

John Bell, captain of the Hudson's Bay Company's McKenzie river steamer, arrived while I was in Edmonton, and gave a hearty laugh on hearing me speak of Alberta as a cold, winter country.

"Why, my boy," said the bluff old captain, "you are in the tropics. The north does not really begin until you reach the end of my beat at Fort McPherson, two thousand miles from here, on the McKenzie river."

The first hundred miles of this long journey is made by wagon to Athabasca landing, where begins a five-hundred-mile ride on the Athabasca river; then comes a portage of eighteen miles; then a long voyage down Slave river to, and through, Slave lake; whence begins the last thousand miles of the journey down the McKenzie river. Captain Bell's sixty-one-ton screw-propeller boat makes but one voyage a year down the McKenzie to Fort McPherson, that last, lonely outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company, within a day's walk of the Arctic circle. Mr. McCauley, the mayor of Edmonton, also proprietor of a livery-stable, in speaking of the six men living at Fort McPherson, said that the place is too lonely for a bachelor, and that all six were married. One of the six held out for many years, but he, too, succumbed, a year ago, under romantic circumstances. He had been

engaged for twelve years to a girl in Scotland.

Captain Bell's steamer goes into winter quarters at Fort Simpson, in latitude sixty-five degrees, where the sun rises about ten o'clock, and sets about two. During the long arctic winter the captain amuses himself stuffing arctic birds, of which he has a rare and interesting collection. His crew hunt deer, fish, cut wood, and kill time as best they can from the middle of August until the following June. Every man is allowed one hundred pounds each of sugar and flour, in addition to wages. The officials at Fort McPherson are allowed five hundred pounds of flour a year per man,—a fairly liberal allowance, considering that in that region flour costs thirty-five to forty cents a pound. Distances are so great, the difficulties of transportation so many, including long portages over rocky ground, that, to carry a pound of freight from Athabasca landing to Fort McPherson costs twenty-two cents. The Indians rarely indulge in the luxury of bread; their diet consists mainly of moose and deer meat. Fifteen Indians will eat a moose in a single night; in the same time eight Indians eat a deer, that is, each man eats from twelve to sixteen pounds of meat within ten hours. They eat until gorged, then sleep, then, in an hour or two, get up and go again to the



SCENE ON WILLOW CREEK, NEAR MCLEOD.