

and struck him; this is exactly the sensation of him who walks in a muskeg. You feel that you must quickly take another step before it is too late, and so you plod on, and soon you tire. In point of fact there is little danger of being sucked down, but the place has a most melancholy look. Nothing on earth can be so vividly green and yet so utterly desolate."

Strange to say, this region of swamps and almost continuous rains holds exactly the same position in northwestern Canada which is held farther south by the western portion of "the great American Desert," the home of almost constant drought. Of the latter region Mr. Somerset and his friend, Mr. Pollen, had had some experience in an earlier hunting trip, and it is hardly surprising that they were slow to credit the warnings of their hospitable entertainers in Edmonton, the northernmost town of settled Canada, who advised them against an expedition which would lead them to "certain misery and failure." They knew better; and when the warnings were proved true, they could find no other resource than to lay the blame on "the mendacious blue-books" of Canada. That the authors of these, in an over-eagerness to glorify their Dominion, may be somewhat at fault, must be admitted, particularly when we find an authoritative map put forth by the Canadian Agricultural Department, presenting inscriptions which proclaim this forbidding region to be a country of "rich soil," suitable for "wheat, melons and cucumbers." The plain-spoken denunciations of the present volume may do much good in warning intending emigrants from this deplorable country.

Mr. Somerset is a son of Lady Henry Somerset, and seems to have a superabundant stock of the young Englishman's fondness for hunting and exploration. He began early, as we learn from the preface of his friend (and, we may presume, his tutor and guardian), Mr. Pollen, that at this expedition he was only nineteen; and two years earlier he had made with Mr. Pollen "short hunting-trips in the mountains in the north of the state of Wyoming, and in the more southerly sierras of California." Their present intention was to strike north from Edmonton with a party of hunters and guides, and afterwards to turn westward across the Rocky Mountains to Fort M'Leod in British Columbia, and then to descend to the Pacific coast. In strictness, their expedition cannot be styled an actual failure, inasmuch as their plan was carried out, though at an immense cost in toils, perils and sufferings. But as a hunting and exploring trip the results were simply *nil*. They found little game, so little that their party barely escaped starvation; and the most eagerly sought of all, the American hunter's greatest prize, the Rocky Mountain "grizzlies," proved so scarce and shy, that, though the hunters had an occasional glimpse of them, and even heard them moving in the thick woods, they did not once get a shot at one. In the way of exploration they did no more than simply to follow back the track which that resolute and indefatigable explorer, Dr. G. M. Dawson of the Canadian Geological Survey, had made fourteen years before in coming eastward from British Columbia across the Rocky Mountains.

But if their trip was not a success, their book must certainly be pronounced one. From beginning to end it is made thoroughly attractive, and even fascinating, by the liveliness of the narrative, the vivid descriptions, the manly energy of the narrators, the undaunted spirit and cheerfulness with which their really serious troubles and disasters were borne, and the fund of interesting anecdote, humorous sallies, and keen reflections with which their pages are enlivened. If we write of the authors in the plural, it is because it is evident that Mr. Pollen's contributions went considerably beyond the preface and the illustrations. But the portions which are plainly Mr. Somerset's own are in no way inferior in literary style or in the personal traits they display. The history of their modes of travel, the descriptions of the country and the game, the accounts of the Indian tribes, with their remarkably contrasted traits, the notes on the Hudson's Bay Company, its forts, officers, and management, and the

#### "The Land of the Muskeg"

*By H. Somers Somerset. With a Preface by A. H. Huxford Pollen. With 120 Illustrations from Sketches by A. H. Pollen and Instantaneous Photographs, and four Maps. J. B. Lippincott Co.*

"THE MUSKEG" is neither a wild beast nor a wandering savage, but something more formidable to encounter than either. It is a treacherous swamp, covered with a deceitful green moss, which seizes the traveller's foot with unexpected grasp. Swamps of this kind, under different names, are found in various parts of the world, where extreme moisture combines with a chilling climate to create them; but northern America seems to be their special home. The plains of northwestern Canada, stretching eastward from the Rocky Mountains, and intersected by the "great Pearl River," are Mr. Somerset's "Land of the Muskeg," and he thus describes "the abomination," as he styles it:—

"At first sight a muskeg seems no very terrible affair. Green spongy moss covers the ground, while here and there lie small pools of clear water: One realizes that the moss is soft and wet, and that the travelling may be heavy, but nothing more. But no sooner have you set foot on its treacherous surface than the thing becomes more serious. The beautiful green moss seems to catch your foot as in a vice, and to rise swiftly towards you. When a man faints he sometimes imagines that the ground has risen up

references to the missionaries, Catholic or Protestant, are all in the best form. They evidently represent the conclusions of the five well-educated and well-travelled gentlemen who composed the exploring party, and are told in the pleasant and unaffected manner in which fair-minded and considerate men of the world relate their experiences. The volume may be heartily commended as one of the most interesting books of travel that have lately appeared. The numerous illustrations add not a little to its attractions. There are four good maps; and one can only regret, for the sake of readers who may desire to refer a second time to striking passages in it, that it has but a too scanty table-of-contents, and no index. The printing and general make-up of the book are all that the most exacting reader could desire.