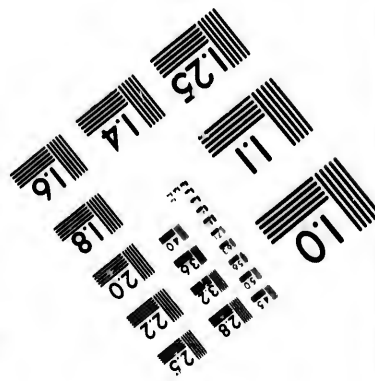
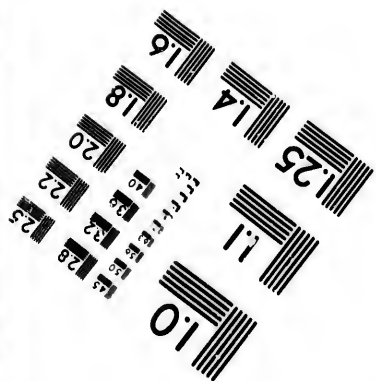
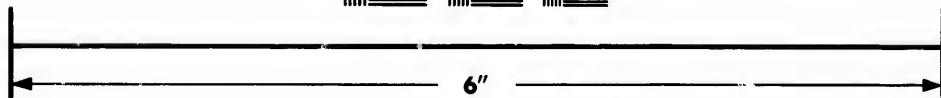
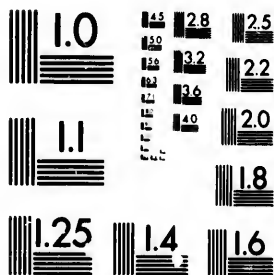


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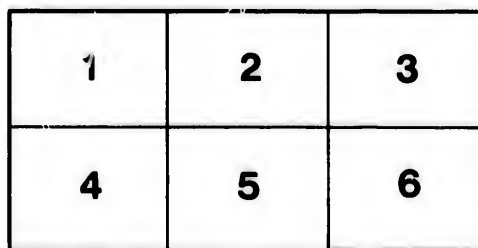
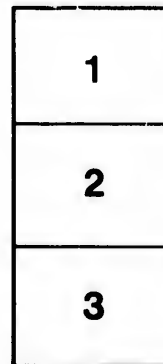
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*Crossing the South Antler River*

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# Across the Prairie Lands

OF

## MANITOBA and the CANADIAN NORTH-WEST.

A WILTSHIRE MAN'S TRAVELS IN THE SUMMER  
OF 1882.

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SIDNEY J. POCOCK.

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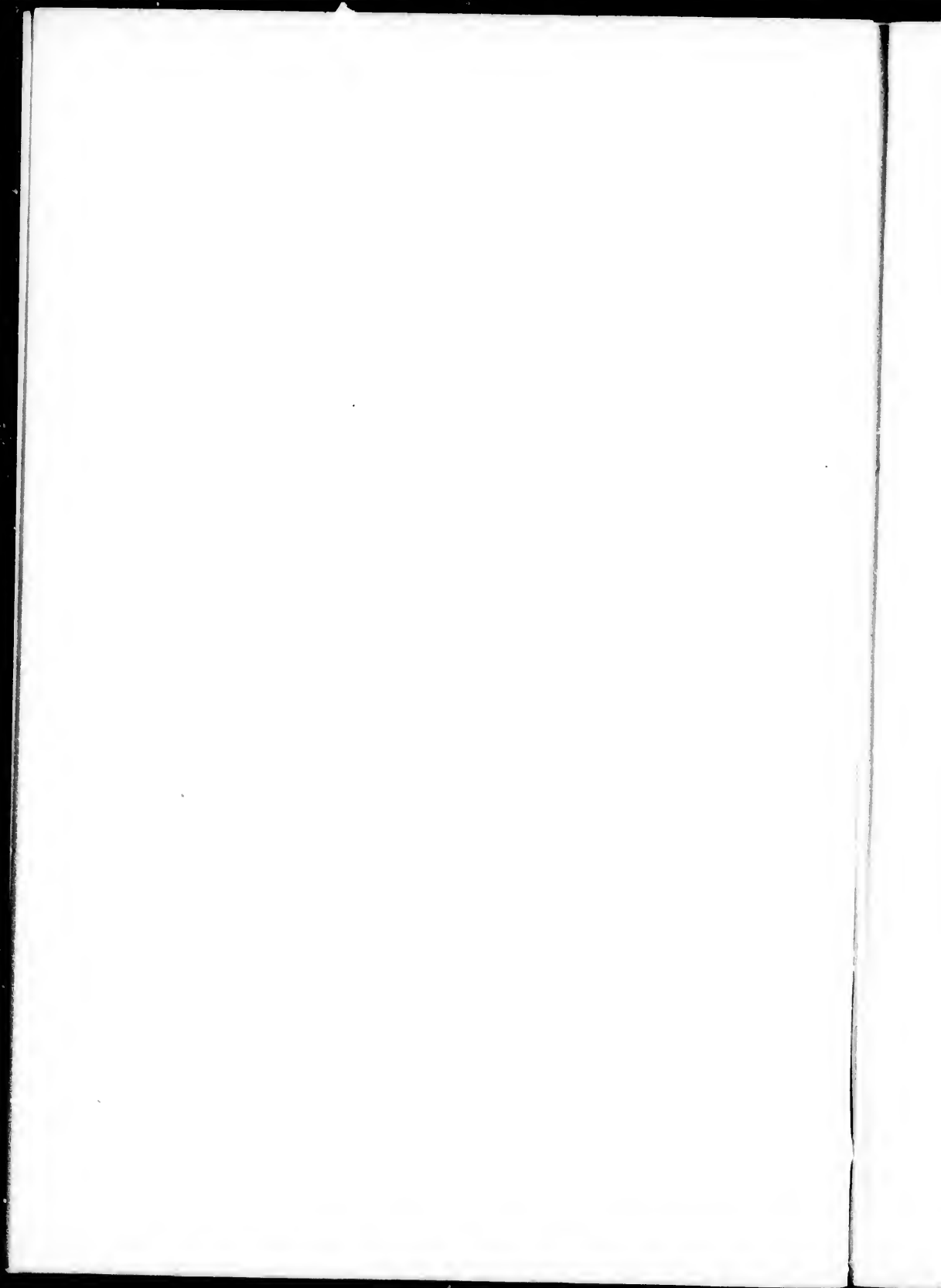
## PREFACE.



Having heard and read so much about Manitoba and the Great North-West, and the facilities there existing for securing land under favourable circumstances, which for some time past has occupied the public mind, I decided to go there, especially as my brother who settled there about three years ago sent home very favourable reports.

Thinking a brief account of my journey, may interest some of my fellow countrymen, I have endeavoured in the following pages, to present them with a plain unvarnished tale of my adventures.





## ACROSS THE PRAIRIE LANDS, ETC.



**I** STARTED in May, booking from Liverpool via Quebec right through to Winnipeg, the Capital of Manitoba. Hearing much of the famed steam-ship "Parisian" of the Allan Line, I determined to trust myself on board that vessel, to carry me safely across the Atlantic. I may say she was most completely found with everything necessary for the comfort and convenience of the passengers.

We had a most pleasant and enjoyable trip across; it took us exactly ten days to reach Quebec, which we did after passing several magnificent icebergs, and going through some dismal fogs off the coast of Newfoundland.

Now I had over two thousand miles of railway travelling by the American Pulman Cars, which I soon found travelled much slower than our English trains. It took me five days and five nights to reach my destination, passing through Montreal, Toronto and Chicago. Crossing the river Mississippi, at this point about three quarters of a mile wide, I saw a

sight I have never seen surpassed for beauty. The full moon shone from a cloudless sky, and lit up with a brilliant silver-like radiancy the water, as it glided between hundreds of small islands, which were covered with trees and bushes, and looked magnificent as they were brought out in vivid relief by the moonlight.

Passing through St. Paul, I reached my brother's home at West Lynne, which is a small town, just on the Canadian side of the United States boundary and separated from Emerson by the Red River of the North.

As my purpose in going to Canada, was to search for minerals, and good farming land as an investment, as well as to see as much of the wilds as possible, I determined not to spend much time in town, so after carefully examining the map, we (my brother George and myself) decided if practicable to reach a spot on the river Souris, which is situated out in the open prairie, about 300 miles southwest of Winnipeg. We ascertained on making a few enquiries, that the best way to see and examine the country, would be to take a good outfit, and drive the whole of the distance across the prairie. We therefore bought a pair of Mustang Ponies, for which we paid 200 dollars, including their harness; a good strong four-wheeled vehicle, called a "Buckboard," a tent, a good map, a compass, and provisions to last a month, consisting princi-

pally of hard biscuits, potted meats, and tins of fruit. Our cooking arrangements consisted of a camp stove, fitted with a small pot and a frying pan. Thinking this would be useless for cooking a quarter of venison or a plump prairie chicken we had three iron rods made, two of them to stick upright in the ground, one on each side of a good fire; these had crooks at the top, in which the other rod rested over the fire, from which we hung a larger pot for prairie chickens and other game. We also had an extra pot to suspend from the bar, in which to boil water for tea, which last arrangement we found much more serviceable than the camp stove. Tools were not neglected; a large axe, a spade and plenty of strong cord for making rafts, tethering the ponies, helping out of slews, etc., formed part of our outfit, as did also candles, matches, a Winchester repeating rifle, a breachloader and revolvers. We each of us took a mosquito net, a suit of overalls, and a thick, warm blanket; we were then fitted out complete and ready for the start.

On June the 2nd we set out, and as we drove through the small town, many of the inhabitants wished us a pleasant journey and safe return, but at the same time did not hold out very encouraging hopes, ominously telling of broad streams, alkaline slews, steep mountain sand ravines that lay in our way; but feeling equal to battle with all difficulties, away we

went merrily in the glorious sunshine, our ponies, as well as ourselves, seemed elated in the pleasant light prairie breeze.

The first day, we drove about 25 miles, halting half-way at a Mennonite settlement, to give our ponies rest and to obtain a little refreshment for ourselves, as we were anxious not to break into the little store we were carrying, while we were within the confines of civilization.

These Mennonites are a people who emigrated from the South of Russia only a few years ago. The Government of Canada gave them a large tract of land, where they have now established many villages. They appear to be very industrious, strictly religious, but very dirty in their habits and customs; a great many of them having their cows, horses, and even pigs living under the same roof as themselves.

After feeding our ponies, we enquired at a house if we could get a cup of tea and a little of something to eat. A burly looking fellow asked us in broken English if we would pay for it if he got it. Having made him understand that we would do so, he invited us inside; on entering, we saw in one corner of the room, a bed covered with huge buffalo robes, in another corner, an old hen, tied by its leg to the cooking stove and surrounded by half-a-dozen chickens; and dirty clothes of all descriptions lying about in great disorder; the

whole giving forth anything but a pleasant odour, in the over-heated room. After waiting a few minutes a dirty looking girl brought us some tea, sour bread, sour butter, sour milk and eggs, but it all had such a flavour of the room, that we were compelled to set it aside and tackle the eggs alone. I do not wonder at the man making sure of the money first, he would never have got it had we seen the fare beforehand.

Although these people are so dirty in their domestic life, we noticed their land was beautifully tilled, no corn could possibly have looked better, but certainly the land they had to farm was all in their favour, rich, loamy, dry, healthy soil, such land the eye does not see in England.

We soon left the Mennonite settlement behind, arriving at an hotel kept by a Mr. Brown, about 9 p.m. This gentleman we soon discovered came from the Old Country, he has quite a nice hotel without any opposition, built by the side of the old Indian hunting trail. We stayed here for the night and made an early start in the morning, reaching Mountain City about 11 a.m., which is quite a new city of about 30 houses and stores and promises to be a large flourishing place at no distant period.

After having a good luncheon and resting our ponies, we started off again, arriving at a place called Pembina Mountain about half-past six o'clock in the evening.

This is a small town consisting of about five houses, situated in a valley between two mountains.

We met here a party of Indians, who had a drove of about 20 mustangs, and tried to have a deal with them as we were afraid that one of ours would not stand the journey, but as we could not make each other understand, were obliged to give it up for a bad job.

The hotel at Pembina Mountain was a small one, we enquired if we could have a bed, being anxious to sleep under a roof as long as we could find a roof under which to sleep. We were shown upstairs, into a room which contained five beds, so we had our choice of beds if not of rooms, and as we were very tired turned in at once; but there was very little sleep for us, as we were soon made acquainted with the fact that all the other beds were afterwards doubly occupied by those persons who will be noisy whether awake or asleep. I was very glad to get out of the overcrowded room in the morning and bid fare-to the snorers.

Now we had to climb the mountain leading from the town, which was so fearfully steep, that we had to put our shoulders to the wheel and help our ponies up with the buck-board; however, they being strong, fresh and sure-footed, we met with no accident, and after about an hour's hard climbing, with a good many halts for rest and breath, we found ourselves at the top.

Here we were delighted and almost bewildered at the abundance of game that seemed to meet us at every turn. This was the first opportunity we had of trying our hands at anything like sport. Wild ducks, of many different kinds, curlews, snipe, plover, prairie chicken, and many other birds, whose names I do not remember, all rising at once, and each giving forth its peculiar note, so excited me that my hand was unsteady, and the game very little the worse for my gun; in fact, I was quite a laughing stock for my brother, who, I must say played havoc with his Winchester repeating rifle. I have seen him send a bullet through a duck's head at 200 yards; but surely there was a little excuse for one who had been shut up in our great Metropolis for over five years, with his mind far from dwelling on the sports to be met with on the prairie. However, being determined to make myself a better shot, I picked up the skull of a very large buffalo which was lying near, and stuck it on an elevated spot as a target, and practised at it till I sent a few bullets through its hard bone, after which, I was much more successful with live game.

We halted in the middle of the day for the usual rest and meal, when we cooked some of the game we had shot. This was the first time we had tried our cooking arrangements, and we found the iron crooks more serviceable than the camp stove. The game cooked well



over the wood fire, certainly it was a little smoky, but our appetites were too keen to be dainty, and we thoroughly enjoyed our first hunters' meal.

Badger Creek was reached about eight o'clock in the evening, after a 45 mile drive. This is a small stream about fifteen yards wide, running at the rate of about six miles an hour. It gave us some little trouble in crossing, as the bed was thickly strewn with large stones. Picking our way as best we could, we landed on the other side, with nothing worse than a little wetting and a severe shaking.

We found here a small stopping house, having a store attached. With a little inconvenience to the proprietor he found us a bed in a room which already contained eight others. The beds were not made of down, but of prairie grass, which came sticking through the under sheet and caused sensations which can be easier imagined than described, but tired nature soon overcame the inconveniences of the bed, and we slept soundly. In the morning we were awakened by the sound of the rain pouring down on the shingles, and a cold creeping sensation, which we found was due to the rain dropping through the roof on to us.

We rose with the intention of starting early, but as it was raining so hard we decided to rest our ponies for the morning. We got away in the afternoon, and had a great deal

of sport as we went along. On the way we passed through some splendid farming land which we found was being rapidly taken possession of by immigrants.

Our next and last stopping place in a house was at a Frenchman's, who came back into the wilds many years ago to trade with the Indians in furs and skins; we reached here about six p.m. This was the dirtiest hut we met with in the whole of the North-West. We were told we could have supper if we wished for it. Knowing that we had not too large a stock of provisions with us we were glad to accept the offer. Whilst busily feeding our ponies a dirty looking Indian squaw beckoned us to partake of the Frenchman's meal. Fat pork and potatoes was the best he could offer, charging 75 cents per head. I kept my eyes closely fixed on my plate, as I wished to eat as much as possible before looking at the dusky creature who waited on us. I had nearly finished when I noticed a raven black hair on my plate, and glancing at the head on which it grew, my meal was brought to a speedy conclusion.

Having left the table, we enquired for a bed, but were immediately informed by the squaw that every bed was engaged, we then asked if we might lie down on the floor of the room in which we had just taken supper, on which floor there was a considerable coating of mud which had been brought in by the boots of the

travellers during the day, which had been very wet. Having received permission to do so, we brought our rugs and blankets, and soon made ourselves as comfortable as possible. We had been lying down for about half-an-hour when we heard another squaw's voice cry out in broken English: "There's room on the landing if anybody would like it better." My brother and I were soon on our feet and making for the landing, as were also several others, we managed to be first in the race, and after carefully picking our way over and between the recumbent forms of several persons who had previously taken possession of the landing we found a vacant spot, just enough room for two, where we spent the night more awake than asleep.

Not having to dress in the morning (for we did not even take off our boots) we were soon down, and called for our reckoning and paid it, being charged 25 cents for our sleeping accommodation, and gladly turned our backs on the dirty Frenchman's home, and the equally dirty squaws.

This being Sunday, we did not hurry our ponies, but kept them at a gentle dog trot, giving them a good long rest in the middle of the day.

The land we passed through here, was splendid farming land. I am sure if half the English farmers could get on to such land, they would soon make their fortunes instead

of losing their capital, and wasting their lives as they seem to be doing in the old country ; but at this spot the land is all taken up, being either sold, or given as free grants by the Canadian Government to emigrants, but further west, there are millions of acres, quite as good, waiting for those who wish to start a home in the new land, to which people are flocking from all parts of the World to make their fortunes.

We reached the Government Land Office about seven o'clock in the evening, here we had to pitch our tent for the first time. We were a little awkward at first, but after a few nights' practice, we soon got more expert.

We had brought with us the canvas ready made into the right shape, and also the ropes, but had to cut the poles and pegs from the trees around. After having dug a trench all round the tent to prevent being flooded in case of rain, and laid the earth out of the trench on the bottom fold of the canvas to keep the mosquitoes, which were very troublesome, from crawling underneath, we were settled snug and trim for the night.

We made a hearty supper off a plump prairie chicken and a dish of tea, gathered all our traps inside the tent, spread out the rugs and blankets, charged our guns, had a smoke, and lay down to sleep, but were soon disturbed by hearing footsteps outside the tent followed by a loud rattling on the canvas, and a gruff

voice asking us if we could direct him to some part we had never heard of. I lay hold of my gun to be prepared for emergencies, while my brother drew back the canvas. Our visitor seeing we were well armed and on the alert muttered an apology and sheered off. Had he found us unarmed and unprepared we do not think we should have got rid of him so easily. We kept watch some time, but hearing nothing more we again settled down to slumber, and I must say I spent a much better night than the previous one, an old lawn tennis hat serving splendidly as a night cap and my jacket rolled up as a pillow.

The next morning we made enquiries at the Land Office respecting some land, but found all that was worth having already taken up. We did not waste much time here, but at once journeyed on. At our usual mid-day rest one of the ponies, which was rather wild, gave us considerable trouble. Although we had hobbled both, one of them liked its liberty so much that it took us nearly two hours to catch it, which we could only do by riding it down with the other, and making it thoroughly tired before we could get near it. We caught it at last, and drove on till about nine p.m., when we reached the first crossing of the Souris River. This was the widest and most difficult stream we had to cross since starting. As the wind was blowing quite a gale and a heavy pour of rain was coming down we had

gave us considerable trouble. Although we had hobbled both, one of them liked its liberty so much that it took us nearly two hours to catch it, which we could only do by riding it down with the other, and making it thoroughly tired before we could get near it. We caught it at last, and drove on till about nine p.m., when we reached the first crossing of the Souris River. This was the widest and most difficult stream we had to cross since starting. As the wind was blowing quite a gale, and a heavy pour of rain was coming down, we had some difficulty in pitching the tent, but with patience and perseverance we at last got it up, pitching it on the bank of the stream, about 150 feet above the level of the water.

It continued raining heavily all that night, and all the next day, making travelling very hard work for the ponies, so we remained here till the following day. During the day a squatter came up to our tent, having with him a very nice water spaniel, which took quite a fancy to us and our guns. I asked the "boss" if he would sell the dog, and if so, how much he wanted for it; he replied, "I don't want to sell it, but if you will give me five dollars, you shall have it." I gladly paid him the five dollars, for I could see the dog was a good one. I christened it after the name of the river we were camping by, which name it soon got used to. We had some

splendid sport along the river, shooting many different species of water fowl. On going down the river we found that a man had stationed himself here to ferry all who wished to cross. His boat was a small one, 18ft. by 4ft. ; he charged according to the load he had to take. We were very glad to avail ourselves of this opportunity of crossing, as it saved us the trouble and time of making a raft, so we made an agreement with him to ferry us across the next morning.

We did more smoking than sleeping this night, being afraid to lie down, as the ground was so damp. Early in the morning we packed up all our things, harnessed the ponies to the buck-board, and descended the ravine leading to the river ; this ravine was so steep that we had to steady down by holding on behind.

As all of us could not cross together, we placed the buck-board with all its contents across the top of the boat, which just left room for the Yankee to row. In doing so we got further into the mud and water than was pleasant. I quietly seated myself at the bottom of the boat, under the buck-board, expecting every moment to have a spill, as the pole was skidding along the water all the while, and occasionally falling foul of stray sticks and branches of trees that were floating in the river, but the man pulled well, and we reached the other side in safety, although

the current took us below the spot we steered for. Then he returned for my brother and the ponies. The horses swam well, just keeping their heads above water. I am sure the bath did them good, as they seemed much fresher afterwards.

We soon made another start, determined, if possible, to make up for the lost day. We had now to pass through some very bad slews, the rain having made the ground very soft. To gain an idea of a Manitoba slew, read John Bunyan's description in "The Pilgrim's Progress" of the Slough of Despond. The mustangs being fresh and strong, we pulled through without once sticking in the mud, although it was a very near go sometimes, as we sunk in up to the axletrees. During the day I noticed a solitary wolf a short distance off. I soon bolted after it, gun in hand, but could not get near enough for a shot, as the further I ran the further I was left behind. These prairie wolves generally go in packs, but this one seemed to have lost himself.

Our next stopping place, South Antler Creek, was reached about eight o'clock. This is a small stream running at a fearful rate from west to east. The mosquitoes here were terrible, they soon found out my English blood, and did their best to get all they could in spite of the utmost precaution I took to protect myself; the further we got west the more numerous these pests seemed to be. I



must admit I felt rather nervous here, I suppose it was owing to the dismal howling of the wolves. There was not the slightest fear of their doing us any harm, in fact we should have been only glad for them to come within range of our guns. After making a large smoky fire—smudge, the Yankees call it—just outside the tent to keep the mosquitoes off, in such a position that the horses could get into it, we laid down for the night, but had not been in the tent long before we discovered that something was wrong with the ponies, and on looking out we found that the wild one had broken loose, and was wandering away. We were greatly alarmed at this, as it was so dark that we could scarcely see the way it was going. We kept the other fast tied to the tent, where it kept neighing for its mate, which was an inducement for the runaway not to get too far off. After running about nearly half the night we succeeded in driving it back, and by quite a stroke of luck George captured it, after which we were careful to make him doubly secure.

The next morning we decided to try the experiment of swimming the mustangs and buck-board across the stream to save the trouble of making a raft; so in we plunged, letting the ponies have their heads, and sticking to the buck-board with all our might. We landed safely on the other side without accident, except a thorough wetting for the pro-

visions and ourselves. For that we cared but little, as the sun was powerful, and we soon got dry.

Carefully examining the map and consulting the compass, we steered for Moose Mountain Creek, which we reached in the afternoon of the following day. While resting at the top of a steep ravine, leading down to the creek, we were startled by hearing a peculiar noise, which George said was made by a Moose deer. We at once made the horses secure, took our guns, and went down the ravine in search of sport. After a great deal of climbing we noticed the track of some animal which we followed for some distance, and found ourselves at the top of another ravine, when looking towards the north, we saw a tent in the distance, which caused us to at once give up the chase and make for the tent.

We found the occupant to be an old Californian miner, whom my brother had met at Emerson. He had come back to the wilds only a few weeks before to take possession of a section of land and make a new home, which by the way, was the nineteenth home he had started. He had some acres of land already ploughed, and a large patch of potatoes planted, besides many other steps towards preparing the house for his wife and family to join him after the country is more settled. Not far from, and right opposite his tent, was a striking object, the body of a dead Indian,

who had been buried *up* in a tree. We were informed that the Indian belonged to the Sioux tribe. The body was sewn up in a buffalo robe, and suspended to the branch of the tree. It had hung so long that only the bones and hair were left for our gaze.

This settler seemed very pleased to see us, and invited us to camp near him for the night. We readily consented, as we thought he might assist us in finding that which we had come so far to seek. This was not the only inducement to stop. He was just baking, and could offer us a greater treat than we had had for some days, namely, a slice of bread, which only those can appreciate who have been living on hard biscuits, as we had. There was one other thing which attracted us to this spot, which was a large bed of stinging-nettles. We picked our little pot full, and boiled them with a piece of fat pork, and so obtained a splendid dish. I dare to say I never relished any vegetables from the most cultivated garden in the Old Country so much. Certainly it gave us a little trouble in gathering them, for the mosquitoes pegged away at our faces and necks, while the nettles did their well-known work upon our hands.

As we had only about thirty miles further to go ere reaching our destination, we invited the old miner to accompany us. After some persuasion he consented. We started the next day, glad to have a little more company,



*An Indian Burial Ground.*

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and especially the advice of an experienced hand.

Now Moose Mountain Creek had to be passed, with steep ravines on either side. We were not long in finding an opening that led down to the water. As the stream looked rather awkward to pass with our light conveyance, George rode one of the ponies through, to see what it was like. It was not deep, but very swift, and the bottom very stony. However, we made up our minds to venture, but after we got in the water we found so many large boulders in the way that we began to fear crossing was impossible. We accomplished it, though, at last, but not till we had bent our axle, lost our only axe and one of our tethering ropes.

This creek runs south to north, emptying itself into the river Souris, the river of which we were in search. After about half-a-day's journey we found ourselves on the banks of the Souris, although at some distance from the point we had marked on our map. We selected a very pleasant spot for our camp where we could see the peaceful antelope and other deer almost flying to reach the highest point on the hills, as they invariably do, for safety. The next day we commenced our search for coal. By the appearance of the land we were pretty certain that we were now in a mineral country. For miles we had nothing but stony land and ravines through

which to wind our way; this severely tried our ponies and buck-board. My brother and Chris. Troy, the old miner, were away chasing some deer, leaving me to descend the ravines as best I could. I got along very well till I came to one which turned out to be much steeper than it looked when viewed from above. I had reached about half-way down when I perceived the danger I was in; the more I tried to steer the ponies the more the danger seemed to increase. There was but one alternative, and that was to let the ponies have their heads and cling to the buck-board to prevent being pitched out head-foremost. I was much surprised to see the care and steadiness with which these creatures picked their way among the many dangers, over stones and huge boulders. I was delighted to reach the valley in safety, and on looking back, could not help thinking how foolish I had been to attempt a descent so dangerous. We kept moving on, making a very little progress; the sun was setting low, and we and our ponies very tired and thirsty through the fatiguing journey and heat of the day. To avoid as many stones as possible we had taken a northerly direction and had got some distance from the river, where we could find neither water nor timber. To camp here would have been madness, so we altered our course to the south-west, and soon struck the river, though not without some difficulty, as the stream cannot be seen until



*"Were away chasing some deer."*



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one is on the very edge of the ravines, it flowing in a chasm about 150 feet below the level of the prairie. We were all delighted to get back to the river again and have a good drink of water.

We now felt sure that we were not far from the spot we were seeking. Whilst looking down upon the little river taking a zigzag course down the valley and the picturesque ravines on either side, I remarked, "Surely we are in a mineral country now, if never we were before." "Yes," replied the miner, "and I can find coal in less than a quarter of an hour."

His practised eye had seen what ours had not.

"Let us first pitch our tent," I rejoined, "have supper, make a smudge to keep the plaguy mosquitoes off, and then we'll all go together."

This plan was adopted, so after selecting a suitable spot, where we could command a good view of the river both east and west, we pitched our tent for the night, then down the ravine we went and Chris. Troy directed our attention to a dark streak, which showed for some distance right and left along the sides of the ravine.

"I told you so," cried the miner, and a hearty cheer went up from all, echoing through the hills which stretched far and wide. With a good will we removed the top crust of earth that just covered the coal, and found the vein or seam to be only 18 inches thick.

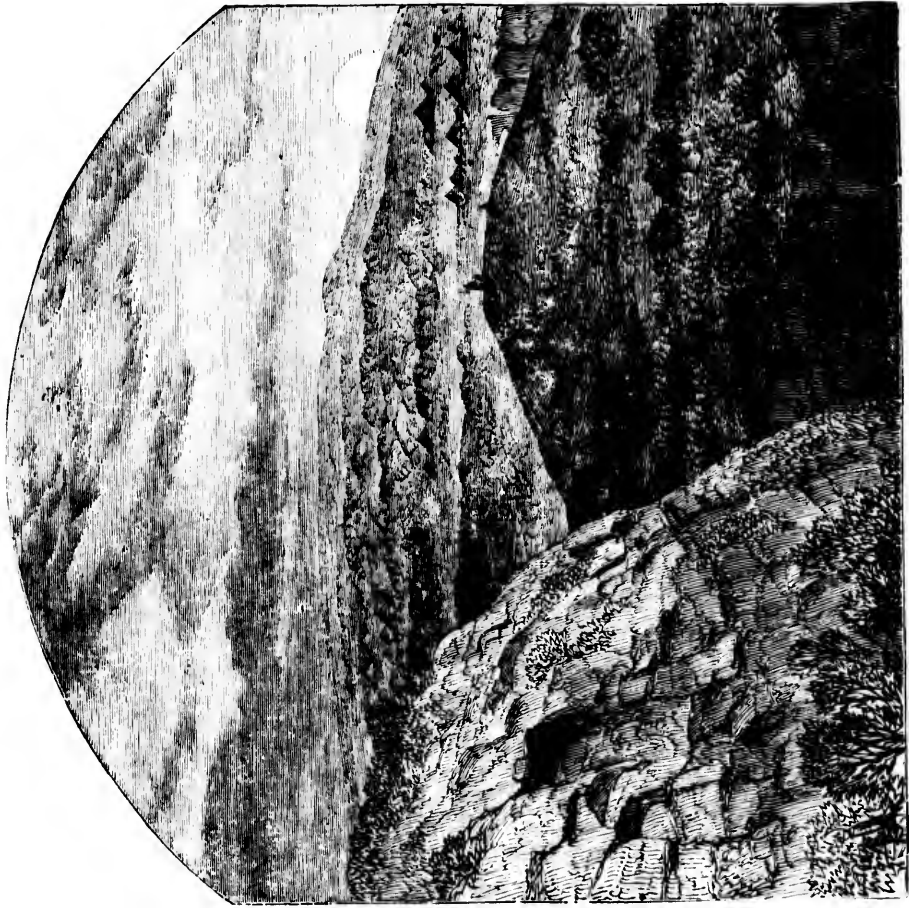
...surely we are in a mineral country...

We at once got a little out and made a fire to see if it was really good coal, and found it burnt freely and well. By this time it was almost dark, so we made our way back to the tent. Before lying down, we examined the map, to see what distance we had to go ere we reached the point we were bound for, when to our great surprise we found we were on the very spot. We at once decided to spend the next day in exploring the many neighbouring ravines, in search of thicker and more profitable seams.

We were up early next morning to commence our search and soon found another vein, but not much thicker than the first. Anxious to make the most of our time, we each took a different course ; before separating the old miner gave me a very useful piece of information.

“ Whenever you see a spring, depend upon it, some mineral will sure to be found near.”

After climbing steep ravines and searching every likely place for about three hours, I came to a very steep rocky part where small trees and shrubs were growing out of the sides. I was creeping underneath the shrubs and making my way as best I could, when I noticed a small stream of water. I tasted it and found it intensely cold with a strong flavour of iron. I soon traced it to its source, and found it came right off a splendid seam of coal, huge blocks coming right to surface.



*“Surely we are in a mineral country now.”*

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Meanwhile my brother had found a seam still thicker. We were quite delighted with the result of our morning's search.

Now we determined to cross the river to examine the other side. The stream was running at a rapid rate and the bed was much too rocky to be crossed in our buck-board, so we decided to wade across, taking off our clothes and carrying them on our backs. But, oh! how our poor feet did suffer, we were continually losing our balance, and the sharp stones gave us quite enough of the river before we reached the other side. The mosquitoes stuck to us, sucking our blood like leeches, Chris. Troy, who had been continually boasting as to his being safe from the attacks of the mosquitoes, on account of his face and neck being so tanned by exposure to the weather, was to our immense delight fearfully punished, now that our tormentors could get at the more tender part of his body. After this we heard very little more boasting.

We found the south side of the river very similar to the north, but rather better supplied with timber.

In re-crossing, my brother left part of his clothing behind, having forgotten it. As he was partly dressed before he missed it, and I had just come across, I volunteered to return for his unmentionables. Having entered the stream with them on my back, I lost my balance and down I went, of course immersing

the articles I was carrying. The only inconvenience was, that George had to suspend them from his shoulders till they were dry, before he could wear them.

After satisfying ourselves that land in this neighbourhood was worth buying, if we could get it, we turned our steps towards Winnipeg, travelling as fast as the ponies could take us, to purchase what land we thought advisable from the Government, or the Hudson's Bay Company. We soon reached Chris. Troy's tent and camped with him for the night.

Some time in the night our wild pony got loose again and caused great delay next morning. After trying our utmost to catch it for more than three hours, we were just giving it up for a bad job, when a happy thought struck Troy. He advised us to lay a snare for it, he having seen wild mustangs caught in that way, which we did by making a loose running noose at the end of a long cord, then placing some bran in the buck-board, we allowed it's mate to feed, while we stood some distance away holding the end of the rope. This enticed it to tread in the noose, when at a second attempt, with a quick jerk my brother secured it by its fore-leg, and we were soon on our way once more rejoicing.

We drove about 40 miles that day, reaching South Antler Creek about sundown. We could see a thunder storm rising in the northwest, and coming up against the wind, also

another coming out of the south-east, threatening to meet over our heads. We were careful in pitching the tent, so as to be prepared for the coming storm, the distant rumblings of which could be heard.

Everything was brought into the tent that could be got inside. About midnight the rolling of the thunder became louder and clearer, and like two mighty black mountains, the thunder clouds approached each other, lightning flashing and darting out in all directions. They seemed to meet right over our heads, forming one mass of blackness and darkness which could almost be felt ; anon, a fearful flash of blinding lightning would light up the prairie with a bluish vivid brilliancy, the flash, or succession of flashes, lasting many seconds, and then the intense darkness settled down on us again. All the while the thunder, in one continuous peal over our heads, shaking the very ground on which we were standing. At last the rain began pouring down, and the wind blowing a fearful hurricane, such as I had never witnessed before. We held tight to the tent to try and keep it up but at last it gave way, and down it came on us with a crash, and we seemed to be rolled along the prairie in one confused mass of men, canvas poles, rugs and provisions. I cried out to my brother, "Let us hold together," for I quite expected our last hour had come. George, who had seen thunder storms in the North West



before, shouted "Let us get the tent up again."

The climax of the storm lasted I should think, not more than five minutes, and we were soon able to get our tent up again, but every thread we had was wetted through and through, and the greater part of our provisions were spoilt.

Lying down on the ground in this plight was not to be thought of, so the remainder of the night was spent in nursing our knees and smoking. We gladly welcomed the dawn of day, and were soon out of our saturated tent.

A great treat awaited us for breakfast in the shape of a fine dish of mushrooms which had grown up during the night, close to the tent.

The stream had swollen very much, at which we were not surprised, considering the quantity of rain that had fallen during the storm. The question now arose, how were we to cross; making a raft was out of the question as we had lost our only axe, and the current was so swift and strong, that we should have had considerable difficulty in steering one if it had been made, so we decided to swim the ponies across, harnessed to the buck-board. My brother was prepared to take the water, should any mishap occur, as he was more used to emergencies of this kind, so we piled our saturated things as high on the buck-board as possible, and drove down into the water, which reached the ponies necks. Suddenly George shouted "Quick! quick! Jump in and buckle

the rein to 'the wild horse's bit," we having foolishly omitted to do so before starting.

In I plunged right away, as not a moment was to be lost at such a crisis. Having adjusted the rein, on we swam, making for the opposite bank I holding on behind balancing the buck-board to prevent it capsizing. The rapidity with which the water was running, forced the lid of the buck-board box open, and away went the greater part of its contents. Slippers, matches, maps, candles, biscuits, and other stores, sailing down the river. I made a grab at them, and managed to capture one candle, all the rest being irrecoverably lost. We landed without any further mishap, and soon had all our things spread out on the grass to dry, which was speedily accomplished in the powerful sun.

We next stopped at the first crossing of the Souris River, as the water was much lower than at our former visit, we had no difficulty here, and tented on the highest hill we could find, so as to get the full benefit of the little breeze blowing. We were up be-times next morning, partook of a plate of porridge and a dish of tea, making more tea than was necessary for immediate consumption, so as to have a supply to drink cold during the day, which was very much appreciated, when we could get nothing else but slew water.

After about an hour's journey we came to a valley which appeared as though it had

formerly been the bed of a gigantic river, the breadth was enormous, the distance being more than a mile from bank to bank. Turtle mountain was reached after 35 miles drive, and we were just congratulating ourselves on not having once stuck in the alkaline slews, when, having to cross a small creek, down we sank right up to the boxes of the wheels, sticking fast as we had not stuck before. It took us about two hours to get out, and then we had to exercise our ingenuity to mend the broken harness and vehicle.

Four more days hard driving brought us back to West Lynne, so tanned by the scorching sun and prairie breezes that our friends did not recognise us. We got back not one hour too soon, for all our provisions were gone, and the buck-board, which was brand new when we started was all to pieces so much so that we had to walk the last few miles. The mustangs stood the journey remarkably well considering they had very little else than the prairie grass to eat, and had travelled a thousand miles at the lowest reckoning.

We lost no time in making our way to Winnipeg to secure the sections of land we had examined, and had every reason to be satisfied with our purchase.

Having secured the land, and rested about a week, I set out on a second trip to inspect it more closely and to discover the quality and

depth of the seams of coal. Having heavy tools I took a strong wagon drawn by a pair of powerful horses just imported from Ontario. I laid in provisions to last for two months, and had a canvas tilt made to go over the wagon so as to use the wagon instead of a tent. As these horses could not live entirely on grass like the mustangs, I had to take some oats and bran which considerably increased the load. I took a bed made of fresh prairie hay, which we lay on the top of the load. As my brother had business at home he could not come with me, but arranged to follow later on with the buck-board and mustangs. I engaged a young fellow, who had just come into the country, to go with me. His name was George also.

We had journeyed on for about two hours when we met a young Canadian with an ox harnessed to a rudely constructed cart. Of course we pulled up to make a few enquiries.

"Well boss," said I, "how far West have you been?"

"Oh! I guess about as far as the South Antler," he replied.

"And how did you get through?" was my next question, thinking of the trouble that stream gave us on our way home.

"Oh!" said he, "all right, but the Turtle Mountain Creek gave me a fair doing."

"How are the streams generally? Do you think we can get through with our load?"

"How heavy is your load, and how far are you going?"

"The load is about twenty-five hundred weight, and we want to get to the Souris River beyond Moose Mountain Creek."

"You'll never get there, never! I'm sure you won't; the slews and streams are something dreadful to cross," he said, encouragingly."

"Surely they can't be so very bad," I replied, "I've only just come from that part of the country."

"Well," said he, "when I was swimming through Turtle Mountain Creek the stream was so deep and rapid that my ox went under and stayed there nearly two minutes."

"Where were you then at the time?"

"On it's back, sure."

"Drive on, George," said I, "that's a Canadian lie, there's no truth in his story, for he would not be here if his ox had been under water two minutes, that's certain."

This story seemed to dishearten my man, but I soon talked him round again and assured him that things could not be so bad as the Canadian had made out.

We made good headway the first day, travelling 25 miles.

We halted at the Mennonite Settlement to rest our horses, and begging a little hot water, made some tea, as I did not care about paying the second time for what I could not eat

or drink. We slept well on our new bed and everything went on so smoothly for the first three or four days that I began to think we should soon be at our journey's end.

We were very careful to avoid all the creeks we could, going either north or south to get round them, but the further west we got, the more difficult were the crossings as more rain had fallen. Whilst going down Pembina Mountain we had a slice of luck, as we thought, picking up a nice gun and a good ox collar. This was very acceptable as my man had no gun. But we soon had to part with our find. We got stuck in a slew and had to unload nearly the whole of our goods and carry them, up to our knees in mud and water to a dry spot. Whilst the things were lying on the ground we were startled to see two half-bred Indians come dashing down the hill, making a most hideous noise. On they came, splashing through the mud and water, straight up to our goods, lying about in all directions on the ground; they immediately dismounted and began scanning our things. Meanwhile, I and my man rushed to protect our property, and watch their movements with keen interest. Presently one of them espied the gun we had just picked up, and stood pointing to it, yelling out something that was at first unintelligible, but we soon understood that the gun belonged to them, and I at once ordered my man to give it up. They were so delighted

at regaining their lost treasures that they yelled and jumped about for nearly an hour. They now brought out a huge block of dried buffalo meat called pemmican and began making their mid-day meal, which they seemed to thoroughly enjoy. I tasted a little, and only a little of it, it was not cooked to suit my palate. We were glad to get away from the strange looking fellows, and kept a sharp look out the next night, but we saw nothing more of them.

Just before we reached Badger Creek we met a squatter who had been some little distance west. He strongly advised us to travel in a northerly direction, as the streams to the south-west were very bad indeed to cross. We at once altered our course to north-west, as we particularly wished to avoid the creek in which the ox had been immersed for two minutes, as we were afraid that the same good luck which attended that animal might desert us.

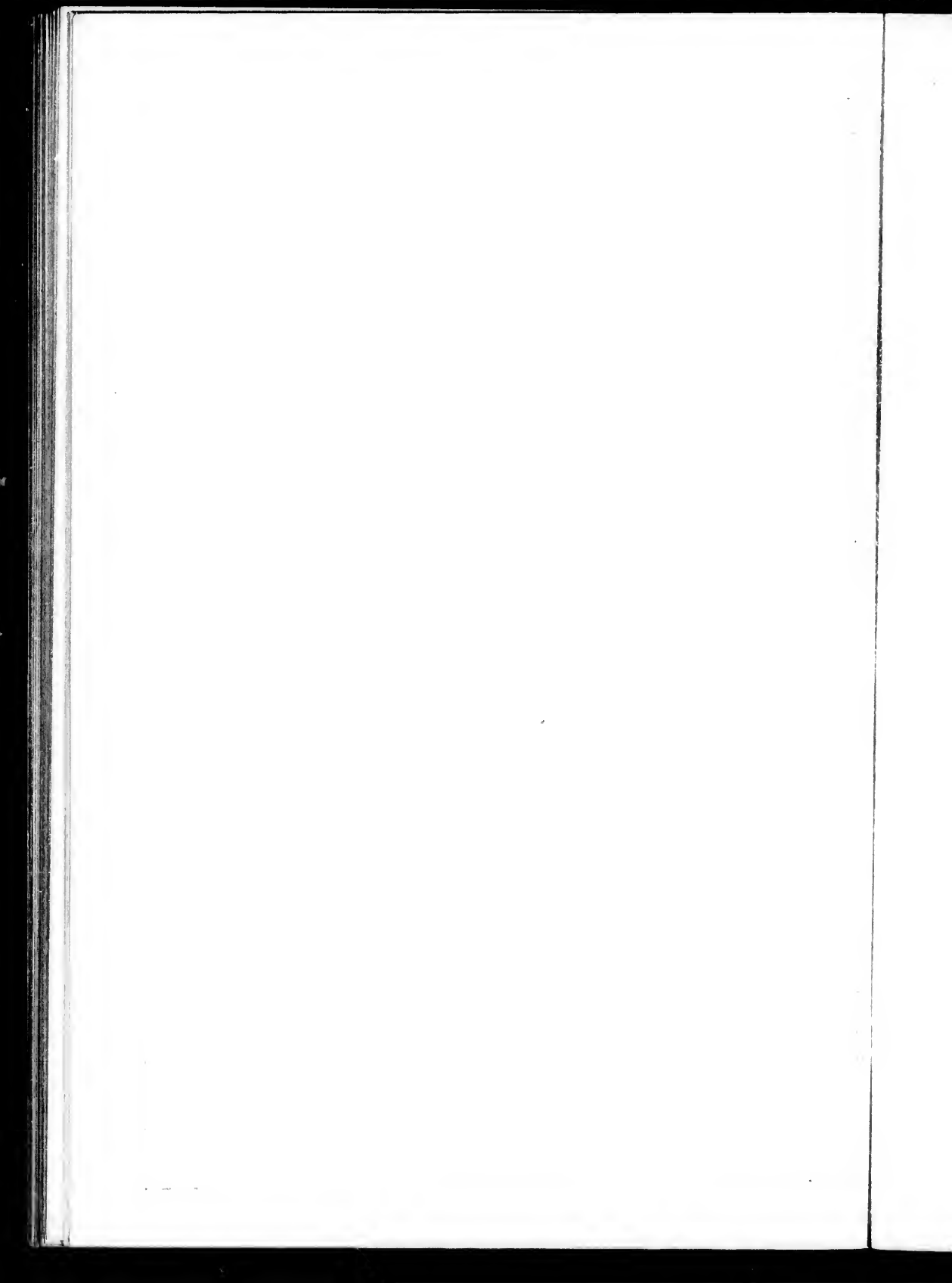
We had been travelling for six days, and had got along remarkably well, considering the load, but now our troubles were about to commence. On the morning of the seventh day we saw in front of us an awful slew, stretching as far as the eye could see, both north and south, a belt of marshy ground about 30 yards wide, nothing but reeds, mud, and stagnant water. Selecting the most likely spot, we made a rush for it, but had only gone a



*We were glad to get away from these strange looking fellows.*

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few yards when in we sank, the horses up to their bellies, and the bed of the wagon level with the mud. The horses plunged and kicked, and with great difficulty got out after we had unhitched them, but the wagon remained stuck fast, and was likely to remain so while loaded, so we both set to with right good will, and carried the load across, which was anything but an easy task, as the weight on our backs made us sink knee deep and sometimes deeper at every step. After depositing the goods on firm ground, we set our attention to getting the wagon out. We began by digging the mud from the wheels, after which we attached a long rope, which we had brought for the purpose, to the pole, which allowed the horses a firm footing on dry ground, while they pulled the wagon out of the mud.

We made very little progress that day, having to pass several other slews and creeks, though none were so bad as the first. One stream, however, gave us some little trouble, being very deep and rapid, but without any mud to speak of. We drove down to the edge, unhooked the horses, fastened the long rope to the pole, and swam to the opposite side. After reaching the bank, the wagon was drawn across by means of the rope. Having lost so much time that day, we kept on till rather late and were very tired, but could get very little sleep, as the mosquitoes

were so troublesome, and I was occupied nearly all night keeping up the smudge. Plenty of smoke was the only protection we could obtain from the little tormentors.

Soon after sunrise we were again on our way, steering due west, having got far enough northward. We made good progress until about three o'clock in the afternoon, when we came to a very deep and muddy creek. I got down to find the best place at which to cross, when I saw a settler's hut. I enquired of the occupant which was the best crossing place. The answer he gave me was that I should never get over with so great a load.

"Well," said I, "I have crossed a good many creeks which looked as bad as this, and I mean to have a good try here."

Selecting a likely place, I walked in and waded about to ascertain the depth. Having satisfied myself that if the horses pulled well together, we could get across, we made the attempt. With a "strong pull, and a long pull, and a pull together," we got across in safety, though the horses had had enough of it by the time we had landed.

After resting awhile, we went forward, reaching Toby Creek about 7 p.m.; this creek proved to be full of mud and water. Walking a little distance ahead to feel the way, I cautioned my man to stop some little distance before he came to the creek, but unfortunately he came just a yard too near, and down went



*"Walking a little distance ahead to feel the way."*

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the wagon, sinking in the mud to the boxes of the wheels. We used every means available to extricate the wagon without unloading, but were unsuccessful. The horses by this time were quite fagged out, so we commenced unloading the goods and carrying them across. At this juncture I espied a hut, and went off to try and procure assistance. The occupant was an Englishman.

"Hullo!" said he, "got stuck in Toby Creek?"

"No," said I, "we are stuck before getting to it; our wagon is as deep as it can be. I find this Toby Creek a bad one to get through."

"Why, it's the easiest in the country to pass! D'ye want any help?"

"That's just what I'm come for, if you'll be good enough to give us a pull with your oxen there."

"With pleasure," said he.

I thanked him much, and helped him to catch the oxen, which were enjoying themselves in a large smudge close at hand. By the time we had got back to the creek, my man had carried nearly all the load through. We hitched the oxen to the wagon, and after a few good pulls out it came, and by some good steady pulling it was brought across to firm ground. The strength of these animals is enormous; they are much better than horses for getting through slews and creeks, as they pull steadily without plunging.

I spent the greater part of the night with the settlers (there were two of them young Englishmen), talking of the Old Country, and learning all I could from their experience in Canada. One of them had just sold his homestead and pre-emption lot for a good price, and was staying with his friend. Our helper told me he had been settled there about 18 months, and was getting on well. He had taken up a homestead and pre-emption lot (320 acres) and had already under cultivation, enclosed with good wire fencing, about 100 acres. The corn, wheat and oats, looked well, and promised a heavy crop. His garden was well stocked with vegetables, and altogether the farm looked well and prosperous. The young fellows seemed happy and contented, and well pleased with the prospect before them. I could not help noticing the contrast between their life and prospects and that of many farmers I have met with in the Old Country, who, though struggling hard against adverse seasons and circumstances, find themselves losing ground and seem to be losing heart also.

As our host assured me that the creeks further on were much worse than Toby Creek, I left part of our machinery in his charge, being convinced that it was useless to attempt to get through with such a load. Taking leave soon after sunrise, we made up our minds for a day in the slews, and were not

disappointed. Before we had travelled five miles we had to dig ourselves out four times. My man was getting quite disheartened, so I let him drive while I walked on in front picking the way. He certainly had the best of it, as I often found myself up to my waist in mud and slush. The day having been a hard one, we stopped for the night about six o'clock, and having made a big smudge we had supper and lay down to rest, both we and our horses quite knocked up.

We did not start quite so early in the morning as usual on account of the condition of the horses. During the day one creek gave us some little trouble, as the bank on either side rose to a great height, and were very steep and rugged. We had to chain the two hind wheels so as to skid down to the water's edge. The horses had got used to this kind of travelling now, and pulled the wagon through the stream with little difficulty. Immediately after crossing we camped in view of Turtle Mountain. At the foot of the mountain is a city, consisting of a store and a few houses. Getting there about five o'clock in the morning, we called up the boss to sell us a few articles, and also to give us some information as to the condition of the country ahead.

"You'll never get through the next creek with that load," was the answer he made to our enquiries, "but if you like, I'll buy the lumber of you so as to ease the load."



"No," said I; "we've brought it so far, and will take it further."

I walked down to the creek, as it was close, to see for myself. It was certainly worse than I expected, but I knew if we got in we should get out somehow, so I went back to my man and assured him we could get through with a little perseverance. He drove as near the edge as he dared, and then began shaking his head, saying,

"This is the worst job we have had."

"Never mind," said I; "drive the horses through first. We must carry the load through on our backs, and shall then be able to get the empty wagon over."

The horses could scarcely get through the sticky alkaline mud. In carrying the goods across one turn, I had rather a heavy load, which sent me so deep in the mud that I could not get my leg out quick enough, and down I rolled into the mire. After emptying the wagon, with the exception of a few boards, we succeeded in getting it almost through, when one side sank in so deeply that it stuck fast. Just at this moment three men with two yoke of oxen came wading through.

Picture myself carrying a bag of flour on my back, up to middle in mud, wagon stuck, horses on other side.

"Hullo!" said one, "I have seen a good many 'sticks' in this country, but this is almost the worst. Do you want any help?"

"It looks like it," I said.

These were Englishmen from Devonshire. Most of the Canadians would have gone by taking no notice of us except to laugh at our calamity. With the assistance of the oxen we managed to get the wagon out. It took nearly three hours to load up and get away. This morning was really lost, for not looking as carefully at the compass as I should have done, we travelled a long way out of our course, and lost a lot of time before we got right again.

We reached the first crossing of the Souris River in the forenoon of the next day, and could see the ferryman's hut some distance off on the other side. My signal soon brought him to us. I informed him our load this time was much heavier than the last, and that he had better make three journeys of it, but he assured me he could take it all in two. We half filled the boat, and then placed the top part of the wagon right across, leaving just room enough for the man to row, while I crouched down under the tilt. We had only got a few yards from the bank, when we found the water coming over the side, the wind acting on the tilt like a sail. I had strongly advised the ferryman to have it taken down before starting, but he would not, and as he was so confident in his own strength, I let him do as he liked. At last his strength gave way and he cried out.

"She's going, she's going; I can't hold her."

And so we *were* going down stream as fast as the wind and current could take us, the wind tossing us about like a cork.

"Can you swim?" he said.

"Not with all these clothes on," I said, looking round for the nearest point for which I could strike out, as I expected every moment to be in the water. Suddenly the fellow cried,

"Sit perfectly still, I can see the bottom," and jumping out he could just reach it. Then all was right, as the boat was much lighter, and planting his feet on the bottom, he could hold her.

After some difficulty we managed to reach the other side, rejoicing at not having had a spill.

We soon fetched the other load over, the horses swimming behind. After putting the wagon together and re-loading it, on we went making for the South Antler River. We had not gone far, when looking for a crossing at a slew, in the long grass which was up to my shoulders, I nearly walked right on top of the finest badger I had ever seen. It did its best to frighten me. I called the dog, which gamely tackled it until I put a charge of buckshot into its head, and brought the fight to a close. These badgers are in great numbers about the prairie, making it bad travelling, as their holes lie so thick and deep. We soon reached the South Antler, and were

glad to find the water much lower than it was at my previous crossing. This being a very clean stream, we refreshed ourselves by having a bath. While we were thus enjoying ourselves, the horses managed to get loose, and were nowhere to be seen. I took my glasses and ran one way, while my man George went another, but without success. We were in great trouble, as several times one of the horses had made a start for home, and we quite thought it had gone for good now. As I was climbing an elevated spot, to scan with my glasses the distant horizon, I was delighted to see them close at hand coming out of some bushes near the stream. We were heartily glad to get away from here, as this seemed an unlucky spot. Every time we came here we had a misfortune. Going out the first time the pony got loose, and kept us up all night hunting for it. Coming back we were caught in the fearful thunderstorm, and lost nearly all our provisions in crossing the stream, and now lost the horses again.

I could not sleep that night for the mosquitoes, they were something terrible. As fast as I lay down in the wagon the horses would fetch me out again by biting and pulling the tilt, to let me know the smudge wanted making up. Once the fire got so low that it needed a match and some paper to relight it. Whilst striking the match, the mosquitoes swarmed so thick about my head that I could

scarcely see the light. In a few seconds my hands, face and neck were swollen all over, and I was nearly blinded by the stings of these insects, and in my haste to make a smoke I unconsciously tore up one of the best maps we had. I was very sorry to lose it as it was the only one by which we had been travelling.

On the second day afterwards, about mid-day, we reached Moose Mountain Creek, where Chris. Troy was camped. He was delighted to see us, and as we had a lot to talk about, I decided to remain with him for the night. He advised us not to cross the creek at the same place that we did on our first journey, as our load this time was much heavier. We spent some hours in the afternoon hunting for the best crossing, and soon pitched on a very good one, but before we could cross, the large boulders in the bed of the river had to be removed. We therefore stripped and commenced our task, when a happy thought struck me, that as all our linen was dirty, it would be a splendid opportunity to have a washing day, so we got our things together and, one by one, took them to the middle of the stream, where a swift current was running. I soaped and rubbed till I nearly fetched all the skin off my knuckles, but I could not get the linen to look white. When I had finished, it looked nearly as brown as London washing; I'm sure it was not for the want of water, for the current was so strong as to nearly

take the clothes out of my hands. The coloured garments looked all right except for the want of mending. I had to be careful in putting them on that my head did not go through the wrong hole.

The evening and part of the night were spent chatting with Chris. Since our first visit he had nearly completed a nice log hut, and was getting comfortably settled. As we had been so long without bread, and had got so tired of biscuits, I asked Chris. to teach me how to bake. We had a cwt. of flour with us, but did not know how to use it.

"You can't bake without a pot" said he.

"Can I bake with one?" I replied.

"Yes, and I'll lend you mine, as I've a spare one, and teach you how to make a good loaf."

I was delighted, as I had really begged for a piece of bread by the way. I will explain my mode of baking further on.

We started rather early in the morning of the following day and passed through the river at our new crossing splendidly. Climbing a very steep ravine we reached the flat prairie and took a northerly direction to avoid the rocks and stones we had encountered before.

Hoping to reach our destination next day, we hurried on as quickly as possible. Thinking we had cleared the stony parts, we took to a westerly course again, but about five o'clock found ourselves right in the midst of the stones.

As I did not care to alter our course again we journeyed on as best we could. Ravine after ravine we crossed, travelling over one mass of rough stones, and the noise of the wheels bounding over them made a dismal sound in the lonely place. The horses, too, seemed to feel the desolation and became very timid. If I left them for a short time to ascertain if we were going right, they would be very restless and whinny for me to return. They would carefully watch me till I got out of sight in a hollow, and the instant I came into view again on rising ground beyond, they would make straight for me, and my man had as much as he could do to hold them back. As we did not reach the river, I was a little alarmed, the night rapidly drawing on, for if we camped here we should be without water or wood, and the horses were already very thirsty. We decided to tie the horses up and hunt for the river on foot. We walked about a mile due south, when to our delight we came to the river, and what was still better, right on our section of land. My man could hardly think we were so fortunate, and was very doubtful as to whether we were on the right spot.

“If you doubt my memory,” said I, “I will soon convince you,” and taking him to a table rock, I shewed him my brother’s name and my own, and the date carved in the stone.

“That’s a proof,” said he, “that’s quite

enough." We hastened back to the horses, and selecting the best way, returned to the river and pitched our tent, for, we knew not how long.

We soon selected a spot sheltered by a ridge, which ran from east to west, the river running parallel with it some distance below us.

The first thing we did next morning, was to plough up some turf near our wagon, as the sods were most useful for keeping up a fire during the night, by lying a little on some green wood, which produces plenty of smoke ; as it was the smoke we wanted more than the fire. The next thing was to make an oven for baking, as we longed for a little more bread. We soon dug a large hole in the ground, according to Chris.'s instructions, to hold the pot he so kindly lent me. This I found to be the easiest part of the business to one who had never tried his hand at baking before. It is impossible for one to be too much domesticated, who starts life in a new country ; although the cooking, washing, etc., is rather different to our old arrangements. I mixed up some thin batter with some batter cakes I had in store, letting it stand for about three hours, after which I thickened it with more flour, and then stood it in a warm place for the night. In the morning I heated the oven with coal and wood, till it was perfectly hot ; whilst the oven was heating, I made the



dough, but somehow I did not make it quite right, for I could not get it to rise. I well greased the pot before putting the dough into it, to prevent its sticking, and then placed the pot in the oven and covered it with hot ashes. I allowed it an hour to bake, or rather burn, for it was baked, not only brown, but black, and so hard that we had to get the axe to cut it. This was a waste we could not well afford, so I determined to be more careful next time. I did not get the oven nearly so hot at my second attempt, but the dough was not quite right again, and it was far from being a success, but the third batch was really good.

The batter cakes I mentioned are very useful as a substitute for yeast on an expedition of this kind as they are used for making many other dishes, such as yeast dumplings, pancakes, biscuits, etc.

We then unpacked the provisions and emptied the wagon of the implements. The hay with which our beds were stuffed, was now nearly all dust, so we replenished them with new, which was much more comfortable. We spent one whole day in drawing dead trees to our tent, so as to have a stock of fire-wood close at hand. Near us was a beautiful cold spring of water which came straight off the coal. This was a great luxury, and saved us the trouble of digging a well. After a few days' rest, we set to work in earnest, searching for larger quantities of coal, and found

several seams of various thicknesses, and dug out plenty for our fires.

As my brother intended to start a few days after our departure, we were now expecting him every hour, but day after day passed without any signs of his arrival. We now tried our hands at building a log hut, plenty of timber being close at hand, taking our pattern from one we had seen on the way out. It was a perfect square, made of trunks of trees about six inches in diameter, placed one upon another till the required height was reached. Turfs were then piled against the outside, up to the roof, to exclude weather and flies. Our wagon was so constructed that the bed could be lifted off and the lower part used as a timber carriage, which answered our purpose admirably.

We had been here a little more than a week, when my man asked me what day it was. As I had now left off keeping a diary, I had quite forgotten, the days being so much alike, but after a long time and a great deal of calculation we concluded that it must be Thursday, though we were by no means certain that our calculation was correct. The horses having now recovered from their fatiguing journey had got quite frisky, and one night they managed to get the rope with which they were secured across the fire, burnt it in two, and got their liberty. We had a bit of a hunt for them next morning and after a while found

them ; on hearing my voice they followed us back to the tent. We had plenty of sport here, prairie chickens in abundance, which often supplied us with an enjoyable meal. We now felt quite at home with the wagon for our house and the sweet prairie hay for our bed. I made a table from some of the boards we brought with us which we found very useful indeed. We had our regular days for washing and baking, doing all the cooking early in the morning to escape the heat of the sun as much as possible.

We worked hard at the log hut and intended when it was finished to turn back, as I was getting uneasy at the non-arrival of my brother, when one morning, just as I had finished frying a large plate of "slap-jacks" (a kind of pancake) sufficient for the day, we noticed a man coming over the brow of the hill. He was quite a stranger to us, but soon introduced himself as one whom my brother had engaged to come with him. He informed us that George would arrive in a few hours. On enquiring the cause of the delay, I was told that one of the ponies being knocked up, they were obliged to rest for a few days, and then could only travel at a walking pace. I was delighted to see my brother, and glad that nothing more serious had prevented his earlier arrival. George informed me that Chris. Troy was about to make an excursion to Winnipeg in a few days, and as my time

was drawing to a close and I was anxious to make my way back to England, this would afford me a splendid opportunity to get over the most difficult part of the way, which was over the prairie to the railway about a hundred miles, leaving George and his two men to carry out our projected plans, so it was decided for George to drive me to Troy's abode on the following Tuesday.

Next day three of us started to go further west to inspect some more land which I proposed to purchase on my return taking enough provisions to last us three days. Our drive, according to the map, extended about thirty miles. We took the tent and a large buffalo robe which was invaluable as a bed. We made a good headway, halting about mid-day near a creek which ran into the Souris. We unharnessed the horses to give them their usual rest, when they all started away from the spot we had chosen, making their way back to the tent at a good walking pace. Our man had a good sharp run before he could catch them, and had to hold them the whole of the time we were resting, as they were so restless. We could not at first divine the reason of their restlessness, but on looking about found the remains of a number of fires, pointing out that Indians had been recently camping near the place, and the horses would not stay where they could detect any smell of these dirty people; dogs also have the same

dislike to Indians, and even when one has been brought up in an Indian camp, and afterwards gets a white man for its master, an Indian had better keep his distance from it. On starting again, the horses were glad to get away and we drove on till sundown, pitching the tent close to the river. After searching for a short time we came upon a likely looking place for coal. We removed a little of the earth and a seam of coal lay open before us. Wishing to ascertain the depth of the seam that evening, we worked by a candle-light till nearly mid-night, but did not reach the bottom. The next morning some little time was taken up in cutting a path through the trees and shrubs which grew on the banks of the river to admit of our crossing.

The ravines about here were very steep, giving us a great deal of trouble to climb, and we were obliged to skirt some of them, going several miles round to do so. We came across several places where buffaloes had been wallowing in the mud. Hundreds of tracks had been passed on our way out, but none so recent as these.

We saw a large black bear shuffling along as unconcerned as possible.

"Quick!" said George "let us chase it."

We sprang out of the buck-board and bounded up the hill, thinking to meet bruin, but on reaching the top, a fine wolf jumped up just in front of us, and stood still looking at us

for some seconds. George was just about to fire when I cried, "Don't fire, or you'll frighten the bear." So the wolf got away, and as Mr. Bruin was better acquainted with those parts than we were he also got off scot free.

Rough Bark Creek was soon reached. This was the part for which we had set out. We were prevented from crossing by the great depth of mud, so there was no alternative but to retrace our steps. Near this creek we saw about a hundred acres of sun-flowers in full bloom.

About fifteen miles from our hut, night overtook us, and we were obliged to camp, it being dangerous to go on. All our provisions were gone, excepting two hard biscuits and it was too dark to look for water, so we were without fire, water or food. The mosquitoes had it all their own way that night, both with ourselves and the horses.

We reached the hut about six o'clock next morning, both hungry and thirsty. After a good meal, my brother, and I started to inspect the north side of the river, taking the ponies and one day's provisions, as our journey would not be so long. Whilst resting in the middle of the day we set fire to the prairie grass some distance off to the windward so that the smoke might be blown towards us and thus protect us from the mosquitoes, this answered very well till we had half finished lunch, when the wind suddenly getting

stronger, drove the fire nearer to us than we bargained for. We could see it coming with great rapidity, spreading far and wide. This was quite unexpected, and before we could get all our scattered things into the buck-board, the fire had swept completely over the spot, devouring everything we had left. We had not time to harness the ponies, and only saved the buck-board by drawing it along and hurrying the ponies on in front till we got to a place where the grass was very short. We harnessed the ponies and got away as quickly as possible, as we could hear the fire roaring and crackling, and see the smoke curling and towering up to the clouds. This fire was visible at least thirty miles. After inspecting the land, we got back with all haste to the rest as we were to part on the morrow. We got into our little tent to have a farewell chat, and to thank God for His great goodness in preserving our lives through all dangers and giving us health and strength to battle with every difficulty, also to ask His blessing to follow us to our journey's end. While in the tent, by some means, the surrounding grass had caught fire. We were just in time to save the tent and soon extinguished the fire by beating it with sticks.

Tuesday morning dawned and I bade farewell to my man and horses who had done me such good service. George and I had thirty miles to travel before reaching the miner's

cabin. It was a hard day's work, as one of our ponies was quite knocked up, in fact we had to get out and push behind sometimes, this I thought was a poor start for a five thousand miles journey. We did not reach Moose Mountain Creek till 10 o'clock at night when it was quite dark. A light was visible on the other side which we knew to be the miner's hut ; but we could not find the only safe crossing which was the one we had made on our way out. We hunted for nearly an hour, when our strength was almost exhausted. We should have camped where we were, but our friend was to start early in the morning without waiting for me, as he did not know definitely whether I should come or no. As our legs were worn out we set our lungs to work.

"Bring a light," we shouted, with all the strength our lungs could afford. We took turns shouting, and after keeping on some time, we were rather surprised to see a light coming as the distance must have been nearly a mile. Now we had to guide Chris., who carried the light, by continuing our shouting. The light was steadily advancing down to the water's edge and we could hear the voice of Chris. guiding us to the proper crossing. He held the light above his head. The lamp consisted of a candle stuck in the neck of an inverted wine bottle, with the bottom knocked off. The sides of the bottle serving as a



splendid protection against the wind, and the neck, besides holding the candle inside, serving as a capital handle. We had some difficulty in persuading the ponies to enter the stream, as the reflection of the light on the water frightened them. We reached the tent at last thoroughly worn out and ready for a good night's rest. After the ponies were fed and secured, and we had partaken of a hearty supper we lay down for the night.

We were up early the next morning, feeling much refreshed. I made an agreement with Chris. to pay him for my keep, until we reached civilization; my company would, he said, amply repay him for the room I took in the buck-board.

"Now, said he, what shall we take to eat."

"I'm not at all particular," I replied, "I can manage anything that's eatable."

He then went to the dried herring box, and after taking out about a dozen, the dried biscuit box was visited. Oh! thought I, hard biscuits again, with dried herring to flavour them, one tin of sardines and a tin of preserved beef were all our eatables, with a little tea for drink.

Our cooking arrangements were very scanty, consisting only of an old lobster tin to boil a little water for tea.

My friend was determined to protect us from the mosquitoes, so he had some green sticks bent over the buck-board, covered with unbleached calico to serve as a tilt.

At last all was ready, and we two brothers had to say good-bye, with a hearty shake of the hand, we wished each other joy, happiness and a safe return, then Chris. and myself drove briskly off, leaving George to return to our land.

The weather was everything to make me feel happy and contented with my lot, even though our food for some time would consist mainly of dried salt herrings, hard biscuit, and tea made in an old lobster tin, with a clasp knife to answer for articles necessary at meal times.

Twenty miles had been run before we stopped to rest. I dreaded the night, as I feared the arrangements we had for keeping off the flies were useless, and so it proved. The best plan we could adopt was to roll ourselves up in the buffalo robes, and lie down on the ground near the fire. The horses wanting to get into the smudge as well, we had to keep a sharp look out, as they were continually getting nearer to us than was pleasant. Three days having been spent pretty much in this fashion, we reached the iron road leading to Winnipeg at a new station out on the prairies called Moosemain. Having made arrangements with a person to take care of Chris.'s ponies till his return, we jumped on to the first freight train that passed, and reached Brandon about half-past eleven at night. We inquired if there was any chance of getting a bed, as I longed to feel myself between the

sheets once more. We were directed to a very fine hotel, and finding the door half open, we entered, and aftermaking a considerable noise, a person appeared at the top of the stairs dressed in white, and asked us our business. We asked if we could have a bed for the night.

"Every bed is engaged," said he.

"Can't you pack us in anywhere?" I said.

"You can lie down in the bar," he replied.

I thanked him, and rolling up my coat for a pillow, spread out my buffalo robe and lay down for the night.

"Come outside," said Chris., "we shall get more air there," he not having quite made up his mind where to sleep.

"No," said I, "I mean spending this night under a roof for a change."

He eventually joined me on the floor, but neither had had much sleep, as it seemed so close and stuffy after the open prairie. One more day and night spent on the cars brought us again to the great and flourishing city of Winnipeg.

A short time spent in visiting some of the wonders of America, including the Niagara Falls and the cities of New York and Philadelphia, brought my American visit to a close, and I returned to England by the magnificent Cunard steamer "Servia," the ocean passage being accomplished in the remarkable short time of seven days, five hours, and ten

minutes, being one of the shortest passages on record.

Should the reader imagine that I have intended to convey an impression unfavourable to the country I have visited, I wish it to be understood that such was the furthest from my intention. I have endeavoured to give a plain unvarnished story of my adventures, which, although at times somewhat hazardous, I enjoyed in no ordinary degree, notwithstanding my journey lay through a comparatively wild and uninhabited country, but one which, from its expansiveness and the general richness of its soil, I have no doubt will in course of time rejoice and blossom as the rose. In closing, I will give a few of what I shall call

#### GENERAL IMPRESSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

One thing that seemed to impress me most was the vastness of the country. We travelled hundreds of miles, through land far richer than any I have ever seen in the Old Country, all virgin prairie, of course varying in quality, some being grand, rich, heavy black loam, adapted for growing crops of wheat, which English farmers cannot realize, other being lighter and more adapted for barley, &c., all waiting to be taken up by settlers, who call obtain the freehold for practically nothing.

Here is a grand opportunity for farmers, or those who can readily turn their hands to

tilling the land. Tradesmen who can only work at one branch of employment had better keep away from the North-West unless they are prepared, should their calling be at a discount, to turn their hands to any kind of labour, and work away with a cheerful heart till more favourable times present themselves, which they always do to men of push and perseverance.

Much has been said against the climate of Manitoba and the North-West Territory, it is certainly hotter in the summer than in England, according to the thermometer, but I did not feel it so, as out on the prairies there was always a gloriously cool breeze blowing, and however hot the day may have been, the nights were always cool; this is not the case, I was told, in the older provinces of Canada. I did not see one close hot dull heavy day like we often get in England, the sky seemed always clear at night, and the Northern Lights were beyond description for grandeur and brilliancy. I did not experience a winter myself, but asked many persons how they liked the winters, but did not hear anyone speak unfavourably of them. They all said it was much colder, according to the thermometer, than in England, but being so dry, it is not felt so much as the raw, damp cold in England. Many of whom I enquired said that the winters are the most enjoyable, as being unable to work on the land, the people give

themselves up to social enjoyment, and have a merry time of it with sleighing parties, skating and other sports.

I made it a point to inquire of every settler I came across how they liked the country, without exception, they all spoke favourably of it, and many of them said they would not return to England, except on a visit, for anything. I heard some say that after being there awhile they wondered why they had not left England before they did, and wondered still more why able-bodied farmers prefer to drag out a miserable existence in England, seeing their capital gradually dwindling away, when by emigration to the Canadian North-West they can be in a short time, after a little privation and self-sacrifice, owners of their own prosperous farms, and independent of any landlord. In this feeling I fully sympathise.

FINIS.

