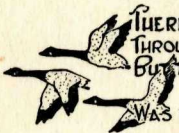


THE ATHABASCA TRAIL

J.C.E.

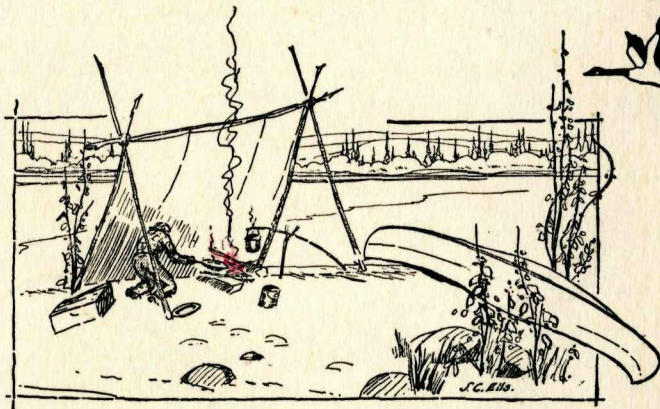


THERES MANY A TRAIL WINDS AWAY TO THE NORTHWARD,—
 THROUGH SWAMP AND MUSKEG AND BOTTOM LAND WIDE,—
 BUT THE TRAIL THAT ONCE CARRIED THE WEALTH OF THE
 NORTHLAND,
 WAS THE TRACKERS' TRAIL BY THE RIVER SIDE.

GONE ARE THE TRACKERS, COILED ARE THE TRACKLINES,
 BUT STILL, OF A NIGHT, AS THE MIST SETTLES DOWN,
 I SEE THAT LONG TRAIL WINDING DOWN TO THE NORTHLAND,
 AND CALL BACK THE PAST,— AND THE MEN WHO ARE GONE.

* * * * *

DRIP, DRIP, AND PATER, PATER,
 THE YELLOW LEAVES FALL CLUMSTLY DOWN,
 DRIP, DRIP, AND PATER, PATER,
 YELLOW LEAVES,— AND GOLD,— AND BROWN,
 FOR THE HIGH BUSH BERRIES ARE CRIMSON NOW,
 AND THE LOW BUSH BERRIES ARE DONE,
 SODDEN AND YELLOW THE WILD HAY DROOPS,
 THE DAYS OF SUMMER ARE GONE.



J.C.E.

D RIP, drip and patter, patter, the leaves fall clumsily down,
And the willows droop by the river,—for the days of
summer are gone,
Silent and swift steals the river away, with the woodlands tarnished
gold,
For the autumn days are numbered,—and the wind is raw and cold.
The morning air is cold and chill, before the rising of the sun,
Through swinging curtains of the mist, the men come
toiling,—one by one.

Like silent legions of the north, the endless spruce march by,
Their inky silhouettes clear cut against the evening sky;
Their heads adorned with golden wreaths, like graceful maidens tall,
The silver stems of poplar gleam, when shades of evening fall.
Still drearily falls the autumn rain, the wind is raw and cold,
Wearily wings the gray goose south,—the year is growing old.

* * *

Drip, drip and patter, patter, and it's chill in the early morn,
The tracking line grows heavy,—while men trudge wearily on,
Wet with the dew at night and morn, but with sweat in the noon-
day sun,
Oh! there's warmth,—and rest,—and shelter,—when the last day's
work is done.

S. C. ELLS

Ottawa,
Christmas, 1926.

*(Note.—In the late fall of 1913 my crew of thirteen men tracked
the first important shipment of bituminous sand from McMurray up
the rapids and fast water of Athabaska river to Athabaska Landing.
For twenty-three days, from daylight till dark, in rain and snow,
we dragged the forty foot scow up stream.—The above lines reflect, in
part, the mental reaction).*