

the district for the Hudson's Bay Company, and others, and from them I heard the first news from the outside world since May in the previous year.

Opposite where I met the steamer is a large island in the river, which the officers of the boat and Mr. Camsill named "Ogilvie's Island," requesting me to so mark it on my map, as henceforth it would be known by that name throughout the district.

Four hundred and forty-four miles from Fort McPherson brought us to Fort Norman, which is situated on the east bank of the Mackenzie, just above the entrance of Great Bear River. I arrived here on Saturday, the 28th of July.

At Fort McPherson I had expected to get letters from home, and I was sorely disappointed to find that though every letter was plainly marked, "*To be kept at Fort McPherson till called for,*" my mail had all been sent on to Rampart House on the Porcupine, on the supposition that I was coming through that way, the only known route, and in the hope that I would thus get it so much earlier. When I learned this, an Indian courier was at once despatched to Rampart House for it, and I left McPherson with instructions for it to be sent on after me.

It was while I was here at Fort Norman, delayed by two day's rain, that it overtook me, brought up by the steamer "Wrigley," and, though the dates of the letters were all many months old, the contents came with all the welcome freshness of the morning newspaper.

As these letters had travelled over two thousand two hundred miles by dog team, a word of explanation here with regard to the Hudson's Bay Company's postal arrangements in the far north may not be out of place.

The northern winter "Packet" now starts by dog teams from points along the Canadian Pacific Railway sometime about Christmas. A few years ago, before the railway was built, the general

starting point was, of course, at Winnipeg. The packet consists entirely of mail matter. No goods or provisions of any kind are carried with it, and as the first requisite is speed, its bulk and weight are reduced as much as possible, and it is carried by relays of the fastest dog teams from post to post.

The parcels for the different posts are made up separately, and packed in boxes and loaded on the sleds, so that there is nothing to do at each post but to open the proper box, take out the parcel and nail up the box again. The rapidity with which this is done is surprising.

The arrival of the Packet at a post is an event not likely to be forgotten by one who has witnessed it. A keen rivalry exists among the different posts in sending on the Packet with the least possible delay. Everything else must give way to it for the time. For days before its arrival it is hourly expected, and the anxiety if the Packet does not arrive at the proper date is very much like the feverish excitement with which an overdue ocean steamer is awaited. Dogs, drivers and sleds are prepared long beforehand, and ready to start at a moment's notice. The excitement is so great as to interfere with all other work, and all ears are strained night and day to catch the first tinkle of the approaching bells.

On one occasion, while I was at a post in the Hudson's Bay district, the Packet was expected, and for two days the officer who was in charge of the post, a young French-Canadian, never took off his clothes, nor lay down to sleep. At intervals he would spring up and listen, and then sit down again, or resume his walk up and down the room. At length, about three o'clock on the morning of the third day, the Packet, which had been delayed by heavy snowstorms, arrived. For a few minutes a lively scene ensued. A kick in the ribs brought Pierre, the teamster, ready dressed, to his feet. The fresh team was harnessed while the load was being unstrapped and the parcel