shipped much water, which was very rough, while a deluge of rain descended. The last of this series is the Moberley rapid, which does not present any serious obstacles. Fort McMurray was reached at 9 p. m. on the 10th, where the weather became very cold.

The first thing we did was to make camp and unload the boat as speedily as possible. We were detained here four days drying out our damaged goods. It was but poor weather for this, for heavy showers descended intermittently for the first two days, and on the 12th a heavy gale was blowing and snow fell for many hours in large flakes. This fort is situated at the junction of the Clearwater and Athabasca rivers. Besides the Hudson Bay post there is a large encampment of Indians, most of whom are Crees. It behooves one to keep a sharp eye on his outfit here for there are many starving dogs roaming about apparently without owners. I learned that these dogs were never fed during the summer. They would commit their depredations during the night, carrying off anything that was eatable. So hungry were these dogs that they would devour packstraps, moccasins, moose hide or anything that was the least oily. One morning we found a dead dog with his stomach greatly distended. He met his death by eating graham flour.

Being on the outside limits of the Cree Indians, a few words of their quaint language may be of interest. For instance: Wa-wa, eggs; musk-ma, a bear; moos-ma, a moose; win-win-ketche-ma, good night; pik-ahik-man, a rooster; pa-quis-a-kin, bread or flour; o-ma, this; chik-a-ha-gan, an axe; pas-ka-gin, a gun; skot too, fire; mees-tik, wood; pi-mou, tobacco; nep-pee, water; saag-a-ha-gan, lake; vaas-ka-ha-gan, house; tap-may, all right; si-seep, duck; see-pee, river.

The country everywhere between Grand Rapids and Fort McMurray shows traces of its glacial formation and the tertiary periods, and much alkali is to be seen. Colors have been found everywhere between Grand Rapids and Fort McMurray.

Below McMurray for 130 miles the river is a complete network of islands and sandbars. One hundred and twenty-five miles below McMurray much pitch is to be found. This at one time used to be gathered by Indians and traded to the Hudson Bay Co. During this distance the spruce and birch grow prolifically, but they both cease to grow 50 miles from Lake Athabasca; but the alder, the cottonwood and various willows flourish in great profusion, especially the feathery leaved species of the latter. Many intricate channels lead into the lake. To make sure of the right one it is necessary to take the second channel on the left, counting the first one which forks off to the west as one.

Previous to entering the lake we came to a large Indian encampment, numbering over twenty teepees. We traded tobacco and tea with them for fish. We reached the lake on the 18th, the banks diminishing on either hand as the lake is approached, when the whole has the appearance of a great sea shore at low tide. Many large hawks, owls and other rapacious birds may be seen on approaching the lake. We had not been long at the entrance to the lake, where we had made camp, before a violent thunder-storm sprang up, accompanied with high wind and torrents of rain. During the afternoon of this day I observed two large water-pouts in the southeast, being driven along at a great rate by the fierce wind. In the immediate vicinity of our camp were many immense cottonwood trees which had been left behind from time by the receding tides. One I measured was over four feet through the butt and over 90 feet long. Before leaving Fort Mc-

Murray we were cautioned against crossing the lake during the daytime. Throughout the whole of the night of the 18th, torrents of rain descended, the morning of the 19th being ushered in by a leaden sky. On stepping out of the boat in which we had slept, I found that the cooking utensils had been scattered around in all directions, and that a quantity of bacon grease was missing. I had not far to look for the thief, for curled up in a bunch of dry grass lay a large husky dog fast asleep. My companions wanted me to shoot him, but as I could not see what good this would be, I let him go free. At 2 a. m., in spite of the threatening state of the weather and the caution which we had received, my companions decided to cross the lake. We had scarcely started before we were on a sandbar, but were not long before we were floating again. The wind freshened to such an extent that it caused an ugly sea to run.

(To be continued.)

### The Undoing of Caesar.

One day when Caesar was leaning up against the wooden Indian in front of Brutus's Cigar store, half way between the Forum and republican central committee headquarters, he was accosted by a Bunko Steerer with a Green Grip and the finest set of lilacs that ever Split the Breeze.

"Hello," said the Bunko Steerer, "haven't I seen you before?"

"I don't think you have, Jo Jo," said Caesar, who was dead on. "I never was in the Penitentiary myself and if I ever saw you outside of the Bastille, it's a mighty good thing for you I wasn't a Policeman. You look a good deal like a local option Sentiment in a German Village. How much will you take for a Slip from that Foliage Plant on your face to Seed my Lawn with?"

Caesar was one of the greatest joshers in Rome at the Time and it tickled him to Guy the Rube, although he saved his Graft all the while.

The Bunko man pretended not to notice that he was a Joshmark and dropped his Grip on the sidewalk. "Ain't you Polonius Applesseed, from over at Pompey's Crossing?" he asked.

He didn't know Caesar from a Fever blister, but he thought he might make the graft stick.

Caesar enjoyed the whole thing more than a Judy show. "Not on Your Little Red Shawl," he said, "I am the Ice-man. You're on the wrong side-track, Uncle. You'd better consult an Oculist. Here's an egg that some chicken laid in your hair," he said, handing the Bunko man an egg that he carried around to use in Slight of Hand tricks that he frequently did for the boys.

The Bunko man saw that he had struck a Dead Game Sport and passed on. Caesar went inside the cigar store. "See me Jolly the Rube?" he said, dropping a nickel in the slot and winning a handful of perfectos.

Brutus laughed fit to kill and put another handful of Stogies into the Perfecto box.

"While you were Jollying the Easy-mack," he said, "he Touched you for Your Watch."

Caesar looked down and saw that it was so.

History does not Record what he said but it was Hotstuff.

### "Scots Wha' Ha' Wi' Wallace Bled."

"Canny" Scots, with their "canny" friends, will meet on the evening of the last day of November to celebrate in proper fashion the birth of the patron saint of Scotland, St. Andrew. The Palace Grand has been secured for the entertainment under the patronage of Mrs. Justice Dugas, Mrs. Alex. McDonald, Mrs. Major Perry and Mrs. Captain Stearnes.

The committee consists of Alex. McDonald, R. P. McLennan, Chas. Milne, Dr. McDonald, Manager Herron of the A. C. Co. The reception committee has added the following names: Dan Matherson, Colin Chisholm, Jas. U. Nicol, Dr. McArthur, Col. D. McGregor is chairman and Dr. Thompson secretary.

### Thanksgiving.

The American day of thanksgiving has been fixed for Thursday, November 30, the last day of the month. Though from custom formally established each year by proclamation of the president of the United States, custom has established the last Thursday in November as the day. The News, on Tuesday, published the odd misinformation that Thanksgiving day was last Thursday. We publish the above information in case any confusion should have arisen.

The Nugget Express starts out a second team for the outside on Monday, Nov. 27th. Passengers, mail and express matter.

New Rex ham and bacon at Mohr & Wilkens.