

Stuart Lake B.C.

July 6. 1879

My dear Anna

Your long letter of May 19th was handed to me this morning, we having arrived here last night between 10 & 11 o'clock. I did not expect any letters, as the date at which they might come Victoria was scarcely later than that at which we ourselves started for the Skeena. We have now passed the long anticipated junction with the pack-trains from Kamloops, & today being Sunday we are making a day of rest, hoping to be all ready to make a new departure on Tuesday morning. Monday will be occupied in arranging about pack-trains & getting the loads so adjusted.

Since starting last from the Forks of the Skeena, we have crossed the "portage" thence to the north end of Babine Lake - some 50 miles in length; ascended the lake to its head - 100 miles - crossed another portage to the head of Stuart Lake - 8 miles - & come down to the outlet of the lake, a distance of 36 miles. The so-called portage to the lower or south end of Babine Lake is a trail through a rough mountainous country, with high snow peaks projecting on all sides. We started from the Forks on Monday morning about 9 am., with a train of 22 pack-trains, - two of whom were women - carrying about 100 lbs

Each, the load being tied into as compact a bundle as possible & secured by a strap across the forehead & chest. We had fine weather on the whole, though rather warm, & climbing up & down the steep rocky hills & through the woods was fatiguing enough to those of us who worked light, & as you may imagine brought the perspiration out on the packers. We were four & a half days making the distance, as it was impossible to get the Indians along at a greater pace than about a mile an hour, including rests, which were frequent, & almost always entailed the necessity of lighting a smudge to keep the mosquitoes & black-flies at bay. You would have laughed could you have seen us getting out of camp in the mornings. The working call at 4.30 or 5.00, stowing away blankets etc, working & dressing; breakfast, & then the packing of the Indian packers who generally sit in a circle & had their food doled out by one of themselves who was appointed cook. The loads had then to be haled up & the Caravan put in motion, the Indians generally packing the little tents they brought to sleep under, or their dogs to lighten their own loads. We generally remained an hour or two behind to let them get a fair start, & then followed, resting an hour or two again in the middle of the day. The greatest altitude we reached was between 4000 & 5000 feet, but that was

Scarcely above the timber line & the higher snow clad
 ranges & peaks looked higher when thus seen from
 some little elevation, than when looked at from the
 valleys. Some of the mountains probably surpassed
 8000 feet, & about the shady sides of their summits
 a few small glaciers lurked. On Friday, about
 noon we camped on the shore of the north end of Bobue
 Lake, in a dampness of rain, the Camping ground
 being the edge of a swamp. The Indians of the Bobue
 village seeing that we required Canoes to go down the
 lake but of the price of Canoes & men to be fabulous
 figures, & only after having enjoyed the Chief's Canoe at
 an exorbitant rate were other prices lowered. All Saturday
 it rained & blew & it was not much better on Sunday,
 so that we did not get away till Monday morning. Bobue
 Lake is about a hundred miles long & probably eight
 miles wide in some places. The first day we ran about
 25 miles, Camping near another Indian village &
 small H.B. Post. Here Mr. Cambie & Macleod wished to
 examine a possible pass eastward & to remain a day,
 so Mr. Gordon & myself in the second canoe went
 on ~~Canoe~~ reaching the head of the Lake on Thursday, about
 noon. The weather was on the whole remarkably fine & the
 scenery beautiful; while we caught with spoon-baits
 trouts behind the canoe more trout than we could
 eat. On Thursday, however, when we reached the head

y^e Lake it was raining by pail fulls, & I had some
 trouble with the Indians in getting them to shoulder the
 stuff for the portage. We could get only one man to help the
 crew & were obliged to leave some provisions to be brought on
 by Mr. Cumbe. As it was the loads the men carried were
 very heavy & they grumbled considerably. We camped
 on the portage trail, wet & surrounded by a stormy
 snow squalls, & about 9.30 the next morning reached
 the head of Stuart Lake. I sent the men back at once to
 meet Mr. Cumbe & help to bring his stuff across. They
 met the other party half way over the trail & in the afternoon we
 were all together again. It had been expected that a boat
 would be sent up from Ft. St. James to the head of the Lake
 on the arrival of the pack teams at the former place, but
 though we heard of the arrival of the teams no boat had come.
 Arrangements had consequently again to be made for cañoes
 & Indians; but we had scarcely turned in, when we heard
 a great row in the Indian village, with shouts of boat Chaco,
 & some cough before long we heard the sound of the oars in
 the rowlocks. On Saturday morning we got away in good
 time, & though experiencing some head wind, what with rowing,
 poling along shore & sailing when the wind was fair, we
 reached Fort St. James at the S.E. end of the Lake, as already
 stated late in the night. When we got near the camp we
 warned them by firing a few shots, & soon had our stuff all
 piled on the banks, & tents in process of erection while we had
 a cup of tea at the camp fire.

Mr^s Connell I find here looking as if the trip agreed with
him, & with all the things he started with from Victoria
in good order.

From this place we hope to reach Fort McLeod in 5 or 6
days by the trail, when with the exception of self & Mr^s C. all
will go down the Passumps & Peace River in Canoes or
boats to Durrigan. I go through the Pine River Pass
to the same destination, with the whole of the pack
teams & riding animals numbering in all, horses &
mules, over one hundred. The boat parties will probably
reach Durrigan first, but we will make as good time
as we can. This is the last chance I know of for
sanding out hills for a time indefinitely long, so that
no surprise need be felt if you do not hear from
me for months. At the same time if any opportunity
offers I will of course embrace it.

Henry, now written to you of past & future operations
& plans at some length I must devote myself to other
matters & correspondence, closing by saying but not to
all. Please give brief of contents of this letter to
others to whom I shall not now write ~~it~~ in detail.

Yours very affectionately

George