

Near Long R. Mass. 1

Oct. 7. 1874.

My Dear Mamma

Here we are only four days march from Dufferin on the back. I received last night one or two letters, the latest from Anna & bearing date Sept. 25. They came out of a scout from Dufferin, & as the same man starts back tomorrow in advance just I write this to send him.

There is nothing in particular to tell our return journey having been particularly uneventful. The weather has been magnificent throughout, & still holds up wonderfully. We have it seems slipped unconsciously from true summer to Indian summer & escaped equinoctial

Storms ~~at~~ together. The thermometer
then runs down now below the freezing
point at night, but during the day
it is warm, sometimes even oppressive
So. The grass on the prairie is still
wonderfully green & fresh, but where
there are any trees, as in the river valleys,
they have shed most of their leaves.

I do not know much yet as to
final arrangements at Dufferin, but
learn that Cameron is anxious to get
things there closed up as soon as possible.
On arriving there each party will hand
over all equipment &c into store, &
we will then go into our old quarters
in the barracks for such time as
we remain there. Advertisements are
already out in the Garry papers regarding
the sale of the Animals, waggons, buildings &c

I hear that the Government is to provide an office somewhere in the Parliament buildings for the completion of maps & plan work &c.

I had a very pleasant branch trip through Lurthe Mt. a few days ago. Capt. Featherstone was going through with a few men to put the tablets in last years mounds there, & meet the main body ^{again} at Lurthe depot, where they were to put in a spare day. Thinking it a good chance to see the "Mountain" & to visit a reported exposure of limestone there I accompanied him. We started from the Souris early in the morning at the same time as the train, but in light marching order. Each man had his blanket strapped to his saddle, & all the rest of his baggage in saddlebags or pockets. We took a buckboard to carry the provisions & out to the ^{west} foot of the "Mountain" & a

Spare horse to pack items on when we entered the Mountain itself. Our mule ride was 25 miles & we arrived at the U.S. Station Wound before noon. Halted an hour or two for lunch & to let the horses feed & then entered the Mountain & the U.S. pack trail. The Mountain is heavily timbered & the trail proved to be more a name than anything else in many places, & what with scrambling through brush, a scrub, & over & among logs & stumps at considerable risk to our horses legs; we only made an afternoon journey of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

Coming to "Summit-Lake" about an hour before dark, we had supper, dinner, or tea as you may choose to call it on pemican & bread, & then proceeded to organize our Camp. This was very simple done & consisted merely in

lighting a couple of big fires among
 some tall woods at the edge of the
 lake, & choosing good spots to spread
 our blankets on. Summit Lake is one
 of the numerous little sheets of water
 crossed by the line in Furth's cut. It is
 only about half a mile long & not half
 so wide but is hemmed in by steep
 wooded banks, covered with poplars now
 yellow & shedding their leaves, & is
 altogether very retired & pretty. It was
 a beautifully calm & clear night, with
 a brilliant aurora, which, had we not
 been so tired we might have set up
 & watched.

Next morning we made an early start, &
 before noon had got $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles further as
 measured by the line, though really a much
 greater distance by the trail which wound
 round swamps & lakes, & up & down among
 hills & valleys. Here we found ourselves on

the west shore of "Lagular Lake" where
the U.S. part of the line stopped, & on the
other side of which the British portion began.
The Lake had been crossed last summer
on a raft once or twice, but as it
was a mile wide & several miles in
length both N & S of the line & no trail
cut out round it - it had from the
first been quite a question if we could
get our animals ~~round~~ to the other
side & if so how. We had heard of
a narrow place however about a
mile S. of the line which it was
reported the Indians had said was
fordable; so making our way to
this spot with much difficulty through
pathless woods & windfall we began to
search for a ford. The narrow place was
about 100 yards wide, hard bottomed,
but deepened rapidly & we could find
no ford suitable for a horse though

perhaps a Camel or a mule could
have waded over. Finding no other way
we urged the horses in till they lost their
footing & made them swim across &
arrived all safe at the other side, but
wet from the waist downwards, & with
wet blankets, saddles, & saddlebags.

Not wanting to waste any time we pushed
on again without stopping for lunch, made
7 miles more by the line & then towards

Sunset chose a good camp in high poplar
woods near a small grassy swamp.

We were partly dry by the time we got
there & remarkably hungry. So starting
a good fire we arranged stockings, boots, &c
around it - & made a good supper, & then
resuming our garments turned in.

We heard Indians shooting ducks in various
directions during the day, & in the afternoon
found two travelling along the trail with a
little pony to carry their impedimenta.

They were Sioux of course, & seemed
much astonished, & very pleased to recognize

one of the Sappers who had been up
working on the line last summer.
Soon after we came on two te-pis
pitched in a little grove on the edge
of a lake. The dogs began to bark at us
& presently an old squaw put her head
out to see what the row was. On
catching sight of us she appeared
transported with astonishment for a
moment, & was perhaps afraid as
well as these Indians having been
enjoyed in the Minnesota massacre live
in great dread of the Yankees. Soon two
or three other Squaws, an old man & some
children emerged. They appeared partly
relieved & pleased on finding out who we
were, & having shaken hands with the
old gentleman, & grinned at him being
unacquainted with his vernacular; we
passed on before they had recovered
from their astonishment sufficiently to

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beg. These Sioux are remarkably well featured & pleasant looking people, & not nearly so dark as most of the other Indians in colour.

The night was again fine & pleasant & only disturbed by the hooting of several owls, which (judging from their voices only) must have been at least six feet high; & a noisy partridge who drummed all night at short intervals. I don't think the latter did it maliciously but merely to keep himself warm.

The next day we tramped along quite fast, having got on the old cart trail used last summer; made about twenty miles & reached the Depot & main party about 4 P.M.

The limestone proved to be only a big boulder in the bed of a brook. We saw no large game whatever, though moose, elk, deer &c are known to be pretty plentiful

Decks there were a good many of
on the lakes, but if shot on the water
they could not be obtained & we had not
time to spend looking for them. We
shot a few partridges in the woods
as we came along, & they proved
a remarkably good eating. I demolished
the last of mine this evening at dinner.

I shall keep up on arriving at Dufferin
& of course write also as soon as
anything turns up to write about.

Love to all at home.

Congratulate Rankine for me on his
Success.

Your loving son
George.

