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Henry Youle Hind

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Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857

Born in Nottingham, Henry Youle Hind (1823–1908) moved to Canada in 1846. He joined the newly formed Canadian Institute in 1849 and later taught chemistry and geology at Trinity College in Toronto. In 1857–8, he made a range of observations during two expeditions to investigate underexplored areas of Canada and their agricultural and mineral potential to support future settlement. Illustrated with a number of plates based on photographs, this two-volume work first appeared in 1860. Intended for a broad readership, the narrative is regarded as a classic of nineteenth-century exploration literature, noted especially for its descriptive use of language and eye for detail. Volume 1 covers the entire Red River expedition of 1857 and the first part of the 1858 expedition through parts of the Assiniboine, Saskatchewan and other valleys.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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VOL. I.

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Henry Youle Hind
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

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

Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



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Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

NARRATIVE
OF
THE CANADIAN RED RIVER
EXPLORING EXPEDITION OF 1857
AND OF THE
ASSINNIBOINE AND SASKATCHEWAN
EXPLORING EXPEDITION OF 1858

BY
HENRY YOULE HIND, M.A. F.R.G.S.
PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND GEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINITY COLLEGE, TORONTO
In Charge of the Assinniboine and Saskatchewan Expedition

In Two Volumes
VOL. I.

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Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

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

Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E.

THE objects for which the Explorations described in these volumes were undertaken, necessarily involved a more minute topographical examination than would be thought necessary in a general survey of a comparatively unknown country.

It was desirable to ascertain the practicability of establishing an emigrant route between Lake Superior and Selkirk Settlement, and to acquire some knowledge of the natural capabilities and resources of the Valley of Red River and the Saskatchewan.

The country between Lake Superior and Red River is therefore minutely delineated with reference to the object of the exploration of 1857, and the first four chapters are mainly devoted to topographical details of less interest to the general reader than the subsequent narrative. The same remark applies, though in a less degree, to the description of the country west of Red River, the object being to show its fitness, or the contrary, for settlement.

The establishment of a new Colony in the Basin of Lake Winnipeg, and the discovery of a FERTILE BELT of

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Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

country extending from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, give to this part of British America a more than passing interest. The idea of a route across the Continent of America lying wholly within British Territory, is daily becoming more settled and defined.

The trade of China and Japan, now on the point of being opened to British enterprise, the gold wealth of British Columbia, and the FERTILE BELT forming the northern boundary of the great American desert, all give importance to the Basin of Lake Winnipeg, which increases with our contemplation of its possible and indeed probable future.

The illimitable wastes of Siberia, extending over eighty degrees of longitude, are traversed by Russian couriers in far less time than with all our appliances of steam and telegraph, we can receive “news” from China. The same postal system which there prevails can be far more easily maintained in British America, and with this vast advantage, that from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains the route would lie through a tract of country not only remarkably fertile, but possessing rich stores of timber for fuel, lignite coal, iron, and salt—the most important elements of industry and wealth.

The chief difficulty in the way of rapid transit across the continent lies between Lake Superior and Rainy Lake. The liberality which has already been manifested by the Parliament of Canada, in voting supplies to explore and open this line of communication, will doubtless be perse-

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

Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

vii

vered in until the route is well established. The Governor of British Columbia sees in “means of communication” the most expeditious way of calling the inert gold wealth of that distant colony into activity, and it remains for the Imperial Government to determine how soon a postal communication shall be established across the Basin of Lake Winnipeg, and the first step taken in establishing a permanent route through British Territory, between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

London, October 1860.

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And of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858: Volume 1
Henry Youle Hind
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE

CANADIAN RED RIVER EXPLORING EXPEDITION

OF 1857.

CHAPTER I.

TORONTO TO FORT WILLIAM. — LAKE SUPERIOR.

Departure of the Expedition from Toronto. — Squall on Lake Superior. — Fog Phenomena. — Steamer strikes on a Rock off Michipicoten Island. — Michipicoten Harbour. — Refraction. — Thunder Bay. — Pie Island. — Thunder Cape. — The Kaministiquia. — Fort William. — Mr. M'Intyre. — Old North-West Company. — Accessibility of Lake Superior. — The Sault Ste. Marie Canal. — Trade of Lake Superior. — Ship Route to the Ocean. — Canadian Canals. — Elevation of Lake Superior. — Variations in the Levels of the great Canadian Lakes. — Influence and Importance of. — Obstacles to Progress westward of Lake Superior. — Dividing Ridges. — Connection of the Valley of the Mississippi with Lake Superior. — Access to the Valley of Rainy River Page 9

CHAP. II.

THE KAMINISTQUIA ROUTE.—FORT WILLIAM.—LAKE SUPERIOR TO THE HEIGHT OF LAND.

Thunder Bay. — Fort William. — M'Kay's Mountain — The Mission of the Immaculate Conception. — The Rev. Jean Pierre Choné. — Indian Treaty. — Mass. — Current River. — Garden at Fort William. — Remains of former Industry. — The first Brigade. — Iroquois and Ojibways. — A Dance. — The

River. — Scenery of Kakabeka Falls. — Valley of the Kaministiquia. — Little Dog Lake. — The Great Dog Portage. — Little Dog River. — The Great Falls on Little Dog River. — Their Beauty. — Winter Road to Dog Lake. — Summer Road to Dog Lake. — Area of Dog Lake. — Description of. — Dog River. — Character of the Country. — Prairie River. — Upper Dog River. — Prairie Portage. — Viscous Lakes. — Description of Prairie Portage. — Atmospheric Phenomena. — Scarcity of Animal Life . . . Page 24

CHAP. III.

THE HEIGHT OF LAND TO RAINY LAKE.

The Height of Land Lake. — Savanne Lake. — Savanne Portage. — Savanne River. — Mr. Bell from the Mackenzie. — A youthful Traveller. — Milles Lacs. — The Seine River. — Character of the Seine. — Baril Lake. — Ancient Forest. — Cannibal Lake. — Cannibalism. — Brulé Lake. — Pickerel Lake. — Portage des Morts. — Death of a Voyageur. — Doré Lake. — French Portage. — Sturgeon Lake and River. — Picturesque Character of Sturgeon Lake. — Lac de la Croix. — Rattlesnake Portage. — Morning in the Wilderness. — Nameaukan Rapids. — Narrow Escape. — Nameaukan River. — Nameaukan Lake. — Rainy Lake 57

CHAP. IV.

RAINY LAKE TO THE SOURCE OF THE WINNIPEG RIVER.

Rainy Lake. — Description of. — Rainy River. — Affluents of Rainy River. — Fort Frances. — Lac la Pluie Indians. — Valley of Rainy River. — Character of the Valley. — The Winter Road to the Lake of the Woods. — Arrangement for crossing the Swamps to Red River direct from the Lake of the Woods. — Fertility of Rainy River. — The Manitou Rapids. — Obstructions to Navigation. — The Long Rapids. — Indian Encampments. — Tumuli. — Graves. — Banks of Rainy River. — Caterpillars. — The Lake of the Woods. — Beauty of the Lake of the Woods. — *Confervæ*. — Garden Island. — Refraction. — Indians. — A Council. — Its Results. — Grasshoppers. — Shoal Lake. — North-west Corner of the Lake. — Monument Bay. — Route to Rat Portage. — Indians. — Sturgeon. — Polished Rocks 79

CHAP. V.

THE WINNIPEG RIVER.

Character of the Winnipeg. — Rat Portage. — Thunder Storm. — Thunder Storms in the North-West. — A View on the Winnipeg — Islington Mission. — Cultivable Areas on the River. — Rev. Robert Macdonald. — Church Service. — State of Islington Mission. — Indian Superstitions. — Farm at the

THE FIRST VOLUME. xi

Mission.—The School-House the Hope of the Mission.—En route for Red River.—James's Falls. — Animal Life.—Rice Grounds. — Mr. Clouston.— Otter Falls.—The Pennawa River.—Scarcity of Food on the Winnipeg.— Bonnet Lake. — Indian Cache. — The Silver Falls. — Fort Alexander.— Lake Winnipeg. — Character of the Coast. — Camp in the Marshes.— Mouth of Red River.—Indian Village.—Christian Indians Page 106

CHAP. VI.

RED RIVER SETTLEMENTS.

The Red River of the North.—Its Tributaries.—The Red Fork.—The Red River within British Territory.—Its physical Features.—Objects seen on ascending the River.—Section of the River and Prairie.—Objects on the Banks. — The Settlement. — The King's Road. — Character of the Country north of Fort Garry.—Aspect of the Prairies.—Beauty of the Prairies.—The Assiniboine River.—Effect of Evaporation on the Volume of Water in the Assiniboine.—Description of the Assiniboine.—Prairie Portage. — Mud and Sand Flats in the River. — Timber. — John Spence. — Lignite reported to exist on the Assiniboine.—Sioux.—Indian Corn.—The Big Ridge.—An Overturn.—The Prairies of the Assiniboine.— Mr. Lane. — Mr. George Flett. — Mr. Gowler. — Mr. Gowler's Farm.—His Opinions respecting the Prairies on the Assiniboine. — Melons. — Old Associations.—Independence.—Mr. Gowler's Success.—The Nor'wester. — A Newspaper published at Red River Settlements. . . . 125

CHAP. VII.

THE WEST AND EAST BANKS OF RED RIVER, BETWEEN FORT GARRY AND THE BOUNDARY LINE.

La Rivière Sale.—Pembina Mountain.—Scratching River.—Pembina Fort. —Pembina.—The Roseau River.—Ancient Lake Ridge.—Roseau Lake. Route to the Lake of the Woods. — Meet an Indian. — Indian Idea of Money. — Crossing place at the Roseau. — Indian Wigwams. — Ancient Lake Ridge.—Prairie Hens.—Indian Snares.—Still-water Creek.—Rat River.—The Nine-mile Swamp.—Mr. Pierre Gladioux.—Half-breed Politeness and Hospitality.—La Rivière Seine.—Character of the Country. —Indian Scruples 154

CHAP. VIII.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLONY.—STATISTICS OF POPULATION.—ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.—TRADE AND OCCUPATIONS.

Lord Selkirk.—First Emigrants.—Difficulties of the Emigrants.—The De Meurons.—Mr. West.—First Missionary.—The Census.—European and

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

Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

CONTENTS OF

Native Population.—Statistical Table.—Population by Families.—“Natives.”—Character of the Half-breeds.—Occupations.—Improvvidence of the Half-breeds.—Aids to Improvement.—Administration of Justice.—Governor and Council.—Quarterly Courts.—Council of Assiniboia.—Trade and Occupations.—Absence of Trades.—Mills.—Merchants.—Freighters.—Land.—Leases.—Unoccupied Area fit for Settlement.

Page 172

CHAP. IX.

THE MISSIONS AT RED RIVER.

Religious Denominations.—Missionaries, Stations, and Congregations.—The Protestant Congregations.—St. John's Church.—St. Andrew's Church and Parsonage.—The Parish of St. Andrew.—Its History.—St. Paul's Church.—St. James's Church.—Church at the Indian Settlement.—Service.—A Novel Night Bell.—A Contrast.—Peguis.—Prairie Portage.—A Congregation.—Wild Indians.—The Presbyterian Church.—The Presbyterian Congregation.—The Roman Catholic Churches.—The Cathedral of St. Boniface.—St. Norbert.—St. François Xavier.—The Congregations at Red River.—Their Demeanour and Appearance.—Protestant and Roman Catholic Parishes.—Extent of the Charities of the Home Missionary Societies.—Apathy of the wealthy at Red River.—Difficulties of Missionary Enterprise at present.—Privations and Difficulties at remote Stations. 194

CHAP. X.

EDUCATION IN THE SETTLEMENT.—AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY.

Schools.—Protestant Schools in the Settlement.—Subjects taught.—Collegiate School.—Distinguished Scholars.—School Attendance.—Sources of Income.—School Wants.—The Presbyterian School.—The Roman Catholic Schools.—Agricultural Industry.—The Farms.—Want of Improvement manifest.—Cause of the Absence of Progress.—Cultivated Crops.—Indian Corn.—Wheat.—Hay.—Barley and Oats.—Root Crops.—Sugar.—Hemp and Flax.—Live Stock.—Agricultural Implements.—Facilities for raising Stock.—Timber.—Country west of Red River . . . 214

CHAP. XI.

SKETCH OF THE COUNTRY WEST OF RED RIVER.

General Surface.—Elevation of the Prairies of Red River.—Pembina Mountain.—Terraces.—Mountains.—Lakes and Rivers.—East of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan.—North-East of the Assiniboine.—Riding and Duck Mountains.—The Great Lakes.—Geological Formations.—The Touchwood Hills.—Turtle Mountain.—Lake Winnipeg.—Lakes Manitobah and Winnipegosis.—The Qu'appelle Lakes.—The South

THE FIRST VOLUME. xiii

Branch.—The Main Saskatchewan.—The Grand Rapid.—The Little Saskatchewan.—The Qu'appelle, or Calling River.—The Little Souris.—Wooded and Prairie Land.—Areas fit for Settlement.—Valley of the Assinniboiné.—Valley of the Saskatchewan.—East of the Riding and Duck Mountains Page 233

CHAP. XII.

THE JOURNEY TO CANADA VIA ST. PAUL.

Isolation of the Valley of Lake Winnipeg.—The Country drained by the Saskatchewan.—Routes to the Valley of Lake Winnipeg.—The Northern Route.—The Southern Route.—Pembina.—St. Joseph.—Deux Rivières.—Pine River.—The Mail.—The Red River Post Office.—Red Lake River.—War Path of the Sioux and Ojibways.—Turtle Creek.—Burning Prairies.—Height of Land Hills.—Caravans.—The Southern Slope.—Leaf River.—Crow Wing River.—Table of estimated Distances between Camps.—Crow Wing.—St. Paul.—Toronto. 251

THE
ASSINNIBOINE AND SASKATCHEWAN EXPLORING EXPEDITION
OF 1858.

CHAP. XIII.

FORT GARRY TO THE BOUNDARY LINE, VIA THE ASSINNIBOINE AND LITTLE
SOURIS.

Members of the Expedition.—Iroquois Indians from Caughnawaga.—Detroit.—Sault Ste. Marie.—Grand Portage.—Fort Frances.—Red River.—Expedition into the Interior.—The Start.—Supplies.—Prairie Ridges.—Pigeon Traps.—Stony Mountain.—Birds.—Saline Efflorescence.—Character of the Big Ridge.—The Assinniboiné.—Grasshoppers.—Ojibway Encampment.—Archdeacon Cochrane.—Prairie Portage.—Cliff Swallow.—Thunder Storms.—Ojibways.—The Bad Woods.—Assinniboiné Forest.—River.—Rabbits.—Sandy Hills of the Assinniboiné.—Latitude.—Dimensions of Valley.—Variation of Compass.—Sand Dunes.—Aspect of Country.—Hail Storm.—“Smokes.”—Balsam Spruce.—Pine Creek.—The Little Souris.—Grasshoppers.—Fish.—Sioux.—Cretaceous Rocks.—Blue Hills.—Pembina River.—Backfat Lakes.—Vast Prairie.—Prairie Fires.—Horizontal Rocks.—Inoceramus.—Guelder Rose.—Lignite.—An-

cient Lake Beaches. — Sand Dunes. — Oak Lake. — Souris Sand Hills. — Night Hawk. — Bog Iron Ore. — Floods in 1852. — Bois de Vache. — Grasshoppers, infinite Multitude of. — Appearance of the Sky, of Prairie. — Little Souris Valley. — Tracks. — Turtle Mountain. — Sioux. — Character of Prairie. — Souris Lakes. — Boulders. — Mandan Village. — Probable Source of the Little Souris. — Character of the Souris south of the 49th Parallel. — Absence of Timber on the 47th Parallel Page 273

CHAP. XIV.

FROM THE BOUNDARY LINE TO THE QU'APPELLE LAKES VIA FORT ELLICE.

Indian Signs. — Smell of Fire. — The Sioux. — Precautions. — “Something.” — Red Deer’s Head River. — The Great Prairie, Character of. — Mirage. — Birds — Grasshoppers. — Limit of Burnt Land. — Pipestone Creek. — Standing Stone. — Country changed. — Forest disappeared. — Approach to the Assiniboine. — Cretaceous Rocks. — Buffalo Bull. — Fort Ellice. — McKay. — Crees. — Hunters. — Provision Trading Posts. — Pemmican. — Dried Meat. — Thunder Storms. — Mammoth Bones. — Ojibway Hunter. — Half-breeds. — En route for the Qu’appelle Mission. — Grasshoppers. — Thunder Storm. — Trail. — Weed Ridge. — Kinni-Kinnik. — Mode of Manufacturing. — Boulders. — White Crane. — Magpies. — Birds. — Dew. — Aridity of Great Prairie. — Charles Pratt. — Chalk Hills. — Indian Turnip. — Qu’appelle Lakes. — Fresh Arrangements. — Descent and Ascent of the Qu’appelle. — Qu’appelle Mission. — Dimensions of Valley. — Character of Lakes. — White Fish. — Rev. James Settee. — Garden at the Mission. — Grasshoppers. — Christian Worship. — Baptism. — “Praying Father” and “Praying Man.” — Rum. — Indian Wishes. — Objection to Native Missionaries. — Difficulties arising from the Prejudice of Tribes. — Plain Crees passing away. — En Route 302

CHAP. XV.

THE QU'APPELLE VALLEY. — FROM THE MISSION TO SAND HILL LAKE.

Depth of the Fishing Lakes. — Cross-Sections. — Confervæ. — Lower Lakes 66 Feet deep. — Birds. — Vegetation. — Water-mark. — Third and Fourth Fishing Lakes. — Fish. — Soundings in Fourth Lake. — Fishing Lakes probably once united. — Geese. — Pelicans. — Fourth Lake. — Water-mark. — Aspect of Valley in 1852. — Qu’appelle River. — Prairie. — Depth of Valley. — White Cranes. — Section of Alluvial Flats. — Temperature. — Character of Prairie. — Birds. — Shrubs. — Antelope. — Hare. — Roses. — Grand Forks. — Plain Crees. — Temperature of River. — Ice Marks. — Buffalo Tracks. — Character of Stream. — Willow Bushes. — Fetid Air. — Drift Clay. — Erratics. — Freeman’s Houses. — Prairie. — Want of Timber. — Thunder

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

Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE FIRST VOLUME.

XV

Storms.—Touchwood Hills.—Indians.—Tolls.—Diplomacy.—Indian Resolve.—The Grand Forks.—Long Lake.—Souris Forks.—Souris of Qu'appelle and Assiniboine.—Dimensions of Valley.—The Grand Coteau.—Prairie Fires.—Indian Signs.—A Prairie on Fire.—Buffalo.—Consequence of Prairie Fires.—Reclamation of sterile Areas.—Indian Telegraph.—Scarcity of Wood.—Ancient Indian Encampment.—The Plain Crees.—Cree Tents.—Provisions.—Buffalo Pound Hill Lake.—Indians.—Aspect of Country.—Coteau de Missouri.—Last Mountain.—Treeless Plain.—The Grand Coteau.—Buffalo.—Birds.—Plain Crees, Camp of.—The Qu'appelle Valley.—Marrow.—Precautions.—Sand Hill Lake.—Crees.—Bois de Vache.—Salt Lake.—Dimensions of Valley.—Erratics.—Cross the Qu'appelle Valley.—Camp at Sand Hill Lake Page 326

CHAP. XVI.

SAND HILL LAKE TO THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE SASKATCHEWAN.

Encounter with a Buffalo Bull.—Interior of Tents.—Barter.—Watchers.—Dogs.—Eyebrow Hill.—Prairies.—Prairies and Plains.—Difference between Prairies and Plains.—Limits of the Prairie Country in the United States.—Growth of Timber in River Bottoms.—Plains in Rupert's Land.—Origin of Prairies.—Grand Coteau de Missouri.—Extent and Boundaries of.—Character of the Grand Coteau.—Elevation of.—Vegetation of.—Eyebrow Hill.—Source of Qu'appelle.—Buffalo.—Character of Qu'appelle Valley.—Water-marks.—Sandy Hills.—Distribution of Boulders.—Section.—Rock Exposure.—Mis-tick-oos.—Sand Dunes.—South Branch.—The Qu'appelle Valley.—Cree Camp.—Height of Land.—Section of Valley.—Levels.—Buffalo Pound.—Camp Moving.—“Dead Men.”—Old Buffalo Pound.—Horrible Spectacle.—New Pound.—Bringing in Buffalo.—Slaughter in Pound.—“A Talk.”—Objections to Half-breeds.—To the H. B. Co.—Demeanour of the Indians.—The Wants of Mis-tick-oos.—His Tent.—His Wives.—Rock Exposure.—Boulders in Valley.—Character of the South Branch 345

CHAP. XVII.

FROM THE QU'APPELLE MISSION TO FORT ELLICE, DOWN THE QU'APPELLE RIVER.

The Second Fishing Lake.—Depth of.—Indian Map.—Origin of name Qu'appelle, or “Who calls River.”—The First Lake, or Pakitawiwin.—Great Depth of First Lake.—Fish.—Confervæ.—Depth of Valley.—Width of River.—High-water Mark.—Valley flooded.—Affluents.—Depth of Valley.—Crooked Lake, or Ka-wa-wa-ki-ka-mac.—Dimensions of.—Effects of Fires.—Trees in Valley.—Boulders.—Character of the Country.—Indian Surprise.—Indians.—Summer Berry Creek.—Dimen-

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

Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

CONTENTS OF

sions of Valley.—Valley and Prairie Scene.—Camp Scene.—Character of Valley. — Ka-wah-wi-ya-ka-mac, or Round Lake. — Dimensions of, — Stony Basin.—Granite Boulders.—Little Cut-Arm Creek.—The Scissors Creek.—Rock Exposure.—Grasshoppers.—Big Cut-Arm Creek.—Dimensions of Qu'appelle. — Flooding of Valley.—Timber.—Undergrowth. — Birds. — Minks. — Deer. — Uniformity of Qu'appelle Valley.— Table showing the dimensions of the Qu'appelle Valley and Qu'appelle Lakes.

Page 368

CHAP. XVIII.

FROM THE ELBOW OF THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE SASKATCHEWAN TO THE NEPOWEWIN MISSION ON THE MAIN SASKATCHEWAN.

Rocks on the South Branch.—Cretaceous.—Altitude of Exposure.—Character of. — Selenite. — Fossils.—Concretions.—Mesaskatomia Berry.—Character of River.—Drift.—Rock Exposures.—Fibrous Lignite.—Treeless Prairie.—Cree Camp.—Mud Flats.—Rock Exposure.—Concretions.—Treeless Banks and Prairie.—Low Country.—Driftwood. — Ripple Marks.—Dimensions of the South Branch.—The Moose Woods.—Water and Ice Marks.—Forest Timber.—Character of River.—Treeless Prairie.—Boulders.—Soundings.—Buffalo.—“The Woods.”—Rate of Current.—Boulders, Arrangement of.—Artificial Pavement.—Tiers of Boulders.—Temperature.—Balsam Spruce.—Former Aspen Forest.—Good Country.—Water-marks.—Soundings.—Stratified Mud.—Fall of River.—Character of River.—Colour and Temperature of North and South Branch.—The North Branch.—Absence of Indians.—Absence of Animal Life.—Grizzly Bear.—Aridity of Country through which the South Branch flows.—Current of North Branch.—Coals Falls.—Boulders.—Trees.—The Grand Forks.—The Main Saskatchewan.—Fort à la Corne.—The Rev. Henry Budd. — The Nepowewin Mission. — Cubic Feet of Water in North and South Branch and Main Saskatchewan, or Ki-sis-kah-che-wun. — Opening and Closing of the River 380

CHAP. XIX.

FROM THE NEPOWEWIN MISSION ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO FORT ELLICE.

Sandy Strip on the Saskatchewan.—Banksian Pine.—Indian Idols.—Medicine Feasts.—Rev. Henry Budd.—His Journal.—Fine Country.—Long Creek.—Old Forest.—Fires, Extent of.—Extension of the Prairies.—Former Extent of wooded Country.—Effect of Fires.—Long Creek.—Hay Ground.—Moles.—Humidity of Climate.—A Bear.—Source of Long Creek.—The Birch Hills.—Flowers.—Aspect of Country.—Carrot River.—The Lumpy Hill of the Woods.—Lakes.—The wooded Country.—Former Extent of.—Limits of good Land.—Raspberries.—Mosquitoes.—The Height of Land.—Continuation of the Eye-brow Hill Range.—Valley insculcating with the South Branch and Main Saskatchewan.—Grass-

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Henry Youle Hind

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE FIRST VOLUME.

xvii

hoppers.—Character of the Country.—Birds.—Destruction of Forests.—The Big Hill.—Boulders.—Limit of wooded Country.—Belts of Wood.—Great Prairie.—Character of the Country.—Salt Lakes.—The Touchwood Hills.—Beautiful Country.—Excellent Soil.—The Quill Lakes.—Flowers.—White Cranes.—The Heart Hill.—The Last Mountain.—The Little Touchwood Hills.—Lakes.—Touchwood Hill Fort.—Ka-ou-ta-at-tin-ak.—Touchwood Hills Range.—Long Lake.—Devil's Lake.—Garden at the Fort.—White Fish in Long Lake.—Burnt Forest.—Grasshoppers.—Winter Forage for Horses.—White Fish.—Buffalo.—Climate of Touchwood Hills.—Humidity of.—Medicine Man.—“Wampum.”—Trail to Fort Ellice.—Marshes.—Little Touchwood Hills.—Character of Country Changes.—Depressions.—Pheasant Mountain.—File Hill.—Character of the Country.—Heavy Dews.—Cut-Arm Creek.—Willow Prairie.—Little Cut-Arm Creek.—Rolling Prairie.—Attractive Country.—Spy Hill.—Boulders.—Aspen Groves increasing.—Sand Hills.—The Assiniboine.

Page 401

CHAP. XX.

THE QU'APPELLE VALLEY.—PORT PELLY TO THE SETTLEMENTS ON RED RIVER.

THE QU'APPELLE VALLEY.—Leading Dimensions.—Character of the Great Plain it intersects.—Elevation above the South Brnch.—Lakes in the Qu'appelle Valley.—Depths of.—Timber on.—Valley flooded.—Effects of a Dam across the South Branch.—Diversion of the Waters of the Saskatchewan.—Table showing leading Dimensions of the Qu'appelle River, Lakes, and Valley.—THE ASSINIBOINE.—The West Bank.—Fort Pelly.—White Sand River.—Manitou Lake.—Little White Mud River.—Leech Lake.—Character of Country.—Crops at Fort Pelly.—Swan River.—Snake Creek.—Fertility of Swan River.—Mr. Dawson's Description.—Thunder Mountain.—Porcupine and Duck Mountains.—Dividing Ridge between the Swan and Assiniboine Rivers.—Miry Creek.—Riding Mountain.—Shell River.—River Terraces.—Indian Graves.—Little Saskatchewan.—Cretaceous Shales on Bird's-tail Creek.—On Rapid River.—Termination of Riding Mountain.—White Mud River.—Ancient Beach.—Beauty of White Mud River.—Rat River.—Prairie Portage.—The Settlements. 426

CHAP. XXI.

FROM FORT À LA CORNE, DOWN THE SASKATCHEWAN, TO THE GRAND RAPID AND LAKE WINNIPEG.

Departure from Fort à la Corne.—Object of the Expedition.—Equipment.—“Bull-Boats.”—Birch-bark Canoes.—General Direction, Current, and Breadth of the Saskatchewan.—Character of its Valley.—Country

VOL. I.

a

xviii CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

through which the River flows well adapted for Settlement.—Pem-
mican Portage.—Cumberland House.—Description of Cumberland.—
The Saskatchewan and surrounding Country between Cumberland and
the Pas.—Indian Hunter.—Sturgeon.—The Pas.—Christ Church.—
Gradual Depression of the Country bordering the River.—Alluvial Flats.
—Marshes.—Delta.—Muddy Lake.—Rock Exposure.—Marshes and Mud
Flats.—Cedar Lake: its Situation and Dimensions.—Surrounding Coun-
try.—The Saskatchewan between Cedar Lake and Lake Winnipeg.—Cross
Lake Rapid: its Dimensions.—Enter Cross Lake.—Meet a Brigade of
Boats.—Cross Lake: its Dimensions and Altitude.—Surrounding Country.
—The Saskatchewan east of Cross Lake.—Rapids: their Dimensions.—
Smooth Reach.—Drift Clay Banks.—The Grand Rapid: Portage;
Running the Rapid: its Dimensions; Character of its Excavated Bed;
Magnificence of the Upper Portion of the Cataract; Mode of Ascending
it; Remarks in Relation to surmounting this Barrier and making the
Saskatchewan available for Steam Navigation.—Indian Encampment.—
Lake Winnipeg Page 441

CHAP. XXII.

FROM THE GRAND RAPID OF THE SASKATCHEWAN TO THE RED RIVER
SETTLEMENTS, VIA THE WEST COAST OF LAKE WINNIPEG.

Enter Lake Winnipeg.—Cape Kitchi-nashi.—Storms.—Detained on an
Island.—Windbound on the Mainland.—Tempest.—Repulsed by the Wind.
—Character of the Coast: the Sand Beaches and Swamps.—War Path
River.—Verifying Rate of Canoe.—Indians.—Tracking.—Limestone
Point.—Encountering a Head Wind and Storm.—Lightening Canoe.—
Starving Indians.—The Little Saskatchewan.—The Prominent Features
of the Coast.—Formation of Cape Kitchi-nashi.—Limestone Exposures.
—Tributary Streams.—General Character of the Country.—Indians and
Fishery at Little Saskatchewan.—Indian Chart.—Inaccuracy of the Maps
of the Lake.—Depart from the Little Saskatchewan.—Windbound again
for three Days.—Provisions exhausted.—Contrary Winds.—Driven back
and stopped.—The Cat Head.—Windbound again by a Hurricane.—Bar-
rier of Boulders.—Eagle.—Stopped by Foul Winds again at the Wicked
Point.—Pike Head and River.—Indian Fishing-Weir.—Opportune Supply
of Fish.—Wide Traverse to Grindstone Point.—Grassy Narrows.—Sandy
Bar.—Arrive at the Settlements.—Conclusion 475

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN

THE FIRST VOLUME.

*** *The following Illustrations are from Photographs taken by Mr. HUMPHREY LLOYD HIME, Photographer to the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expedition, or from Sketches by Mr. JOHN FLEMING, Assistant Surveyor and Draughtsman.*

CHROMOXYLOGRAPHS.

Ka-ka-beka Falls	to face page	36
Fall at the third Portage above Ka-ka-beka	„	38
Beginning of the Great Dog Portage	„	40
Great Falls of Little Dog River	„	42
Grand Falls of the Nameaukan River	„	73
Chaudière Falls, Rainy River, opposite Fort Frances	„	81
Islington Mission, Winnipeg River	„	112
View of Red River from St. Andrew's Church, four miles above the Stone Fort	„	128
The Prairie, looking West	„	135
Half-Way Bank, Assiniboine River	„	235
Confluence of the Little Souris and Assiniboine	„	289
Fishing Lakes, Qu'appelle River	„	321
Valley of the Souris	„	293
Driving Buffaloes into the Pound	„	358

WOODCUTS.

	Page
Steamer Collingwood on a Rock near Michipicoten Island, Lake Superior	12
Fort William, looking up the river	25
Décharges des Paresseux	35
Second Falls, Kaministiquia River	38
Entrance to Little Dog Lake, from Kaministiquia River	39
Ojibways at Fort Frances, Rainy River	83

xx LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	Page
Fort Frances, Rainy River	86
Falls at Rat Portage	105
Hudson's Bay Company's Post at Rat Portage	107
Slave Falls, Winnipeg River	117
Fort Alexander, Mouth of the Winnipeg River	121
Prairie Portage, Assiniboine River	145
Confluence of the Assiniboine and Red River	153
The Red River at Pierre Gladioux's	165
Birch-bark Tents, west Bank of Red River, Middle Settlement	200
Ojibway Tents on the Banks of Red River, near the Middle Settlement	202
The Village of Pembina, Dakota Territory	255
Stony Mountain	278
Valley of the Souris, looking towards the Blue Hills of the Souris	290
Valley of the Souris, opposite the Valley of the Backfat Lakes	291
Section on the Little Souris, showing ancient Beaches with Lignite Boulders	294
Fort Ellice, Beaver Creek	310
Encampment in the Qu'appelle Valley	323
Transverse Section of the Valley of the Qu'appelle at the Height of Land	355
Ridges, with Boulders, on the East and West side of the Height of Land in the Qu'appelle Valley	364
Section on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, showing layers holding <i>Avicula Linguaeformis</i> and <i>Avicula Nebrascana</i>	381
Horizontal Tiers of Boulders in Drift on the South Branch, with polished Boulder Pavement at the Edge of the River	389
Polished and Grooved Pavement of Boulders on the South Branch	390
Nepowewin Mission and Fort à la Corne	399
Cumberland House, Pine Island Lake	449
The Pas, or Cumberland Mission	453
The Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan	468
The Cat Head, Lake Winnipeg	488

MAPS AND PLANS.

Map to Illustrate the Narrative	<i>to face page</i>	9
Plan of Selkirk Settlement	"	172
Plan of the Fishing Lakes	"	329
Plan, showing the Junction of the Qu'appelle with the South Branch of the Saskatchewan	"	366
Plan of the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan	"	471