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978-1-108-07088-1 - Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857:

And of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858: Volume 1

Henry Youle Hind

Excerpt

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THE
CANADIAN RED RIVER EXPLORING EXPEDITION
OF 1857

VOL. I.

B

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THE
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OF 1857.

INTRODUCTION.

IN July, 1857, the Canadian Government organised and despatched an expedition to examine the country between Lake Superior and the Red River of the North, with a view to determine the best route for opening a communication between that lake and the settlements on Red River. The expedition consisted of the following members:—

GEORGE GLADMAN, Director, and one Assistant.

HENRY YOULE HIND, Geologist, and one Assistant.

W. H. E. NAPIER, Engineer, and five Assistants.

S. J. DAWSON, Surveyor, and four Assistants.

One road superintendent.

The *voyageurs* were composed of twelve Iroquois Indians from Caughnawaga, near Lachine, a Scotchman from the Ottawa, a French Canadian from Collingwood, a French Canadian (Lambert) from Fort William, a half-breed, engaged on board the steamer Collingwood, where he was employed in the capacity of cook, and twelve Ojibway Indians from Fort William, thus making the number of the party forty-four persons in all, when the canoe voyage commenced.

The following extracts from Mr. Gladman's instructions

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will exhibit the designs of the Canadian Government in despatching this expedition : —

“The primary object of the expedition is to make a thorough examination of the tract of country between Lake Superior and Red River, by which may be determined the best route for opening a facile communication through British territory, from that lake to the Red River Settlements, and ultimately to the great tracts of cultivable land beyond them. With this view the following suggestions are offered for your guidance, so far as you will find them practicable, and supported by the topography.

“In the first place, after being landed at Fort William, to proceed by the present Hudson’s Bay canoe route — by the Kaministiquia River, Dog Lake, Lake of the Thousand Islands, &c., to Lac La Croix, and thence by Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg, and up the Red River to Fort Garry.

“From Rainy Lake to Lake Winuipeg, the route as at present affords a good navigation for boats of considerable size, with the interruption however of some short portages; but from Rainy Lake eastward to Lake Superior, the route is very much interrupted, and rendered laborious, tedious and expensive, by the great number of portages, some of considerable length, which have to be encountered to avoid the falls and rapids in the ravines and creeks which this route follows.

“For the establishment of a suitable communication for the important objects aimed at, it is believed that the construction of a road throughout, from some point on Lake Superior, probably either at Fort William, or at or near the mouth of the Pigeon River to Rainy Lake, must be undertaken. To ascertain, therefore, at present, by general exploration, what the route for this road should be, whether in the vicinity of the Hudson’s Bay route, or by the line of country in which lies the chain of waters from Rainy Lake to the mouth of Pigeon River; this question can obviously be only satisfactorily determined by the difficult portions of both being tested instrumentally, but in either case, as the construction of such road would be a matter of time and much expense, it is considered necessary that the portages, &c.,

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of either of the routes above described should be improved, so as to be made more available and facile, and to be auxiliary to the works of the road by facilitating the transport of men, supplies, &c.

“To determine, therefore, the portages to be improved, and the best mode of doing so, and whether the present reaches of canoe or boat navigation may not be further extended by the removal of shoals or the erection of dams, will be points to which you will direct the attention of the engineering and surveying branches of your party.

“From Rainy Lake by Lake of the Woods, and Lake Winnipeg to Fort Garry, as before described, is now comparatively a good water communication, but very circuitous; and should the character of Rat River, which rises at no great distance from the Lake of the Woods, and falls into the Red River above Fort Garry, be found susceptible of its being made a boat channel, a saving probably of 150 miles in length might be effected; or on an exploration of the country through which that river flows, it may be found more desirable to construct a road along it from Red River, and should this be so, the nature of the communication between Red River and Lake Superior eventually would be about 100 miles of road from Red River to the Lake of the Woods, thence about 140 miles of water communication to the eastern end of Rainy Lake, and from that point a continuous road to Lake Superior of from 160 to 200 miles in length.”*

My duties in connection with this expedition are explained in the following instructions:—

“Secretary’s Office,

“Toronto, 22nd July, 1857.

“SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that his Excellency, the Administrator of the Government, has been pleased to nominate you Geologist and Naturalist to the party which is to leave this city immediately for Fort William, for the purpose, in the first instance, of examining the lines and state of the

* Report on the Exploration of the country between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement. Printed by order of the Legislative Assembly, 1858.—Instructions and Communications, page 5.

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communication thence to Fort Garry, on the Red River. It being indispensable to the satisfactory result of the expedition, as well as to the safety of the party, that one individual should be invested with the general control and management of it, Mr. Gladman has been intrusted with this authority and responsibility, for which he is considered eminently qualified, from his long residence in the territory, his acquaintance with the leading lines of communication, with the trading posts, with the tribes of Indians with whom the party will necessarily come in contact, and with the extent and nature of the supplies which can safely be calculated on as procurable in the country during the course of the expedition. By him, therefore, will be regulated and determined the movements of the party, the routes to be taken and explored, and all matters connected with the provisioning and transport of the party, the hiring and payment of the men, and all other matters of detail whatever comprised in the general conduct of the expedition.

“From the nature of your duties, it may be necessary that you should occasionally separate yourself from the party. In such cases you will state so to Mr. Gladman, who will take care that you are provided with the necessary provisions and means of transport, and with all such necessaries as you may require; and he will arrange with you as to the places and times for your reuniting yourself with the main body.

“As you will require the services of an Assistant, the appointment of an efficient one is left with you, his remuneration not to exceed 20*l.* per month. That of the Geologist, Engineer, and Surveyor is fixed at thirty shillings per day each.

“The objects to which your attention is requested are of a general character, comprising a description of the main geological features of the country you traverse, and of whatever pertains to its natural history which you may have an opportunity of observing and recording.

“In relation to its geology, you will be guided by the memorandum furnished you by Sir William Logan; giving especial attention, as far as lies in your power, to the following points:

1. The boundaries of formations.
2. The distribution of limestone.

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3. The collection of fossils.
4. The occurrence of economic minerals.
5. The exact position of all facts, and the attitude of the rocks.

“The distribution of limestone should be made a constant subject of question with every one you meet.

“With reference to natural history, you will, if at the time convenient, and the object capable of transportation, collect whatever may appear to be new or of interest; and you are requested to record in a daily journal, such facts in connection with this subject as may present themselves to your notice, when not susceptible of representation by specimen or illustration.

“A general description of the whole of the country you traverse, from Fort William westward, is very desirable; and it is advisable to note, as minutely as possible, all leading features of topography, vegetation, and soil, along your line of route.

“You will proceed with the main party to Fort William, and continue with it, or with such party as may be detached from it, as much as is consistent with the efficient prosecution of your own exploration and researches. It may, of course, be occasionally necessary, as already adverted to, that you should separate from the others for a short time, for which course Mr. Gladman will afford you all requisite accommodation; but as that gentleman’s instructions require him to explore not only the present canoe route of the Hudson’s Bay Company, from Fort William by Dog Lake, Lake of the Thousand Islands, Lac Croix, Lake of the Woods, and Lake Winnipeg, to Fort Garry, but also in returning to examine the former North West Company’s route by Pigeon River; and further to survey or examine the line of Rat River, from the Red River to its source, and the intervening country between it and the Lake of the Woods; it is not probable that there will be much necessity for your leaving the party for more than a few days at a time, which is desirable, from its limited number and the late season of the year.

“It is arranged with Mr. Gladman, that he is to send a messenger, some time hence, with despatches to the Government, explanatory of the progress made towards carrying out the objects of the expedition; and by this means you will also have an

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opportunity of making such *ad interim* report as you may consider desirable. You will determine the return route to be taken by you and your assistant, whether by Lake Superior or by St. Paul, as you may be led to believe will most conduce to the attainment of the object of your branch of the exploration.

“When materials for illustrating the geology and natural history of the country accumulate, so as to render their transportation an inconvenience, you will hand them over in packages, properly made up and directed, to Mr. Gladman, who will take care that they are safely lodged at some of the posts, and arrangements made for their being securely conveyed to this city.

“Your reports and communications upon the various subjects to which your attention is directed will be addressed to the Hon. Provincial Secretary; and it is presumed to be unnecessary to impress upon you the propriety and expediency of taking care that the subject of such reports, and the results of your labour, shall be only so communicated.

“I have the honour, &c.

(Signed,) “T. L. TERRILL,

“Provincial Secretary.

“H. Y. Hind, Esq.

“Professor, &c., Trinity College.”

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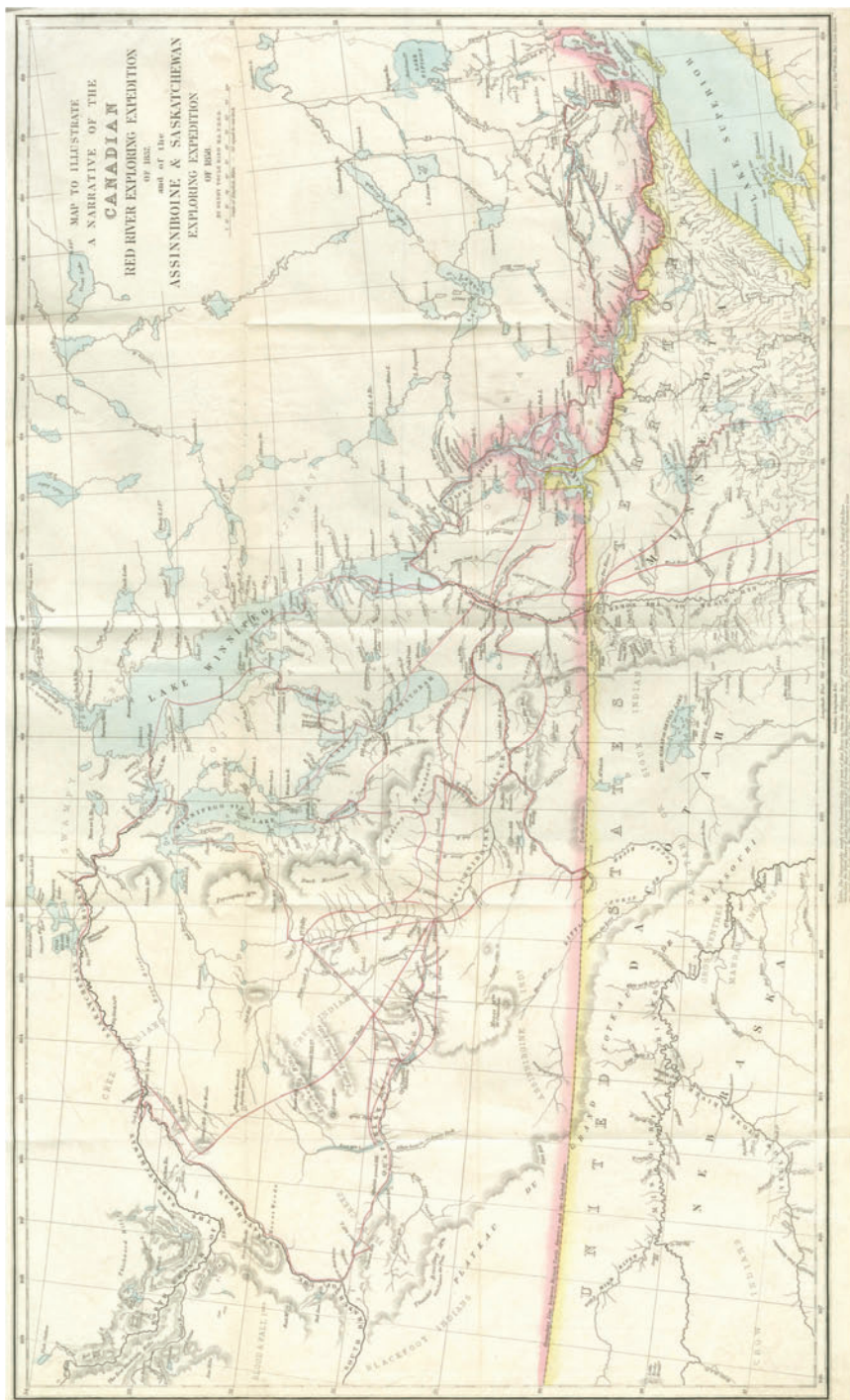
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