ARCTIC TRADER

The Account of twenty years with the

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

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ARCTIC TRADER
By PHILIP H. GODSELL

The Hudson's Bay Company, venerable, romantic, and steeped in the traditions of a glamorous past, has ever been shrouded in mystery. The policy of the Company has always been: silence.

Philip H. Godsell started as an apprentice with the Hudson's Bay Company when he was seventeen. Gradually he took charge of various posts in widely separated sections, and finally became inspector in charge of large territories. One of his most important districts was that of the lower Mackenzie River, where he spent much of his time on Islands in the Arctic Ocean off the Canadian mainland.

His book is crowded with grand adventure and amusing anecdotes. There are stories of man hunts, of the activities of the North West Mounted Police, of Indians, of the fur traders, and of long and hazardous journeys through the wilderness. While it is devoted primarily to the experience of the author himself, and of the men with whom he came in contact, there are throwbacks to the romantic past of the Hudson's Bay Company, which governed autocratically a vast territory and was for years a law unto itself.

Simply and effectively written, “Arctic Trader” will interest everyone who responds to the lure of the North. It is remarkable that a man who has spent most of his life in the wilderness could be so articulate.

PHILIP H. GODSELL.

ARCTIC TRADER

THE ACCOUNT OF TWENTY YEARS WITH THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

By PHILIP H. GODSELL

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Former Field Officer Hudson's Bay Company

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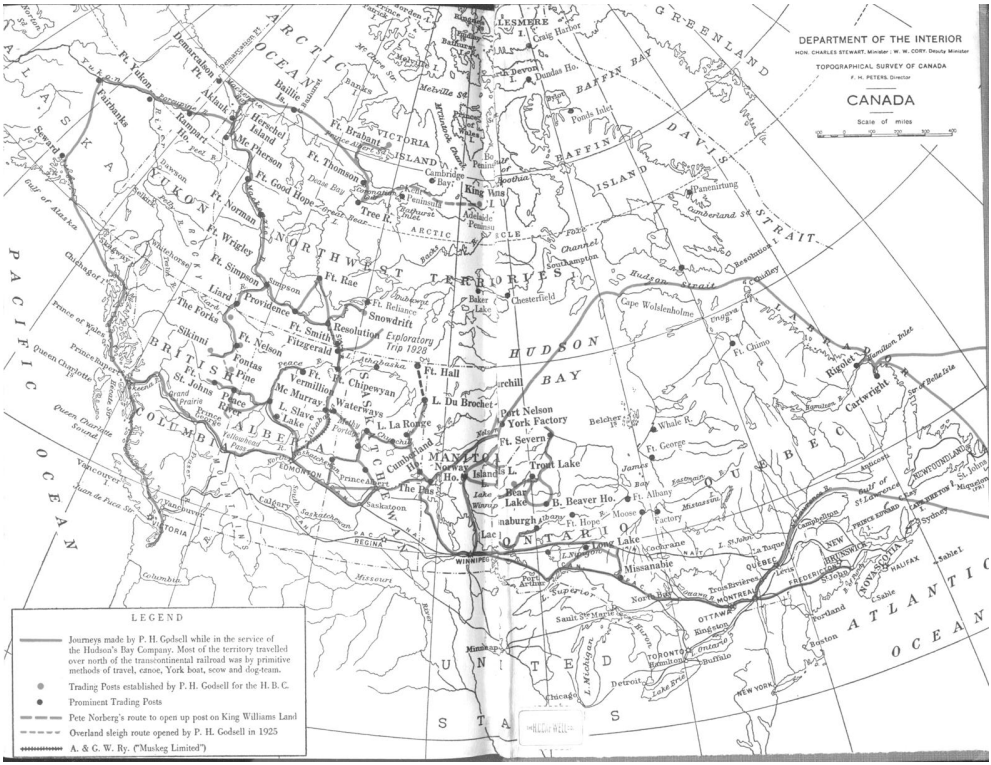
DEDICATED TO

My Friends and Companions of the Silent Places:

THE MEN OF THE
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY,
AND OF THE
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

who are still pushing
the Flag of Empire into the lonely places
of the North



Godspell's travels in the North-West

INTRODUCTION

The period covered by Philip Godsell's narrative, though short in the life of a great company (which celebrated its 250th anniversary some fifteen years ago), is perhaps the most eventful in the history of Canada's north. When young Godsell joined "the service" as an apprentice clerk in the early part of this century, life at many of the northern trading posts was little changed from that throughout the hundred years previous. Transportation and communication in summer were by York boat and the birch-bark canoe, and in winter by the carriole and the dog sled. Mails were infrequent, and a Post manager was forced by his isolation to depend upon his own initiative and resourcefulness to meet the varying conditions of a primitive life. The life of the native was simple, being governed almost entirely by the necessity of securing the bare means of existence. Comforts, much less luxuries, were unknown, and life, even for the traders, was primitive.

The story is brought up to the present day, and when it closes, a tremendous gap has been bridged, marking an evolution in the history of northern Canada such as would have been inconceivable to the "wintering partners" of the old "Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay" of even a generation or two ago.

Two factors are almost solely responsible for this change, the aeroplane, and the radio, by which both time and distance no longer isolate the occupant of the lonely outposts, even on the shores of the Arctic. The marvel of this change can only be appreciated to the full by those who, twenty-five or thirty years ago, were compelled or elected to live on the fringe of the Arctic, and who now, on a Saturday night, listen to the messages sent from within the vale of civilization, to friends or relatives in all parts of the north, through the medium of the Canadian Broadcasting Commission. To such, the reading of Philip Godsell's story will bring a striking realization of Time's march of progress. To others, it will be a record of northern Canadian life engagingly told by one who has learned of it by living it; a record that needs to be preserved for future generations.

CHARLES CAMSELL, B.A., LL.D.
Deputy Minister of Mines and President
Canadian Geographical Society

Ottawa, April 12th, 1934

FOREWORD

For nearly thirty years I have said “How!” and “Watcheer?” to the Indian, and “Chimo!” to the Eskimo, more frequently than I have greeted men of my own color. For in my case boyhood dreams came true. I came, I saw, and was conquered by the romance of the Silent Places, since when some irresistible urge has carried me by York boat, dog-train and canoe over most of the lakes and rivers of the Northland. In the lodges of the Red Men, and in the igloos of the Huskies, I have learned to know and appreciate the many sterling qualities of these natives.

The North is still vibrant with color, beauty and romance, though this is quickly passing, and in the ensuing pages I have attempted to depict the real North as I knew it; the North of the Fur Trader, the Mounted Policeman and the Indian.

I must, however, ask my readers to be tolerant if this book does not measure up to high literary standards.

Nearly thirty years spent in isolated trading posts, far from the social amenities and “advantages” of civilization, amongst wigwams of Crees, Dog-Ribs and Ojibways does not make for literary style. Those to whom this vast sub-arctic territory is unknown may be inclined to doubt some of the unusual features related in this narrative.

It is, however, just another case of truth being stranger than fiction, though I have endeavored, where possible, to give dependable references in support of incidents which might otherwise appear improbable.

P. H. G.

1104 Byng Place, West,
Fort Garry, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
May 15, 1934

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The chapters in this book dealing with the arrest of the Medicine Man, Pe-ce-quan, by the Mounted Police, and the Corporal Doak affair, are reproduced here with the kind permission of the Macfadden Publishing Company of New York, U.S.A., having appeared in their publication “True Detective Mysteries,” the courtesy of the Editors being gratefully acknowledged.

ARCTIC TRADER

CHAPTER I

Icebergs and Polar Bears

It was the spirit of romance and desire for adventure which brought me to the low-lying swampy shores of Hudson Bay, causing me to forsake the comforts of civilization for the companionship of primitive Eskimo and Indian hunters.

I am not quite sure where I got hold of R. M. Ballantyne's book called "Hudson Bay" but as I read it my boyish imagination conjured up a thousand possibilities of adventure on the forest trails beneath the northern lights. Here, indeed, was a career simply awaiting me! I would join the Hudson's Bay Company; trade, trap, fight with Indians and Eskimos; travel unknown trails and perhaps, who knows, become an Arctic explorer like Richardson or Rae. So, boylike, I hit upon an expedient of my own and wrote for advice to the editor of "Chums."

Over a year later I was overjoyed one morning to receive a personal letter from Lord Strathcona, Governor of the Company, saying that Sir Henry Fowler had spoken on my behalf and that a position would be found for me that spring.

At London, on the 28th of May, 1906, I was met by my uncle and conveyed to the offices of the Company. Here I met Mr. Ware, a very pleasant, gray-haired old gentleman, who presented an enormous contract for me to sign. For the princely sum of one hundred dollars the first year, increasing to two hundred and fifty *the fifth year*, I was to serve the Company "by day and by night" as an apprentice clerk, prepared at all times to defend "with courage and fidelity the property of the Company, their posts and settlements," and so forth. A far more pleasing prospect than I could ever have anticipated in the dull and uninteresting town of Wolverhampton where I was brought up. So I signed the contract, and at the age of sixteen years became a Hudson's Bay man. Next morning I bid a hasty farewell to my uncle at the West India Dock and stepped aboard the staunch ship "Pelican."

All was bustle and excitement on board, the first and second mates, Smith and McGluchan, were shouting orders, while the nondescript crew of a dozen nationalities busied themselves stowing the last remnants of cargo in the hold.

The “Pelican,” I soon learned, was an auxiliary vessel of about seven hundred tons, an ex-gunboat and slave chaser, which depended far more upon her tapering spars and snowy canvas than upon her engines, which were only used in emergency or when encountering strong head winds.

She was one of the three vessels owned by the Company which made their way annually to the various depots on the dismal shores of Hudson Bay, conveying food, merchandise and mail to all the trading stations tributary to those shores, along Labrador and in Ungava Bay.

After delivering their cargoes they returned to London late in October loaded with bales of rich furs which had been bartered from the Indians and Eskimos by the Company’s factors during the preceding winter.

The “Discovery,” of Antarctic fame, and the “Stork,” the other ships of the fleet, were docked alongside the “Pelican,” but were not due to sail until some time later on.

I was, of course, quite enchanted by my surroundings, while even the pungent odor of tar which permeated everything seemed to give a further touch of romance to the scene.

Meanwhile sundry clanking sounds below, accompanied by billowing clouds of smoke from the yellow funnel, and the chansons of the sailors as they hauled upon the ropes, gave indications of an early departure. Then a tall, gray-haired man with a leonine head, a weatherbeaten countenance and an extremely gruff voice, walked down the gang-plank. It was Captain Grey, veteran of the polar seas, whose pet aversion I soon learned happened to be apprentice clerks. The lines were soon cast off and our little vessel commenced churning the muddy waters of the Thames towards the sea, passing a long line of shipping on either side of the river.

My unerring instinct led me to the cook’s galley where I quickly established friendly relations with Ben, the cook. He was a typical sea-faring man of huge girth who smoked everlastingly upon a stocky briar pipe, alternately singing snatches of ribald song or anathematizing “Chips,” the carpenter, in colorful and fluent language.

I retired early to my bunk. When I was awakened by the stamping of feet overhead, and the rattling of ropes and blocks, I found that we were well out in the open sea. The weather was fine but there was a brisk salty breeze and as the “Pelican” careened merrily over the deep blue rollers with all sails set I commenced to realize that all was not well within. Fortunately it proved to be a false alarm as there was too much of interest taking place aboard for me to succumb to the discomfort of sea-sickness and I quickly recovered.

Three more young apprentice clerks came aboard at Peterhead; Massie, Shepherd and another chap we called Jock, who, judging from his appearance, might have been leaving for a summer cruise in the Mediterranean. Clad faultlessly in creased flannels, form-fitting blue coat, white shoes, with a white nautical cap cocked jauntily over one eye, he swaggered aboard as though he owned the ship.

Captain Grey took one astonished look, heaved a deep sigh, and could be heard impolitely remarking to the first mate something about "live ballast" ere he retired to his cabin, presumably to have a drink.

Before coming aboard Jock had shown us his outfit which comprised an enormous number of white starched shirts and wing collars, a swallow-tailed coat, a couple of tuxedos and so forth. As I chuckled at this display of finery, for wear in the northern wilderness, Jock frowned severely and explained that in the wild places of the earth—he was sixteen—white men ruled by prestige alone, and that nothing impressed the natives more than to see their white boss immaculately attired. So, by virtue of this finery, Jock elected himself forthwith the leader of our party.

Next day we sailed in earnest, rounded the north of Scotland, and soon all that was to be seen of the homeland was a purple shadow upon the horizon. Then, at last, I realized the last bond had been severed between myself and those at home, and I must admit that I went down to dinner that evening with a lump in my throat and an unwillingness for conversation.

But my fit of melancholy did not last long. While I was cogitating upon deck Jock put in an appearance, resplendent in nautical cap and flannels. The deck was being cleaned and was very slippery indeed. Nothing daunted, Jock stepped out jauntily, entirely disregarding the heavy motion of the ship. Next moment his feet shot from under him and he careened, arms and legs thrashing the air, across the slippery deck into the scuppers, right beneath the bosun's hose.

For the first few days it remained bright and fine. Then suddenly the picture changed. The sky became a dull leaden color, the wind rose until it shrieked through the rigging, the sea became black as ink, while the rolling of the boat was terrific, and she creaked and groaned as though in pain. Yet, hour after hour, the lookout for'ard answered the bells with the inevitable cry of "All's Well."

On the third day it calmed down and the voyage commenced to become monotonous when one morning we received a quite unlooked for thrill. Sailing majestically by, a couple of miles away, was the first iceberg we had

ever seen; a huge green and white mountain of scintillating crystal against which the sea was continually breaking, showering it with spray.

By this time Ben, the cook, and I were on the best of terms and I had the free run of the galley where I voluntarily helped him with odd jobs and cut up plug tobacco for his pipe. Then one afternoon he made a huge pie and covered it with a rich crust. Having a small piece of pastry left over he converted this into a thick maple leaf which he placed in the center, and stood back, wrapped in silent admiration of his work. Then he put it in the oven and retired to have a chat with "Chips."

I cannot say exactly what impelled me; I knew, of course, that the pie was for the for'ard crew and not for us. I carefully lifted the maple leaf, scooped out a hole, emptied in a small canisterful of cayenne pepper, replaced the piece of pastry and quietly made my way back aft. I thought no more about it until, as we were having our dinner, the noise of tramping feet could be heard on the deck outside. Then a loud altercation occurred between some of the seamen and the steward. Pale and angry Smith, the first mate, jumped to his feet just as the steward entered.

"Well! What the hell's gone wrong?" inquired Smith, whose father was a clergyman in a country village in the north of England, a fact that I could never reconcile with his wide and colorful vocabulary.

"They say as 'ow the cook's bin an' tried to poison 'em, Sir!" replied the steward. "Seems 'e must of upset a lot'er pepper in the pie, an' one feller 'as gorne an' swallered it all."

Cold shivers commenced to chase themselves up and down my spine, and I applied myself diligently to my knife and fork as Smith, with thin pressed lips, passed out of the saloon to interview the for'ard hands who had paraded to the bridge.

The interview proved long and stormy, and I finally contrived to peep around the doorway. Exhibit "A," a wizened cockney, stood holding his stomach, continually calling for cold water and cursing the cook, while tears of pain coursed down his seamed and sunburned countenance. Deciding that discretion was the better part of valor I retired to my bunk on the grounds of indisposition and declined the steward's frequent offers of sulphur and molasses, and his suggestion that I go on deck, see Ben and get a cup of coffee. That steward was a wise old bird!

Eighteen days after leaving the north of Scotland a dark cloudlike line appeared upon the horizon which the bosun told me was the coast of Labrador. Next morning there was an entire lack of motion and upon

looking through the porthole I observed that we were anchored in a deep pine-covered inlet, surrounded by rugged snow-capped mountains.

Upon a sandy beach were clustered a group of white painted buildings over which, from a tall flagpole, waved the ensign of the Hudson's Bay Company, while scores of big pointed-eared dogs roamed along the shore. It was the trading post of Cartwright.

I looked in vain for Indians; they did not come that far east.

Two of us were to remain in the Labrador district and Jock had firmly made up his mind that I was to be one of them. After a disgusted examination of the resources of the post he became profuse in his expressions of sympathy for me. As we were seated at the table a few days later the Captain turned suddenly to Jock and expressed his regret that it would be the last meal he would be partaking of aboard the "Pelican." Jock looked shocked and unbelieving, then bursting into tears he besought the skipper to take him back to Scotland.

We passed a small rocky island shortly afterwards and a rowboat came out to meet us, into which we dumped all our companion's luggage. Then Jock tearfully made his way down the rope ladder, as though on his way to execution, and stepped into the boat. When I got my last glimpse of him his glory had all departed. He was standing in the stern of the rowboat mopping his eyes with a big bandanna handkerchief, the nautical cap fallen neglected at his feet; the very picture of hopeless misery and dejection.

Soon we encountered large fields of ice but, as it was rotten, the vessel plowed her way through without the slightest difficulty. The crow's nest, a large barrel, had already been slung at the mast-head, and here a lookout was stationed with his telescope, morning, noon and night. Frequently we ran into large schools of porpoises who seemed to take a delight in playing about the vessel, and we never tired of watching the graceful movements of their white bodies as they dived and cavorted in the sun.

It was not until the first week in August that we approached Resolution Island at the entrance to Hudson Straits, the ice and fog having become more troublesome as we sailed northward. Finally an insurmountable barrier appeared ahead. As far as the eye could reach this stupendous ice formation extended. There were cliffs, mountains and domes of ice in every imaginable form; pillars, arches and deep caverns of greenish-white crystal, while gigantic spires and pinnacles cut the skyline sharply at varying angles. The scene was impressive in the extreme, and Massie and I gazed speechlessly upon it. Already the mist had condensed upon the rigging, from which long icicles depended.

Not a sound disturbed the tranquil, awe-inspiring scene save the ripple of water beneath the vessel's prow, and the shrill cries and screams of the white gulls as they circled overhead. As the ship moved rapidly and silently along in what appeared to be a dead calm it was like a page from Alice in Wonderland, for there was something totally and utterly unreal about it all.

All evening we steamed slowly northward through this sea of enchantment, on the lookout for an opening in the ice barrier which barred our progress, always on the watch for polar bears or seals. From the crow's nest the Captain scanned the serpentine channels through his telescope, shouting down gruff orders to the mate upon the bridge. At last the "Pelican" got her stout oak bows into the channel and commenced her struggle with the ice.

Hour after hour we followed the serpentine channel amongst the monster bergs. Often the vessel would come into sudden contact with a solid mass of ice, quivering from stem to stern with the violence of the impact, while the sailors would come spilling out of the fo'castle, white-faced and very scared.

Hourly we continued this slow progress, our coat collars pulled up about our ears, while Cotter, the factor from Fort Chimo, looked warm and snug in his hairy, hooded Eskimo coat, with beaded moccasins upon his feet. At last we brought up against a ledge of solid-looking ice so, as further progress was impossible, ice anchors were put out, an extra watch was set, and the skipper descended to enjoy his first warm meal for twenty-four hours.

I was glad that I had, in the meantime, made my peace with Ben for the cook's galley was nice and warm, proving a fine place to retire to after getting chilled upon the deck.

Here we remained for three and a half days, which Massie and I spent in roaming around on the ice, examining the bergs from the crow's nest with a telescope in the never ending search for polar bears, in which our patience was at last rewarded. Then we would amuse ourselves potting away at bullet-headed seals who would occasionally flop out on to the ice, look us over with their big round eyes, and slip back into the water again.

Then one morning I was suddenly precipitated out of my bunk upon the cabin floor. Hurrying on deck I found that the lead had opened and the ship was pounding her way through ice again.

"Look!" shouted Smith as he pointed to the northward. "See the 'Discovery'; she's also stuck in the ice."

Sure enough, the vessel seemed to be riding in the sky. It was a mirage. It was three days ere we worked our way completely through the ice and emerged into open water near Digges Islands, to behold a sea of indigo tossed by a rapidly increasing gale. From the windows of the chart house I watched the surging waters as the pilot steered the vessel into the shelter of a natural harbor near Cape Wolstenholme, where it was decided to take on a supply of fresh water.

Immediately we landed three skin-clad Eskimos came running down to meet us with cries of "Chimo! Chimo!" They explained to Cotter and the mate that they were following the ahtook, or deer, so we took them back on board and gave them a feed of ship's biscuit and molasses, with a present of tobacco, and were vastly amused at their childish glee.

When the gale abated we got under way once more, passing through fields of rotten ice which, however, did not delay our progress, and on August fourteenth we dropped anchor in the Five Fathom Hole at the mouth of the Hayes river, opposite York Factory, about two hundred miles south of the present port of Churchill.

I was anxious, of course, to get ashore at the earliest possible opportunity and explore the far-famed York Factory, scene in earlier days of stirring fights, twixt French and English, and was surprised when Captain Grey informed me that, owing to the shallowness of the Bay, we would have to remain anchored twenty miles from shore and await the arrival of Indian manned coast boats to take the goods up to the fort.

That night Captain Grey fired rocket after rocket from the deck into the purple sky above so that the anxious watchers at the wilderness fort would know that, at last, the long looked for annual ship had arrived with supplies and letters from the outside world.

Bright and early next morning a number of small dots appeared upon the shimmering horizon to the west. Coast boats, with all sails set, drifting lazily in our direction. Some hours later, with incredible shouting from the incompetent Indian crews, the boats brought up alongside and commenced to take on cargo. George Ray, the officer in charge at York Factory, scrambled up the rope ladder, while at his heels followed a number of hilarious young Scotsmen: Ogston, Purvis and Laing. These lads were apprentice clerks like myself, and had just arrived with their Indian crews from their distant trading posts where, during the past nine months, they had seen no white men and rarely spoken English. Now, during their brief stay at the erstwhile capital of fur land, they were making up in riotous fun for their enforced solitude of the winter ere returning to their lonely trading posts.

We were all shortly entertained in the saloon by Captain Grey and the ship's officers. The new arrivals, in spite of their animated talk and exuberance, certainly did full justice to the excellent meal prepared by Ben, having been on rather slim rations for some months owing to the ship's non-arrival the year before through getting damaged in the ice.

Preferring the known to the unknown, and the ample hospitality of the ship to the Spartan fare which, Laing told us, would be our lot once we stepped ashore, Massie and I remained aboard until the last boat was loaded and the urgent cries of the Indians notified us that the tide was on the turn. So, bidding a hurried farewell to Captain Grey, Smith, Ben and "Chips," we piled into the coast boat and erelong the good old "Pelican" was but a dot upon the horizon.

Some hours later, hounded by millions of blood-thirsty mosquitoes, we stepped ashore and beheld the palisaded fort, established by the adventurer Radisson over two centuries before, situated upon a high bank. With boyish enthusiasm I examined the old cannon guarding the gateway, and the cluster of Cree wigwams nestling beneath the spruce woods. Above all waved the red ensign of the fur company in honor of the ship's arrival, the one great event of the year.

I had little time to admire my surroundings for, with Massie and the boys we had met on board, I was immediately set to work in the trading store. From five in the morning, when the first bell rang, until nine or ten at night we were busy paying off Indian and half-breed voyageurs; giving out rations to the Cree boatmen and their squaws, and packing trading goods for shipment to the outposts in the interior.

At mealtimes we assembled in a large mess room in the officers' quarters, the walls of which were adorned with large oil paintings of Lord Nelson and the Battle of the Nile, which, a century before, had graced the walls of the North West Company's Council Chamber at Fort William.[1]

Very dusky, but comely, Cree squaws gaudy in their bright tartan dresses and embroidered moccasins, waited upon us and moved silently about the room. There was something almost medieval in the surroundings, and it appeared to me as though the clock of Time had been turned back a couple of centuries. Hardly, however, was the meal over when we would be back in the trading shop, engaged in the prosaic occupation of chopping slabs of "sow-belly" with a tomahawk into one, and four, pound pieces, and rationing the hungry Crees.

Each night, after trading was over, we would gather together under the dim light of a coal-oil lamp in the garish, yellow-painted Bachelors' Hall,

the walls of which were hung with a picturesque assortment of beaded shot-pouches, powder horns, mooseskin capotes, guns, snowshoes, moccasins and brightly colored sashes. Here we would swap experiences, play the gramophone and eat fancy biscuits and canned fruit from the ship; a rare treat for the boys who had come in from the outposts.

Sometimes one or two of the more favored half-breed servants, or trippers, would edge in half apologetically, lean against the door, or squat upon the edge of a wooden bed; their mahogany faces, raven locks and colorful trappings fitting in with the backwoods atmosphere of the whole place. York Factory was primitive and proud of it, and thrived on past traditions.

One evening when we were again making merry in the Bachelors' Hall, Sammy Grey rushed in crying excitedly that the "Fall packet" had just arrived from Norway House with letters from Winnipeg, and a few moments later a tall, fair-haired chap entered and was introduced as Harry Moir. He was to remain at York Factory for the winter, he told me.

He was reputed to be a good hunter, and as he was quartered with me I often remained awake until far into the night, thrilled by his stories of hunting and adventure.

One night, about a week later, we were thrown into a state of great excitement by the terrific barking of the sleigh dogs and the sound of piercing cries without. Then the door burst open and Sammy Grey was projected into the room as though shot from a catapult. He was pallid with fright, his normally large eyes almost popping out of his head.

"Okemasis! Okemasis! Dere's a debbil in de ice house!" yelled the frightened half-breed as he ran aimlessly around the room.

Moir was quietly pulling on his moccasins. Throwing on his blanket capote, and seizing his rifle, he dashed out into the square, quickly followed by myself, and in a few moments we were in the vicinity of the blubber house. A mob of frightened, jabbering and gesticulating natives encircled the building, though at a very respectful distance, as Moir and I approached. Something gray seemed to move within, and I felt my heart jump with sudden excitement.

"Polar bear! Polar bear!" whispered Moir excitedly. "Look! He's eating the seal meat inside. Come on! Quick!"

Next moment my companion was near the doorway. I saw the moonlight glint upon the rifle-barrel as he raised it. Two thunderous reports were followed by a terrific noise within the building as the wounded and

infuriated animal thrashed about, then fell, a huge gray shape, with paws extended, upon the threshold; the massive head swaying wildly from side to side.

All this time the dogs had been barking excitedly, Indians had been yelling, and squaws and children crying in their fright. The bright moonlight shining on the darkened palisade, the ghostly whitewashed buildings, and the gloomy spruce forest nearby gave the entire scene a weird and almost fantastic appearance.

It was some time ere either of us felt disposed to approach very closely to the mighty beast. When we did we found an enormous polar bear, stone dead, his thick coat matted with heavy yellow grease. The huge animal furnished a plentiful supply of oil and dog-feed, while one paw, when we weighed it, tipped the scales at over twenty-five pounds.

I was sewing up some bales of trading goods a few days later when one of the Indians came running excitedly into the store saying that a canoe had rounded the upper bend of the river and was rapidly approaching the fort. From the speed with which it was traveling he was sure it contained the Gitche-Okemow—the Big Master. Immediately we all dropped our work and hastened to the bank of the Hayes river. Sure enough, a small red flag was flying from the bow of the swiftly moving craft, denoting it to be the conveyance of the Chief Factor, the mighty potentate who, in those days, still practically ruled the country and the Indians as the chief official of the Company.

Hurriedly the flag was raised to the top of the eighty foot flagpole in the center of the fort. The Indians were furnished with free gunpowder so that they might fittingly celebrate the august occasion by firing frequent volleys from their muzzle-loading guns. Then the cannons were loaded and roared out a stentorian welcome, belching out clouds of billowing white smoke; the loud reports reverberating far across the surface of the swift-flowing river.

Chief Factor McTavish, a small stout man with muttonchop whiskers, a vast opinion of his importance and that of the occasion, was helped ashore by one of his canoemen and proceeded to climb the bank. Here some two hundred and fifty Indian bucks, squaws and papooses were lined up to meet him, all gaudily attired for the occasion. Soon the staccato reports of a hundred muskets fired into the air at random echoed through the forest. Meanwhile, with great pomposity, the Chief Factor proceeded to shake each squaw and Indian by the hand, saying “Watcheer?” as he did so, then off he strutted with George Ray, the factor, to the officers’ quarters inside the palisade.

[1] These paintings have since been removed, and may be seen upon the walls of the Hudson's Bay Company's store in Winnipeg.

CHAPTER II

The Ways of Chief Factor McTavish

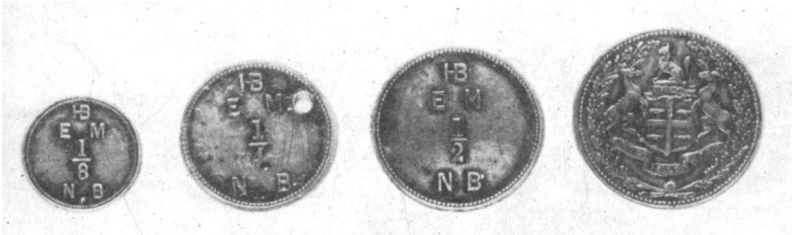
That night Chief Factor McTavish went into executive session with George Ray, and next morning I was informed that I would have to leave shortly for Norway House, four hundred miles inland, either by canoe or skiff.

Ogston, Purvis and Laing had already departed, somewhat regretfully I thought, for another winter of isolation at the distant trading posts of Fort Severn, Weenusk and Trout Lake, so the convivial gatherings within the Bachelors' Hall had already become a thing of the past. Massie, it seemed, was to remain along with Harry Moir at York Factory.

Early in September I bade farewell to my companions and jumped into the skiff which was to take me on the next stage of my journey. Accompanying me were four Cree Indians. It was slow and tiresome work tracking the clumsy craft against the swift current of the Hayes river. Frequently we would be forced to jump, waist deep, into the icy waters in order to lighten the skiff and get it safely past some rocky obstruction while two of the Indians walked along the shore towing, or "tracking," the boat with a long cod-line. As the river banks were usually precipitous these Indians had to scramble along, often high up, crawling along narrow ledges where there was scarcely room to pass, while at other times they were at the water's edge, floundering knee-deep through slimy clay or fighting their way through closely-matted willows.

HUDSON'S BAY PAPER MONEY USED AT FORT GARRY, NOW WINNIPEG, BEFORE CONFEDERATION.

At night we picked a suitable place to camp, pulled up the boat and soon had a huge log fire blazing cheerily away, the ruddy glow painting the nearby foliage and trunks of the trees a deep red, while showers of sparks shot high up into the encircling gloom. The spare figures of the bronzed Crees with their black locks, as they squatted cross-legged, smoking, before the fire gave an atmosphere of unreality to the primeval environment, which was enhanced by the eerie hooting of a night owl or the shrill cry of a yellow-leg.



HUDSON'S BAY TRADE TOKENS (GODSELL COLLECTION).

LEFT TO RIGHT: ⅛ Made Beaver.
¼ Made Beaver.
½ Made Beaver.
1 Made Beaver.

Day after day we pushed inland but never saw a living soul. We experienced one unfortunate mishap about ten days after leaving York Factory for the tracking line broke while the boat was being hauled up a rapid. Next second the craft had overturned, spilling everything into the boiling waters, while the two Crees who were aboard were swept over the falls into the foaming cauldron below. Fortunately the current cast them up on a sandspit where we rescued them. We repaired the craft to some extent, and later were fortunate in buying a birch-bark canoe and jerked moosemeat from the only Indians we met on the entire journey.

Then one bright morning we rounded a bend in the river and saw before us, atop of a high bank, the white buildings and flagpole of Oxford House. Ashton Alston hurried down to meet us, and I was greeted by a broad grin as I stepped from the canoe, unkempt, unshaven and very sunburned. With true northern hospitality Mr. Alston saw to it that I was immediately provided for, both internally and externally, and I felt more like myself as soon as I was cleaned up and attired in new raiment from head to foot.

While I was disposing of a roasted mallard duck he kept up a running fire of conversation. My experience, he assured me, was by no means unusual but part of the everyday routine of a Hudson's Bay man. He added that he had once run short of food while on a winter journey to York Factory and had been forced to boil and eat his moccasins. The merry-eyed little Englishman was a typical product of the time and place. The Company could do no wrong; his whole life and soul was devoted to its service, and he exercised a despotic sway over all the aboriginal inhabitants of his vast forest domain. Fur, and more fur, for the Company was his one and only thought.

Although the Charter, granted to the Hudson's Bay Company by King Charles II. in 1670, giving them almost omnipotent rights throughout the greater part of Canada, had no longer any force all these old traders appeared to think that they still owned the Indians and the North. The bitterness aroused in their breasts if a "free trader" ventured to defy the might of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" by attempting to trade on their own was almost inconceivable. Usually they did not last long.

Such was the foundation upon which the Hudson's Bay Company's greatness was built; a legacy they owed to the old North West Company. The feeling was irresistible and was imparted to every new employee who joined the organization, and, to a large extent, to the Indian hunters also. As most of the apprentice clerks entered the service at the impressionable age of sixteen or seventeen these influences had a marked effect in forming their future

character and outlook upon life, and in some cases made them even unscrupulous in upholding the Company's fancied rights.

After a few pleasant days with my hospitable host I departed, this time in a good Peterborough canoe with two Cree paddlers. Each night was vibrant with the cries of passing wild fowl and daily we bagged fat mallard ducks amongst the reeds, roasting them at night before an open camp-fire while the bannock was browning in the frying pan.

At length we reached the beautiful body of water known as Little Playgreen Lake, entered the deep gorge of the Nelson river and saw before us, in ideal tranquillity, Norway House, headquarters for Keewatin—Land of the North Wind. Proceeding to the large house in the center of the square of white painted buildings I entered the office and soon became acquainted with the various members of the staff. Charlie Sinclair, a handsome man of about forty who spoke Cree like a native, was in charge in the absence of Chief Factor McTavish. For nigh upon one hundred and seventy years his family had served the Company; carried trade to the ferocious Blackfeet; discovered the Sinclair Pass across the Rockies, and established the first posts at both Oxford House and Norway House. I was immediately introduced to Mrs. Sinclair whose subsequent kindness forms one of the most treasured recollections of my sojourn in the Northland.

A few days later the little steamer which ran to Warren's Landing, at the head of Lake Winnipeg, returned bringing back Donald McTavish, and with him the pomp and circumstance of a bygone age.

As the long winter was fast approaching hasty preparations were now made to meet it. Daily squaws arrived with canoe loads of whitefish, strung ten on a stick, which they traded at the store, while the Indians were sent to put up fish at various neighboring lakes. In all, some thirty thousand whitefish were purchased and hung on stages to dry in the air or freeze, to be used for feeding the sleigh dogs. This was necessary as Norway House was an important post. Not only were dog-teams kept for tripping to the Indian camps for furs but others were employed in carrying the mail over the frozen surface of Lake Winnipeg, while others from the far-off posts frequently arrived in the winter time and always needed fish for their return journey.

The staff at Norway House comprised Mr. Taylor, an old bearded Orkneyman who had grown gray in the service; Roddy Ross whose father, as Chief Factor, once exercised an almost despotic sway over the surrounding tribesmen. There was also Donald Flett, *beau-ideal* of all the dusky maidens, a wonderful runner and a dog-driver of renown, and Bob Anderson who shared with Donald and Roddy an intense liking for the

products of John Barleycorn; a trio who never enjoyed themselves more than when smuggling in liquor from the Landing under the nose of the vigilant Sergeant Smith, who invariably searched any craft upon which any one of them happened to be traveling.

At Norway House we lived in a sort of semi-feudal state. At regular hours the bell rang and we paraded to the messroom. Here, with much pomp and ceremony, presided the bewhiskered Donald McTavish, and although we were literally in the back of the beyond, woe betide the person who appeared at table unshaven or without a white collar on. Once only I appeared with a spotted scarf knotted around my neck. Hardly was I seated ere I found myself transfixed by old Donald's astonished and disapproving gaze. A string of expletives crackled off the old man's tongue as he demanded to know whether I considered they were all barbarians in this country. He answered his own query by exclaiming that, being an Englishman I could, of course, not be expected to know any better, and I was forthwith ordered to proceed to my room and put a collar on.

Only Chief Factor McTavish's intense indignation prevented Bob, Roddy Ross and Alex Budd giving vent to their suppressed amusement with guffaws of laughter. Having dealt with me in the interests of Northland etiquette, he picked up the carving knife, sliced a tempting morsel off the roast before him, conveyed it to his mouth with the carving fork, then went on carving dinner.

In the Bachelors' Hall a few evenings later Donald Flett, Bob, Roddy Ross and Alex Budd, head dog-driver and tripper for the Company, a tall handsome man whose black hair fell in ringlets about his ears and forehead, were seated around the crackling stove when the subject of Mr. McTavish's peculiarities was brought up. Roddy started to laugh.

"I'll never forget the time he married John Mestatim and Mary Muchiskisin!" he chuckled.

I was anxious to hear the story and finally Roddy opened up.

"Mestatim had a big debt with the Company and refused to go out and hunt. He'd had trouble with his wife and left her. Now he was in love with Mary. Some said it was love medicine; it must have been gol-darned good stuff for the big Indian sure did have it bad! Well, finally he went to old Papanakis, the minister, and wanted to marry the Muchiskisin girl. Nothing doing! Then he went to Harry Fox. Still nothing doing! It was getting pretty late in the fall and still he wasn't away to his hunting grounds but mooning around that Muchiskisin girl's place all the time. And his debt was getting bigger and bigger as he was a first-class hunter and we were afraid to lose

him. Finally he came to McTavish. By this time the old man was worried to death about the big debt and was just about ready to do anything to get John away to his hunting grounds. Anyway, Mestatim suggested that old Donald marry them. Of course, he had married lots of couples before, but then they were usually both single and there weren't any missionaries around. 'Sure,' says McTavish in desperation, 'you come down here tomorrow morning, then get to hell off to your hunting grounds.' Next morning Mary and John turned up, decked out like a couple of Christmas trees, along with a bunch of friends. If they expected any fancy ceremony they were sure a disappointed pair. The old man just looked at them as though he didn't know just what to do. 'Here, Mary, sit over here!' said McTavish as he pointed to one of those gray painted forms. So Mary sat there, her back as straight as a ramrod, with a coy look half covered with her shawl. 'Now, John, sit here too. All right. Now hold her hand. Mary, do you love him? Yes, eh? John, do you love her? All right, now get to hell out of here, and here's an order on the store for some flour and jam and sow-belly!"

"What happened?" I inquired.

"Lots," replied my companion. "The mission got sore about it and took the matter up and old McTavish found himself in a devil of a fix, bringing these here new-fangled divorce ideas into the North. Not only that, John's wife raised hell and said she wanted him back as the other girl had conjured, and put a spell, on him. Oh! yes, it finally worked out all right and blew over. Anyway, McTavish was satisfied, young Mestatim paid his debt!"

The following day I was working in the office when Mr. McTavish blew in.

"Hey, Flannagan!" he yelled, using a nickname he had recently applied to me. "I don't suppose you can type. None of you damn Englishmen can do anything!"

I compromised by saying I could type a little but not much, whereupon he sat down, scribbled savagely away for a while then proudly handed me the paper, telling me to go ahead and TYPE THAT. I looked and must have shown my surprise somewhat for the little man adopted a belligerent attitude, remarking as he did so: "Well! What the hell's wrong with that?" The letter was addressed to the factor at Fort Churchill and it was very evident that he must have been in the old man's bad books. It commenced: "Sir: Of all the damn fool nonsense the suggestions in your letter can't be beat. I never did give you any credit for having any brains, and that dirty temper of yours is always raising hell. Once again. . . ." Whew! It was a hot one.

As far as possible I transformed it into the more orthodox letter of commerce then, proud of my composition, took it back into the office for signature. I was not prepared for the explosion of wrath that followed. *What the devil was this?* This wasn't his letter at all! If I thought that any damn fool Englishman could teach a Scotsman old enough to be his father how to write a simple letter then I was barking up the wrong gum tree. Just what he might have expected!

"Go back and do it again, and DO IT RIGHT!" he thundered. "And, by the way, write a letter at the same time to the Commissioner and tell him next time they send out any more apprentice clerks *they must be from Scotland*. No more Englishmen for me!"

One morning, while a bitter north wind tossed ragged plumes of white smoke from the chimneys of the Big House and the Bachelors' Hall into a sky of burnished copper, wherein the sun-dogs gave promise of further cold to come, the interior of the fort presented a scene of unusual animation and excitement. For, drawn up before the store, were eighteen long, narrow toboggans, each harnessed to a team of rangy sleigh dogs. Alex Budd, Donald Flett and a dozen other drivers, all clad in fringed and decorated buckskin capotes, blue stroud leggings and fur caps, were scurrying here and there, frequently holding their gauntleted hands before their faces to avoid getting frost-bitten from the biting blast. For Keewatin, the dreaded north wind, plays no favorites but treats one and all alike, often searing the face as though with a hot iron.

Cases containing mirrors, colored cloth, beads, duffle, fishhooks, axes, copper kettles and whatnot; sacks of flour, kegs of tallow, and a heterogeneous collection of other trading goods, were being carried from the storehouses and lashed upon the sleds.

Meanwhile Alex Budd and Charlie Sinclair were rushing here and there shouting orders, pointing out defects in the harness, straightening out the dog collars as the huskies barked and leapt about in their traces, anxious to be off. Bells jangled as the dogs proudly tossed their massive heads and shook their beribboned standing-irons in the gusty breeze.

"Marche! Marche!" yelled Alex as he cracked his whip and gave the straining animals their heads. Like lightning they were off. Already the Indian foregoer had slid his moccasined feet into his snowshoe thongs and was headed for the gateway, his hood pulled close about his face. Whips cracked. Dogs barked and howled with delight or fear. Bells jangled loudly in the frosty air. Then to the vociferous accompaniment of a medley of yells from the Indian drivers: "Choc! Choc! Gee, muchistim! Marche! you . . . ,"

the teams sped one by one through the gateway and soon were lost to sight. But for some time the barking of the huskies and the cries of the exasperated drivers in English, French and Cree echoed from the rocky gorge of the Nelson River. The first mail had left for Winnipeg, and the first trippers for the Indian camps. Soon fur, the wealth and life-blood of the Northland, would be flowing into the storehouses of the "Gentlemen Adventurers."

Wrapped in rabbitskin robes within a gaudily painted carriole, drawn by six huge dogs, and driven by the buckskin clad Johnny Robertson, Chief Factor McTavish departed for the interior to inspect the far-off posts.

Meanwhile, amongst the primitive pagan Indians at an isolated trading post near Island Lake, events were taking place which were to have a far-reaching effect upon the North country and the residents of Norway House.

CHAPTER III

The Medicine Murder at Sandy Lake

Fear and starvation stalked amongst the wigwams of the Saulteaux on the lonely shores of Sandy Lake.

Upon a spruce bed in one of the birch-bark lodges lay the young squaw Sap-was-te, raving in delirium; possessed, said Pe-ce-quan the Medicine Man, by evil spirits; liable at any moment to turn "Weendigo," or cannibal, and endanger the lives of every member of the band.

Few young squaws in the band had been so well liked as Sap-was-te whose comely looks, flashing white teeth and ready smile had endeared her to young and old. Eagerly she had been sought after by the young bucks, upon all of whom she smiled; yet, not until the previous spring had she given herself to the son of old Pe-ce-quan the conjurer.

Early in the autumn, just as the leaves were falling from the trees and the tang of approaching winter could be felt in the evening breeze, the Red Sucker band of Saulteaux had left the Company's trading post at Island Lake, nearly two hundred miles to the eastward of Norway House, and slowly paddled their bark canoes to their winter hunting grounds at Sandy Lake.

There they had erected their lodges amongst the deep spruce woods which fringed the shore. Sap-was-te had been singularly quiet for one who was usually so merry and the music of her laughter had ceased to enliven the evenings around the camp-fires. Hardly had they reached their winter quarters when the young squaw was taken ill.

At first they had thought that she would soon recover. Now, however, she was delirious and strange talk and queer words came tumbling from her lips. At times again she fought with peculiar strength and ferocity, causing Pe-ce-quan, the seventy-year-old Medicine Man, to shake his head and ponder deeply with eyes fixed upon the glowing embers in the center of the lodge. For days he had howled and shouted, waved his medicine-rattle and pounded his tom-tom close to the girl's body in hopes that the noise would drive the evil spirits out, but all to no avail.

Pe-ce-quan, like all the Indians of this almost unknown land, was steeped in the superstitions of the Red Men. Still a pagan he worshiped his

powargan, or medicine bag, the spirits in the woods and waterfalls around him, and appeased the evil manitous with offerings of tobacco and colored cloth, obtained by bartering furs with the Company's traders.

It was obvious that Sap-was-te had, in some way, offended the spirits and that unless something was done to propitiate them without delay the girl would surely become a "Weendigo," or cannibal, and devour whoever crossed her path. The spirits must be appeased, and that quickly, to enable the terror-stricken hunters to venture into the woods in search of moose and game. For instead of hunting a living they had simply crouched over their lodge fires, frightened and afraid to leave the camp although starvation stared them in the face, and merciless winter was fast approaching.

After consulting the Chief, Mista-inninew, old Pe-ce-quan called a council of the headmen of the village and it was decided to invoke the aid of the spirits so, retiring to a glade deep in the primeval forest, the old Medicine Man commenced to build his *chi-si-kan* or conjuring lodge.

For the rest of the day he remained alone and aloof from all, engaged in the awesome rites connected with the medicine lodge, for Pe-ce-quan was a member of that mysterious and powerful Mi-di-wi-win society which, at one time, exercised tremendous influence throughout the Ojibway tribe, of which the Saulteaux were a branch.

When dawn broke above the swaying tree-tops Pe-ce-quan and the Chief took over the lodge occupied by the sick girl and the occupants were forced to scatter. Some time later small holes appeared on either side of the bark covering through which a stout cord dangled, swaying in the wind.

Entering wigwam after wigwam the old Chief finally selected two young Indians, known to the traders as Angus Rae and Norman Fiddler, from the fear-stricken occupants. Protest, they knew, was useless; they must do as they were bid or risk the sure vengeance of the powerful conjurer.

Their orders were short and simple. Each was to take his place on opposite sides of Sap-was-te's lodge, hold the dangling cord and, when the drum beat, to pull with all his might.

Soon the drum throbbed out its warning, the executioners pulled upon the rope, then as the dreaded tom-tom ceased to beat the young hunters dropped the line as though it was a thing accursed and, pale with fright, they rushed to their respective lodges.

From behind the bole of a distant tree Sap-was-te's husband had watched the dreaded preparations, but lacked the courage to raise a hand in his wife's defense, so deep seated were the pagan superstitions of the tribe.

Not long afterwards a bundle swathed in a rabbitskin robe was carried into the leafless forest and buried in a shallow grave. Then, lest the evil spirits should return and raise the body back to life, a long sharp stake was driven through it into the ground and a pile of rocks was heaped above the spot, while the uncanny howls of the starving sleigh dogs served as a requiem for the dead girl's soul. Then many shots were fired into the air from the guns of the motley group of hunters to frighten the hovering spirits away; a torch was applied to the execution lodge, and Pe-ce-quan informed his awed followers that all would now be well.

Some months later "Big Bill" Campbell, the Hudson's Bay Company's trader at Island Lake, was looking disgustedly from the small window of his log dwelling at the snow swirling around outside. Never before had he seen such a severe winter. Right from freeze-up it had been desperately cold and snow had fallen every time there had been the slightest rise in temperature. Drifted snow almost covered the stockade and buildings, and though it was nearing Christmas hardly an Indian had been in with furs to trade.

Like most of the Company's men Campbell had entered the service in Scotland when a lad of sixteen, sailed on the annual ship and landed at York Factory. Since that time he had traveled widely amongst the Indians; knew both Crees and Ojibways intimately, their superstitions and languages and, like other traders, managed to preserve a loose control over the thousand or so pagan natives who traded at his post.

Turning to his native wife he addressed her in Cree.

"Wat-chis-to-gatz! This is the worst winter I have ever seen. Snow, snow every day. Why, if this keeps up the Indians won't be able to trap any furs at all, their traps will be snowed up. Here it is December already, hardly a pelt in the store, and McTavish due any day now."

A knock sounded at the door.

"Petigay" (come in), shouted the trader.

Hat in hand the interpreter entered. "Three dog-teams out on the ice, Sir, and coming this way," he remarked. "Dogs seem tired and they're travelling very slow."

Slipping on his fur cap, fringed buckskin coat and gauntlets Campbell stepped outside into the swirling snow and looked in the direction of the interpreter's outstretched hand. Between the snow flurries he could detect three long black snake-like forms writhing and twisting over the frozen surface of the lake two miles away.

“Hmm! Guess those are some of the Sandy Lakers at last; they’ll be all in bucking those drifts. Better thaw out some fish for their dogs, and get your wife to cook up a few bannocks and make a kettle of tea.”

About an hour later Campbell looked down disgustedly into the faces of five emaciated Indian hunters squatted cross-legged upon the floor of the trading store.

“Wat-chis-to-gatz!” he exclaimed. “What’s happened to the hunters of Sandy Lake when this is all the fur they can bring in after howling for big debts last fall?”

Pointing to a pile of silver, red, and cross foxes, and a considerable number of mink, marten and beaver skins piled upon the counter he continued: “Although you say you are starving how can you expect me to give you more goods in debt if you cannot bring in more fur than this and pay for what you got already? Last winter you brought in four times as many skins.”

“Wha! Wha! Okemow,” answered Norman Fiddler, “it is not our fault that we have had bad luck all winter. Ever since Pe-ce-quan made us kill that girl Sap-was-te the evil spirits have followed us everywhere. We cannot even catch fish in our nets; Kinaw-gabow, our best moose hunter, shot himself, and day after day the snow covers up our traps so that we cannot catch any animals at all. If you do not help us soon we shall all starve to death. We had to singe and eat our beaver skins on our way in here, and the people at Big Camp are starving.”

Until far into the night the trader sat in his big babiche-netted chair, smoking pipe after pipe of Imperial Mixture, lost in serious meditation.

When was all this going to end? These pagan Saulteaux were becoming possessed with a blood lust. Hardly a winter now went by without word being received of some murder or primitive execution.

Only the fall before they had burned an old woman to death at Satchigo Lake because they said she was too old, or too evil, to live and that it was the evil spirits which would not let her die. He had seen the poor old soul the summer before lying neglected, like a dog, outside one of the bark wigwams, shriveled up to nothing, and fed on scraps thrown to her as if she were a dog, yet with bright intelligent eyes. She was very old, probably one hundred and ten years or more, and was undoubtedly an encumbrance to the band. But he had been shocked when her own daughter had told him of the manner of her execution. She had been cast alive upon a flaming pyre of dry spruce logs. After the fire had burned down all that had remained was the old woman’s heart amongst the ashes which, according to the daughter, was

a sure sign of the evil that was in it else it would have been consumed within the flames. She had, therefore, taken the heart, impaled it on a stick, and ponasked it as one would roast a duck.

Later in the winter Robert Fiddler had come in and reported that old Pe-ce-quan had had his cousin shot through the head because he was ill. Then they had burned to death Me-o-was-cum because he had suffered for days with an intestinal complaint, attributed to bad spirits.[1]

These constant killings were affecting the mentality and entire outlook of the whole band; soon it would be impossible to get them to hunt at all. After all fur was, and always would be, the thought uppermost in any trader's mind, and anything that interfered with the trapping of furs was a matter of primary importance. Should he notify the North West Mounted Police at Norway House? The problem was a difficult one. If he failed to do so then he was, to all intents and purposes, protecting the culprits. On the other hand McTavish would, as usual, resent any action by the police as interfering with his own fancied authority, while, if he did report to Sergeant Smith and the Indians found out, as they most assuredly would, it might seriously imperil his standing with them and they would quite likely scatter and trade at other posts, or even with the hated "free traders."

At length he threw himself upon the bed without having reached any decision as to his future course of action.

Such executions as the ones referred to, and for causes similar to those described, were by no means infrequent in the North at this time. Similar cases can be found in Mounted Police records as having occurred at Lesser Slave Lake, Whitefish Lake (in Alberta), at Berens River on Lake Winnipeg, where a son shot his mother because he thought she was possessed of evil spirits. The writer was twice privileged to see the Medicine Lodge ceremony, which is still occasionally practiced, but usually by stealth so that the missionaries will not find out.

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[1] These facts were confirmed in a conversation with Mr. Campbell at Norway House in July, 1932, where he is still living, though no longer connected with the Company. Twenty killings, at least, were attributed to Pe-ce-quan and his medicine practices and became a matter of Mounted Police investigation, as will be seen.

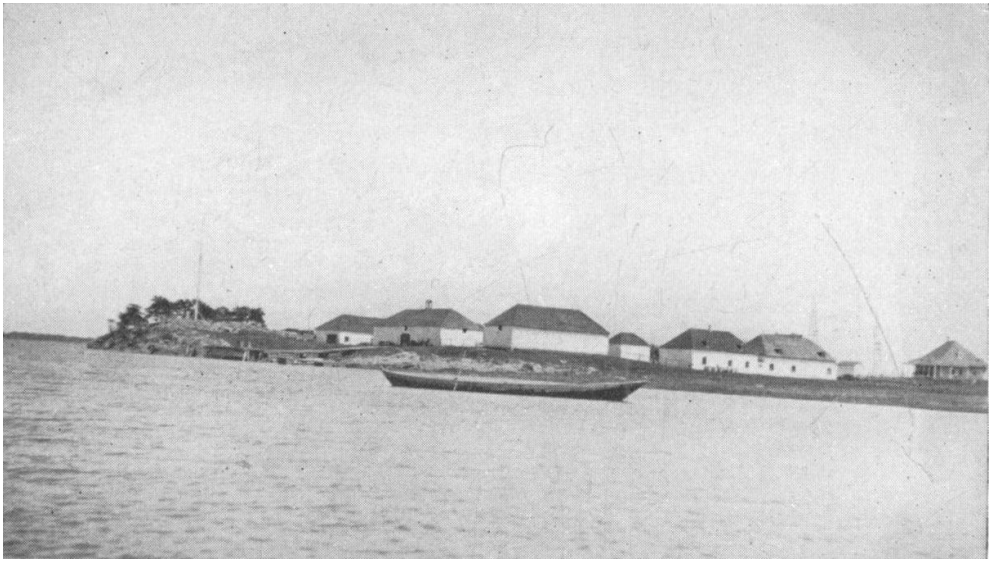
CHAPTER IV

The Christmas Gathering at Norway House

At Norway House time passed on fleeting wings. Each day brought some new interest as the Indians commenced to come in from their camps with furs to trade. Soon from the rafters in the fur loft great bundles of gorgeous furs were hanging; silver, cross and red foxes, sleek mink, glossy black otter, dark marten from the hills, grayish-white lynx skins with black tufts above their ears, beaver, large and small; black bear skins, wolves whose brushes almost swept the floor, coyotes and, in diminutive bundles, ermine in their hundreds such as grace the royal robes.

Then one day the dog-teams returned from Icelandic River with the mail. Hardly were the sacks opened and the contents poured upon the floor ere half the white population of the settlement—traders, priests, missionaries and Mounted Police, were all upon their knees. Each was nominally engaged in sorting the mail, which seemed to constitute grabbing their own letters and discarding all others into a rapidly mounting pile which represented the mail of those *not present* and was left for later inspection.

Each evening there was the usual gathering in the Bachelors' Hall and inevitably the conversation turned sooner or later to the one subject of primary interest in the winter time, dogs! dogs! dogs!



NORWAY HOUSE, HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY'S HEADQUARTERS FOR KEEWATIN DISTRICT.

Although the poor sleigh dogs are discarded and neglected in the summer time when they are not needed, in the winter they assume a rôle of paramount importance as the one and only means of transportation in the Northland, and each tripper usually vied with the others to see who could produce the fastest dog-team in the land.

One day there was a sudden commotion outside the office, followed by the thud of a fast speeding toboggan striking the side of the building, the jingling of bells and the loud shouts of drivers. I ran outside. It was Mr. McTavish back from his five hundred mile inspection trip.

A few days before I had purchased a small mongrel dog from an Indian for the sum of two dollars in order to have company, being unacquainted with a regulation of the Company which forbade a clerk or servant owning a dog without the permission of his superior officer. The little animal was about a foot long, but what he lacked in size he certainly made up for in spirit. When at work in the daytime, and in order to keep my canine companion from being torn apart and devoured by the huskies, I kept him tied with a long piece of string to the leg of the table in my room within the Bachelors' Hall. Sublimely unconscious of the sin I was committing I continued to keep my pet when Mr. McTavish returned from, his winter journey.

Next morning, and unbeknown to me, he decided to make a short tour of inspection around the fort, in the course of which he walked into my room.

This intrusion into our joint privacy was taken immediate exception to by my small pet, who bared his teeth and growled ferociously at him. Such ignorance and presumption could not for one moment be tolerated. It was an insult to his position and dignity so, mistaking the character of the little animal by his size, Mr. McTavish kicked him contemptuously. In a second Fido had him by the leg. The potentate of the Northland howled in anguish and called upon Magnus Budd, who was cleaning stove-pipes at the time, to eject the "dangerous animal" immediately, but, considering discretion the better part of valor, he beat a hasty retreat instead.

I was made aware of the fact that something had gone wrong by the manner in which Mr. McTavish burst into the store where I happened to be trading with some Indians. Red faced, and speechless with anger, he stuttered and spluttered for some time ere he made it clear to me that he had been bitten by a dog. I was, of course, most profuse in my expressions of sympathy, which seemed to goad him into an even more towering rage. Finally he blurted out that it was "that dangerous animal" I was harboring which was the cause of all the trouble. I was permitted ten minutes to dispose of my pet, or kill it, so I hurriedly arranged to give it to an Indian girl who happened to be in the store and promised to look after it.

For some time afterwards both myself and my dog were the heroes of the hour. Donald Flett, Charlie Sinclair and Roddy Ross were convulsed with laughter every time the matter was mentioned, but they did not fail to let drop some veiled allusions as to the probability of my banishment, at an early date, to an isolated and God-forsaken spot called Pepekwatooce, though sometimes rather knowingly referred to as "Penitentiary Post."

ARRIVAL OF THE FACTORS AT BACHELOR'S HALL, NORWAY HOUSE, FOR CHRISTMAS.

As Christmas rapidly approached more and more Indians arrived daily to feast and make merry, according to custom during the holiday season, and from morning to night the store was full of dusky capoted hunters squatted cross-legged upon the floor, or seated upon the counters, making the place opaque with the smoke of *kinni-kinnick* from their pipes.

Here they discussed the price of furs, their good or evil luck at hunting, the speed of Alex Budd's famous dogs, and the gossip which is just as prevalent in fur land as amongst the enlightened white race to the southward.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Sinclair, with the aid of old Betsy and Miss McLean, our cook, was giving the usual deft Christmassy touches to the mess room and bungalow by unearthing from hidden recesses colored paper decorations and streamers of bright colored tissue paper. Spruce boughs were brought in from the nearby woods by the half-breed servants, tied in festoons with bright ribbons, and soon the entire fort had a jolly and festive appearance.

Events never seem to happen singly in the Northland and on Christmas eve, while we were welcoming first one new arrival and then another, strange dog-teams came careening into the square, spraying the bystanders with snow, driven by swarthy unknown drivers wearing hairy Chipewyan deerskin coats. It turned out to be Inspector Pelletier of the North West Mounted Police who had just arrived from Fort Churchill after a journey across the almost unknown Barren Lands. Next, a gaudily painted carriole,

hauled by five big hounds, dashed madly into the fort, while a pandemonium of yelping and barking came from the dog-yard. This time it was Henry McLeod, veteran trader from Cross Lake, reputed at one time to have been the fastest dog-driver in Keewatin—the Land of the North Wind. In quick succession followed my friend Ashton Alston from Oxford House, and "Big Bill" Campbell from the land of the pagan Saulteaux.

With the hospitality which ever characterized the Hudson's Bay Company each was given accommodation of some kind, though all that was asked was a place to stretch one's rabbit robe at night and a corner in which to store a dunnage bag containing clothes. Dogs were chained up in the yard and fed, and half-breed runners given rations and sent to the Indian house to camp.

Hardly were the traders gathered together within the Bachelor's Hall when glass and bottle were passing freely from hand to hand. Loudly they talked, argued and reminisced, poked fun at each other, and extolled the virtues of their dogs. Of course, the Company also received its share of criticism, but woe betide the outsider, unconnected with the firm, who dared to say a word against it.

Outside, as night drew on, the stars shone like jewels in a setting of steel blue sapphire, while from the buildings within the fort, and the log cabins along the river, straight white spirals of smoke ascended from stove-pipes and chimneys into the frosty air above. Each time the door opened and a visitor arrived a billowing cloud of white frost preceded and almost obscured him from sight so intense was the cold without, and flowery patterns of white crystal covered the small window panes until they were coated all over with the frost.

From the nearby council chamber came the cries and whoops of excited Indians, the strains of the fiddle, the thud-thud of stamping moccasined feet going through the intricacies of the Red River Jig, and the cries of the Caller-off, while mingled with these noises was the incessant barking and snarling of strange sleigh dogs, aching to get at one another's throats.

Up and down the length of the snow covered river young bucks were racing their gayly caparisoned dogs, with admiring dusky belles, gay in tartans and ribbons, wrapped warmly in their gaudily painted carrioles.

Inside the Bachelors' Hall every one seemed to be talking at once and nobody doing any listening; it was fast becoming a riot.

Bill Campbell, his usual discretion thrown aside for the time being, was discussing the happenings at Sandy Lake that fall.

“Why, that’s nothing new,” remarked McLeod, bringing his fist down with a crash upon the table. “Just an old custom; goes back to the days when these tribes were all nomadic. Then they’d just fix ’em up with a nice warm camp, leave enough firewood and grub for a few days, and beat it to let them die whatever way they liked.”

Suddenly the door swung open and Sergeant Smith entered the hall, blinked for a minute to get the frost crystals out of his eyelashes, then turned to greet the traders.

“Hello there, Henry, getting pretty soft, eh? Had to get your son Louis to drive you in this year, eh? Oh! well, sixty miles in a day is pretty good hiking; too much for an old man to have to hoof it.”

“Old man be damned,” roared the incensed Scotsman rising to the bait immediately. “Why, I can knock any of my sons out with the gloves yet, and there’s not one of them under six feet, or weighs less’n a hundred and eighty pounds. Come on, Sergeant, let’s try a wrestling match and see who’s old,” belligerently suggested the wrathful McLeod as he staggered uncertainly to his feet.

Roars of good-natured laughter greeted the sally as the Sergeant turned, shook hands with Campbell and wished him a Merry Christmas with a twinkle in his eye.

“How’s everything going out at Island Lake, and Sandy Lake way? Not very much fur this winter, I believe; too cold for the animals to move around, eh?”

“Sure,” answered Campbell with a wink at McLeod, “they’re just as wise as the Mounted Police. Den up in the cold weather and come out when it’s warm.”

“As I was remarking when this long-legged limb of the law interrupted us,” continued McLeod with a hiccup, waving a glass in his hand and spilling the liquor over everybody near him, “that Sandy Lake affair’s nothing at all. Supposin’ they hadn’t killed that squaw she’d have died anyway. And anyhow, when they get that there Weetigo idea into their heads something’s bound to happen, can’t help it! Say, if the Sergeant wasn’t looking at me I could tell you a heap of cases, mostly amongst the Chipewyans,” he added as an afterthought, remembering his Cree wife at home.

“Here, have a drink, Sergeant; this’ll warm the cockles o’ your heart. No! you needn’t look at me like that, it’s real permit liquor; hic’, that young

constable of yours, McNeill, canceled it himself and took a good big snort into the bargain too."

The Sergeant complied and drew the back of his hand across his long drooping straw-colored mustache. At length the Mountie rose to depart, and after several unsuccessful efforts caught Campbell's eye and motioned to him.

"I'd just like to see you for a few minutes and talk with you privately," he suggested. "Which is your room?"

Together they entered. Ten minutes later the Sergeant emerged with a grim look around his mouth, bid us all goodnight, untied his dog-team and set out for the barracks, two miles away.

That night Sergeant, "Daisy," Smith sat in his little log barracks at the Crooked Turn with a sheet of paper in front of him, addressed to the Commissioner of the Royal North West Mounted Police at Ottawa, and chewed the end of his pen in deep thought. In the saddle or on the trail the tall raw-boned policeman was quite at home, but writing reports was not in his line at all, and he despised the necessity for doing so.

Nevertheless, after deep travail, the letter was completed and the policeman sat back with one eye closed, the inevitable wisp of straw between his teeth, and surveyed the result with obvious satisfaction. Two days later the story of the medicine murder at Sandy Lake was speeding by dog-team over the snowy surface of Lake Winnipeg, en route to Ottawa.

Next day was spent in a round of visiting by red and white people alike, all attired in their best capotes, or decorated and fringed hunting coats of buckskin, belted with gaudy L'Assumption sashes at the waist, while their moccasins displayed the last word in the decorative art of the local half-breed girls and squaws.

Mugosay-keesigow, or Feast Day, is the name given by the Swampy Crees to the white man's Christmas, and wherever one went it was a continual round of feasting, jollification and merrymaking. Both at the Hudson's Bay Company's fort and at the Rossville Mission, two miles away, large copper kettles full of sweetened steaming tea, huge pails full of doughnuts, biscuits galore, and other comestibles were prepared in advance of the Red invasion as it literally became.

In almost every building large enough for the purpose, and more especially within the council house at the fort, fiddles were going all day long to the accompaniment of pounding feet, and the cries and whoops of the excited and perspiring dancers.

At eight o'clock there was to be a great dinner in the mess room for the staff and the *élite* of Norway House, and for days beforehand Mrs. Sinclair and Miss McLean, assisted by some pretty Scotch half-breed girls, had been making preparations for the feast. Having some ability with the brush I had been called upon to do my share, which consisted of painting little place-cards for the table.

As the shades of evening began to fall and Henry McLeod, Roddy Ross, Donald Flett, and others commenced to wander in from their merrymaking it seemed to me that the prospects for the big dinner were hardly of the best.

However, Constables Cashman and O'Neill, by means of cold towels and other devices known to the initiated, managed to bring some semblance of intelligence, and a knowledge of what it was all about, to the befuddled Bob Anderson and Roddy. This accomplished, and with Charlie Isbister supported between them on account of the fact that, though he was still able to smile in a sort of fixed way and to even mumble coherently at times, his legs refused to track or support his tall attenuated frame, they all proceeded towards the dining hall.

Donald McTavish, looking like a dark colored powder pigeon with his little stomach stuck out importantly in front of him, Charlie Sinclair, Mrs. Sinclair, and Inspector Pelletier were already assembled there when our delegation from the Bachelors' Hall arrived, every one doing their unsuccessful best to look as though they had never seen a drink. Their legs being somewhat wobbly both Bob and Roddy made an unceremonious dash for the first chair at hand, regardless of the place cards and the fact that the others were still standing. Both, of course, selected the same chair with disastrous results, but having been parted they subsided in their seats muttering maledictions beneath their breath. Charlie Isbister was carefully deposited in the chair opposite his name, then with the same fixed grin still carved upon his wooden features, his head slipped forward as though it was not connected with his body until his chin came to rest upon his chest, whereupon he commenced to snore quite lustily.

Poor Mrs. Sinclair, to whom the success of the dinner meant so much, seemed dumfounded at the peculiar actions of her guests as she watched their queer antics in open mouthed astonishment, and seemed decidedly relieved when all were seated at the table. Noticing, however, the smiles upon the faces of Inspector Pelletier and Mr. McTavish, and catching the significance of the wink which Charlie gave her, she overcame her perturbation and endeavored to carry on as though it was quite the usual thing.

At this moment one of the maids arrived with a tray containing glasses of wine which were placed before each guest, her advent being greeted with exuberant appreciation. Mr. McTavish suggested an appropriate toast to the King and, with the exception of the sleeping Isbister, every one rose to the occasion. Then Alston insisted that he also had a toast. Slowly, and very carefully, rising to a standing position, grasping the tablecloth firmly in one hand in the hopes that it would keep him steady, he raised his glass, then while every one waited expectantly, he hiccuped once or twice, swayed a little and mumbled:

"*Here's to the girl with the high-heeled shoes*
Who eats your dinners and drinks your booze,
And then goes home to her mother to snooze . . ."

Unseen hands yanked Alston protestingly to his seat, leaving the rest of the toast unfinished, and the noise of laughter and conversation drowned out further words.

Meanwhile, Henry McLeod, having reached the stage where food was more desirable than frivolity, carefully rolled his entire steak, speared it with his fork, popped it into his mouth, and in a twinkling it had disappeared. This did not escape the attention of Alston.

"It's a good thing for everybody you weren't around when the Lord divided the seven loaves and fishes amongst the five thousand," he grinned.

With a look of unutterable disgust McLeod glared across the table.

"H'm! Wonder you wouldn't read your Bible once in a while, then you'd know that it was *Jacob* who fed the five thousand."

There was a further difference of opinion as Bob Anderson thought that the honor went to Moses, and the controversy waxed heatedly until at last Mr. McTavish was appealed to, and McLeod grudgingly accepted his decision in favor of Mr. Alston's views.

It was an excellent dinner, enlivened by a hundred amusing and extraordinary incidents, while the smart red serges of the police, the moccasined serving girls in bright tartan dresses and raven locks tied with bright ribbons, the bronzed and picturesque traders seated around the snowy tablecloth decorated with real flowers, created a picture which still lingers fondly in the memory.

For the rest of the week the jollification continued and little work was done. New Year's day was almost a repetition of Christmas, and is known as Ocheemay keesigow, or Kissing Day, by the Crees. Every one visited again

from place to place, the merry cries of “Happy New Year,” “Happy New Year,” ringing upon the frosty air as gayly caparisoned dog-teams dashed up and down the river.

Wherever I went I found that each member of the fair sex expected to be greeted with the customary New Year’s kiss. So far as the young and comely girls were concerned I was more than willing to enter into the spirit of the occasion but I felt less chivalrous in doing the honors upon some toothless and leather faced female veteran of eighty or ninety summers, and these I found were far more anxious to be kissed than the young girls.

Until far into the night the dancing and merrymaking continued, and it was not until the small hours of the morning that I entered the Bachelors’ Hall and went to bed.

CHAPTER V

I Am Banished to Pepekwatooce

Next morning I was busy in the store putting up rations for the traders who were making last minute preparations to leave for their respective posts. Already many of the Indians had departed for their hunting grounds. Bitterly cold weather had been ushered in by old Keewatin, God of the North Wind, with the New Year. Outside one's breath whistled queerly, a feathery white plume appearing each time it was expelled, while distant sounds were highly magnified in the greatly rarefied air.

Mr. McTavish came toddling with quick, short steps down the snow covered walk from the Big House towards the store. As the door closed behind him he turned to me with the remark: "Say, Flannagan, have you got lots of moccasins?"

"Yes, Sir," I replied.

"Well, be ready to leave with the God's Lake teams for Pepekwatooce in the morning."

Although this entailed an arduous journey of some four hundred and fifty miles on snowshoes, and meant sleeping out each night in the intense cold with only the steel blue sky above, it was said as casually as one would tell the office boy to drop around to the post office and buy a few stamps. After all Donald Flett and Roddy had not been very far wrong when they had laughingly told me that I should probably do penance for the misbehavior of my dog!

There was little time for preparations but I hurriedly secured a few extra pairs of moccasins and blanket socks, and a pair of snowshoes; bundled up enough clothing to fill a flour sack, which was all the overloaded sleighs could take, and wrote some letters home. By ten o'clock next morning I had started on my way, waving a mooseskin mitten to Mrs. Sinclair and the boys as they shouted their farewells. Next minute I was striding along on my snowshoes trying to keep ahead of the dogs, which came barking at my heels.

There were six teams of five dogs each harnessed to toboggans sixteen inches wide and twelve feet long on which the four hundred pound loads were lashed. Behind each ran a fleet-footed Cree driver with a long dog-

whip in his mittened hand. Two of the teams were for God's Lake and the rest for Oxford House. Accompanying our party was the irrepressible little Ashton Alston who looked like a miniature Santa Claus in his white-fox trimmed moleskin parki and leggings, and Carl Parker who was to initiate me into the mysteries of the Indian trade at Pepekwatooce.

The trails were well beaten owing to the many teams which had passed over during the Christmas holidays, and the dogs hit a fast trot which made it necessary for us to run hard to keep ahead of them. Over small lakes and portages I followed Johnny Ocass, the guide. Panting from our exertions we stopped at mid-day at a small log Indian shack, thawed out the frozen bannock and beans, boiled the tea kettle, enjoyed a hasty meal, and continued on our way. Just as the sun was dipping below the purple shadowed spruce trees, painting the sky and tinging the fleecy clouds with fiery red and orange, we left the frozen river and floundered through the deep snow into the woods, eagerly followed by the tired dogs who had put on an extra spurt as they realized that camping time was near.

Using our snowshoes as shovels we soon scooped out a big hole in the snow and covered it thickly with fragrant spruce boughs lopped off the trees felled by the Indians with their axes. Then the trunks were piled above each other along three sides to form a barricade, and as a protection from the biting wind, while along the front a huge fire of eight and ten foot logs was soon roaring and shooting myriads of sparks far up amongst the ghostly branches of the trees. Before this the dogfish, bannock and other frozen eatables were placed to thaw while we carried our bedding and the grub-boxes from the toboggans and hung up the leather harness so that it could not be eaten by the dogs.

Without having experienced it one cannot realize the complete transformation that takes place in the winter woods at night the moment a big camp-fire is lighted. Before, all is cold, unutterably silent, desolate and gloomy, while the pale snow looks almost unearthly in the dark. Suddenly a bright ruddy glow paints the tree trunks and branches a deep, warm red, then as the flame shoots upwards, carrying with it a shower of sparks, the overhanging branches are tipped a mellow ruby tinge. The ghostly snow becomes a lovely pink, while the tree stems near at hand stand out bright and clear, beyond which the camp appears to be surrounded by an impenetrable wall of deepest purple.

While everything was being prepared the dogs, loosened from their harness, first shook themselves then rolled in the snow and roamed around snarling and fighting until the fish were thawed out and their one and only

meal for the day ready. Feeding them in the daytime only makes them lazy. Then the drivers took up different stands around the camp with the thawed fish at their feet and summoned their huskies around them. Each hungry dog would down his fish in two or three great gulps, catch the next one on the fly, and when he realized that nothing more was coming would turn around two or three times until he had made himself comfortable in the snow, or upon his bed of spruce boughs, and quickly fall asleep.

At three o'clock in the morning the dog-drivers were up and about, renewing the fires and preparing breakfast, and by five, while still pitch dark and bitterly cold, we were again upon the trail feeling our way in the darkness with our feet. By daylight we were in the Musketaban where there were quite a number of deer. As the sun, large, red and devoid of heat, rose above the horizon Ocass took an axe and kettle from one of the sleighs and disappeared ahead of us at a good fast lope. Later on, as we rounded a bend in the river, we noticed a vast cloud of smoke rising slowly in billowing rolls above the tree-tops of a distant island and when we arrived there we found camp already made and the tea pail bubbling above a bright and crackling fire. Another breakfast was disposed of and we were on our way once more. This routine continued until we reached Oxford House upon the sixth day, our ears and noses blackened from frostbite.

The only change so far as I was concerned was the fact that I developed snowshoe trouble, *mal-de-raquette* as the old French bushrangers call it, and could barely lift, or move, my feet so intense was the pain occasioned by any movement of the inflamed joints and muscles of my badly swollen legs. There was no stopping, however, and at the suggestion of one of the Indians I attached the ends of my long L'Assumption belt to either snowshoe. As I took each step I pulled upon the belt with my hand, thus taking the weight off the foot, which I then moved painfully forward, and so managed to push awkwardly along, though frequently I would not arrive in camp until many hours after my companions had retired to rest.

It is, of course, dangerous to delay while upon the winter trail, but it is nevertheless a peculiar fact that the Indians seem to take a supreme delight in leaving an inexperienced clerk behind on occasions of this kind, and will often deliberately force the pace; a refined and exquisite form of torture. Possibly it is merely their way of testing out a young man's mettle, but I am inclined to think that at the bottom of it lies the inherent and deep-seated hatred of the Indian for the encroaching race, and I know of two instances at least where tragedy was averted by a hair's breadth from this practice.

Usually a piece of partly frozen bannock and bacon was left in the frying pan for me, and some cold tea in the kettle, which I heated over the fire. I would then take off my blood-soaked socks and moccasins, rub my legs with snow to ease the pain and limber them up, and after putting some ointment on my sore and lacerated feet I would retire for the remainder of the night. Around me the trees split and cracked asunder with reports like rifle-shots from the intense and bitter cold.

We stopped overnight at Oxford House, then after two days of heart-breaking toil over heavily snowed-in and drifted trails we reached the isolated trading post at God's Lake, perched on the edge of a magnificent frozen inland sea. Here I met the trader, Alex Swain of Cree-Scots ancestry, whose lame squaw was forced to crawl on hands and knees. He was a huge knock-kneed man with a tremendous stomach, and an inclination towards black and white plaid clothing, white dress shirts and scarlet ties, which, while it might have impressed the Indians, furnished a startling and bizarre effect.

Much to my delight it was decided that we would rest here for a couple of days, and the small log building with its whip-sawed walls, gaudily painted, hand-made furniture and the red-hot Carron stoves, seemed like an oasis in the desert. The time passed all too quickly and on the third day, still somewhat lame from the novelty of snowshoe traveling, I was once more upon the trail. Our party had dwindled to two dog-teams, two Indian drivers —Ocass the guide, and Carl Parker, with whom I was to spend the rest of the winter at the outpost.

On the fifth day after leaving God's Lake, leg-sore and weary, we debouched from the forest and beheld, almost buried under a mantle of drifted snow, the post of Pepekwatooce; three small bark-roofed log cabins, a couple of Indian wigwams, and about thirty birch-bark canoes imbedded in the frozen ice of the creek. Entering the dwelling house, which consisted of one room about eighteen feet long and fifteen feet wide, we found about twenty swarthy, long-haired Saulteaux hunters squatted around the floor smoking their *kinni-kinnick*, with all of whom we shook hands and said "Watcheer?"

The building lacked a ceiling, the pole roof being the usual mudded type, while the rough hewn planks of the floor were separated by a few inches from each other, permitting a current of biting cold air to come through from the unfilled pit below. A rickety table, a couple of broken boxes for seats, with a damaged iron stove, completed the list of furnishings. Next we examined the store; a smaller log shack with a bark roof and one or two

packing cases nailed to the walls in lieu of shelves. The small amount of stock was scattered around upon the mud floor; one or two rusted kettles and some powder horns hung from nails driven in the rafters, while a few muzzle loaders were propped up in a corner. The third building was the fish house in which were a few sticks of frozen fish for dog-feed. The half-breed postmanager had died that fall and Nazie, a local Indian, had been in charge of the establishment since.

ROSS'S TRADING POST AT THE MOUTH OF THE CONROY.

"Well! What do you think of your new home?" inquired Carl disgustedly. Personally I did not think much of it, and my features must have betrayed my feelings for Carl added: "Never mind. Once we get these Indians off to their traps, and our dog-drivers away to God's Lake, we will be able to make ourselves beds and furniture and fix the place up a bit."

In the evening we took a small collapsible tin cook-stove off the sled and erected it, then, after giving the Indians and our drivers some rations, we rolled up in our rabbitskins upon the hard floor, placed our capotes under our heads for pillows and slept the sleep of exhaustion.

While Carl was engaged in the store next day outfitting the hunters I busied myself with hammer, saw and nails. Erelong I succeeded in constructing a couple of rough wooden beds, two chairs and other necessary articles, and in chinking up places between the logs through which daylight could be seen and which let in blasts of cold wintry air.

Our meals were far from sumptuous. Porridge for breakfast; bacon, bannock and tea for lunch, more bannock and, perhaps, whitefish for dinner, and once in a while some moosemeat. Of vegetables there were none. As a special treat we allowed ourselves about two tablespoons of desiccated potatoes on Wednesdays and Sundays, a small quantity of which we found room for on our sleighs and had brought along from Norway House.

The days passed slowly, the cold being intense both inside and out; and apart from an occasional hunter we received no visitors. Our isolation was complete.

Once in a while we sent out a tripper with a toboggan load of trading goods to one of the Indian camps but the weather was so cold that fur-bearing animals were staying in their holes, and even the Indians were keeping as close to their wigwam fires as possible.

A peculiar change seemed gradually to come over my companion. As the days went by he became more and more taciturn until at times he would not speak for forty-eight hours at a stretch. I did not at that time understand the peculiar psychological effect of the wilderness upon the mind of man. The intense isolation has its own queer effect upon a person's outlook; even the best of friends, thrown for months into close association with each other, will often drift apart and sometimes become the bitterest of enemies. At first they are apt to be forbearing, but gradually some little trait will be magnified out of all proportion to its importance, and from mild irritation this feeling is apt to grow to one of open hatred and hostility. From such causes have arisen many Northland tragedies. Finally weeks went by during which we lived and ate together but seldom spoke a word.

At length March arrived and we commenced to look anxiously for the spring packet from Norway House; anything to break the dread monotony. Then one day dog-bells were heard ringing and echoing loudly in the woods across the river; whips cracked, dog-drivers shouted wrathfully while their sleigh dogs barked in anger or defiance; a dog-team emerged from the woods and pulled up in front of the post. The packet had arrived.

A SAULTEAUX FAMILY.

As quickly as possible the driver and fore-runner were fed, the toboggan unlashed, and we became deeply interested in our mail, much of it six months old. Next we questioned the Indian packet-men regarding the latest gossip and news from the different posts. Until far into the night, as we lay rolled upon the floor in our rabbit robes, we were entertained with all the latest gossip and scandal from each and every fort until, wearying, we fell asleep.

At five in the morning the Indians left on their return journey, taking our letters with them. For a long time the tinkle of bells and cries of the drivers were borne faintly upon the fresh morning air. Even these sounds seemed like a link with the outside world and distant friends, and as I strained my ears to catch them I was transplanted, temporarily, from my wilderness surroundings to more congenial climes.

One morning as I looked through the shimmering heat haze which arose from the melting snow upon the lake I beheld a long, writhing, snake-like line moving slowly across the rapidly rotting ice. Gradually it approached the post. It was a strange procession indeed! In front strode old Piskonas, the hunter, and behind him a number of Saulteaux braves carrying nothing but their muzzle loaders in their hands. Behind, bent almost double under the enormous bulky burdens, trudged the squaws; even little tots of six or eight carried quite large loads upon their backs while their small brothers played around with bows and arrows. In the rear came the youths, their dogs

hitched to sleighs bearing the remainder of the camp equipment. It was moving day in the woods.

When they reached the shore each band, or family, made for some particular spot upon which, for ages, it had been their inevitable custom to pitch their wigwams. Bundles were thrown upon the ground, and with axes in their sinewy hands the squaws entered the nearby woods. Very soon the sound of falling trees and chopping axes echoed through the forest glades, while from all directions they returned hauling long tapering lodge-poles to the places selected for their lodges. In next to no time a village of some thirty conical wigwams arose around the fort to the accompaniment of a great deal of shouting and chattering amongst the squaws, and the incessant barking and fighting of the innumerable sleigh dogs they had brought along with them. Then the lodge fires were kindled and spirals of acrid smelling wood smoke arose into the air where it mingled and formed a blue canopy above the camp. The lordly red men, however, kept proudly aloof from such menial and degrading tasks and lounged around the trading post, smoking, talking and laughing.

As night fell the flickering fires within the wigwams cast ghostly shadows upon the surrounding trees, while the natives squatted within were silhouetted like ancient images against the lodge covers. Soon the throbbing of tom-toms made the damp air vibrant with their plaintive melody. The guttural age-old songs of the Saulteaux rose and fell in a soft cadence of sound as they called upon their Powargans and Manitous for protection against the evil spirits and the Much-innin-iwuk, the “bad Indians,” of whom they stood in constant fear.

It was easy to imagine that one was back in the days of long ago, ages before the white invaders set foot upon the ancient hunting grounds of the aborigines of the New World, so utterly primitive did things appear.

For the next few days Carl and I were kept extremely busy as the hunters brought in their packs of furs, paid their debts and did their trading. Soon the store was full of broad faced, grinning squaws and dusky maidens pawing over colored tartans and gaudy ginghams, and buying bright ribbons, shawls and tawdry jewelry with which to beautify themselves and excite the interest of the lordly swains amongst the wigwams.

Cupid was not idle during this time, and it was obvious that his feathered barbs had transfixed some of the inmates of the lodges. But the lordly hunter does not permit his accelerated heart-beats to disturb his equanimity or poise. For hours at a time the love-stricken swain would sit like a graven image near the lodge of his adored, neither of whom would give the slightest

indication of any knowledge of the other's presence. Not a word would pass between them for the silent communion of souls spoke a language which was stronger ever than speech.

The Okemasis, or Little Master, as the young clerk is known to the Indians, occupies a prominent and enviable position in the social strata of the woods. For it seems to be the desire of nearly every Indian and half-breed girl to capture and marry one of these boys. And this ambition was by no means without a certain amount of justification as many of the old traders had made a practice of marrying into the tribes, which meant that the lucky squaw thereafter led a life of languorous ease and luxury from the viewpoint of the Crees.[1]

Never would the fortunate woman again feel the gnawing pangs of hunger and starvation she had experienced around the lodge fires, nor have to carry huge bundles upon the trail. Instead, she would hold an envied position of influence, and to the people of the surrounding wigwams would become the first and foremost lady of the land.

Frequently, and especially if Carl was not around, I would be besieged by bevies of dusky sloe-eyed belles, gay in their newest gingham dresses; their raven locks parted in the center and coiled neatly behind their sleek young heads. Inveterate beggars they were, eternally wanting candy, or coyly pointing to some trinket or gaudy handkerchief and wanting it in "debt." One particularly pretty girl was continually coming around. Although she was probably about fifteen she had all the appearance of maturity so quickly do these natives develop. She was the daughter of Cun-na-buts, who fished for us, and soon I discovered that the wily old rascal was deliberately throwing his girl in my path. No doubt he had visions of my marrying her and of becoming an important personage around the post.

As soon as the Indians had all "pitched in" we packed the furs and pressed them into ninety-pound bales for convenience in transportation. Then I secured two good paddlers, Cunabie and Nazie, and prepared to leave for the post at God's Lake.

[1] Frequently during my life in the North I have known of these boys marrying native women, though not as a rule until they were through their apprenticeship. The outcome of such mixed marriages was rarely successful as the white man would usually degenerate, as it is much easier to drop to the elemental level of the native than to elevate the Indian woman to one's own.

CHAPTER VI

By Portage, Lake and River

One bright morning I reclined upon a seat in the center of my canoe and watched my winter home gradually sink from sight upon the rapidly dimming horizon as the paddles swished through the sparkling waters. Following, but at a more leisurely pace, came thirty or so bright yellow bark canoes loaded with their motley crews, dogs and bundles of dried fish. As the sun shone warmly on the painted paddles, flashing now on one side and now on the other, and upon the gayly attired bucks and squaws, it lighted up a picture of indescribable primitive beauty which even the penetrating odor of fish could not dispel.

Hour after hour we toiled in the almost tropical heat of those late June days; paddling, wading and stumbling through slimy gripping moss, packing the canoes and baggage from one creek to another, around roaring rapids or other obstructions in the river. When we reached God's Lake on the fifth day and saw before us the shimmering island dotted water and felt the cooling breeze even the Indians grunted their appreciation.

Converting a blanket into a sail we careened over the waves in a state of great elation, free at last of mosquitoes and the pungent, stifling heat of the spruce woods. As we neared the post we saw, to our surprise, a large field of ice jammed between the islands and the shore. Then, while we were turning the canoe to paddle around it, a long lean wolf came loping out from an island, proceeded casually towards the bank and disappeared into the bush. We landed in a little bay, pulled up our canoe and followed a narrow trail, carrying our packs upon our backs. In a short while we entered the picketed enclosure of the fort and were shaking hands with Alex Swain and a crowd of God's Lake Indians who had gathered around us as quickly as a lot of mosquitoes in their anxiety to hear the latest gossip of the backwoods.

Once again I occupied the little room I had used the winter before. This time, instead of stoking up the stoves to keep out the bitter cold, smudges had to be made to drive out the voracious mosquitoes, while at night it was necessary to sleep within the protecting curtains of a mosquito bar outside of which the insects kept up a droning hum all night.

All the God's Lake Indians were encamped around the post in their picturesque wigwams and the place was now a hive of activity. York boats

were being caulked and prepared for the journey to Norway House; furs were being baled and marked; Indians hired to man the fur brigade and rations prepared for the forthcoming voyage. Alex Swain, the personification of importance, stalked around bellowing out orders in Cree. Being partly Indian himself he understood the natives thoroughly and, like other Hudson's Bay men of his time, although he worshiped the Deity, the Company was actually his God.

A few days later Carl arrived, accompanied by my dusky friends from Pepekwatooce. The moment the canoes were sighted the red flag was unfurled in the breeze, then Alex Swain appeared resplendent in check suit, dress shirt, a flaming red tie and fancy moccasins. A large V-shaped patch of white drill had been inserted into the back seam of his pants to accommodate his increasing girth. This triangle, which extended about four inches below the back of his coat, the tight-fitting trousers which emphasized his knock-knees, together with the rest of his costume, presented a picture for merriment, and Carl and I were convulsed with quiet mirth at his unique appearance and proud and arrogant gestures. When we reached my room Carl, who was still in a state bordering on asphyxiation from suppressed laughter, pointed at the clothes line. It extended the full length of the square inside the fort and from it innumerable white dress shirts danced a jig in the afternoon breeze.

"See those," chuckled my companion, "they all belong to old Alex and are just hung up to impress the Indians with the vast extent of his wardrobe. He prides himself on having sixty-three dress shirts, one of which he wears on special occasions. *The rest are just for show.*"

I realized later that Parker's words were true. On every important occasion the clothes line was always full.

Next day Carl and Alex Swain left with the fur brigade and I bid them good-by. As they departed I remained in solitary state, the sole white man in this wilderness and monarch of all I surveyed.

Having little to do after the York boats had left, and no one with whom I could talk English, I decided to try and master the Cree language. Whenever the opportunity presented itself I would round up some old Indian, take him to the store, point out various articles and have him give me the names for them in Cree. I soon had quite a vocabulary and one day proudly demonstrated my familiarity with the language before some of the ladies of the wigwams who were paying court to Mrs. Swain. The effect was the reverse of what I had anticipated for, instead of being spell-bound with my eloquence, they at first seemed amazed and shocked then, looking at each

other, they made the walls reverberate with uncontrollable howls and shrieks of laughter. Then to my chagrin I discovered the duplicity of my teachers. Instead of giving me the Cree equivalent for the articles I had shown them they had, with a perverted sense of humor, furnished me with words having a vastly different meaning.

Mr. Swain had evidently left with his squaw strict instructions regarding the economical management of the household during his absence. Three times a week, with the regularity of clockwork, boiled whitefish, bannock and tea made their appearance upon the table. One morning even the sugar failed to show up. When I notified Mrs. Swain of this omission she crawled on hands and knees over to the bedroom and unlocked a massive iron-bound trunk. From within she extracted a pair of old Alex's woolen drawers. Untying a knot at the knee she proceeded, after the manner of a conjurer, to shake out lumps of sugar upon the floor. Recovering from my astonishment I placed the sugar in the bowl and, having by this time overcome my fastidiousness, I dropped a couple of lumps in my tea, disregarding the mixed odor of camphor and lavender. I found later that this unique method of conserving food supplies dated back to the days when the lady had occupied a wigwam.

One day a canoe arrived from Pepekwatooce and to my surprise Helen Trout, our native housekeeper, bearing a broad smile upon her face, handed me a little square of birch-bark tied with a moccasin string.

"Cagwan oma? (What's this?)," I asked her.

"It's a letter from your sweetheart at Pepekwatooce," replied the girl with a knowing grin.

Glancing at the bark I noticed the following superscription written in the Cree syllabic alphabet:

ᐱ ᐱᑊ·ᐊ ᒍᓯ ᐅ ᑭ ᒣᓯ ᑎ

meaning "Pepekwatooce Okemasis," or, in English, "The Young Master of Pepekwatooce."

Wonderingly I opened the missive. Within was a sheet of fine inner bark from the birch tree and upon it was a letter written in the queer syllabic characters. With the ready aid of the giggling Helen we deciphered my Indian love letter. It commenced in the orthodox Cree manner: "Kar-sag-i-hi-tan O-ke-masis," (To the Young Master whom I love), but immediately trailed off into far less romantic and more practical lines. My "girl friend," it seemed, was hungry and desired that by return of the canoemen I would

send her some sugar, sow-belly, flour, beads, and baking powder along with other equally unromantic objects as demonstrating my affection and regard.

When Alex Swain finally returned and informed me that I was to accompany the second fur brigade to Norway House my delight knew no bounds. Once again I was going to see and talk with old friends. For a while, at least, I would bid good-by to the eternal whitefish and bannock. What a change it was going to be to get amongst English speaking people again! Immediately I set about gathering together the few things I would require for the journey.

To the accompaniment of vociferous shouting and gun-firing ashore the boats got under way three days later, being accompanied to the first fire by almost a hundred bark canoes filled with laughing squaws and squalling infants. And these backwoods beauties certainly raised havoc with the rations when dinner was prepared!

At the end of God's Lake is a mosquito-ridden portage, three miles in length, called the Mossy Portage, over which the boats had to be hauled and the equipment carried on the backs of the Indians. It took nearly two hours to get everything across, then, loading up our canoe once more, we paddled for about a mile and camped in an open spot where we would have the benefit of what breeze there was to keep away the mosquitoes. A few hours later the boatmen arrived, sweating and bloody from mosquito bites, but thoroughly good-humored as long as there was lots of grub.

The head guide, Peter Watt, then gave out the rations, each Indian receiving a strip of salt pork, a tin mugful of flour, some tea and sugar, and in a few minutes all were busy kneading the flour into dough, flattening this in a pan, then propping it before a fire of glowing red coals to cook into bannock. In a very short time the meal was consumed and every one rolled into their blankets upon beds of spruce boughs, with their feet towards the fire.

About four in the morning we were awakened by the guide's stentorian cries of "Won-is-kark! Won-is-kark!" (Wake up! Wake up!) Rolling out we prepared and ate our breakfast, while above our heads the branches of the pine trees were hung with bejeweled drops of dew which scintillated and threw out a thousand glittering rays in the early morning sun. Then we loaded up and were on our way once again.

It turned out to be a sweltering hot August day, and the poor middlemen who did the rowing, having to rise to a standing posture with each stroke of the enormous oars, then throw their entire weight upon them, time after time for hours at a stretch, certainly earned the four or five meals which they

partook of every day. Notwithstanding, every once in a while some of the young bucks would challenge the other boat to a race, then with riotous yells and whoops they would go right to it while the boats would simply surge through the water for a hundred yards or so until the ebullition of feeling had subsided.

These York boats, which were modeled very much after the style of the old Norse galleys, were introduced by Governor Simpson in 1826, and replaced the large bark "North canoes" in use before that. The larger ones were about forty feet long and ten feet wide, with stem and sternposts sloping at an angle of forty-five degrees to enable them to be easily pushed off any obstruction they might run onto in the rapids. These craft would carry 110 "pieces," as the ninety-pound bales or packages were called, though the smaller boats, used on the shallower streams, carried only eighty.

The crew of the larger boats comprised a steersman, eight middlemen, or rowers, and a bowsman whose duty it was to fend the boat off any rocks or obstructions in the rapids with the long pole with which he was usually armed. The head guide would be one of the senior and more experienced steersmen and have charge of the entire brigade, the steersmen of the other boats answering to his orders.

By lake and river, up tumultuous roaring rapids and across long and difficult portages, we continued on our way until, at last, we reached Robinson Portage, only a hundred miles or so from Norway House. We found that the Norway House brigades had already left our freight on the other side of the two-mile portage and it would have to be carried across on the backs of our trippers before it could be loaded into the York boats. All next day the Indians sweated in the heat, hitting a dog-trot with two or three hundred-pound loads slung upon their backs from the leathern portage-straps which carried most of the weight upon the forehead. Usually the freight was dumped a third of the way across and taken over in three successive stages, which proved to be easier on the men.

Not until I had loaded the boats and seen them start out on their return journey did I turn to cross the portage. Then my two Crees carried over the canoe which we launched and loaded at the other side and set out once again, using our blanket for a sail. Two days later, scanning the sparkling white flecked waters of Playgreen Lake, I beheld with mingled feelings the whitewashed buildings and shingled roofs of Norway House almost hidden amongst the towering granite rocks.

Hardly had I stepped ashore ere I was surrounded by the grinning faces of my erstwhile companions; Roddy Ross, Bob Anderson, good-natured

Donald Flett and a host of others, all anxious to hear how I had fared during my banishment to "Penitentiary Post"—Pepekwatooce, though all agreed that I had apparently not suffered from my exile. Breaking away I hurried up to the Big House to shake hands with Charlie Sinclair and his wife. It was good to hear my native tongue and to talk freely in English once again; neither was I at all disappointed when I heard that old Donald McTavish was away, having left for York Factory to meet the annual ship.

Mrs. Sinclair was rather disconsolate and lonely for she was undergoing one of those hardships and deprivations which fall to the lot of every Hudson's Bay man's wife. Her son, Moray, had reached the age when his education had to be considered so he had gone outside to school. Now she was watching her little daughter, Ramona, rapidly growing up; dreading the day when she would be separated from this child also. I told her of my experiences at Pepekwatooce; of the peculiar action of the rice and evaporated apples when I had turned my hand to cooking, and of the internal economy of the Alex Swain household until she became almost speechless from laughter and the tears coursed down her cheeks.

The next few days were a round of rollicking fun and laughter, of anecdotes and stories as dusk descended upon the Bachelors' Hall; of evening bathing parties at Sandy Beach nearby or on the rocky islands in the lake.

After the discomforts and spartan fare of outpost life Norway House with its clean whitewashed buildings, orderly atmosphere, its beds with white linen upon them, and more especially the sumptuous fare provided by Miss McLean, the cook: potatoes, roast beef, fresh cream and milk, none of which I had seen for the greater part of a year, seemed like Paradise.

Mr. Sinclair told me that soon after open water two white men had arrived very unostentatiously, stating that they were mining men, and had hired canoes and Indians to take them to the Bay. Their names were Thervenet and Mallet, and from the first he had been suspicious that they were really scouting for some trading company. Not so, however, Mr. McTavish who was quite disarmed by their friendly manner and gave them all the help he could. So impressed and friendly did he become that the usually hard-boiled Scotsman had actually opened the books of the York Factory District to display with pride the excellent showing the posts had made under his administration. When they departed from Fort Churchill they had left a man behind who was to board at the post during the winter just to observe conditions thereabouts. Such was the rumor we heard.

When Mr. McTavish returned to Norway House and discovered that these two men were *actually* prominent representatives of the Revillon Frères Company, who were organizing to challenge the Company's supremacy in the North, his indignation and humiliation knew no bounds; especially when he thought of the man at Fort Churchill and realized how neatly a spy had been planted right in the midst of one of the Company's most profitable "preserves," *the secrets of which had always been guarded with most jealous care*.[1]

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[1] A couple of years later Revillon Frères did send out a ship the "Adventure" with a big cargo of trading goods, to open up the trade of Hudson Bay in opposition to the Company. The ship was wrecked in Hudson Straits; while they opened posts in many parts of the North, they never again attempted to do so in Keewatin District.

CHAPTER VII

Trailing the Killers of Sap-Was-Te

Two months after Sergeant Smith had written the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police at Ottawa regarding the killing of the girl Sap-was-te at Island Lake he received his answer.

In the meantime he had sent a lone patrol off to Island Lake to gather evidence regarding the killings he had heard of from Bill Campbell and others. Only a few days before I had departed on my long snowshoe journey to Pepekwatooce Constable O'Neill had left the barracks in the chilling cold of sub-arctic dawn and with but a single dog-team had followed his Cree guide across the river where they had disappeared into the black and gloomy forest.

As soon as he had finished reading the Commissioner's letter Sergeant Smith called in Constable Cashman.

"Well, Constable," he remarked as he looked into the clear blue eyes of the stockily built young man before him, "I've got a little job for you which may keep you hoofing it for some time to come!

"You remember the story these Hudson's Bay men were telling at Christmas time about that murder at Sandy Lake last fall? All right! I've just got word from the Commissioner. He's decided it's about time to put an end to these murderous practices and make an example of the Medicine Men. O'Neill is at Island Lake now getting all the evidence he can. From what I've already learned I'm satisfied the matter is serious. Judging from the news O'Neill sends in this Pe-ce-quan is a bad actor; *his band have killed about twenty all told*, and the same sort of thing is going on in other parts of the North. The influence of these Medicine Men must be broken and it's up to you to do the job! You will leave with Moses Gore and Jimmie Kirkness, who knows the Sandy Lake country well; proceed to Island Lake, arrest the Chief and Medicine Man, obtain the witnesses you want, and bring the whole bunch back to Norway House. These Saulteaux seem to be bad right through and are outlawed by the other tribes! They're all pagans and most of them have seen no white men but the traders so you'll have to be darned careful. Remember, there's to be no trouble, and you must *not* return without your prisoners. And," added the Sergeant, "if you fail—God help you!"

As with O'Neill it was long before sunrise when Constable Cashman and his three teams sped down the icy surface of the Nelson River between the high forested banks. To all appearances the little settlement, sprawled along the shores, was fast asleep, but many pairs of black beady eyes watched the little patrol as it started on its difficult and dangerous journey.

Two white men, mere youths, were to penetrate into an almost unknown wilderness, arrest a powerful Medicine Man who knew no laws but those of his own making and held the power of life and death over his followers, and also the Chief of a band of outlaw Indians, feared by all adjacent tribes! And to accomplish this they carried not weapons but merely the prestige of the North West Mounted Police and their reputation for square dealing. Would it be enough? Many of the old timers who knew those Indians said that it would not!

Months passed but no word reached Norway House. At length the ice commenced to get black in spots then, almost without warning, summer burst upon the Northland; the trickle of water was heard everywhere, the snow disappeared almost overnight, and with a terrific booming the ice of the Nelson River gave way. Freed of its fetters the swift and turbid waters rushed and swirled by on their way to Hudson Bay.

When the middle of July arrived without any sign of the police anxiety spread apace at Norway House and in many quarters conviction was openly voiced that the Saulteaux had lived up to their evil reputation and the patrol had been destroyed.

As soon as they had left the hard beaten trails near the fort Constable Cashman and his companions realized that they had no soft job ahead of them. Day after day they toiled through enormous snowdrifts, often whipped by the biting north wind; fighting blizzards accompanied by stinging, blinding snow; glad when night came to stretch their tired and pained limbs upon soft and fragrant spruce boughs before the roaring camp-fire. A hot meal of bannock, beans, and steaming strong tea would revive their spirits, and after feeding their dogs they would roll in their rabbitskins and sink into merciful forgetfulness of aching and swollen feet, frozen ears and the stab of icy blasts.

It was many days ere the picketed enclosure of the log fort at Island Lake came into view. Long before the tired dogs dashed excitedly through the gateway the red flag fluttered out in greeting—a welcome sight to any northern traveler.

The genial Campbell accompanied by O'Neill met them at the gateway with hearty handshakes, glad to see another white face in this land of

loneliness.

"Come right in, boys! Never mind your dogs, John, my tripper, will look after them and put your stuff into the warehouse. Just come right in and get warmed up, and give us the latest news from Norway House and Winnipeg!"

The two days' rest that followed, the extra feed for the tired dogs; the sumptuous meals of moosemeat, dried berries and real bread, and the chance to get warmed through and through, put the party in fine fettle when the time came to hit the trail once more. With parting words of cheer from the big trader, and many warnings to be careful of the Red Sucker Indians ringing in their ears, the Mounties now headed towards the hunting grounds of the dreaded Saulteaux.

THE FUR BRIGADE. YORK BOATS EN ROUTE TO NORWAY HOUSE.

Once again they faced their bitter battle with nature and the snowdrifts, and it was not until the fifth day after leaving Island Lake that they sighted the bleak expanse of island dotted ice that Jimmie Kirkness said was Sandy Lake. Although they searched the shores for signs of an Indian camp not a wisp of smoke was anywhere to be seen so desolate and devoid of life did the surrounding country appear.

Suddenly the native trail breaker stopped in his tracks, dropped on his knee and examined the surface of the snow minutely: "Injun' walk here mebbe tree, four nights ago," he announced as the sleighs came up. Closely

Jim Kirkness and Moses Gore scrutinized the barely discernible concave marks of snowshoes upon the snow.

"He's right," commented Kirkness, "let's follow the direction of this trail towards the shore."

Swinging along on his snowshoes the guide obeyed Jim's orders as the dogs fell into line behind him. When they reached the shore another council of war took place. It was arranged that they would camp for the night sufficiently far in the woods to prevent their camp-fire from being seen by prying eyes out on the lake, while Jim and Moses scouted the shore for a few miles in each direction.

Late that night Jim returned, reporting no luck whatsoever, but later on Moses stepped into camp obviously excited, kicked a log making the fire send up a shower of sparks, then threw on an extra log. All sat up expectantly.

"Well, boys, the birds have flown!" stated Moses laconically. "I found the old camp all right, then about two miles further on I came across another one which they must have moved to after they killed that girl. I guess they got wise we were coming and beat it, bag and baggage, just before that last snow. They sure left in a hell of a hurry as I found a partly finished pair of snowshoe frames and quite a lot of other junk around!"

"Moccasin Telegram again," muttered Constable Cashman disgustedly. "It sure beats me how news travels in this North country. Not a soul has been ahead of us, we've traveled fast, yet they've found out we're coming and are all prepared for us."

"Cyam" (Never mind), answered Kirkness. "If Moses has located their old camp we can find where they buried the girl. The Indians can't be very far away as they've got their squaws and kids with 'em. There's bound to be some kind of a trail we can follow, though it's liable to be slow work. Looks to me as though they're high-tailing it for Deer Lake."

The patrol reached the old camp-site next morning where they had little difficulty in locating the resting place of the murdered girl. Turning to the southward they slowly followed the faintly marked trail.

It was not until they arrived at Deer Lake that the trail freshened. Then, as the sun was almost setting, they came upon net-holes surrounded with spruce boughs, a sure sign of the proximity of Indians. As they rounded a heavily wooded point the outlaw Saulteaux camp lay stretched before them; a score or more of squat bark wigwams nestling in the somber darkening forest a mile or so ahead.

Rapid movements among the lodges, and the angry barking of many dogs, appraised them that their presence had become known. But they continued resolutely onward with rapidly beating hearts while the medicine drum throbbed its menacing warning across the frozen bay.

Leaving the teams in charge of Moses Gore and the Indian Constables Cashman and O'Neill, along with Kirkness, climbed the bank and next moment were looking into a sea of angry scowling faces and piercing deep-set serpent-like eyes. Squaws, from the security of their lodge doors, spat and hurled insults at the two *Shi-mar-kanis-uk*—the hated Long Knives.

VOYAGEURS CARRYING UP THE FREIGHT.

Although he dared not show his feelings Cashman was surprised at the size of the camp, which was the largest he had seen, while there were far more long-haired, capoted bucks around than he had ever anticipated meeting. Evidently they had heard of the coming of the Red Coats and a call had been sent by the Chief to the neighboring camps to gather his swarthy supporters all around him.

The Saulteaux were obviously in a thoroughly ugly and surly mood and his interpreter was also nervous. The atmosphere was tense in the extreme and Cashman realized instinctively that any tactless action on his part would probably be accompanied by most serious consequences. Any Indians he had dealt with so far had always held the Mounted Police in fear, and the prestige which this famous force enjoyed went far when making difficult

arrests. Here there was no fear but only bitter racial hatred, and for the first time he fully realized the magnitude of the task before him.

With set lips and a steady stride he entered the largest wigwam where most of the bucks were assembled, their muzzle loaders in their hands. Giving but a cursory glance at the motley crowd around him he turned to Kirkness.

"Tell the Chief that the Great Father has sent me a long distance to come and talk with him."

Twenty pairs of beady eyes gazed unwinkingly upon the interpreter as he conveyed the message in the sonorous Ojibway tongue. Piercingly the old Chief surveyed the policemen, puffing deliberately meanwhile upon his long-stemmed stone-headed pipe, then with an abrupt wave of his hand towards his followers he arose and faced the Mountie with angry flashing eyes.

"What has your Great Father to do with the Mi-qua-mapin-uk?" (Red Suckers), demanded the Chief arrogantly. "This is the country of the Indians, the An-sin-a-beg, who do as they please in their own hunting grounds. The Long Knives wish to take me and my brother away and put us in their stone house, but I have twenty young men who do not wish that I should go. All of them have guns, all ready to shoot—not toy guns such as you carry in your belts. What is to stop them killing you where you stand and throwing your carcasses, and those of the half-breed dogs you brought with you, to the sleigh dogs?"

It was no idle threat and Cashman realized it for the scowling natives seemed only too anxious to put the Chief's threat into action at the slightest sign from him. As they grunted their approval he looked the Saulteaux squarely in the eye then replied in quiet level tones:

"What you say is only partly true, Mista-inninew, for you forget one thing. Truly, you have twenty young men but the soldiers of the Great Father are like the leaves on the trees, and he will never forget an insult offered to the men who wear his red coat. For every one of us you might injure the Great Father across the Big Water would send a hundred men to take his place, and he would never rest until he had run each one of you to earth even as you run the foxes to their holes. Many widows there would be to cut their hair and slash their bodies in mourning for their dead. Let you and your brother Pe-ce-quan show that those gray hairs denote the wisdom age has taught you. Tell these young men to put away their guns, and warn them to do nothing foolish lest their squaws and children suffer with themselves."

For hours the contest of wills lasted. Frequently the outcome seemed in doubt. Then Mista-inninew suddenly shook the long locks from before his eyes, threw back his head, with his hands held out towards his captors.

"Mi'way! Ah-mi-way! Put those irons on my wrists, White Man. I am old and have not long to live, many winters have left the snows upon my hair. I do not wish to see my people get into trouble. I will go with you, so will my brother Pe-ce-quan. You are a brave man, you look me right in the eye as one true man should always look at another."

Neither of the policemen displayed the intense relief they experienced from the favorable outcome of the council. They knew Indian nature too well not to realize that any moment might still witness a change of attitude. Promptly the two young men who had assisted at the killing were singled out and, upon the advice of Mista-inninew, agreed to accompany the police. Both prisoners were spared the humiliation of being handcuffed as it might easily have caused the smoldering fires of hatred to once more burst into flame. Without any outward display of haste the baggage of the prisoners was placed upon the sleighs and, accompanied by the Chief, Pe-ce-quan and the two witnesses, the four teams set out on their long journey back to Norway House.

Until far into the night they continued on their way, anxious to place as great a distance as possible between themselves and the village they had left, lest in their excitement some of the more hot-headed young bucks might follow in their trail and attempt a rescue.

Turn about they stood guard over the sleeping prisoners at night. A large cold silvery moon shone down upon the camp as O'Neill took watch lighting up the heavily lined face of the sleeping Chief. An owl hooted mournfully somewhere in the darkened woods and a faint breeze sighed through the tree-tops, rustling them slightly. Some unseen presence seemed to hover around the place. The Constable watched silently and a feeling of deep sympathy came over him.

After all these were pagan Indians, and it was their own country which the white man was taking possession of without as much as a "by your leave." Murder could not be condoned yet these natives had their own queer laws and superstitions and, no doubt, there were many occasions when the destruction of a demented person was actually necessary to the safety of the band. Where was one to draw the line? There had been a certain nobility in the manner of the old man's surrender. Furthermore, he remembered now the kindly pat the old Chief had given him on the back when he had insisted to his tribesmen that no harm was to come to the young *Shi-mar-kanis*. After

all the white man's justice, like his commerce and his laws, often worked in strange and unfathomable ways.

Tired, spent and grimy from the smoke of the camp-fires they at length made their way once more into the fort at Island Lake. Two hundred miles still to go; the trails breaking up under the heat of the warming sun; the surface of lake and river one mass of slush, and the ice unsafe to travel on.

PE-CE-QUAN, THE MEDICINE MAN.

Constable Cashman gave the matter deep thought, then at the earnest solicitation of Bill Campbell he decided not to take foolish chances but to remain at the post with his prisoners until open water. Then they could travel with the Company's fur brigade to Norway House. As soon as this decision was reached the trader turned over one of the post buildings to the police to serve as a temporary jail, and here the prisoners took up their abode. Furnished with ample tea and tobacco, fresh moosemeat and whitefish, the Indians seemed little worried as to what the outcome was to be but smoked contentedly all day long.

About the time that I was bidding farewell to Carl and Alex Swain at God's Lake that same summer the three York boats, with police and prisoners aboard, pulled out from the dock at Island Lake to the usual accompaniment of whooping and gun-fire from the Indians lining the shore.

Next day they heard the roaring of water ahead and soon the boats were in the midst of the Kanutchewan Rapids, rushing like mad things through the foaming waters. Passing within ten miles or so of where I remained in solitary state at God's Lake they reached the Mossy Portage just ahead of our own brigade and three weeks after leaving Island Lake they sighted Norway House.

With one accord the people at the post rushed down to the dock to greet the new arrivals, and great was the rejoicing when it was found that rumor had once again proven false and that the "lost patrol" was safe.

As the police party transferred to canoes for their two-mile paddle to the barracks at the Crooked Turn realization of their predicament seemed to strike Pe-ce-quan for the first time. He appeared worried and turned to Campbell who had accompanied them: "Wha! wha! I guess it is all up with us now."

"Quiesk, kiam picu weeta" (Never mind, tell the truth), replied the trader as he shook hands with the prisoners and next moment the paddles dipped and the canoes were on their way.

Such was the story I heard from Cashman and O'Neill, also Moses Gore, shortly after my arrival at Norway House, and at the first opportunity I paddled up to the barracks to have a talk with the prisoners and take them some tobacco. They appeared to be in good spirits and glad to see me as my post at Pepekwatooce was only a couple of hundred miles from their home at Sandy Lake.

Ottawa had decided to make an example of the murderers, and to hold the trial at Norway House in order that the surrounding tribesmen should be properly impressed with the power of the police, and the certainty of punishment overtaking evil-doers. Arrangements had already been completed to have Colonel Saunders of the North West Mounted Police proceed North in order to conduct the trial.

Meanwhile the Company had turned over to the police the large council house wherein the factors had gathered in years gone by from the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains to hold their annual councils and regulate the affairs of Rupert's Land.

Upon the day that Colonel Saunders and his party were due to arrive Sergeant Smith and Cashman left for Warren's Landing at the head of Lake Winnipeg, twenty miles away, to meet the steamer. At the barracks the prisoners were taking their daily exercise under the charge of a young constable. Suddenly the policeman noticed that Pe-ce-quan was missing.

"Tante Pe-ce-quan?" he asked the Chief.

"Dunno!" gruffly replied the Indian.

A hasty search of the barracks grounds failed to reveal any sign of the missing man and the alarm was hastily spread; Pe-ce-quan had escaped.

"Quick, boys, search the woods," cried the thoroughly excited constable to some half-breed onlookers, but not a sign could be found of the prisoner. It was near nightfall when O'Neill returned from the fort and assisted the constable in his search. Through the drear and forbidding forest they made their way.

"Good God! What's that?" cried his companion in a hoarse shaky voice.

"What? Where?" demanded O'Neill in alarm as he shook off the convulsive grip upon his arm.

"There! Swinging from the branch of that tree," cried his companion, pointing to a dark object silhouetted against the darkening sky.

It was the lifeless body of Pe-ce-quan hanging from a tree by his L'Assumption belt which was knotted tightly around his neck. He had gone to meet the Manitou of the Saulteaux, but he had chosen his own time and place and had not died shamefully at the hands of the pale-faced usurpers of the Indians' hunting grounds.

On August 8th, 1907, Mista-inninew stoically faced his accusers in the historic old council house which had witnessed many strange sights, but none more thrilling than those now taking place. Behind a large spruce table covered with a Union Jack sat Colonel Saunders, impressive in his immaculate uniform. Beside him sat the lawyers attired in wigs and gowns, while behind stood the red-coated escort in charge of Mista-inninew and the Indians. Opposite sat the jury; white collared clerks of the fur company, moccasined traders, capoted French-Canadian voyageurs, and half-breed dog-drivers, while priests, missionaries and Indians filled the balance of the hall. In front of the Judge's table, looking somewhat nervous, was the interpreter, Jimmie Kirkness.

Without the slightest hesitation Mista-inninew pleaded guilty to the charge of murder, then told of what had happened in the lodge that cold October morning. They had decided, he and Pe-ce-quan, that Sap-was-te

must die. Old Pe-ce-quan placed the fatal cord around her neck, then as she struggled he himself had held her down.

As the jury retired to consider the verdict the Chief leaned back and stared stolidly at the heavy beams above him. Considerable sympathy was felt for the old Chief, especially by the fur traders who realized fully the extent to which these pagan Indians were swayed by superstition. But the police felt otherwise. There were four authenticated cases of killings at their hands, and evidence pointing to probably twenty others. These murders, and the domination of the Medicine Men, must cease, and that could only be accomplished by making an example. During the solemn silence that prevailed when the jurymen returned the Chief listened unmoved while the sentence of death was passed upon him by the Judge.

In a few days he was being taken across Lake Winnipeg towards the dreaded stone house of the whites. But the sentence was never carried out for upon the representations of the fur traders and others to the Minister of Justice it was decided to temper justice with mercy and the sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life.

Three years later Mista-inninew's soul also passed on to the Happy Hunting Grounds of his forefathers for one morning his emaciated body was discovered lifeless upon his narrow prison cot by one of the wardens of Stoney Mountain Penitentiary.

"Angus Rae" and "Norman Fiddler" were not detained but were sent back to their tribesmen to spread the word amongst them of the power of the whites, and the certainty of Mounted Police justice.

CHAPTER VIII

The Weetigo of Pepekwatooce

The days at Norway House passed all too quickly, then one morning I received orders from Mr. Sinclair to return and take charge of Pepekwatooce for the winter. That afternoon I bid good-by to Roddy, Donald and the rest of my companions, shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair, and with somewhat poignant regrets turned my back upon the fort and headed my canoe once more towards the wilderness.

There were some fine old Indians trading at the outpost to many of whom I became quite attached. Old Moses Wap-in-a-gasis (Snowbird) with his thirty-two children, had at one time boasted five wives, though only two were now living. He was a noble old savage with long raven locks and the features of a Roman gladiator. There was also Gitche Inninew, with a peculiar aboriginal culture all his own; positive proof that nature can produce gentlemen without the aid of schools and civilized conveniences. Whenever he visited the post he invariably brought some delicacy for my table. Sometimes it would be a haunch of venison, moosemeat, moose nose, beaver tails or perhaps some delicately flavored speckled trout.

Although barely eighteen I was supposed to have the wisdom of the ages, and I smiled to myself as these old men, with childish trust and simplicity, consulted me about their troubles and asked for my advice. In event of marital difficulties I would be sought out by both parties and be constituted both judge and jury, and when the offending party happened to be a good hunter who owed a big debt, the extent of tact and diplomacy required can be better imagined than described. At other times I would be expected to sever the irksome bonds of matrimony tied by some orthodox missionary, and to give my blessing and approval upon a much less holy union in which the would-be divorcees expected to ease the pain of disillusionment.

Isaac Mason, the free trader, and I never saw each other. Only those who have experienced the isolation of the North can appreciate the bitter hatred and antagonism that frequently develops between two rival traders. Often they are the only English speaking people within a radius of many hundreds of miles, yet so bitter becomes the antagonism arising from the trade in furs that it is the rule rather than the exception to find them not on speaking

terms. Of course, it is in the Indians' interests to promote such ill-feeling and so enhance the price of furs, and in this respect they have become astute and cunning diplomats.

As the days became shorter and shorter I found time hang heavily on my hands. The life was one of terrible isolation and overwhelming loneliness and at times I longed for some one with whom I could talk in my own tongue. Often I would fall to wondering what my old school companions were doing, and my mind would revert back to the Old Country and the folks at home.

Unfortunately I had neither coal oil nor candles so I constructed a sort of lamp from a baking powder tin, rendered down rancid bacon fat for oil and made wicks from cotton cloth. Though my primitive lamp smelled terribly, and emitted clouds of pungent smoke, I was at least able during the long and lonely winter nights to read some of the books I had brought with me.

The Indians, though nominally Christians, were utter savages at heart, and close contact with primitive life and passions, and the almost complete absence of moral sense amongst those with whom I was so closely associated had a disquieting effect. Only the strictest self-discipline could prevent one "going Indian," with all that it implies.

Never, it appeared to me, did any of these Indians attribute ill-health to natural causes. Inevitably they would cast around in their minds to find out whom they had offended, then, having by virtue of dreams and other means decided upon this point, they would try to propitiate the party they thought responsible for their illness with gifts. If this failed they would make recourse to medicine and the injured man, by peculiar incantations, would enlist the aid of his familiar Manitous, endeavor to overpower those of his enemy and thus drive the sickness back upon him.

Open water brought in all my Indian hunters, including my old friend Cun-na-buts who still seemed disposed to assume the rôle of Cupid, though I gave him scant encouragement.

One afternoon while I was baling up beaver skins old Wap-in-a-gasis entered the store with bent shoulders, his unkempt hair dangling before his eyes. Silently he took me by the hand and remained motionless while tears coursed down his cheeks. At length he spoke.

"Okemasis, my son is very ill. Long and fervently have I prayed to the Ke-sha Manitou (Great Spirit) of the white man but he remains hidden behind a cloud and cannot hear my voice. Okemasis! You are a white man and are supposed to know all things, unlike us poor Indians who know nothing apart from the habits of the animals in the woods. Can I call upon

the spirits and Manitous of my forefathers to aid me? May I conjure the good spirits by *Kar-min-or-sic* Manitou-kay-win (*good* conjuring) to help my dying son?"

I realized with utter sympathy the tremendous fight this poor Indian, old enough to be my grandfather, was faced with. He had abandoned his household gods when baptised by some missionary many years before. Upon these new gods he had called in vain in his extremity. Was it to be wondered at that now he thought the white man's God was not to be relied upon, and that his own ancestral Manitous were offended by their abandonment?

Taking him to the house I made him a cup of tea, gave him some tobacco, and as best I could drew upon my own small store of spiritual experience, explaining that all paths led to the same end no matter what trail was followed.

A few days later I was awakened early one morning to find poor Wap-in-a-gasis on his knees beside my bed, holding my hand and kissing it repeatedly while hot tears splashed upon it.

"Oh! Ni-chi, Oh! Ni-chi, assay ni gi wan-i-ha ni kosis," (My friend, My friend, I have lost my son at last), wept the old man as he continued to bathe my hand in tears. He was almost overwhelmed with the intensity of his grief and I did my best to console and comfort him.

A wooden coffin was made and covered with cloth, and later in the day the burial procession moved from the wigwam to a little knoll amongst the pine trees where a shallow grave was dug. Then, in deference to old Wap-in-a-gasis, I read the burial service in English as the coffin was lowered, while around me the relatives sobbed and cried with complete abandon. There is something unspeakably impressive in the stark simplicity of an Indian funeral.

As night approached it commenced to rain steadily and again I felt that strange longing for human companionship. Finally, tired and lonely, I threw myself upon my hard wooden bed and fell asleep.

Fur had been quite plentiful that winter and when spring arrived I had a fine collection of furs but an almost empty store. Although Alex Swain had promised to send six or eight dog-team loads of trading supplies only two had arrived before the ice became unfit for sleighing. Isaac, on the other hand, had done very little trade and his store was still well stocked with goods. Now all the Indians were away on their last spring hunt and would soon be returning with big packs of beaver, otter, bear and muskrat skins.

With my store practically empty I was in a quandary as to how I was going to secure these furs and prevent the opposition from getting them.

I was sitting in the house one evening wondering what I was going to do to meet the situation when an Indian lad, Paskina, rushed into my room, scared and breathless.

"Okemasis! Okemasis!" he cried in Cree, "there's a Weetigo in the woods. The women saw him when they were cutting wood and it chased them back to camp. We shall all be killed!"

The Weetigo, as already explained, is, according to Indian belief, a cannibal spirit which will suddenly descend upon a camp and destroy every one in sight, devouring young and old alike, the mere mention of the word being sufficient to cause the direst terror.

On walking over to the camp, situated on a high ridge behind the post, I found every one in a frenzy of fear, while old Piskonas, the Medicine Man, was pounding on a drum and singing vociferously to frighten the spirits away. The panic continued for about a week, during which time none of the women would venture into the woods for firewood but would go in crowds to the very fringe of the forest, grab what they could carry and scurry affrightedly back to their lodges.

To my intense surprise I received a visit one afternoon from my avowed enemy, Isaac Mason. But it was a very subdued and badly frightened Isaac who entered the despised portals of the Hudson's Bay house, and I immediately knew that something most unusual must have impelled him to this course of action.

He was a little shamefaced, and had entirely lost the arrogant and care-free poise of the free trader; he seemed thin, nervous and ill at ease as he mumbled first one thing and then another. Finally he spoke what was on his mind, and it must be remembered that Isaac was an Indian at heart.

"This Weetigo, he's scare the womans pretty bad!"

"He sure has. Seems to have scared what few men there are around also; aren't you a little afraid of him yourself?"

Then I received an inspiration. "You see, Isaac, while it's not pleasant I haven't much to be afraid of for, as you know, these Weetigos never molest a white man unless he has Indian blood in him. But you will have to be careful in that place of yours way off in the bush. It would be too bad if anything happened to your family!"

Across Isaac's face shot a look of relief and understanding.

"I just come over for to see what you t'ink about it. You're a white man and I t'ought I'd see what you'd say. I'm being paid to trade furs, not to have my fambly eat up by Weetigos. If he comes around again I'm going for to go away some place where dey'll be all right," added the pale-faced breed as he pulled himself up and puffed out his chest. "Course I'm not scared, me, but I'm just afraid for the womans and kids."

"Certainly, Isaac," I replied, very tactfully I thought. "But perhaps, after all, you'd be wise to keep out of sight until, this thing blows over, that is if that darn Weetigo comes around again. Good-by!"

Intuition seemed to tell me that *the Weetigo was most certainly going to reappear*!

The following evening, just as the millions of frogs commenced their usual evening song: g-rrk, g-rrk, g-rrk, I walked over to the Indian house and summoned Joseph McKay and Nazie, my trippers. Seated in a babiche-netted chair with my two helpers squatted at my feet smoking their *kinni-kinnick* I outlined my plans. At first both seemed fearful and afraid. At last Joseph commenced to chuckle, then a grin overspread the stolid dusky face of Nazie, and I knew that I had won the day.

Announcing later that we were leaving for a duck hunt the three of us paddled towards the lake in a canoe and erelong beached our craft in a bay a mile or so in the rear of the encampment. Making our way through the fringe of woods that skirted the shore we emerged into a low-lying muskeg thickly covered with willows. It was quite dark by this time, though the conical wigwams could be seen dimly outlined against the purple star-spangled sky a mile away. Apart from the usual noises—the sound of women chopping wood, the peevish cries of a sleepy child, the droning lullaby of some squaw which sounded very close in the damp night air, everything in the camp was quiet.

Silently we cut a couple of willow sticks, to each of which we tied a lantern. Tying red bandanna handkerchiefs around the globes so that they would give out a dull red glare we lighted them in the shelter of the willows. Everything was deathly still as we hoisted the lanterns overhead, then, with unearthly groans, commenced to swing them to and fro. Suddenly the silence of the night was rudely broken by an ear-splitting screech, followed by a most awful uproar; cries and screams of frightened squaws and children, punctuated by sporadic reports of guns.

Igniting some gunpowder we held the lanterns some distance apart in the smoke and continued to moan dismally. To the overwrought imagination of the Indians on the ridge the red lights no doubt resembled the blood-shot

orbs of some strange monster, and the smoke his body. As suddenly as the uproar commenced it subsided, and we could hear the voice of a man addressing the squaws. In a little while the harangue ceased and the noise recommenced louder than ever. Carried away with enthusiasm over the success of our enterprise we continued to swing the lanterns in the air, moaning and shrieking weirdly as we did so.

With a shout of terror McKay yelled that some one was moving in the darkness ahead. Next moment a rifle flashed. With a cry of terror McKay dropped his lantern and dived towards the bush with Nazie at his heels. Grabbing the lanterns I fled in the direction taken by my followers, speeded on my way by a bullet which whistled just above my head. Ahead I could hear my valiant companions crashing through the woods, yelling as they went; thinking, no doubt, that the real Weetigo was after them. Bang! Bang! went a rifle behind me, and I could hear twigs being snipped off by the bullets as they passed close by.

As I reached the beach I observed the two Indians paddling away for dear life. I yelled to them to stop but they paddled all the harder. Finally they realized who it was and waited while I waded waist deep through the icy waters and was finally helped aboard.

It had clouded up in the meantime, and by the light of the sheet lightning flashing in the sky we discerned a small canoe being vigorously propelled towards Dog Island. I chuckled in spite of my discomfort for I had no doubt it contained the free trader and his family; a surmise which proved to be correct.

As we neared the post we noticed a black mass moving at the top of the bank and realized that a crowd of natives were watching us. I was worried for a moment lest the hunters had returned and penetrated the deception. It would be an uncomfortable predicament if they found us out. A worried grunt from Nazie convinced me that he was also ill at ease.

Boldness alone could carry us safely through so, as we beached the canoe, I strode firmly up the trail. There was nothing to fear, however, for the crowd consisted of frightened youths and squaws whom I told we had abandoned our duck hunt on account of the approaching storm.

They were loud in their cries of relief at having a white man amongst them again, so yielding to their entreaties I accompanied them over to the camp, listening meanwhile to their noise and incoherent description of the visitation from the Weetigo. One boy had, they told me, fired a shot immediately upon seeing the red-eyed apparition and fainted, while the women were still almost crazy from their fright. The camp was still in an

uproar when I reached it, and at that very moment old Piskonas, the Medicine Man, stepped into the light of the big fire they had kindled, carrying a rifle in his hands. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that it was Piskonas who had stalked us in order, probably, to maintain his prestige with the tribe.

Immediately the squaws all crowded round him and he proceeded to give them a vivid description of his encounter with the monster. He had, he said, fired three shots at the Weetigo whereupon the spirit had promptly knocked him down and fled howling into the woods. He seemed pretty badly scared I thought, and I wondered why it was that his particular Manitous did not indicate to him that the cause of all the trouble was, at that very moment, watching him from the other side of the fire.

As night again approached there were unmistakable signs of excitement and nervousness around the encampment, and it was barely dark when two young lads tore breathlessly into my room to say that the dreaded Weetigo was around once more as the women had heard him in the bush.

Things were breaking nicely. Here, I thought, was an admirable opportunity to gain a little personal glory and renown which I might capitalize in future trading with the Indians. Picking up my Winchester rifle I filled the magazine with 40.40 cartridges and walked over to the camp. The story of the monster's reappearance was immediately shouted at me from all directions. To calm their fears I now told them in Cree that the Weetigo could harm only Indians but could not hurt a white man, so I proposed to try and kill it. With my rifle under my arm I strolled jauntily down the trail in the direction from which the latest sounds were supposed to have come and penetrated some distance into the darkened woods.

Here I waited a while, listening to the babble of tongues upon the ridge, then uttering one or two piercing cries and moans I discharged my rifle, time after time, into the heavens, while, from the ridge, arose despairing cries of frightened squaws and children. Having emptied the magazine I slowly retraced my steps towards the camp. From the shouts of genuine welcome with which I was greeted I was satisfied that they had never expected to look upon me again. I told them that their minds might rest in peace as I had encountered the Weetigo and rendered him *hors-de-combat*; that the cries they had heard were emitted by the ogre as I pumped lead into his person. Then, lest some more skeptical members of the band should, after recovering from their fright, decide to investigate and take a look at the "remains" I informed my listeners that I had treated the bullets with a

special preparation known only to white men which made such spirits dissolve into thin air.

A day or so later, while I was still looked upon as the hero of the hour and the saviour of the squaws and children, the hunters returned with big packs of fur upon their backs. Immediately I made a round of the wigwams, accompanied by Nazie and McKay. While I modestly and nonchalantly puffed upon my pipe my trippers loudly extolled my courage. It was a simple matter to get the furs regardless of my almost empty store, and when we got through I was satisfied that hardly a pelt remained around the camp.

While the furs were being pressed and baled I made preparations to close the post for the summer and go into God's Lake. The canoe was looked over and leaky spots caulked with spruce gum; mosquito nets were made by the squaws, guns oiled, the tent examined and patched where necessary, and everything put into readiness for an early departure.

A SAULTEAUX TRAPPER.

In less than a month's time I was again on my way to Norway House with the fur brigade. Late one evening, just as we were thinking of camping for the night, a York boat appeared suddenly upon the brink of the Knife Rapids, then, after a moment of seeming indecision, it plunged down into the foaming cauldron of waters, dipped for a second out of sight in the flying spray, then rode upon the surf with bow raised high in the air. One after another, three others followed and in a little while all came together in the still eddy where we were waiting.

"Hello, Godsell," a familiar voice hailed me. "How is everything at Pepekwatooce?"

To my surprise I beheld Massie clad in moccasins, wide brimmed Stetson hat, corduroy pants and a flannel shirt, standing in the stern sheets of the leading boat.

Hurriedly we compared notes. Chief Factor McTavish had taken quite a fancy to Massie, who had been transferred to Norway House the previous summer. Now poor Massie was also in disgrace. He had fallen in love with a pretty native girl who assisted at the mess. She was a great favorite of McTavish's and as a consequence the wrath of this potentate of the wilderness had fallen upon my erstwhile fellow-traveler and he was being banished to the back of the beyond. He was even now doing penance, being under orders to proceed to York Factory, then along the coast to Fort Severn, thence overland across terrible mosquito-ridden swamps and portages to *Pepekwatooce* where he was to spend the winter. It was a long, expensive and unnecessary journey of almost fifteen hundred miles; but it was Massie's punishment that was aimed at by this old disciplinarian who, at all times, loved to show his power.

A few days after my arrival at Norway House, Charlie Sinclair came to the store where I was putting up rations for the Split Lake Brigade.

"How would you like to take charge of the post at Trout Lake?" he inquired.

I felt more than honored at being offered this appointment while only nineteen years of age for Trout Lake was a large and important post, second only to Fort Churchill and York Factory. I replied with alacrity that I should be very pleased to do so, and was told to arrange for canoemen and rations.

The following morning I was talking to Mr. Sinclair when who should come trooping into the office but a deputation of ten Pepekwatooce Indians, headed by Big Simon.

“Is the Okemasis going back to Pepekwatooce?” inquired the Chief. “We hear he is leaving us, and do not want him to go elsewhere; he understands us Indians and we want him to come back.” But it was not to be.

A few days later I set out with three good Cree paddlers on my six hundred mile canoe journey into the interior.

CHAPTER IX

The White Lights

Two years later I found myself at Fort Severn on Hudson's Bay, gazing day after day across the lonely sand dunes and billowing gray rollers, waiting vainly for the coast boats to arrive from York Factory with the outfit. [1] It was already the middle of September and there was great danger of my York boat brigade getting frozen in ere reaching Trout Lake with the much needed supplies.

In the meantime the Fort Severn stock of flour had been reduced to about seven sacks and I was forced to divide my crew of forty-four Cree boatmen into bands of ten, supplying them with muzzle loaders, gun-caps, trade ball and gunpowder, and turn them loose to hunt a living along the barren shores of the Bay. Not being accustomed to the rarefied atmosphere of the coast they saw their bullets, time after time, fall short in the sand and figured they were the victims of bad medicine, then when one was mauled by a polar bear they practically threw up their hands.

When no coast boat arrived by the first of October I sent the four York boats off with very little in the way of rations and set off with my paddlers for Trout Lake where I faced half a thousand hungry Indians who had been waiting for their fur debts. Sending them off to places where they could catch fish in the lake, I put the post on short rations and killed off all the pups and unnecessary sleigh dogs to avoid having to feed them. Then, early in December, I set off with four dog-teams on a five hundred mile jaunt to Norway House to get relief supplies. That journey will long linger in my memory as one of the hardest I have ever experienced for the snow was soft and often, for days, we waded through a freezing slushy mixture of snow and water.

As I stepped into the Company's office at Norway House in my soiled buckskin coat and leggings, thin and emaciated from the scanty fare and hardships of the trail, Roddy and the clerk gasped with astonishment and asked what on earth was wrong. A moment later, Charlie Sinclair, Mr. McTavish's successor, hurried in. White-faced and angry he stood before me.

"Why have you left your post without permission?" he demanded, then without waiting for an explanation continued: "You know that it is contrary

to regulations for any officer to leave his post without authority. You will return tomorrow without fail."

Astonished at this reception I retorted angrily:—"I have come for supplies. The Trout Lakers are nearly starving."

He gazed at me unbelievingly. "But you got your supplies! What are you talking about?" he faltered.

Then, for the first time, he learned that the coast boats had failed to reach Fort Severn, and that neither that post nor Trout Lake had received their proper outfit and each was short of goods.

"I have come in for supplies which we need in the worst way," I continued, "and it is my intention to return just as soon as the dogs are rested and in shape to make the trip with proper loads."

This explanation put an entirely different complexion on the matter, and when the dog-teams carrying the York Factory packet arrived a couple of days later we heard that the coast boats had been wrecked near the mouth of the Cas-kit-a-makan river, and the freight scattered all along the coast.

But Mr. Sinclair was worried about other things. The Company, for whom he had worked nearly all his life, was undergoing one of these periodic convulsions that come at certain times to all large corporations. Mr. R. H. Hall, an old fur trader, had recently been elevated from the charge of Saskatchewan District to the position formerly held for nearly thirty years by the able Mr. Chipman, and was now Czar of furland.

In years gone by some little quarrel had taken place between Mr. Sinclair and the new executive, and already he thought he could see the writing on the wall, for hardly had this old fur trader taken office when the calm of thirty years was suddenly broken. Quarrels long forgotten were revived and, one after another, the erstwhile enemies of Mr. Hall were made to bite the dust. To such men, whose lives were bound up with the service, and who had been willing and satisfied to accept small wages and forego the barest of comforts in anticipation of a pension in declining years, this action spelled stark tragedy.

"Once a Hudson's Bay man always a Hudson's Bay man" had always been the slogan. What now were they to do? Even the thought of working for a despised opposition outfit was repellent to men who had devoted their entire energies to keeping the traders from flooding the Company's erstwhile territory.

Mr. Sinclair told me of his troubles. Inspector Tremayne was out, and he felt that he might also soon have to resign. Never for a moment had I

doubted the enduring stability of the Company and their recognition of work performed until that day. During the long conservative régime of Commissioner Chipman promotion had followed definite lines, very much as it had done before Confederation. Rarely, very rarely, was a man ever dismissed; hence, to a large extent, the enduring devotion and unswerving loyalty of the staff. Never were politics played within the service. Now the tranquillity of the Company's routine was disturbed, and soon a score of small contending factions arose within the ranks, laying seed for future quarrels.

At Norway House I found everything that was needed, and soon the dogs were on their way back home again. Seven Norway House teams accompanied them, each laden down with the regulation four hundred pound load to a toboggan.

In the meantime sundry internal disturbances had warned me that all was not well within, and upon visiting the Doctor at the Indian Agency I was told I had acquired an ulcerated stomach as a result of my peculiar diet of sodden bannock and greasy, Indian cooked food. He suggested it would be well for me to have a proper diagnosis and take a course of treatment as soon as I conveniently could. Seeing that my five years had nearly expired Mr. Sinclair agreed to let me go in the spring, which I immediately arranged to do.

Early in April Leslie Laing, Bevington, the Reverend Mr. Wright and myself were gliding swiftly over the gleaming surface of Lake Winnipeg, each behind a dog-team, full of enthusiasm at the prospect of going "outside" and seeing the "white lights" once again. How romantic those two strips of steel looked at Icelandic River! And what a thrill I got when, after five years, I once again beheld a train! Our enthusiasm was almost childish as we gazed wonderingly upon the everyday things we had taken for granted even in our schoolboy days. Primarily, I think, our minds were occupied with what we were going to eat. Big juicy steaks, ham and eggs, French fried potatoes, ice cream, oranges! What a change they were going to be from the eternal fish and bannock, and accursed pork and beans.

When, at length, we sat around a snowy tablecloth we created almost a sensation by our voracity and the unusual selection of our orders. No doubt our tanned faces and fringed attire gave the impression that we were peculiar types of natives which the North country produced. With an expansiveness which suited both our feelings and the occasion we further surprised the waitress by each giving her a dollar tip.

As soon as we reached Winnipeg we made for the Empire Hotel, and as we dined we all remarked that the trim, active waitresses were a decided improvement upon the swarthy, moccasined variety which had even begun to look good to us in the North. That afternoon we indulged in an orgy of shopping, and were all quite proud of ourselves when we sat at that table that evening in well pressed suits, new shirts, stiff collars and gleaming shoes. But oh! what agony we did suffer with those shoes!

I doubt if any one who has not actually had the experience can realize the intense delight and exultation one feels after years of isolation in being transplanted into the intoxicating atmosphere and colorful life of a gay city, especially if accompanied by gay companions. We were here, there and everywhere, our minds and spirits stimulated by the fast moving traffic, noise and bustle of the streets. At length we visited the office and were told by Mr. Christie that the Commissioner was busy and would not be able to see us for a day or so. In the meantime, he suggested, we might as well go ahead and enjoy ourselves.

This suited us splendidly, and Laing proceeded to interpret the suggestion in the *broadest* literal sense. When we sat down to dinner he was in a highly convivial mood while his antics and loud witticisms convulsed nearly every one around. As the hotel was frequently patronized by arrivals from the North these unusual ebullitions of feeling were, however, met with tolerant good humor.

My persistent sobriety soon became the subject of amused teasing by the waitresses who had been betting amongst themselves as to when I would also fall from grace, and "tumble off the wagon," as the saying goes. One morning I was accompanying my companions on their pilgrimage from bar to bar, contenting myself with just an occasional port wine. Suddenly Laing had one of his brain waves: "Why don't you try a *John Collins*?" he suggested. Upon the united assurance of every one, including the bartender, that this was nothing more than a sort of Sunday school drink and strictly non-intoxicating, I agreed to try one out. It tasted like lemonade and was decidedly good on a warm day, so, thenceforth, I ordered a *John Collins* when the others ordered Scotch.

It was a most exhilarating drink! Never did lemonade give such a rosy color to everything around. Soon I was roaring with laughter at Laing's sallies, oblivious to time and place, and also, I fear, to the number of drinks I imbibed. Our party continued to increase in size, noise and merriment; every one talking and laughing at the same time while nobody appeared to listen. Meanwhile, as I smoked one cigarette after another, with one foot upon the

brass rail and a John Collins in my hand, I felt as though I owned a million and was at peace with the world. Looking at the bar I noticed an untouched John Collins. Instinctively I drained the glass in my hand and picked up the full one, then I became aware of a small man in a bowler hat addressing me. I had never seen him before in my life but, of course, I ordered a drink. He seemed to want to talk about the North but my mind was full of other things. The little chap was most persistent, and seemed obsessed with the idea that all was not well with the North. Time after time I assured him that everything was simply perfect; that the birds were singing, the Indians living in the lap of luxury and everything was wonderful. Then through the haze of smoke Laing's features appeared.

I think some sort of introduction was performed for I distinctly remember the little fellow shaking me by the hand and ordering another round of drinks. It gradually penetrated through my rather befuddled brain that the man had made up his mind that there was starvation in the North. Well! he was rather liberal with the drinks so, feeling big-hearted and anxious to please, I resignedly agreed with him. In a little while I found myself seated opposite him at a small table away from the rest of the crowd. When I had told him pretty well what I thought he wanted to hear he departed in a state of suppressed excitement, and I joined my friends again.

I suppose it was about eight o'clock when I walked into the dining room upon far from steady feet. Over in our corner the gang were all assembled; Laing, Bevington, Captain Freakley of "The Stork" and one or two others whose names I now forget. All seemed absorbed in newspapers they held before them and were evidently highly amused judging by the robust guffaws and howls of laughter. With considerable difficulty I steered an erratic course towards the table. Loud cheers greeted my arrival; newspapers were waved overhead, and everybody talked at once. Catching the amused eye of the waitress I subsided in my chair. Vociferous congratulations continued to be poured upon me as newspapers bearing big red headlines were thrust before my gaze.

Splashed across the front page of *The Evening Telegram* ran the announcement:

"MEN FROM THE REMOTE NORTH COMPLETE
LONG JOURNEY IN A TRIP TO WINNIPEG."

"Well! What of it?" I inquired as I laid the papers down.

"Look! Read it," cried Captain Freakley excitedly while tears of laughter streamed down his cheeks as he gazed at me with beaming features. Again I

took the paper up and glanced at the sub-heading in slightly smaller type.

"Hudson's Bay Official Relates Story of Privations
During Winter—Serious Condition Prevails
Among Some Tribes of Indians—Fur
Catch Is Not Large This Season."

This was more interesting so cocking my head on one side and focusing my eyes as well as possible I proceeded to read the smaller type.

"Mr. Godsell stated today that food conditions in the Keewatin District have been very grave. He stated that . . ."

There were eleven columns altogether and about every third paragraph commenced with the accursed reiteration: "Mr. Godsell also stated to our representative . . . ," and so forth. Then it dawned on me that the gentleman in the bowler hat was no gentleman at all but a newspaper reporter with all that it implies. It was a heart-rending story of starving Indians, hungry missionaries, awful journeys, and terrible privations which would raise a lump in anybody's throat, but it bore not the slightest resemblance to anything that I remembered saying.

While congratulations were being showered upon me in having acquired such prominence on the front page of one of Canada's leading dailies after such a short sojourn in town I continued to read this astonishing piece of "news."

"*Mr. John Collins.*" I looked up. The waitress, a wide exultant grin upon her face, was proffering the menu. *She had won her bet at last!*

Again I looked at the paper and started in genuine surprise.

"What's the matter?" grinned Freakley. "Reading about all the little foxes and all the little bears and lynx being cuddled together beneath the ice to keep warm?"

In order to get rid of that confounded reporter when he was asking the reason for the shortage in the fur catch I had, with an eye to the ridiculous, told him something like this: that throughout the North the water in the lakes and rivers was very high when it froze up in the fall, then there had been a drop of some five feet in the level and the water had frozen over again, leaving an overhanging canopy of ice in all the lakes and rivers of the land, the upper strata forming a sort of roofed passageway above the lower level of ice. I had assured him that, being much warmer down there, *the animals had forsaken the woods for these icy corridors* and, therefore, the Indians had seen no sign of them in the woods. Now this was advanced as my own,

"an expert's," explanation for the supposed shortage of furs and suffering that winter. No wonder the boys laughed!

The quotations herein are from *The Winnipeg Evening Telegram*, dated Wednesday, April 12th, 1911.

Next morning as I was passing the office on my way to breakfast the telephone commenced to ring so loudly that I thought it was going to jump right off the desk. Something told me that it was for me, and I was right. The clerk answered, then catching my eye he called me over.

"The Commissioner would like to see you right away!" he said.

I hurried over, but oh! how my head did ache! My presence was greeted with appreciative and knowing smiles at the office. My fame had spread like wild-fire. I did not have long to wait, and was quickly ushered into the presence of a tall gray man, of huge frame, with stiff close cropped hair and cold calculating eyes. For a moment he watched me narrowly.

"Good morning, Mr. Godsell. To what might I attribute your unbecoming prominence in print last night?" inquired the autocrat of the fur trade.

"To excessive indulgence in John Collins', Sir," I replied.

Mr. Hall seemed somewhat at a loss for an answer to my unexpected reply.

"Well, I hope, for the sake of the Company, you will abstain from spirituous liquors in future. I have been nearly forty years in the service but during that entire period I have never appeared anything like as prominently before the public eye as you did yesterday."

Briefly I explained my meeting with the reporter and, to some extent, the environment in which we met, and I left with strict admonitions regarding the demon drink.

Next morning, on my way to breakfast, I passed the news stand. Stopping to glance at the morning's paper I stood rooted to the spot for, to my profound astonishment, the following headlines in *The Winnipeg Telegram* stared me in the face:

STARVING INDIANS ATTACK H. B. POSTS IN REMOTE NORTH

———

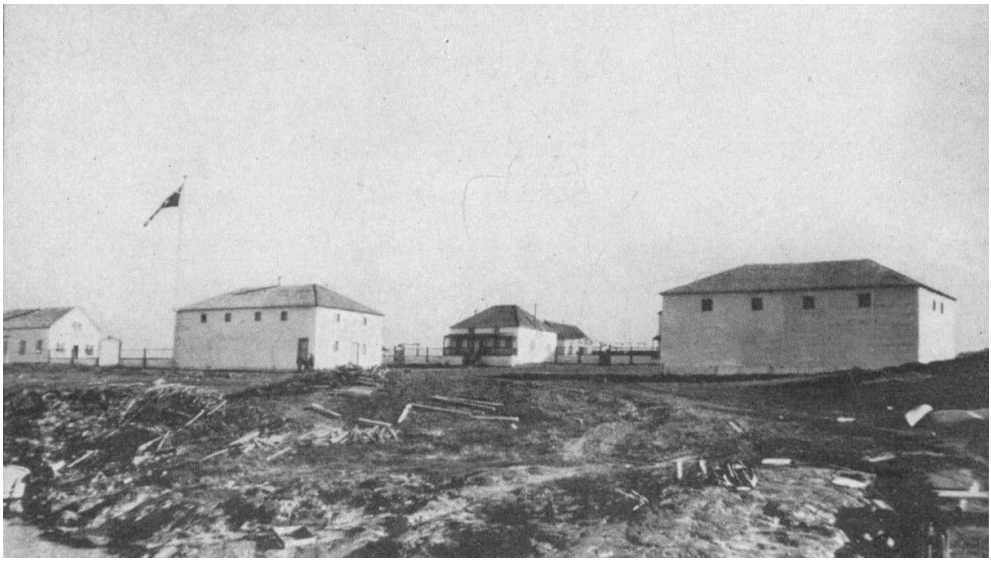
RED MEN BANDED TOGETHER ARE RAVAGING COUNTRY IN SEARCH OF FOOD

———

BLOODY SKIRMISHES REPORTED TO OTTAWA

RESIDENTS OF NORWAY HOUSE PREPARE FOR WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER IF NECESSARY

It was truly a remarkable story of frenzied bands of starving, painted half-breeds and savage Indians threatening the safety of the trading posts in the North, and bearing down Lake Winnipeg towards Selkirk, looting Hudson's Bay railway caches as they came. Special troops of the Royal North West Mounted Police, said the paper, were being rushed from Regina to hold the hostiles back.



FORT CHIPEWYAN. CRADLE OF EXPLORATION IN THE NORTHWEST.

As we were the last arrivals from Norway House, and the place was as peaceful as an old maid's home, or probably more so, I could not for one moment think where such an absurd report had originated. At that moment the telephone commenced to ring loudly. Again I had a presentiment, and once more I was right.

"Commissioner wants you over at the office right away," called the clerk.

This time I entered the sanctum sanctorum with considerable trepidation, recalling fully the old adage of giving a dog a bad name. The Commissioner's attitude was distinctly hostile.

"I presume you have read the morning papers, Mr. Godsell?"

"Yes, sir."

"Am I to understand that you have again been indulging in intoxicants?"

His disbelief was distinctly obvious when I assured him that I had not and that I was very much surprised at what I had read.

"These stories and reports are most annoying, and are giving me a large amount of unnecessary work. Here," he continued, placing his hand on a pile of telegrams, "are wires from the Department of Indian Affairs at Ottawa, from the Mounted Police in both Ottawa and Regina, from the Chief of Police at Selkirk, and here," he added petulantly, "is a cable from an apprentice clerk's mother in Scotland wanting to know if her son is anywhere in the zone of hostilities."

The story was, of course, denied in the evening papers by the Hudson's Bay Company, and was subsequently traced to a letter written by an imaginative resident of Norway House to a friend in Ottawa, who little thought that it would ever be disposed of to the press.

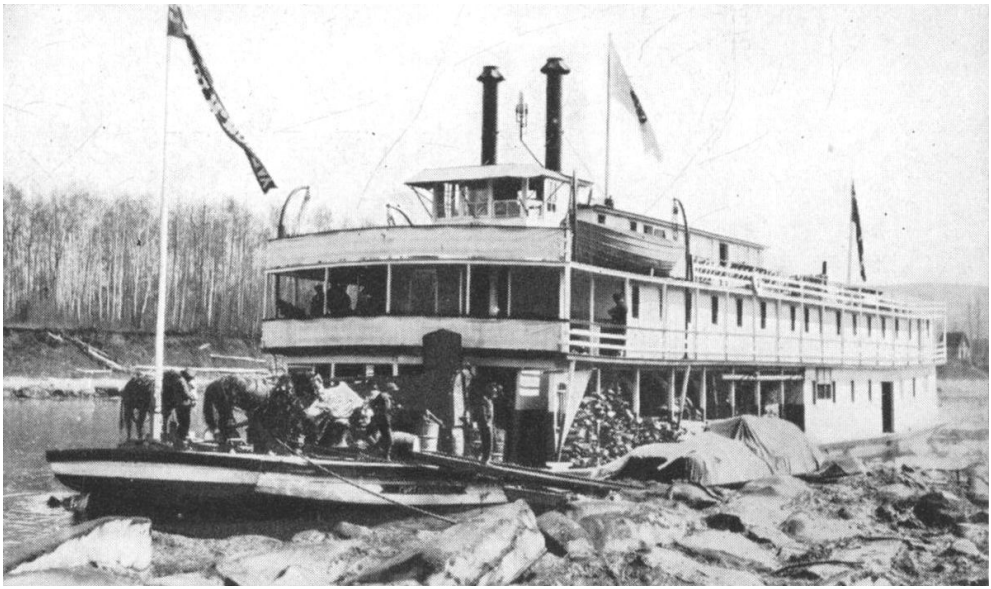
A few weeks later I was faced with a decision as to my future course of action. The Company's doctor, Mr. Simpson, considered it unwise for me to return North until I had followed a diet prescribed by him, which was impossible in that country. In the meantime I had made quite a number of friends around the hotel. One met many people in those days of vast colonization schemes, of land booms and extensive railroad construction. Introductions were unnecessary, and there was still a free and easy good-fellowship almost everywhere in the West.

After a final interview with Mr. Hall, and following his suggestion that I should return to Norway House, I told him that I had decided to follow the doctor's orders and that, having received an offer to go west on the Grand Trunk Railway, I had decided to leave the Company for a while at least. The Commissioner then very liberally agreed to defray all my hotel and medical expenses until I was ready to depart.

It is not my intention to deal with my life, or experiences, on railroad construction. It was a peculiar life to be thrown into daily contact with the riff-raff of Europe; to check over empty box-cars each morning in search of typhoid cases and rush them off to Prairie Creek Hospital, from which few ever returned alive. There was a ceaseless movement of incoming and outgoing men, which bore out the contention of the contractors that it took three complete relays of men to build a railroad; the one on the job, the one going out, and the one coming in to replace them.

During a visit to Edmonton later in the summer I was introduced to a man from Fort Vermillion named Fred Lawrence, who was organizing a trading venture to reap profits from the development taking place in the Peace River country which was being financed by Grenfells of London, England. From the description he gave me of this land of milk and honey, of rolling hills and grassy prairies, I was more than intrigued as it appeared so different from the sterile, swampy country in which I had spent the last five years. Finally I consented to join the Peace River Trading and Land Company for a year.

A few days later I boarded the Athabasca Landing stage at the Transit Hotel near Edmonton with lively recollections of the only other stage I knew, the one from the western railroad town of Edson which ran to Grand Prairie, and I saw to it that I was attired *for walking* should the necessity arise.



ATHABASCA RIVER STEAMER—THE FORT MCMURRAY.

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[1] Outfit, the name used by the Company to designate the annual supply of trading goods sent in to the posts. Each season's trade was also known as "Outfit 250, 251," and so forth, and this mark was put on the merchandise to identify the season it was shipped.

CHAPTER X

Stage, Steamer and Pack-Train

It was a magnificent August day, a grateful breeze rustled the leaves of the cottonwood and poplar trees, swaying the branches to and fro over our heads as we clattered along behind our four-horse team. The Athabasca trail, as it was known, was in reality an exceedingly good road, especially where it meandered through beautiful park-like country interspersed with poplar groves.

There were six passengers in all; some, like myself, connected with trading outfits, others bound for the Peace River country in search of homes, and a real estate speculator who had smelled out the possibilities of easy money in this promised land.

At noon we built a camp-fire, watered and fed the horses, prepared our meal and then were off once more. Every few miles we would overtake strings of heavily laden Bain wagons hauled by horses, mules, or even oxen, conveying trading goods from Edmonton to Athabasca Landing for the North. Usually they were driven by breeds, wearing fringed buckskin coats and black felt hats, who lolled on top of the loads as though they had unlimited time before them and not a worry in the world. At almost every turn on the trail we would meet more teams, hauling empty wagons, on their way back to town for further loads of freight. Since the arrival of the railroad in the west the Athabasca trail was the highway of the North and all the freight for the Peace River and Mackenzie River trading posts, as far as Fort McPherson, passed over it.

Just as the cool mists of evening were falling we dashed up to a number of log out-buildings which I was told was Aggie's stopping place, and half way to the Landing. Here, after a sturdy supper of pork and beans, flapjacks, cookies and stewed fruit, we rolled in our blankets upon the floor and enjoyed a dreamless sleep.

A little after six o'clock next evening we topped the rim of a spruce clad hill and saw before us, enshrouded by a glimmering heat haze wherein wisps of wood-smoke floated languidly, the far-famed frontier settlement of Athabasca Landing. Drawn up to the river bank were two white painted stern-wheel steamers, from the yellow funnels of which arose white puffs and balls of steam.

As we clattered down the steep hill towards the boat landing we noticed that the street was crowded with a cosmopolitan crowd of trappers, Mounties, Indians, rivermen, a few white women, and here and there a squaw carrying her papoose upon her back.

It was exactly the setting I had visualized back in the Old Country when reading adventure stories of the wilds.

We shot past the rowdy Union Hotel, the club and meeting place for rivermen when going to and from the Silent Places, beloved by breed and voyageur alike, then, as the gang-plank was being pulled in, we dashed aboard the "Northland Echo."

As the raucous shriek of the whistle echoed amongst the wooded heights the paddle wheel commenced to revolve protestingly, beating the muddy waters into froth. At the bow a couple of Indians tested the channel with striped poles, shouting the depth in feet to Captain Barber on the bridge. Night fell as the "Echo" puffed her way slowly against the Athabasca's current; one by one the stars came out and twinkled brightly in the darkening sky, while the piney odor from the damp wooded banks became almost overpowering in its pungent strength.

As I sauntered around the deck the next morning I was addressed by a tall handsome man of about forty, wearing the usual broad-brimmed Stetson.

"Hello, Diamond P. How are you?" quoth the stranger with a smile as he extended his hand towards me.

"I'm fine," I replied, "but why the branding iron?"

"Well, aren't you Godsell, one of our deserters, and a prominent member of Fred Lawrence's famous Diamond P?"

I learned that the Peace River Trading and Land Company had chosen to identify their bales and cases with the letter P inside a diamond thus:

Throughout the North the firm was already known by this nickname, and as I was the first representative to proceed inland I was promptly christened "Diamond P" by all on board. The tall man was, I discovered, Max Hamilton, Inspector for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Athabasca District, and was on one of his periodical visits to the posts.

Mr. Hall's axe had also fallen at Edmonton and Sam King, the popular District Manager, had resigned, most of the office staff leaving with him. As

a consequence there appeared to have been considerable disorganization and Mr. Hamilton was endeavoring to keep things going properly.

At last we sighted the half-breed settlement of Grouard, situated upon a gentle wooded slope beside the reed-filled Buffalo Bay. It consisted largely of straggling whitewashed Indian houses, a Mounted Police barracks, the trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company and Revillon Frères, and a pretentious Catholic hospital and mission. As most of the larger buildings were painted white, with red roofs, the general effect was both picturesque and pleasing.

I found that the mailman would be leaving for Peace River Crossing the next day and arranged to travel with him. In the morning we set out over the seventy miles of muskeg, mud and up-ended roots that was, by courtesy, called a road. In places it was a mere gash through the thick poplars, yet, over this trail, all the freight for the Peace River country was hauled. The land was still a paradise for the fur trader, the coming of settlers being looked upon only as a distant possibility, and the amount of goods necessary to keep the trading posts going was not particularly large.

Unemployment and poverty were quite unknown as every one either traded, trapped or freighted, owned his plot of ground and small log house. A general air of tranquillity and quiet prosperity seemed to permeate the land, but already on the steamer I had met the vanguard of the coming white invasion, the land shark and the real estate promoter, and I wondered, as we rolled along, how great a change the next few years might bring to these happy thoughtless children of the woods. There seemed but one barrier against their ruinous exploitation, the paternal influence of the devoted Fathers at the mission. Would this be strong enough to resist the white man's gold and greed and fire-water? The future proved emphatically that it was not.

I had been told of the magnificent sight that would unfold itself when we topped the nine hundred foot bank of the Peace, but I was entirely unprepared for the stupendous grandeur of the scene. Like a wide ribbon of silver the river meandered through the richly verdant valley, joined at no great distance by the somber Smoky River as it emerged from its purple shadowed canyon.

Upon the topmost pinnacle of the high grass-covered bank a flashing white dot marked the resting place of "Twelve Foot Davis," a veteran trader whose last wish was to be buried upon this magnificent and commanding spot.

We had some trouble in holding the horses back as we drove down the steep incline but we reached the river flat safely and swung into the diminutive village of Peace River Crossing. A telegraph office, Mounted Police barracks, the trading posts of Revillon and the Company, and Johnny Gaudet's log house were all that it contained, while, tied up to the bank, was the steamer "Peace River" waiting patiently for her cargo to be brought across the portage so that she could leave for Fort Vermillion.

I soon had my little trading post established, then teams commenced to arrive with an assortment of cases, bales and sacks of flour. One of my first visitors was "Black" Mackenzie who occupied, along with his half-breed sons, a piece of land some six miles up the river opposite the site upon which Alexander Mackenzie had erected his first fort. He claimed direct descent from the explorer from a natural son by a Beaver woman, which, current gossip maintained, was actually a fact. His sons were big stalwart fellows, showing plainly the Scotch and Beaver strain, but Mackenzie proved well worth watching on account of his oily and persuasive tongue.

In January I got a call to go over to Grouard to straighten out the new company's accounts. It proved to be a cold but interesting journey across the snow covered trail, and it was sixty-two below zero when I pulled on my bearskin chapps and threw my leg across the pinto's back.

About twenty miles out I met the vanguard of the last great mass movement of white people into the unoccupied lands of the Canadian Northwest. It consisted of a team of heavy horses hauling a large caboose on bobsleighs from the roof of which an enormous plume of white smoke trailed up into the frosty air. A gray-bearded old veteran was standing before a little window holding the reins which passed through a leather covered hole in the canvas wall. He stopped the conveyance when we met and invited me in to get warmed up.

Within was a good sized cook-stove, a supply of split wood, a wardrobe and a conglomeration of trunks, household furniture, harness, saddles, pails, pitchforks and what not. A gray-haired lady offered me a cup of tea, inquired anxiously the distance to the river, and asked a thousand questions about the country. By this time I noticed two good sized girls and a boy, all dressed in jean overalls, amongst the baggage, who told me they had sold out in Montana and driven all the way with the intention of settling on the north shore of the Peace.

Hardly had I left when I met a somewhat similar conveyance, though far more rickety, hauled by the queerest team I ever saw—an ox and a mule.

Altogether I counted seventy-two of these emigrant outfits on my way over to Lesser Slave Lake, where I learned there were many more behind. A lot of them seemed quite poverty stricken and poorly equipped to meet the difficulties which would undoubtedly confront them. Quite a few of these new settlers had driven from far down in the States, one family I met having come all the way from Texas, to such an extent had the merits of the Peace River country been extolled in the outside world.

During the short time I had been away Grouard had undergone a remarkable transformation. Frame "hotels," tawdry cafés and dance halls had sprung into existence along with the inevitable real estate offices. For miles around, in hayfield and muskeg, town lots were being surveyed; breeds were selling their homes for a few hundred dollars, then going on a wild carouse, and the smallest strip of "inside" property was selling from a thousand dollars up.

The Mounted Police were kept busy in their eternal search for booze, unloading suspicious looking loads of freight and scattering it around upon the snow while the angry drivers waved their arms and swore in impotent wrath.

Daily the unorganized caravan trickled in and out of town, some taking the road I had just crossed to the Peace while others branched off along the Sturgeon Lake trail to Grande Prairie and beyond. Sometimes as many as a hundred home-seekers passed through in the course of a single day. Business boomed and every one, except the homeless breeds who had already sold their land, seemed happy and content.

But I was hardly satisfied. The desire to reach the unknown places, to meet the pagan Beaver Indians, and to see the distant Rocky Mountains still urged me on. When I was approached by the Revillon Frères Company to take charge of their post at Fort St. Johns the following summer I eagerly accepted the offer, and as soon as I could obtain relief I set out again along dim and infrequently trodden trails.

It was a pleasant and memorable journey. Along lovely jackpine ridges, down one cutbank and up another, through gloomy swamps and over flower strewn prairies our cayuses followed the guide with tireless gait. At night we hobbled the horses, or staked them out on a picket line to save time seeking them in the morning. Across Pouce Coupe prairie we continued along dim trails barely touched at this time by the foot of any white man.

Then we awakened one morning to find our horses gone. Search as we would amongst the copses of poplar not a sign of them could be seen, so we followed the narrow trail we had traversed the day before and there, sure

enough, were the imprints of hobbled horses on their way back to Spirit River so, at my guide Joseph's suggestion, I went back to guard the camp while he set out at a tireless Indian lope in pursuit of our fleeing animals.

It was two days before Joseph brought the wanderers back to camp, though one horse had made good his escape and never to this day have I seen or heard of the brute again. We set out immediately and towards evening came unexpectedly upon what looked like a log blockhouse situated in a verdant little valley through which ran a sparkling little creek, since named Dawson Creek.

Seated before an enormous stone and mud fireplace within his stronghold I made the acquaintance of the bearded veteran Tremblay, the discoverer of, and only settler in, the fertile prairie known as Pouce Coupe. Having had difficulties with the authorities in British Columbia some years before he had decided to flee and seek sanctuary in the unknown places and had thus carved out this pioneer homestead in the backwoods of the North.

We told him whence we were bound, purchased a few supplies from the store in which he traded furs from the Beaver Indians, and continued on our way.

We camped amongst a group of Cree teepees upon the prairie that night, enjoyed the rabbit stew and purple-colored birch syrup which Noseky placed before us. Later that evening we received an addition to our party in the person of an old Iroquois[1] moose hunter called Napoleon, and the blackest Cree I ever saw named Meskinak. He disappeared after a while and must have unearthed a bottle of whisky from some hidden cache for he arrived back at the camp full of abuse and, apparently, bad liquor for he was frothing at the mouth. After trying to hit me over the head with a whisky bottle a couple of times, and kicking down the lodge-poles so that the teepee fell about our ears, I managed to rope and hold the homicidal savage with a picket line while Joseph trussed him up, then we bound him securely to a tree and allowed him to sob and howl himself to sleep.

We forded the treacherous Cutbank River the following evening and picketed our horses in a beautiful little meadow on the far side. The next night we camped in heavy spruce woods beside a little spring upon what seemed a high plateau. Taking me with him the old moose hunter led the way to the edge of the woods and pointed down below. A thousand feet beneath us the wicked South Pine River roared tumultuously between its wooded banks, throwing the swirling waters into those of the Peace some miles below. It was a vast panorama of mountains, dark green forest and yellow cutbank, split by swiftly flowing streams. Far off a pointed cone

made a jagged break in the skyline, and towards this the Iroquois pointed with the remark: “E-ogo-Me-na-haig o Was-kar-igan,” (There is the Pine Fort), the name by which Fort St. Johns was known to Crees and Iroquois alike.

We found the swift mountain torrent known as the South Pine to be in flood. It was about a hundred yards wide so we built a raft, placed all our equipment, saddles and guns upon it, drove the horses in with switches, and poled and paddled to the other shore. The sun was getting low as we emerged from the heavy spruce woods upon a grassy flat beside which flowed the swift turbid current of the Peace.

Across the river, upon a long open clearing overshadowed by a gaunt and ragged range of hills, were pitched scores upon scores of conical skin lodges, while horses by the hundreds ranged the side hills and the flats. The far bank seemed vibrant with color, life and movement. The musical tinkle of many horse-bells mingled with the high pitched cries of scolding squaws, the occasional barking of angry dogs, and the incessant throbbing of tom-toms. High up on a pointed knoll some savage was sending his quavering song to the spirits. My heart leapt at the stirring and unaccustomed sight for even at this distance there was an atmosphere of primitive barbarism in all that we beheld.

Sitting upon our horses, silhouetted against the skyline so that we could easily be seen, we unslung our rifles from the leather sheaths beneath our legs and fired into the air. Immediately we noticed a commotion across the river but it was not until about half an hour later that a narrow dug-out canoe pulled out in our direction. Although the two figures within paddled with might and main the clumsy craft was swept far below ere they brought it to the bank.

Kenneth Beatton, son of the Hudson’s Bay factor, and a Beaver Indian wearing brightly dyed plumes attached to the quill-worked band around his hat, came walking up the bank to find out who we were and agreed to ferry us across. First, they told us, it would be necessary to pole the boat about half a mile upstream as it drifted so much in making the crossing. We therefore unsaddled our horses, dumped the packs into the canoe and, slapping the animals on their flanks, drove them into the stream.

It was an exciting experience crossing the swollen angry river in that scooped out log. As soon as we got ashore we had to scatter through the woods in search of our mounts who had clambered out and disappeared into them some time before. Once this was accomplished we threw on the saddles again and rode towards the post.

[1] Though the habitat of the Iroquois is in Eastern Canada and New York State there is quite a colony of them still living in the vicinity of Jasper House and the Yellowhead Pass. These Indians were originally employed as voyageurs and canoemen by the North West Company, and later by Sir George Simpson, some of whom married Cree women and remained in the West.

CHAPTER XI

The Untamed Beaver Indians

Nowhere in the Dominion of Canada could a more barbarous and primitive scene be witnessed than the large village of smoke stained Indian teepees through which we wended our way.

The unwhipped Beavers stared at us with insolent and unfriendly looks as we rode between the lodges. They were untamed Indians who still retained their pride of race and looked contemptuously upon the white men as being a decidedly inferior people. The Sarcees, a branch of this race had, years before, deserted the main tribe over a fight about a dog. They had found their way through their Cree enemies to the prairies to the southward, and so harried the powerful and warlike Blackfeet that they had been glad to form an alliance with this off-shoot of the Beaver tribe.[1]

Catholic priests had tried to civilize these natives but had been driven out with insulting jeers and gestures, and the Medicine Lodge still controlled the pagan devotions of this impudent branch of the far-flung Athabascan race. Once I got to really know them I could understand the sullen fierceness and cruelty of their cousins the Apaches of the southwestern States.

At the time I was thrilled by the vibrant throbbing of the drums, the quavering and eerie medicine song of the man far up on the hill, and the loud *A-ha-a! A-ha-a! A-ha-a*—of the gamblers as they played their ancient game, *La halle*; staking clothes, horses and, at one time, even their wives upon the outcome. Strong-backed powerful looking squaws were busy with their camp duties, scraping skins, hauling water, carrying piles of spruce boughs, for firewood, upon their backs, or chopping wood. Piled upon tripods of poles beside the teepees was a heterogeneous collection of dried meat, pack-saddles, skins, gaudy rugs and blankets, pots, rifles and clothing. There was life and movement everywhere for every moment riders were coming and going, always at a gallop, upon their small wiry cayuses.

We dismounted before four whitewashed log buildings bearing a sign “Revillon Frères,” and I shook hands with a smiling black-haired man wearing corduroy pants, a flannel shirt, moccasins and a cowboy hat, whom I would have taken to be a half-breed anywhere, but it was the renowned Harry Garbitt, an Englishman whose place I was taking as he was to guide an expedition into the Rockies through the Laurier Pass.

Entering the house I found a dozen or more black-haired Beavers squatted upon the floor, each of whom was wearing an enormous buffalo knife stuck in a sheath of leather studded with brass headed tacks. Some of them were also wearing porcupine quill belts and armlets of excellent workmanship, for which the tribe was famous. I noticed almost immediately that many of them had terrible scars upon their necks; scrofula, I learned from Garbitt, due to close intermarriage and their refusal to marry or mix with either whites or other tribes.

Harry introduced me to some of his leading hunters; Attachie, Ah-clu-key, Chief Montaignais, who had recently married his thirteen-year-old granddaughter, and Mi-he-gan, the Wolf—a tall splendidly built Indian with the carriage of a Roman emperor and the high-boned features of a Sioux. There were also a number of straight limbed Ojibways with long braided locks parted in the center and a narrow decorated scalp-lock running down their backs. They were supposed to have killed a Mounted Policeman many years before, becoming outcasts and working their way slowly towards the mountains to escape the white man's law.

The Hudson's Bay post was situated about a hundred yards to the southward and formed the regulation square of buildings with a flagpole in the center. Mr. Beatton, the trader, was a grizzled and hard-headed Orkneyman married to a squaw. He was a bigoted but intensely loyal Hudson's Bay man who, when the new Diamond P steamer put in an appearance that summer, refused to go on board or celebrate the occasion as it was an opposition boat. Like H. A. George, the Company's trader at Peace River Crossing, Beatton continued to look upon all opposition traders as though they were still usurping the chartered rights which the Company had surrendered at Confederation fifty years before.

Each evening the store was besieged by young bucks with lynx and beaver skins to trade for silk handkerchiefs, cowboy hats, buffalo knives and ribbon with which to gamble on the horse races that were held at a still larger camp back on the hill.

One day an insignificant little man arrived from Pouce Coupe and there were great doings in the camp. He proved to be a Medicine Man of considerable standing, and in his honor a big "Give Away" dance was put on near the flat behind the fort. Having been invited to attend I accompanied Harry Garbitt and Reid Johnstone, the interpreter, to the lodges where we squatted cross-legged within Montaignais' teepee in the place of honor opposite the door, and devoured juicy bear and moose ribs. It is a matter of Indian etiquette on such occasions for the guest to eat everything placed

before him, but by a private arrangement made beforehand with Reid, he undertook to handle any portion of my helping which I was unable to take care of myself, this being quite within the bounds of custom and, in my case, a very necessary precaution.

It was quite dark when the throbbing of many drums and the quavering yells of the six drummers announced the dance to be under way. Following the actions of my companions I singled out a young squaw and handed her one end of a bright scarf with which I led her into the circle of dancers as though she was a horse attached to a halter, and together we bobbed up and down around the fires.

The drums and singing followed a regular rhythm to which a hundred dancers limped jerkily around, each male leading his partner by the present he had taken her up with: a scarf, a kettle, a blanket, a saddle, or whatever it might be. As the dance progressed the singing became louder and louder, and the dancing more vigorous until many of the participants were bordering on a state of frenzy. As one couple tired they would make way for another, but each woman would return the compliment by leading out her erstwhile partner with a present of her own: a pair of embroidered moccasins, a fringed buckskin coat, a side of dried meat, or whatever she could spare.

Large copper kettles containing tea were slung above the fires and this, served in mugs, was consumed in large quantities, adding to the mental intoxication of the crowd.

Seen from a distance the dance presented a weird and fantastic sight as the grotesquely limping figures went by, darkly silhouetted against the smoky radiance of the fires; the pulsating throbbing of the tom-toms echoed amongst the somber purple shadowed hills, while the smoky flickering fires which dimly illuminated the scores of lodges, added to the eeriness of the scene.

Suddenly there was considerable whispering and excitement. Andree, the Medicine Man, had led out Attachie with his best race horse, a fine big strawberry roan. A crude drawing of a horse upon a piece of skin was all that passed between them but everybody knew just what it meant. Every one waited expectantly to see what Attachie would do. His bay mare had, only that day, beaten the roan in a race upon the hill, and custom almost called for this horse to be “danced” back in exchange. But Attachie had not traded with old Beatton all these years for nothing. He was a born trader, and a politician of some consequence to boot, and had not quite relished all the attention the new arrival was receiving. When he led the Medicine Man into

the dance with nothing but a rusted Winchester rifle Andree's discomfiture was as obvious as the amusement of the band.

But the episode might easily have ended in tragedy. Having been disappointed in the exchange Andree, as soon as he conveniently could, hurried from the fire, rounded up the horse he had just "danced" and swam it across the river with the intention of spiriting it away next day. But he had not reckoned with Attachie. As the horse plunged ashore on the south side of the river two shadowy figures arose from amongst the willows. Quick as lightning a rope shot out, fell neatly over the animal's ears and, as he started back affrightedly, was pulled taut around his neck.

Scenting what was in the air Attachie had adopted his own peculiar way of taking possession of the gift.

A few days later there was an angry commotion on the hill. The Wolf had lain in wait and stolen the twelve-year-old daughter of Ah-clu-key and had disappeared with her and all his horses. There was intense indignation, much riding and galloping around, flourishing of guns and threatening talk, which all came to nothing as they were afraid of the big man.

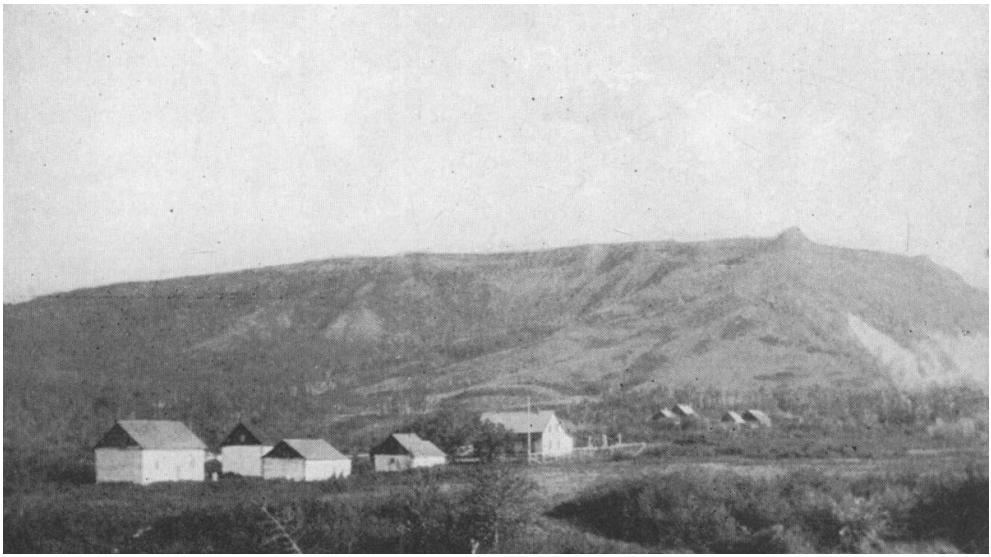
Only a few years before Wolf and Bellyfull, the Sikinni Chief, had attacked a camp of Klondykers on top of the thousand foot hill behind the fort. After days and days of grueling toil the gold-seekers had at last assembled their heavy wagons upon the brink of this precipitous slope. Unfortunately for them some young man, connected with quite a different party, had shot an Indian horse a few days before under the impression, no doubt, that the animal was merely running wild. Like devils incarnate The Wolf and his friend had led their followers upon the camp of the unsuspecting white men and sent the wagons and supplies, along with the teams, crashing down into the yawning gulf below while they yelled and howled with savage glee.[2]

The Beavers still looked upon the country as their own and upon all white men as usurpers. For generations the Peace River had been considered the southern frontier of their land, in recognition of which it was called by the Crees The Beaver Indian River, just as the Sikinni River is looked upon as the frontier of the Sikinni tribe today.

A small colony of the tribe, probably part of the band who emigrated with the Sarcees, still occupied Grande Prairie to the southward. A year or so before some of the Crees from Lesser Slave Lake had decided to hunt in that district but the reception they received was far beyond their expectations, for the Beavers were upon them like a nest of hornets, and the

droning hum of their bullets sent the Crees scurrying back for home and less dangerous trapping grounds.

Now the Beavers were looking with genuine hatred and alarm at the increasing number of whites who were coming each year into their land. The surveyors especially aroused their keen suspicions. Why were they making these lines and cutting down the Beaver Indians' trees? Frequently, when they were gathered together in the store, did some young firebrands threaten to clean up on these intruding whites.



FORT ST. JOHNS, BRITISH COLUMBIA, HUDSON'S BAY FORT IN FOREGROUND.

Having lived amongst the peaceful Crees I did not take these threats very seriously, but I found that Beatton was of an entirely different frame of mind and was fearful that, some day, these natives might perpetrate some ghastly tragedy. Perhaps the knowledge that they had burned down the North West Company's post near the mouth of the North Pine many years before, and massacred all the men, caused him to feel the way he did. Possibly it was due to the fact that, only three years earlier, The Wolf had attempted to stab him in the back for refusing to give him debt; Montaignais had barely been in time to turn aside the blow. At the time I was inclined to attribute his fear to cowardice; now, however, I know that Mr. Beatton was absolutely right, and that wholesale murder was avoided by only a very narrow margin on more than one occasion.

I had hired a Cree Indian named Noseky to act as interpreter in the store and work around the post, and while he did not talk any English he spoke excellent Cree and Beaver, so I talked to him in Cree, which he interpreted into Beaver, and vice versa, and we got along quite well for I had soon managed to adapt my Swampy Cree to the much prettier sounding Plain Cree, the dialect which was spoken in the west.

Noseky, quite a young man, was married to a Cree woman from Lesser Slave Lake, and during the summer they occupied a tent with a plank floor behind my house. Being, like all Indians, an inveterate gambler he often played at night with the Beavers in a small shack belonging to the post but separated by some heavy intervening willows from his tent.

About twelve o'clock one night I was awakened by a perfect bedlam just behind the house, then Noseky came dashing in, dragging his wife by the hand and yelling for a rifle, cursing and swearing like one possessed. I saw that the man was beside himself with anger and that his wife was pale and quivering from fright so, instead of letting him have the rifle, I asked him what was wrong.

At first Noseky was inarticulate with rage; finally he told me what had happened. He had gone as usual to gamble with old Chilla in the shack. While they were playing Achisoken, Ca-ta-koose and The Wolf had entered and they commenced to play for plugs of black tobacco; then The Wolf arose and went outside but failed to return. Suddenly he had heard a woman scream and a few moments later his wife had dashed in, terror-stricken, yelling that The Wolf was after her.

She had been sleeping on a wooden bed pushed up against the far wall of the tent when the thing happened. She had been aroused by a slight noise and seen a shadowy hand move the canvas flap. Sensing something to be wrong she had just slipped over the far edge of the bed and lifted the canvas wall when the naked figure of The Wolf came bounding into the tent. With a cry of fear she had ducked into the open and made a frantic dash for the shack with The Wolf in hot pursuit.

TRACKING THE YORK BOATS UP THE RAPIDS.

Now Noseky wanted to borrow my rifle and go after The Wolf. I talked him out of this idea by telling him that it might be unsafe to leave his wife, and by promising him that I would take the matter up with Mr. Beatton, who was a Justice of the Peace, next morning. Beatton had already heard of the affair when I went to see him. I suggested that Noseky should lay a complaint and that I be sworn in as a special constable and be empowered to arrest and bring in The Wolf.

The factor, however, was frightened, and to my disgust refused to take any action whatsoever. I accused him of lacking courage and being afraid of The Wolf, though had he acted otherwise I should most probably have been killed for I had not yet come to the realization that the Beavers were vastly different from the peaceful Crees and were always ready for a fight. So, though The Wolf's teepee remained ostentatiously in view just across the river, nothing whatsoever could be done, and Noseky and the other Crees around the post continued to mutter angrily, threatening dire vengeance upon him in the future.

About thirty of Lucien Breynot's survey gang rode down the hill that evening and soon afterwards a game of football was started on the stretch of open ground before the deserted Catholic mission. The Crees and half-breeds soon joined in, then, one by one, the Beavers assembled and sat around upon their horses taking in the fun.

I was talking to Mr. Beatton when, to our astonishment, The Wolf stalked insolently across the field. With fist upraised Noseky was upon him like a flash, then one of the survey boys leapt forward and caught his upraised arm. Next moment The Wolf was parading angrily backwards and forwards, waving his arms in fury, shouting loudly in his guttural tongue to the Beavers all around us. Beatton's face blanched as he grabbed me savagely by the arm.

"He's telling them to attack the white men and drive them into the river and to seize the stores at both the posts!" cried the factor nervously. "You get the Crees together and take them over to your place while I get hold of Attachie and try to quieten these damn Beavers. Once a fight gets started there's no knowing where it's likely to end. Whatever you do don't sell The Wolf or the Beavers any ammunition!"

There was already quite a stir. The whites instinctively grouped together without knowing what it was all about. The Crees bunched up on one side, the Beavers milled around, while The Wolf continued his harangue.

Just as I got over to the Crees old Montaignais, the Chief, reached the clearing and commenced to talk excitedly to his followers. With Appasasin's aid I managed to quieten Noseky to whom the sight of The Wolf was like a red rag to a bull, then I noticed that Beatton and Montaignais were herding the Beavers towards the Hudson's Bay.

In a few moments the excitement was all over; The Wolf had disappeared, the Beavers were all moving towards Beatton's, while the Crees were following Appasasin and myself to the Revillon post. The survey boys, who had followed the crowd over to the Hudson Bay store, lost no time in getting back up the hill, and the few I saw appeared to have received a very thorough scare.

Soon after this incident the Beavers moved off to the north to hunt moose and things became very quiet around the fort. Once in a while a raft would drift in to shore and strangers would make their appearance, asking how far it was to Dunvegan or some down river point. Usually they had come through the Rockies from somewhere in British Columbia, having followed the Crooked River, walked across Rocky Mountain Portage to avoid the canyon through which the river plunges tumultuously for sixty miles, and at Hudson's Hope had built another raft and committed themselves to the mighty bosom of the swift and tranquil Peace.

From the Indians we received word of frequent drowning accidents; of white men, unaccustomed to the dangers of swift mountain torrents such as the Halfway River and the Pine, being thrown from their stumbling horses

while trying to ford the current and being drowned as a result. Each summer added to the graves of the unknown dead upon the little knoll behind the fort.

As soon as the ice went out of the river in the spring a number of Beavers arrived on lean, starved ponies, rounded up their horse herds and drove them inland to their villages to carry in the furs and equipment but they were a sorry looking bunch of horses that staggered up the hill. While rounding up our own stock that had wintered out, Mannie Gullion, the police interpreter, and myself came across the bodies of twenty-seven dead Indian horses in the course of a single day.

In anticipation of a big spring trade in lynx, which were plentiful that year, I sent a couple of breeds to Spirit River. They were to buy all the horses they could find at thirty-five dollars a head for I was confident I could more than double my money if I got them in in time.

One day Car-ta-koose, Attachie, Mazula the singer, and a few of the advance guard of the approaching horde came rattling down the hill, howling and singing at the top of their voices, their poor horses nothing but skin and bone. They brought word that Montaignais' and Achisoken's bands had joined forces and were camped in a large village at Fish Creek.

I sent up tobacco, tea and flour with word that I had about fifty good saddle and pack ponies fattening on the prairie grass across the river. Most of the Hudson's Bay horses had died, and as Beatton was far too conservative to bring any in I knew that I would have a distinct advantage once the trading started.

Soon the place was alive once more with Indians. The throbbing of drums resounded in the valley, and horse races and gambling became the order of the day.

They were wonderful trappers, these Beavers, and it was amusing to watch the manner in which some proud hunter would hold aloof until satisfied there was a big crowd in the store. Then he would canter nonchalantly up, leading three or four heavily loaded pack ponies. Casually, though seething internally with unbounded pride, he would throw pack after pack of furs upon the floor while the Indians squatted around marveled at the mounting evidence of the great man's wealth.

But Beatton's scouts would be in the offing, ready the moment I was off my guard to use any possible blandishment or story to sow discord, or lead the hunter with his furs to the Hudson Bay post. I had my own spies in the camp, however, and long ere any hunter arrived I was on the lookout for

him, and rare indeed was the occasion when means were found to entice the Indian to the other store.

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[1] The Beavers are a branch of the great Athabascan, or Tinneh family, which extends from beyond the Arctic Circle along the Rocky Mountain range to New Mexico. The fierce and warlike Apaches, the Navahoes, the Sikinnis and the Dog-Ribs are also of this same ethnological group.

[2] I was told this story by F. W. Beatton who was the Company's factor at Fort St. Johns at the time, and also heard it from The Wolf. While traveling with Bellyfull in the summer of 1926 I also heard it from him. I examined the remains of these wagons in 1912; while in 1926 portions of them could still be seen half way up the ravine behind the post. The Wolf and Bellyfull are still living.

CHAPTER XII

The Fur Smugglers

A few months later, it was the summer of 1913, I boarded the "Peace River" en route to the Old Country, and soon afterwards watched the verdant hills and cutbanks as they slipped rapidly by.

When I arrived at Grouard I found it smelling strongly of newly sawn lumber, with barber shops, stores, Chinese cafés and places of less respectability lining either side of "Main Street," while the local half-breed girls were up in arms at the advent of some flashy, high-stepping dance hall "ladies" from outside. City cowboys, gaudy in their decorated chapps, scarlet neckerchief and ten gallon hats, were riding jerkily to and fro in search of love, adventure and town lots. But Grouard's days were numbered for already the approaching railroad was surveying out a townsite of their own near Round Lake, forty miles away, where they would have the "pickings" by selling town lots of their own.

Athabasca Landing was, for the first time in history, full of angry breeds, Indians, and freighters deprived of their customary work by the arrival of the railroad which they had anxiously desired, and now as heartily condemned, for there was no work to be had, and their teams were eating their heads off in idleness. A peculiar sidelight on the by-products of "progress."

I beheld these strips of steel, this time with mixed feelings. They represented civilization and creature comforts previously unknown in the Northland. But they spelled the end of romance; restrictions on the liberty of half-breed and Indian alike, and would prove a death-blow to the erstwhile power of the fur traders, hitherto the unquestioned lords of the land.

Finding the little town of Bridgnorth, where my people were now living, extremely quiet I was soon attracted, like most returned travelers, by the promise of the bright lights of London, to which place I eventually made my way.

I was on the point of accepting an offer from Revillons to take charge of Fort George in James Bay when, by one of those queer twists of destiny, I again came into contact with the Hudson's Bay Company through a friend who told me that Mr. Hall had been retired and a new man, Mr. Bacon of the London office, appointed as Commissioner. He added that Mr. Bacon, anxious to repair the damage done by the late Commissioner, was

endeavoring to re-engage many of the men who had been forced out of the service, or had quit, during Mr. Hall's régime.

My uncle, who knew the Deputy Governor, Sir Thomas Skinner, was also anxious for me to rejoin the service, so I finally signed a three year contract and in April, 1914, reported to Mr. John Duncan Mackenzie at Fort William for service in his district. Immediately I was assigned to the work of reorganizing the canoe transport between Lac Seul and Osnaburgh post on Lake St. Joseph, and received word to proceed to the former post without delay. I was met at the gate by a dignified Englishman named Frank Aldous whose tweed hat, sporting coat and gray flannels proclaimed his nationality. His invitation, given in a rather exaggerated Oxford accent, to come in and join him in afternoon tea occasioned no surprise. He was eager to hear the latest news from the Old Country, and quite endorsed the unheeded warnings of Lord Roberts regarding the prospects of early war with Germany which were, at that time, being loudly ridiculed by the British press.

Aldous was worried. Hidden in the depths of the surrounding woods were many heavy packs of "contraband" beaver,[1] which, somehow or other, had to be smuggled past the alert game authorities and shipped to England. Both the Provincial Police and Game Wardens were well aware that the furs had been traded by the Indians in defiance of the recently created Ontario Game Regulations prohibiting their sale. Word had reached him that the Company's manager at Missanabie, Johnnie Robertson, had been arrested and released on heavy bail by Constable Edwards of White River owing to his having been caught red-handed in possession of a large quantity of "illicit" skins. He knew that vigilant watch was being kept by unknown spotters and feared that, as soon as he took the furs out of hiding, the authorities would be informed and swoop down upon the spoil.

In 1869 the Hudson's Bay Company had surrendered their chartered rights, received from King Charles II. two centuries before, to the Crown for the sum of three hundred thousand pounds. Now the Ontario Provincial Government in order, they said, to prevent the extermination of the beaver and otter had enacted game laws protecting both these animals, the penalty being a fifty dollar fine for each skin found in possession of a trader together with the confiscation of the pelt. This the Company's officials considered, and no doubt rightfully, as being quite contrary to the agreement made at the time of Confederation between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Federal Government.

Their traders continued to buy the skins in disregard of the Provincial edict while the Indians still trapped them and bartered the skins surreptitiously at the posts. Thus began a long silent battle betwixt the traders and the Ontario Provincial Game authorities. In the meantime the legal side of the fight had been carried over to the Old Country and while the Privy Council's long delayed decision was anxiously awaited the battle 'twixt the fur trader and Game Warden continued unabated in the woods.

Company employees caught with "illicit" furs in their possession would be arrested and later released on bail which would be arranged as soon as word was received at headquarters. A trial would be held and the conviction and fine registered against the Company if the evidence proved their agent guilty of a breach of the new Provincial Act. As far as we knew guarantees were put up by the Company to pay the fine in case the decision of the Privy Council went against them. After these legal technicalities had been completed the fur was usually released, and shipped over to England by the Company.

To the Indians the action of the Game Authorities seemed like a direct contravention of their treaty rights, and in this respect their views seemed to be shared by all the Indian Agents, for, said the Ojibways, according to the Robinson Treaty they had the Great Mother's promise to be permitted to kill game and fur-bearing animals "as long as the sun rises and sets." Now, however, they were told that they could not trade the pelts of either beaver or otter.

To the Indian the beaver is to a large extent what the seal is to the Eskimo and has always been one of his favorite and most important foods, for it is about the only animal to be found in the woods which carries any considerable amount of fat upon its body, and the Indians claimed that fat beaver meat was just as necessary to their well-being in the cold of winter as was bacon and butter to the white men.

The Indian had always looked upon the Hudson's Bay man as his friend. When he realized that the Company had taken up the cudgels in the matter of the killing of these animals he felt far more satisfied, for if the representatives of the Great Father (King George V.) could not be depended upon to keep their promises what was going to happen to the Ojibways, and of what use, they said, was "that 'Mis-in-a-hagan'[2] upon which our fathers placed their signs?"

They might well argue along these lines around camp-fires and in the lodges for Marten, a Nipigon Indian, was arrested by a Game Guardian for having *moosemeat* in his possession. The Indian Department, of course,

provided counsel when the case came up for trial, and the Indian proclaimed his *treaty rights* as his justification for having shot the animal. Then the Game Guardian produced a pair of udders wrapped in a piece of paper and based his charge on the fact that it was a female that had been killed, so Marten asked for a week's remand and when the case came up again he also produced conclusive evidence from a paper bag to show that it had been *a male*. The court rocked with laughter and the Game Guardian departed, red faced and mortified, as the Indian was discharged.

So the Indians continued to hunt and kill both beaver and otter, all the traders continued to trade them, and the "spotters," Game Guardians and Provincial Police, continued to annoy and harry both. A technique soon developed on both sides. The authorities appointed "spotters" here and there, while the traders made false floors, walls, or other hiding places in which to keep the records of transactions in so-called "contraband." Never were the pelts of either beaver or otter allowed to remain for any length of time upon post property, instead they were hurriedly conveyed to secret caches in the woods by reliable Indians or half-breeds.

Needless to say the excitement lent zest to smuggling and trading the forbidden skins, and I think it is safe to say that, for a while at least, these regulations had the reverse effect to that originally intended for the Indians deliberately trapped and traded more of the skins as a result of the prohibition.

For a time Revillon Frères followed the example of the other traders. But while the Company was undoubtedly within their legal rights owing, so we were told, to the terms upon which they had surrendered their chartered rights to the Dominion Government, this did not apparently apply where Revillons and the other traders were concerned.

When La France, Revillon's agent at Missanabie, was arrested for handling "contraband" fur he was treated rather roughly, and for a while it looked as though he might spend a considerable while in jail. When the trial at White River reached its climax Magistrate Depew turned to the pale and nervous Frenchman and announced his verdict: *a ten thousand dollar fine or twenty-seven years in jail!*

Poor La France was simply dazed by the decision and looked as though he had received a blow between the eyes. Pale eyed and questioningly he gazed at the gray-haired judge, then accompanied the burly Edwards from the dock. Some kind of understanding was eventually arrived at and the frightened Frenchman permitted to retain his liberty, but from that time forward the Revillon traders seemed to lose all stomach for this class of

trade which, for a considerable while thereafter, became, to a large extent, a monopoly of the Hudson's Bay men.

In nearly every way the Company's stand in continuing to trade these furs from the Indians while awaiting the decision of the Privy Council worked out to their advantage. The employees, with that blind partisan spirit which dominated them, saw only the Indians' and the Company's side of the argument, and would have been quite prepared to go to jail had the necessity arisen, satisfied that they were but upholding the Company's traditions and fighting for their rights. Being keen traders, and anxious to make the best possible showing for their posts, they naturally did not let the grass grow under their feet but took advantage of any unforeseen opportunities which these developments created.

It was only a matter of a few years before most of the opposition traders, including Revillons, had "withdrawn" from Lake Superior District with the exception of a few minor posts at places like Ombabica and Fort Hope.

One side of the story was unseen by all except the Game Authorities and little attention was paid to the havoc being raised in the rapid depletion of both the beaver and otter, two of the mainstays of the trade.[3]

Soon after I arrived at Lac Seul post I was delegated to the task of smuggling out the "contraband" fur that had been collected from all around and which was still cached in the woods behind the post. Of course, the obvious method was to convey the bales by stealth to the nearest point of railroad, some fifteen miles away, by the shortest canoe route, then to ship them out invoiced as foxes, lynx, and other "legal" furs. In order to test out the possibility a couple of Indians had been dispatched with four bales of musquash, on which there was no closed season. They were to arrive at night and act suspiciously so that if there were any spotters around they would probably show themselves and thus openly display their hand. The ruse proved more than successful for barely had the Indians gone ashore than they were pounced upon and the furs seized as "contraband" by two men who had been working as section hands repairing the railroad track. Great indeed was their chagrin when after tearing open the bales they were found to contain nothing else but muskrat pelts.

This, however, decided me that the railroad route was out of the question as it was far too closely watched. The transport I was operating comprised some thirty or more large canoes of the Lac Seul Freighter type, each capable of carrying thirty "pieces," by means of which the goods for the posts at Cat Lake and Osnaburgh were freighted over the two hundred mile stretch of lake and river between there and Lac Seul. From Osnaburgh the

Albany River flowed swiftly onward past Fort Hope until it emptied into Hudson Bay at Fort Albany. What better method could there be of avoiding detection than to disguise the fur bales as trading goods, mix them in with the regular freight as far as Osnaburgh, then hire canoemen to rush them down to Fort Albany whence the shipment could be sent off by the annual ship to England? While the fur was going north disguised as trading goods the Game Authorities and police would be closely watching the railroad waiting for it to be shipped, and by this method I had in mind I hoped to "put it over" them with ease.

I was a little afraid of Tom Smith, Game Guardian and Justice of the Peace, who lived at Hudson and bore little love towards the Company for having erected a post almost alongside his own store only a year or so before. Tom not only knew the North but he knew the Company and their methods well, and there was always the possibility of him "getting wise" to my little scheme.

Some chances had to be taken, so after picking my Indians carefully I led them one night to where the furs were cached, carried the bales to the lake shore, and took them out to an island about three miles from the post. Hiding the bales in the woods, and carrying the canoes up into the bush, I left the Indians on the island with instructions not to show themselves, build any fires or make the slightest noise, and to await further word from me.

Meanwhile I had had a large number of cases made by a half-breed carpenter at the post, with lids all ready to nail down, each one large enough to contain a bale of furs. On every one of them was placed the customary "H.B." markings for the post at Osnaburgh, *and only by a special run of numbers would I be able to identify them myself* from similar cases containing ordinary trading goods.

Late that night Aldous and I loaded the empty cases on a York boat and silently conveyed them across the stretch of darkened water to the waiting Ojibways upon the island. It was one of those muggy sultry nights and clouds of voracious mosquitoes bit viciously every chance they got, following us right out on the lake. But it was nothing to the clouds that seemed to be lying in wait once we landed and proceeded into the bush.

We dared not light a fire or make a smudge lest prying eyes ashore should note these signs of activity and properly interpret the cause, so we suffered in silence but cursed them none the less earnestly beneath our breath.

We anticipated little delay in getting the bales into their respective cases when a totally unlooked for hitch occurred. By some error the carpenter had

made the *outside* instead of the inside measurements of the cases correspond with those of the bales which were supposed to go within. Hours of exquisite torture did Aldous and I experience as we wrestled with the packs in an attempt to force them into the boxes, besieged all the time by the accursed little pests. Dawn was almost breaking when the last bale was jammed home and the lid nailed down. Already the York boat had left for the post so, bidding me farewell, Aldous slipped quietly into a small canoe and disappeared silently into the dusk.

It was pitch dark the following night when we set out on our journey and I noticed with keen appreciation that heavy black clouds covered the sky and that there was no sign of either moon or stars. Ahead went two reliable Ojibways in a light canoe as scouts. They were to build a fire on some exposed point, or give three shots, in event of sighting strangers, and to fire one shot when the way was clear once more. When they had been gone about half an hour we stepped into the loaded canoes, dipped our paddles, and followed noiselessly in their wake.

It was an eerie and exciting experience working our way across the wide expanse of Lac Seul without word or sound except the occasional drip of water, or scratch of a paddle against the gunwale of a canoe, always with our ears and eyes strained to catch the slightest sign of any alarm from those ahead.

We had one or two scares which proved quite groundless, and before the eastern sky had lightened we had landed our cargo at Perch Ripple, mixed the cases with the other freight, and left a lookout a few miles back on the route we had just followed.

The narrow crooked streams and the many portages made it impracticable to use the rather clumsy York boats, and a brigade of about thirty canoes manned by Ojibways carried the freight and furs beyond this point.

I doubt very much if a single Indian, apart from the chosen few, had the slightest idea that the innocent looking cases contained bales of "contraband" furs. It would probably have made little difference if they had as the Crees and Ojibways were always good allies and entered wholeheartedly into any move on our part which was made for the purpose of hoodwinking the police.

Three or four days of hard packing and portaging brought us to Root Portage, at the other end of which lay Lake St. Joe. Picking up my gun and paddle I commenced to walk across the two-mile stretch of rock and muskeg. It was a hot July day and I was wiping the sweat from my face after

laying my gun against a stump when a man stepped unexpectedly from behind some nearby spruce trees. *It was Tom Smith the Game Guardian!* I was so astonished that I could scarce believe my eyes, and thanked my stars that he was far enough away not to observe the expression on my face. It was a case, however, where bluff alone could win.

"Why! hello, Tom," I called as I stepped casually towards him and extended my hand in greeting, "this sure is luck. Haven't seen a white man since I left Frank Aldous. Where are you bound for now?"

Tom Smith had one of these "poker faces" and I gleaned nothing from the searching gaze I gave him. How much did he know, I wondered, or rather, *how much did he suspect*?

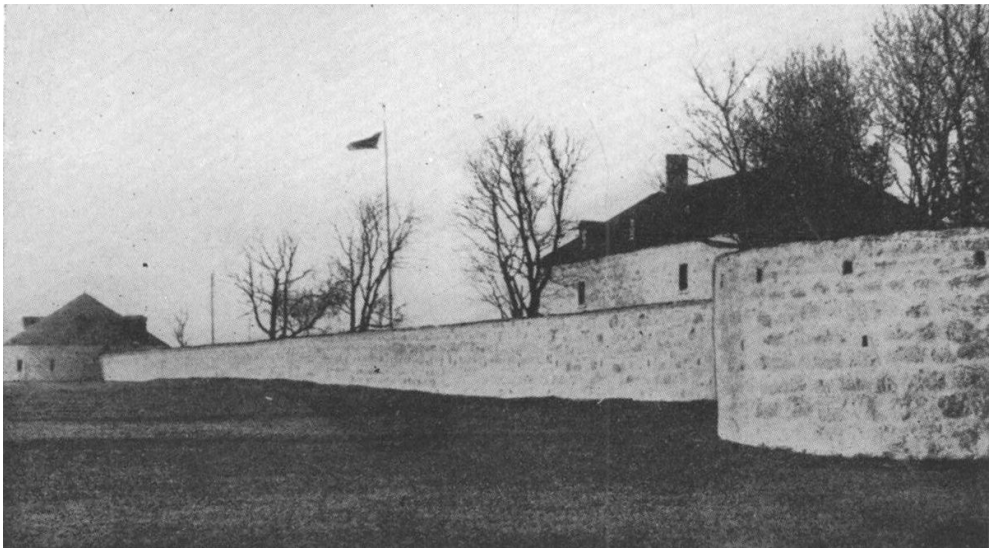
"Oh!" he replied in a most casual tone, "I'm just on my way to Fort Hope and Osnaburgh to buy live foxes, and I've been hung up here with head winds for four days. Glad you came along."

I wasn't quite sure whether I was glad or not but I made advances of my own to try and throw him off his guard.

"I'm expecting the little tug 'Kaytoo' along any time with a barge in tow for the stuff my Indians are just bringing across the portage. You can throw your canoe and things on board and come along with us, it will save you quite a little time and some pretty stiff paddling."

As I spoke a crowd of heavily laden sweating Indians came loping down the trail, then slung their loads upon the ground almost at our feet. I noticed that at least two of the beaver cases were there and my heart jumped to my mouth as they were thrown roughly to the ground. If only one of them were to split the game would be up right there. Commenting on the heat I moved to a more shady spot, keeping up a running fire of conversation as Smith strolled along beside me.

At last the "Kaytoo" came puffing noisily in, hauling a barge behind her. The moment she docked I invited the Game Guardian aboard and left him in conversation with the engineer while I superintended the loading of the scow. There was not quite room on the barge for all the freight so three pieces containing "contraband" were thrown on board the steamer. It was out of the question to move them so I told the engineer to let the "Kaytoo" go and off we went towards the open lake. At dinner time one of these accursed cases became our table and I wondered as we ate what Tom Smith would have thought had he known that he was seated upon some of the very beaver skins he sought, others being tightly jammed within our extemporized dining table.



LOWER FORT GARRY AS IT IS TODAY.

It was late the following evening when we pulled into Osnaburgh and were greeted by a voluble gray-haired little man with twinkling gray eyes and a round merry face. It was Jabez Williams, one of those peculiar characters the Northland alone produces, who was now married to a squaw, his white wife having died some time previously. With true Northern hospitality he immediately invited us to the house, a white clapboarded building gaudily painted inside. Catching the old rascal's eye I signified that I wished to see him alone. Promptly he took the cue and while Tom was washing his hands I hurriedly outlined my plans.

I wanted him to place Smith in a room at the back of the house which did not overlook the lake or store, and to see that the cases bearing the numbers indicating they contained fur bales were placed together, apart from the other freight, near the doorway of the warehouse, then he was to have his interpreter rustle up enough Indians and canoes to start the fur off about midnight for Fort Hope, and have their rations put up behind locked doors.

Jabez was old at the game, as cunning as a fox, and more than delighted in outwitting traders or any one else, it did not in the least matter who, so long as he thought it was in the interests of the Company.

I happened to have a bottle of brandy amongst my baggage so I gave this to Jabez with instructions not to open it until about ten o'clock when he was to see that Tom got sufficient to send him into a sound and peaceful sleep. This warning was necessary as Jabez had one particular failing and that was a deep and abiding affection for John Barleycorn.

As the evening wore on Jabez acted the part of host to perfection, going pretty easy on his own drinks and seeing that our guest enjoyed the lion's share. About half-past eleven Jabez yawned prodigiously, suggested that Mr. Smith was probably tired, and shortly afterwards saw him to his room which overlooked the potato field at the rear of the dwelling. I made a noise in the adjoining room as though I was also going to bed, but as soon as I heard the Game Guardian snoring lustily I sneaked carefully downstairs in my moccasins, cursing the creaky wooden treads beneath my breath.

While I kept watch on the veranda Jabez and his interpreter lost no time in getting the fur brigade away, and to my intense relief I watched one black shape after another shoot across the moonlit stretch of dark and rippling water until, without the slightest sound, they disappeared like ghosts around the wooded point ahead.

Tom Smith appeared at breakfast in splendid humor and did not seem to have the slightest inkling of the duplicity of his hosts. He remarked that he wished to obtain two canoemen to take him to Fort Hope and back, whom Jabez readily agreed to furnish, but it was some days before he finally got away for we found means of our own to delay his departure from the post.

Jabez, however, almost surpassed himself when, on his own initiative, he offered a bonus of two dollars a day to the rascals he hired for every day over the regular six which it usually took them to reach Fort Hope with Mr. Smith.

I heard later that, anxious to prolong the journey and increase their earnings, they deliberately ran the canoe against a rock in one of the rapids, intending to merely damage it sufficiently to cause a few hours' delay. Unfortunately for their plans the side of the craft was almost stove in and they narrowly escaped drowning. In all nearly ten days were taken to reach their destination by which time the fur was well on its last lap down to Albany, being finally shipped to London by the ship.

GODSELL LEAVING ON AN 1,800-MILE INSPECTION TRIP.

Shortly after Tom Smith departed I set out on my return journey to Lac Seul where I acquainted the highly pleased Aldous with the success of our little enterprise.

It was the early part of August and I found it necessary to go in to Hudson and there take the train to Sioux Lookout. I was seated in the smoking carriage puffing calmly upon a fat cigar when the conductor entered and took my ticket, then noticing my sunbrowned face and hands he inquired where I had been. In the course of conversation he spoke about "the war." This was news to me so I asked him what war he meant. Never shall I forget the astonished look on that conductor's face as he proceeded to tell me that France and Germany were at each other's throats; that Belgium's neutrality had been disregarded, that German troops were sweeping everything before them on their mad drive towards Paris, and that Great Britain had taken up arms in defense of France and Belgium. Any day, I learned, the British fleet was due to sail. It was like a bolt from the blue, so entirely unexpected and tremendous was this news. It seemed incredible that the peaceful England I had so recently left was now at death grips in a gigantic European war. The conductor finally brought me some papers and until I stepped off the train at Sioux Lookout I read, almost unbelievingly, the early chapters of the war.

At some of the very remote posts, like Fort Chimo in Ungava, it was almost a year before word of the world war reached any of the people.

Note. For obvious reasons I have changed the actual name of the Game Guardian, who is a very good friend of mine, to Tom Smith. Seventeen years after these events I again met him and we laughed heartily over the episode, then, for the first time, he learned the details of the means adopted to avoid detection in handling the shipment of "contraband" from Lac Seul.

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[1] The term applied by the Ontario Game authorities at that time to beaver trapped or traded contrary to the provisions of the Game Act.

[2] Paper, any document or treaty was a Mis-in-a-hagan to the Ojibway, and was supposed to have some mysterious magic.

[3] This refers to conditions existing nearly twenty years ago, and some of the beaver and otter hunts brought in by individual Indians were enormous. From fur traders and buyers familiar with that territory at the present day I understand that both beaver and otter are extremely scarce to what they used to be, which was only to be expected.

CHAPTER XIII

"Contraband" of the Forests

Those were days of panic which followed Britain's declaration of war. Almost overnight fur values dropped to practically nothing. Lynx from twenty-five to three dollars, beaver from twenty-five to three dollars, marten from ten dollars to seventy-five cents, mink the same, and other furs proportionately.[1]

Norman Bacon who succeeded R. H. Hall as Fur Trade Commissioner had only been in office a few months at the time. He was a particularly able and broad-minded man, having been promoted from the London office, and not being a fur trader he was entirely free from the petty narrowness which characterized his predecessor. He had been furnished with a most capable and experienced advisor in the person of N. M. W. J. MacKenzie, veteran trader, who knew the Indians and fur trade thoroughly, whom I had met while over in London.

Lacking any intimate knowledge of the psychology of the fur trade at this crisis Mr. Bacon seemed to be influenced by the panic which swept like wild-fire throughout the land, and as soon as word could be conveyed to the traders at the posts they received orders that they were not to give out the customary Indian debt.

Two hundred years of dependence on the white man and his goods had, of course, made it impossible for the natives to get along without them. At first they did not, could not, believe that the *Ma-mo-chi-kay*, the Company upon whom they had always relied when in difficulties would desert them in their hour of need.[2]

But orders were orders and the post managers were forced to make the best explanations they could devise. Loyal "Hudson's Bay Indians," of whom there were still many at this time, remonstrated with tears in their eyes to the Okemow whose position was not an enviable one.

On this point of policy there appeared to have been serious misunderstanding between Mr. Bacon and his assistant. N. M. W. J. MacKenzie had all the trader's sympathy for the Indian in the unexpected crisis with which he was now faced. Reminding the Commissioner that it was to the past loyalty of these Indians and their forefathers that the Company owed its prosperity, and that the line of policy embarked upon

could not help but be looked upon by the natives as a flagrant breach of trust, he also pointed out that by the time word reached many of the posts much of the debt would already have been given out. Why not, he counseled, instead of appealing to the Indian Department to come to the aid of its charges, set an example to other panic-stricken firms with a "business as usual" slogan?

MacKenzie knew that, orders or no orders, many of the older traders would ignore them to a certain point and risk dismissal rather than see the Indians stuck. Again he argued that Indian debt, instead of being entirely cut out, should be confined to necessities, and that prevailing panic fur values be disregarded and the Indians be paid sufficient for the skins to enable them to get along until the worst of the crisis was over.

Subsequent events proved Mr. MacKenzie was quite correct in his interpretation of conditions and that the Company would have actually made money had Mr. Bacon been guided by his words for shortly afterwards fur commenced to rise in value, continuing to do so with hardly a break until the spring of 1920. Notwithstanding, Mr. MacKenzie's advice was disregarded at the time, and not long afterwards he quietly retired on pension, much to the regret of many who recognized his exceptional ability.[3]

With only slight variations the Commissioner's policy took effect, though many of the post managers risked dismissal by giving out a little debt. Usually, however, it was not shown as such in the books but was entered in a "*Purgatory Ledger*" and never saw the light of day.[4] Others spent much of their own earnings in doing what they could to alleviate the Indians' distress, while the Indian Department also did their best to meet the situation.

The opposition traders on the whole took the fullest possible advantage of this situation, especially when the Indians visited them and asked for twine and gunpowder in debt. "Why," they asked, "do you not go to the Company's traders and remind them of the promises they always made the Indians to come to the rescue whenever they were stuck? When these traders first came amongst you they only had a small ship and enough goods to build a small post! Now, they are everywhere. Did they not make this money out of the Indians?" It was logical propaganda and it was driven home with emphasis. Hardly ever did we refuse debt without having this, and other things the traders were supposed to have said, dinned into our ears.

To this day the Indians have not forgiven the Company for what happened at the beginning of the war, and I think any experienced trader will

agree that the Hudson's Bay Company never fully regained their old-time prestige with the Indians.

It was not until free traders flocked into the North in ever increasing numbers, to be welcomed with open arms by the Indians, in after years that the extent of the damage was fully realized.

Many an Indian, however, can still remember the help he received from his Okemow's own slender resources, and this personal influence alone held the trade of many an embittered hunter during the boom of after years.[5] Now nearly every Indian has become a materialist and sells his fur wherever he can obtain the highest price, and the "Loyal Hudson's Bay Indian," who would literally prefer to starve rather than trade a pelt to an opposition trader, is no more. Education in any case would have seen to that.

Not long after I returned to Lac Seul, carrying the news of the war to Aldous, I received word from Mr. J. D. MacKenzie at Fort William to proceed to Missanabie on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, between Nipigon and North Bay, and take charge there for the winter.

Johnny Robertson, the manager, met me at the train and together we walked over to the post. We chatted for a while regarding one thing and another, and laughed about Jabez Williams at Osnaburgh whom he also knew quite well. Soon, of course, the conversation swung around to fur smuggling and then Johnny insisted upon telling me what had happened in the spring. He was quite upset over the fur seizure and had decided to enlist and go overseas, having received leave of absence for that purpose.

All winter he had shipped his "contraband" fur as it accumulated to a little rocky island about six miles down Dog Lake behind the post. Here the bales were kept covered with a big white tarpaulin to prevent them getting wet, and as it blended with the surroundings the cache remained unnoticed. Before he was able to remove it the ice got bad and when the break-up came the white tarpaulin evidently glistened in the sunlight and became conspicuous for miles around.

Only a few days after the ice had gone out he was talking to John Touchette. After the Frenchman had taken two or three drinks he became unusually friendly and communicative and finally let drop some unguarded words which sent shivers of apprehension up and down the trader's spine. As soon as he possibly could Johnny got into a small canoe and paddled down the lake. As he stepped ashore on the island his first fears were realized *for all the fur had totally disappeared*.

It was some time before he recovered from the blow. How was he going to explain the fact that many thousands of dollars' worth of furs had

vanished as though into thin air? As he paddled back towards the post he pondered deeply upon this enigma, then decided to see Touchette again. The Frenchman proved uncommunicative this time but Robertson had formed opinions of his own.

There were two French bushrangers living in the neighborhood, whom he had at times befriended, who made their living from trapping and hunting round about. They had been away for quite a while but had recently returned to Missanabie. Careful inquiry soon convinced Johnny that he was upon the right trail at last. Making his way to the cabin occupied by Telesphore Godin and John Vincent he accused them outright of having taken the furs. Convinced that Robertson knew more than he was telling, and that his threat to notify the police was no idle one, the two Frenchmen admitted having moved the skins to another place with the intention of disposing of them later.

Greatly relieved by the turn things had taken Johnny allowed them twenty-four hours to place the cache back where they had found it, warning them that if they failed him he would lay a charge against them and risk the seizure of the furs.

When the time was up Johnny sent off a number of Ojibways to bring in the furs as he intended to take a chance and ship them anyway by train. They did not altogether relish the task as they were deathly scared of Constable Edwards but finally agreed to go. They were reassured, however, when they found the fur bales on the island, bundled them down the rocks and commenced to load up the canoes.

“Here you are, Mr. Edwards!” shouted young Echum jestingly as he picked up the last bale and rolled it down. A gruff voice sounded behind him and he turned quickly in alarm. From beside a fringe of scrub appeared the broad face of Constable Edwards and in his hand was a shining black revolver leveled right at Echum’s head.

“That’s all right!” exclaimed the policeman. “Now just fix up these bales in the back canoe so that nobody will see me when we reach the post. Fine; now paddle as though the devil was hafter your ’ides, and, mark you, the first man that says a word about me being ’ere will get this!” and he patted his revolver, which, by this time, must have looked the size of a cannon to the frightened Indians around him. Nothing more was necessary; those Ojibways were just as meek as lambs.

Johnny was watching through a pair of field glasses as the brigade approached the post, delighted when he observed the packs piled high above

the gunwales. But his joy was short-lived for as the last canoe struck the beach the huge form of the constable arose from behind the bales.

"Thanks, Johnny, for getting that fur into the ware'ouse. I was afraid if you saw me you mightn't wish to claim it. Consider it seized and yourself under arrest!"

Immediately Johnny realized exactly what had happened and could have kicked himself for his foolishness in not having gone right out with Godin and Vincent and moved the fur himself, for Vincent, realizing that his dreams of selling it were gone, had turned informer in the hopes of receiving half the fine.

The Company, Johnny told me, immediately put up the bail; the fur was released and shipped to London, though never, so far as I know, did Vincent reap any reward for his duplicity.

A year later Johnny Robertson was reported "Killed in Action" on the battlefields of France.

It was not long before I became quite well acquainted with the ubiquitous Constable Edwards. He was a big burly bald-headed Englishman from Bilston, in the Black Country, who not only misfired on his "H's" but invariably put them where they did not belong.

Being situated alongside the railroad, over which a dozen or more trains passed daily, I never knew the moment he would walk unexpectedly into the store and make a thorough search of the buildings for he was absolutely untiring in his efforts and zeal against all fur smuggling. His usual method was to drop off the rear end of some passenger or freight train, then slip into the bush behind the water tower entirely undetected by those upon the station platform. Knowing that I would be on the *qui vive* while the train was in he would wait until an hour or so after its departure then he would appear unexpectedly with the inevitable greeting, " 'Ow are yer?" proceed to search the store and dwelling house, looking into the clothes cupboards, trunks, stoves, and even under the beds.

Another of his favorite practices was to turn up in the middle of the night and insist on every one getting out of bed. He would then proceed to split open the mattresses, scattering feathers all over the floor in his hectic search for skins, after which he would ransack the buildings, examining all the books as well.

Of course, beaver and otter skins by this time were usually recorded in a separate set of books, which were always kept hidden. His search proving unsuccessful he would then amuse himself for the next hour or so tapping

the walls and floors for hidden cavities where the books might possibly be cached.

Under these circumstances it was not safe to have very many "contraband" skins around the premises for any length of time. Luckily we had the post office in the building, a place which the wily Edwards could not search without first wiring the Post Office Inspector for permission to do so, so the heavy mail sacks were pressed into service as an emergency hiding place until the skins could be conveyed to some cache down the lake or in the woods.

But there was always the problem of shipping. The usual procedure at some of the "line" posts, one much favored by traveling buyers and free traders, was to pack the beaver pelts in trunks bearing no name; buy a ticket to Winnipeg, check the trunks on the ticket and send the stubs by mail to some one in Winnipeg who would take delivery of them, the beaver being safe once across the Ontario border.

I rather enjoyed this game of hide and seek, which soon developed into a battle of wits betwixt Edwards and myself. He did make a winter trip that year by dog-team to English River post where he surprised Echivrier, Revillon's man, and his wife. Ordering them out of bed the zealous policeman first split open the mattress in his search for hidden skins, the woman standing with teeth chattering from cold and fright as the feathers were strewn about the floor. On this occasion he secured, I believe, a conviction on entries in the books and Echivrier accompanied him back to Missanabie.[6]

That spring I was advised of my promotion to the charge of Long Lake post, and as soon as I had shipped the fur safely away I left for Nipigon. My new post was situated nearly two hundred miles east of there on the Canadian National Railway, which was still in course of construction, and it was arranged with Mr. Gafer, one of the engineers, to take me to Long Lake on his gas-car, or jigger, which was fitted with a motor and flanged wheels and ran on the railroad track.

Only a little while before this Edwards and Magistrate Depew had made a trip down the line in pursuit, they said, of a couple of vicious criminals, on the strength of which story they had obtained the assistance of Mr. Gafer and the other engineers who extended to them the privilege of traveling over the right-of-way, and even placed a gas-car at their disposal to assist in bringing these desperate characters to justice.

Arriving in the vicinity of Long Lake they had stopped the car, sneaked through the woods and had caught Mr. Thompson, the manager of the

Hudson's Bay post, entirely unawares. Finding no beaver skins around they had insisted on him opening and producing the books. Not quite sure of his position in the matter Thompson complied and Edwards and Depew gazed with glistening eyes upon the neat array of figures in the fur book denoting the number of beaver and otter skins traded to that date. Immediately Thompson was placed under arrest, then the two men proceeded over to the Revillon post where Mr. McLeod was found in possession of a few skins traded out of season. He was tried on the spot and fined, but Mr. Thompson was forced to accompany the party back to Nipigon.

Mr. Gafer and the other engineers were furious at the trick the police party had played upon them, especially when they discovered that their own particular friends, Thompson and McLeod, were the "desperate criminals" they had heard so much about. But the snubs and cold looks which Edwards received on his return journey were like water on a duck's back, though, if Thompson had not been accompanying them they would most assuredly have been forced to walk the track.

It was shortly after this episode that I arrived at Long Lake to take over the charge of the post from Mr. Thompson. It comprised the usual whitewashed log store, warehouse, Master's house, and Indian houses, and was situated in a picturesque rock-girt bay, about two miles from the newly built railroad, overlooking the beautiful expanse of water called by the Ojibways Kinogami, or Long Water.

Nichol Finlayson, the interpreter, a descendant of the Finlayson who established Fort Chimo for the Company in Ungava, ran a little outpost at Kowkash near the Ogoki River, and in the summer remained at Long Lake with his large family, most of whom worked around the post. His buxom daughter, Mrs. Boissoneault, lived with her husband in a building behind the dwelling house and acted in the capacity of cook and housekeeper, being clean, orderly and very capable.

Emile, a son of old Finlayson, a most conscientious fellow, was the right-hand man around the post. With his efficient assistance I managed to outwit Edwards for the entire six years I remained in charge of Long Lake post. In spite of the latter's spotters, and his sudden nocturnal visits, I usually knew when he was coming as I had instituted an effective counter-spy system of my own.

Meanwhile fur had commenced to increase in value by leaps and bounds. One of the greatest difficulties the Company had to contend with on a falling market was the long period of time between the purchase of the fur and the time it would be put up for sale at the London auctions. Now,

however, this delay meant untold thousands to the firm. Frequently, between the time the furs were purchased and ultimately sold in London, the values would have increased fifty, and sometimes almost a hundred percent, the profits being enormous.

Partly, no doubt, as a result of my command of the Ojibway tongue, and to the fact that I was buying "contraband" on a large scale without getting caught, I soon had a large increase in the number of Indians trading at my post. Many small bands which had left the Company at Montizambert and other posts, and were dealing with the independent traders, I managed to round up and gather into my flock. Erelong I was more than trebling the returns of the best days the post had known.

The Company had become like one large family again under the broad-minded administration of Mr. Bacon, and a spirit of camaraderie and good-fellowship throughout the service had been revived which seemed to stimulate every one to the greatest possible efforts on behalf of the concern.

My friend McLeod, the Revillon trader across the lake, was, however, getting more and more annoyed at the success attending my growing authority over my Ojibway charges. He was afraid by this time to touch "contraband" so I had a decided advantage there as I would not trade beaver or otter from Indians who sold other furs to him. McLeod complained to me at last that the Indians refused to trade with him in the daytime lest I catch sight of them through my long-range telescope, or my spies report the matter to me. Even at night they insisted on the blinds being pulled down so that the light would not shine across the lake.

Then I received word one day from the Company that Revillons had decided to close their post and ship the goods to Ombabica. It was suggested that I take over what was being left and that, so far as active trading was concerned, the Revillon post would become a thing of the past, which in a few days' time it did.

I felt sorry for McLeod when I saw him leave as he was very decent about everything, but only those who have worked for the Company can understand the feeling that existed against the average opposition trader, and the perhaps misguided sense of loyalty which would, literally, cause a Hudson's Bay man to push even his own brother to the wall if he happened to be trading in opposition to the "Gentlemen Adventurers."[7]

I think the true explanation is that we subconsciously felt, and in fact had it instilled into us when young by the old-timers, that the Company had a sort of Divine right to both the Indians and the land, and that all other traders were interlopers and intruders upon the Company's "domain." The fact that

the country was free to all, and that the Company's chartered rights and monopoly no longer existed, was often lost sight of through the mass of tradition which nearly all of us became heir to.

But the constant rise in fur prices soon stimulated outside interests into active participation in the trade and ere long each trail was over-run with fur buyers who, having very little overhead expense, and being very mobile, were able to pay high prices and buy the furs with cash. By ones and twos small traders crept into the country to be readily welcomed by the Indians, most of whom still bore a deep-seated grudge against the Company. With characteristic cunning they decided to encourage the newcomers and saw to it that they got sufficient fur to keep them looking for still more. The new traders were out for all they could get and were quite prepared to take the risk of being caught while handling beaver and otter on account of the enormous profits to be made.

During the whole of this time I was pestered by the untiring Constable Edwards, who had vowed that he would "get me." But I had one great advantage over him. I knew who his spotters were, though they did not realize it, *but nobody knew mine*. Furthermore, I worked in collaboration with Bert Williams, the Company's factor at Nipigon, and with others at Montizambert near where Edwards lived at White River, and was friendly with all the railroad men.

If I were preparing to send a fur shipment I would sometimes contrive with my confederates to have the constable sent elsewhere on a wild-goose chase. Assured by code wire, or other means, that all was safe, the "contraband" would speed merrily on its way. It was a considerable strain notwithstanding as there was always the danger of a slip-up and I had to be eternally on the *qui vive*, while I never knew when the place was going to be raided in the middle of the night.

Finding that he could not get the better of me Edwards' next and obvious course was to terrorize the Indians who, according to their treaty, could kill game and animals "as long as the sun rises and sets" yet apparently did not have the power to sell the pelts of the protected animals. The Indians finally got so scared that many of them would not bring their beaver or otter skins in to the post but would send me word to visit their camps and get the furs if I wanted them, which I had perforce to do.

Twice Edwards arrived at a camp a short while after I had left and seeing circular beaver stretchers lying all around he naturally drew his own conclusions. I escaped him by a hair's breadth but at last my luck seemed to desert me.

Marten, Wadoo, Kitchinini and a number of other Nipigon trappers were encamped about two miles from the little divisional town of Jellicoe, sixty miles west of Long Lake, and wrote me that they had a large number of beaver pelts on hand but were afraid to bring them in. Jumping on a freight train I hurried down to Jellicoe but made the mistake of being seen around the hotel ere going to the camp. When I got out there I found Kitchinini and the other Ojibways awaiting me with nearly two hundred beaver skins, the outcome of their spring hunt. It was dark when I got through so I packed the skins in bags and left them cached in the woods in care of the Indians, returned to Jellicoe and slept at the hotel. As there was a slow way-freight due east next morning I intended to bring the fur in from the camp just in time to catch the train and travel in the caboose back to Long Lake with my spoils.

With the help of some of the Ojibways I brought the fur to the station only to find that the way-freight had been delayed and would not depart until the afternoon. It was but a short time before the passenger train was due when the agent brought me a message. *Edwards was on the train!* I knew immediately that he must have been tipped off by some one who was watching and that he had caught the train at Nipigon. The way-freight would travel slowly and stop at every station, and probably go into a siding to let the passenger train go by. It would be easy for Edwards to drop off, search the way-freight and catch me red-handed.

I explained my troubles to the conductor who, like most of the railroad boys, happened to be a good friend of mine and also disliked Edwards intensely as he was by no means popular along the line, so instead of stopping at every station he ran the train at fast speed right through to Long Lake and entered the siding there. Standing on the end of the caboose as the way-freight swayed along I could hear the shrieking whistle of the passenger train close behind and knew that I would not have a moment to spare once we reached Long Lake.

I found my interpreter awaiting me as I stepped from the way-freight while the smoke of the oncoming passenger could be seen above the trees. Then I noticed a couple of Indians who were camped alongside the snow covered trail to the Revillon post not yet having left for home. Hurriedly I completed my arrangements and like a shot the bundles were whisked up by the Ojibways who hiked off down the trail.

A few minutes later the train roared in with bell clanging, stopping with shrieking brakes before the water tank. Next second I was confronted by the grinning Edwards.

" 'Ullo, Godsell," he laughed, "I've got you this time, eh? Where are them beaver skins you bought at Marten's camp?"

I looked blankly at him. "What beaver skins are you talking about?" I asked.

Erelong Edwards lost his smile and became abusive, but it did him little good. Vainly he searched around. I suggested that he might like to go over and search the post. Together we walked down the trail past the two Indians who were seated in a brush camp made on top of the snow calmly boiling a kettle over the fire. Beneath those green boughs upon which they sat, buried deep in snow, were the bags of beaver skins he sought but so intent was he on getting to my place that he did not give these harmless-looking hunters even a passing glance.

At the post there was nothing to be seen so he retraced his steps and departed on a freight train. Not until it was dark did I attempt to move the beaver skins, then they never touched the post at all but were transported down the lake to my cache by dog-team. While this was being done I was at the station keeping a sharp lookout. Somehow some intuitive sense seemed to tell me that Edwards was not very far away. From Miss Haynes, the operator, I found out that there would be a freight train in about midnight so I decided to stick around. Later, from the shadow of the water tower, I watched the huge form of the constable descend from the caboose and proceed in the direction of the little station. I waited until the train had gone, then entering the office silently on moccasined feet I beheld the broad back of the policeman.

Edwards looked around. "Why, what the 'ell are you doin' 'ere?" he impolitely inquired as he scowled at me menacingly.

"Well, I didn't think you seemed very well satisfied this afternoon and I expected a call from you again so, rather than be interrupted in the middle of the night, I decided to come over and meet you. There are no more trains tonight; I've a bed ready for you at the post and my dog-team's outside, so if you want a little Hudson's Bay hospitality you'd better come along right now!"

It was quite a long time before I was bothered with the constable again.

Shortly afterwards the mail brought me news that Mr. Bacon had retired and his place taken by Chief Factor Thomson who had been the Land Commissioner for some time. Mr. Thomson, a thorough gentleman, was one of the canny Scots type: cautious to a degree and bewilderingly slow in arriving at a decision, which, when reached, was invariably along the most conservative lines. Possibly Mr. Thomson realized that the enormous prices

being obtained for furs, and the constant upward swing, could not continue indefinitely and must end in a sudden and complete collapse. If such was the case then there was more justification for his attitude than was conceded by those of us engaged in trading at the time.

Tremendous profits were being reaped by the independent traders who, often in a month or two, would make as much as the Hudson's Bay man opposing them would draw in wages during an entire year, and it was not for want of offers, at far higher pay than they were receiving, that the employees remained loyal to the "Bay."

Shortly after Mr. Thomson's appointment it became increasingly difficult to obtain cash with which to help out the trade in furs. The traveling buyers had accustomed the Indians by this time to using cash and they liked to handle a little of it after having paid their debts. They did foolish things with it undoubtedly. If a couple of Indians wanted to spend their money traveling backwards and forwards on a passenger train, eating in the diner for the novelty of the thing, and sitting in the observation car, that was their affair! But, for some peculiar reason Mr. Thomson insisted that there should be no cash used at the posts for buying fur other than that taken in from the sale of goods. Yet, without a little cash we were in danger of losing a very large percentage of the trade, still, in spite of Mr. J. D. MacKenzie's representations, the Commissioner's views seemed fixed.

If the employees had wished to use their own money there was nothing to prevent them but the Company's regulations, and they were in a position to make big profits for themselves while still, in doing so, indirectly protecting the Company's trade. But all of them put up a fight to obtain the cash from the Company rather than resort to such means for preventing a serious loss of trade.

At far-off Chipewyan, on Lake Athabasca, the same situation had to be faced by the trader there. Realizing that the Indians would sell to the opposition for cash he rightly considered that it would be much better to have the dealings take place in the store so that he could obtain a share of the money across the counter rather than have the fur bought surreptitiously around the Indian camps.

J. H. Bryan, a local trapper and trader, soon acquired a large quantity of fur in this manner and sold it in New York which was now making a bold bid to become the great fur center of the world. The outcome of Mr. Bryan's activities, combined with the Company's policy and their having failed the Indians during the earlier days of the war, was startling and far-reaching, for on one of his trips to New York with a large assortment of selected furs *he*

succeeded in interesting American capital in the possibilities of the North. Thus the Lamson-Hubbard Canadian Company came into being, with Mr. Bryan as manager, and throughout the Mackenzie valley and the northern parts of Saskatchewan the Company found that the weak and insignificant opponent who had been almost laughed at around Fort Chipewyan was now the leader of a million dollar enterprise which was raising havoc in the North. Everywhere the new company was received with open arms by whites and Indians alike.

Note. The events dealt with in the last two chapters in connection with the smuggling of beaver refer to the days prior to, and during, the war. At the present time the Hudson's Bay Company are coöperating with the Provincial Game Departments in observing and enforcing the game laws and this picturesque and adventurous side of a trader's life is now a thing of the past.

Before I left Long Lake, Donald McDonald, veteran fur trader and Deputy Minister of Game and Fisheries for Ontario, had devised an ingenious means of accomplishing what the Department desired while still protecting the beaver and otter, yet satisfying the traders. Each Indian was permitted to kill ten beaver and ten otter in a season, to which numbered coupons were attached and the numbers entered on the back of an identity card given him yearly by the Indian Agent.

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[1] Seventeen percent of the values realized at the London Fur Sales of April, 1914, according to word which we received.

[2] Somewhat similar conditions must have prevailed in the '70's for Isaac Cowie, on page number 440 of his book "The Company of Adventurers," says: "After the alleged 'Reorganization' under Donald A. Smith, as Chief Commissioner, most stringent orders were issued to officers in charge to cease advancing the Indians on their hunts." Mr. Cowie then refers to the determination of the natives to help themselves.

[3] Mr. MacKenzie is now (1933) living in Winnipeg. His book “Men of the Hudson’s Bay” gives interesting sidelights on the fur trade of the latter part of the last century.

[4] A “Purgatory Ledger” was a book in which a post manager or trader entered unauthorized debts to Indians which he was afraid to show in the regular books and statements. The debt remained “in Purgatory” until the Indian made a good hunt when it was entered as “Barter.” It was used in nearly all the trading companies but never officially recognized as existing.

[5] I speak from personal experience, and know of many other men who did likewise at this period. I had it on very reliable authority that one trader, when his account was checked up the following summer, was over a year’s salary in debt, due to his having charged himself with goods which he gave to the Indians.

[6] Echivrier related the story to me when he got to Missanabie, and expressed indignation at the treatment accorded him.

[7] A term often used but inaccurate. The correct name is: “The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson’s Bay.”

CHAPTER XIV

The Peace Pipe at the Stone Fort

Early in July, 1919, I was on my way once again to the Old Country, and stood upon the promenade deck of the "S.S. Adriatic" gazing at the receding skyline of New York.

In that teeming city of millions I had felt more alone than in the most desolate wastes of the Northland until I discovered the whereabouts of our late Commissioner, Mr. Bacon, who had become manager of the New York Fur Auction Sales Corporation, which was commencing to threaten London's supremacy in the fur trade. Already the newly formed Lamson-Hubbard Company was diverting a large volume of furs from the northwest into the warehouses of the American concern.

As soon as possible after reaching England I paid a visit to the Old Lady of Lime Street, as the London office was affectionately known. I was received by Mr. Ingram, the Secretary, with the affability and friendliness which endeared him to all the Company's people in Canada, and which went far, I think, in cementing the feeling of loyalty towards the Company and making the men feel that they were not mere employees but rather integral parts of the historic corporation.

He told me that the Hudson's Bay Company were making preparations to celebrate their 250th anniversary, which fell due on the 2nd of the following May. It was arranged that I should meet Sir William Schooling who was preparing a history for the occasion and desired some first-hand information on the Indians and their customs.

Shortly afterwards I met the Deputy Governor, an unimpressive, middle-aged and extremely self-important man by the name of Charles Vincent Sale, who had become connected with the firm, I was told, through his shipping interests.

I had only been back at Long Lake a short time that fall when I was summoned to the head office in Winnipeg and told by the Commissioner that it was the Company's intention to stage a pageant on the Red River, and that I had been chosen to undertake the work.

I immediately thought of Lower Fort Garry, that stonewalled stronghold of the Company situated on the banks of the Red River only eighteen miles

from Winnipeg, so rich in historical associations, as an appropriate setting for the affair. Erelong arrangements were completed: Indians were brought in from all quarters of the land; costumes were designed, bark canoes and York boats built and tepee covers sewn together.

Overlooking the river a village of painted and decorated tepees soon housed a hundred Indians from many different tribes. There were Swampy Crees from James Bay, Hudson Bay and Norway House, Saulteaux from Lake Winnipeg, Ojibways from the Nipigon country and the hinterland of Ontario, stalwart Red Men from the Peace and Athabasca valleys, swarthy tribesmen from Fort St. James and the Pacific Coast, and plaited-haired roman-nosed Sioux warriors from around the Portage Plains.

Strange as it may appear tradition kept the tribes from intermixing. The Ojibways looked askance at first at their hereditary enemies the Sioux; the Crees kept severely to themselves and avoided the Ojibways and the other tribes who spoke in unknown tongues. Knowing their peculiarities I arranged and allotted the tepees so that they would not be forced to intermingle.

For a while the atmosphere of earlier and more picturesque days hovered about the Old Stone Fort. Silhouetted against the painted tepee covers at night the shadowy figures carried the mind back to days of long ago when the chansons of the light-hearted voyageurs must frequently have arisen around camp-fires on the very spot where the Indian lodges stood. There was much visiting backwards and forwards amongst the tepees of the Sioux for there were many prominent men amongst them and these held aboriginal court in their own quiet way. There was the mighty eighty-year-old veteran, Iron Bull, whose father, Little Six, had led in the massacre of the six hundred whites in Minnesota during the sixties. Then there was the noble-looking Kinnewakan, Chief of the “refugee” Sioux of Portage Plains, whose followers had fled the States after an encounter with the American troops and had sought sanctuary in the “Land of the Great Mother” where they had been given grants by Chief Factor Christie of Upper Fort Garry.

Around and around circled Iron Bull’s long-stemmed red stone pipe and the acrid fumes of *kinni-kinnick* were wafted overhead. Within the walls all was quiet and silent though the tent occupied by the two Mounted Policemen who kept watch was dimly lighted with a coal-oil lantern. An occasional light flickered from the Governor’s residence and there was a peculiar tranquillity permeating the old fort and its surroundings, so different from the bustle of the city but a few short miles away.

To my intense satisfaction the morning of May 3, 1920, broke with a cloudless sky while a cool breeze rippled the surface of the river. My fleet of birch-bark canoes, two York boats, and a long dug-out were assembled on the beach in front of the site formerly occupied by Upper Fort Garry, for long the fur trade center of the Northwest.

Clad in a fringed suit of deerskin, fur cap and moccasins, impersonating the Factor in charge of the brigade, I stepped into my own small craft and under the impetus of the sinewy arms of my Ojibway friends, Wadoo and Kitchinini, we took the leading place in the flotilla.

Past the site of Fort Rogue and the mythical Fort Maurepas at the historic Forks, and over towards the St. Boniface shore, sped the York boats with red painted oars rising and falling in unison. Then came the bright yellow bark canoes with their befeathered occupants who yelled and whooped excitedly as they waved their paddles at the cheering throng of palefaces along the banks. Behind followed the long clumsy dug-out filled with Pacific Coast tribesmen who toiled lustily to keep up with the other craft.

Under densely crowded bridges, alive with cheering humanity, we continued over the trail followed by the pathfinders of almost two centuries before. At the Rapids,[1] only two miles from the fort, my bedizened warriors paddled wonderingly into the locks. Affrightedly they watched the water creep lower and lower, marveling at the power of the palefaces who made even the water rise and fall at will.

A dense crowd was seen surrounding the fort as we swept around the last bend. There was a thundering boom followed by another, and another as billowing clouds of white smoke shot from the muzzles of the cannon far out over the blue surface of the river. Immediately the Indians responded with a resounding crackle of musketry which almost deafened those of us in the canoes. Again and again the cannon boomed out their stentorian welcome, the pall of white smoke almost obscuring the loop-holed walls and red topped bastions from sight. Then the white house flag of the Company fluttered overhead in honor of the day. The Indians continued to load and fire their guns as we bore swiftly down upon the fort.

To the loud reverberations of the cannon the fur bales were stored within the warehouse. Gathering my braves around me I led them to the stretch of green sward surrounding the flagpole at the base of which was a platform occupied by Sir Robert Kindersley and his party.

Each tribe, with their respective Chiefs in front of them, squatted cross-legged in their appointed places, the position of honor being given to the

Crees of Hudson Bay. The gaudy war-bonnets and coup-sticks of the Sioux, the beaded and fringed costumes of the Crees, and the lank befeathered locks of the painted Ojibways formed a strange contrast to the Governor in his frock coat and silk hat, and the conventional clothing of those seated around him.

As the gates of the fort swung open and two laden Red River carts, drawn by oxen, made their way with protesting squeaks and groans towards the fur store, followed by trappers leading Indian ponies with packs upon their backs, an aeroplane hovered overhead—a symbol of the old and the new.

With Mr. McKay, the interpreter beside me, I addressed the Governor and introduced our native guests.

"Sir Robert Kindersley, Gentlemen: I have much pleasure in assembling before you on behalf of the Company the native representatives of most of the different tribes that the Company has been so long associated with. Your Indian guests have been drawn from all parts of the North country, many of them having traveled for weeks by dog-team, snowshoe, canoe and other means to meet you. You see before you the Chiefs and leading men of the Swampy Crees from York Factory, Moose Factory, and the interior parts of the hinterland of Manitoba; the Plain Crees from Saskatchewan and the Athabasca. The Ojibways are present in considerable numbers from the country north of Lake Superior. From southern Manitoba have come the Sioux, and from British Columbia the representatives of six different tribes. It is most appropriate that this event, of such historical interest, should take place within the walls of the old Stone Fort, one of the last relics of frontier days prior to the penetration of civilization, of which our officers formed the vanguard. It was here that, in 1871, the first treaty was enacted between the Western tribes and the Government, and now, once more, the same tribes meet again clad in the habiliments of those days. Memories of this meeting will be carried back by the tribesmen to their distant camps throughout the North where, around their camp-fires in the cold winter nights, will be talked over this re-union and your reception upon the banks of the historical Red River as being, amongst other things, the means of causing erstwhile traditionally hostile tribes to smoke, at last, the calumet of peace together and to seal forever the bonds of friendship with each other. Possibly for the last time have the creaking wheels of the Red River carts lumbered into Lower Fort Garry, and the sweeps of the York boats and painted paddles of the canoemen churned the muddy waters of the river, manned by actual participants in similar brigades of bygone days. My Indian charges are, I perceive, anxious to shake you by the hand and express to you in person the

feelings of loyalty which they still feel towards you and the old Company. Before doing this they will, in accordance with an old custom, pass around the pipe of peace."[2]

Then a tall magnificent Sioux, Kinnewakan, arose from the group. Attired in fringed and beaded buckskin, a striking war bonnet of war eagle quills tipped with red tufts of horsehair encircling his mahogany countenance, the old man stepped forward with all the dignity and poise of a Roman emperor. Lifting a large stone-headed calumet, bearing the totem of each tribal leader painted on the stem, from a couple of crotched sticks he filled the bowl with *kinni-kinnick*. There was a deep hush amongst the crowd of onlookers as he reverently raised the stem, pointed it to the heavens and called in guttural tones upon the Wahcondah to give blessing to the day. Turning the stem to each point of the compass he then presented it towards Sir Robert.

Deafening shouts of applause arose from the whites and Indians as the Governor emitted three puffs of blue smoke which he drew through the sacred stem. Like a priest giving sacrament Kinnewakan passed around the semi-circle, holding the stone head firmly in his hand while each brave took one whiff. Then with the same deliberation and deep reverence which had accompanied all his actions Kinnewakan placed the pipe in the hands of the Governor, a lasting pledge of friendship and good-will.

There was a gasp of awed astonishment from the Indians when Sir Robert Kindersley, broad of shoulder and six foot six in height, arose to welcome them. Here, literally as well as figuratively, was a "Big Master," and they were impressed not only by his size but by the kindliness they readily detected in his face.

One by one I introduced the Indians, each Chief being permitted to make a little speech. I had warned McKay beforehand that if any of them talked foolishly, as they are sometimes apt to do, he was to substitute words of his own more suited to the occasion. It was well I did for hardly had Beardy, Chief of the York Factory Crees, been presented when he proceeded to say in Cree:

"Truly this is a great day when I am able to meet the Great Master of the Company, but there is one thing I want to ask you which I cannot understand. The Company is paying and feeding me while I am here to see you, and they are also feeding my es-quayo (squaw). *Why are they not feeding my dogs* which I need and think as much of as my wife?"

Realizing the portent of his speech I caught McKay's eye, and it is hardly necessary to say that the flowery address delivered by the interpreter

was very much at variance with the actual words of the Chief.

Bronze medals, struck for the occasion, were now pinned upon the breasts of all the Indians, then the Ojibway Chief stepped forward and made his speech. He dwelt upon the Company having forgotten its pledges to the Indians at the time the war broke out, of the free traders trying to wrest the trade away from the Company, and of his pleasure at once again placing the "Chain of Friendship" within the Governor's hands. This was confirmed by the presentation of a beaded wampum belt upon which the ideas conveyed in the speech were depicted in minute figures, a black band across the white background representing the cloud which had temporarily marred the relationship between the Indians and the Company.

As the ceremony came to a close the tom-toms began to throb. Next moment the Governor's party became the center of a mob of wildly dancing Indians; befeathered coup-sticks waved in the air, gaudy war-bonnets tossed this way and that as the tribesmen mingled together and danced the Dance of Peace.

A few minutes later my name was called and I was led over to the car occupied by Sir Robert Kindersley. He shook me warmly by the hand and pronounced the gathering to have been a success in every way, adding that as the years passed the historical significance and value of the Pageant would increase.

By this time Omar Upper, the cook, was busy amongst the tepees preparing a feast for the Red Men. Over a number of camp-fires huge kettles of tea were bubbling, while half an ox had been roasted to satisfy the voracious appetites of our aboriginal guests. When all was ready one hundred braves, still wearing their war-paint and paraphernalia, squatted in a wide circle amongst the lodges and enjoyed the old-time hospitality of the "Gentlemen Adventurers."

From the stone store within the fort came the sound of fiddles, the calls of the dance leaders, and the pounding of moccasined feet as the old-timers from St. Andrews, Little Britain and Selkirk indulged once again in the riotous fun of the Red River Jig.

Thus for a day were revived the old traditions and romantic past, and as I gazed at the flickering lights of the tepees and watched the shadowy forms of the old Indians passing the pipe once more from hand to hand I realized with a keen pang that history had been made that day, and that, with its passing, the old fort and the traditions which surrounded it had taken another long step towards antiquity.

On one point, however, I felt reason to be proud. From an obscure clubhouse, which it had become, I had at least elevated the almost forgotten but historic old fort to a place in the sun, and brought to the attention of the Press and the people of North America this appropriate monument to the courageous Selkirk settlers of a century before.

A few days later I received a letter from the Governor dated at Edmonton, May 6th, 1920:

"My dear Mr. Godsell:

"Although I took the opportunity of personally complimenting you on the fine results of your very hard work in connection with the reception of the Indians at Lower Fort Garry, I wish to say that the events of last Monday, May 3rd, will be carried in the memory of all who had the good fortune to witness them. Their historical significance and value will increase as time passes and the work you have done with such fidelity will be, I am sure, remembered by you with the same satisfaction as by myself.

"Yours faithfully,

"R. M. Kindersley,
"*Governor*."

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[1] The Rapids, as this place was called in former days, is now known as the village of Lockport on account of the locks built there in recent years.

[2] These are the actual words of the address taken from the original, which I still have in my possession. At Sir Robert Kindersley's request the author also prepared the speeches of welcome and farewell which the Governor made to the Indians.

CHAPTER XV

The Gathering of the Factors

On the evening of May 1st the entire staff had been entertained at a 250th Anniversary dinner by the Governor in the Fort Garry Hotel. It was a merry and happy gathering of men, women and girls from the city, and traders, clerks, ship's captains, and executives from the farthest reaches of the North. The splendid physique and commanding but kindly manner of Sir Robert Kindersley endeared him immediately to one and all and frequent loud hand-clapping and wild enthusiasm interrupted his speech.

"This gathering is unique," said the Governor, "even in the history of such a great Company as the Hudson's Bay Company. We must remember that it is one thing to get things in life and another thing to keep them. It was one thing to get a Charter, another thing to keep it. How was it that the Company managed to retain its Charter for so long? I do not think the answer is very difficult to find, as great privileges carry with them great responsibilities and obligations, and former Governors had discovered this truth and worked with only one purpose, the shouldering of those responsibilities and the carrying out of these obligations.

"I think this Company holds the proud privilege of being the oldest company of its kind in the British Empire, as the Bank of England, another old institution, was started some twenty-four years after the Charter was granted to the Hudson's Bay Company.

"The story of its servants is one long record of adventure and unswerving loyalty to the Company, and the history of the organization is very largely the history of Canada itself. We are very proud of the part we have played, and it leaves us with great traditions which should prove for all an impetus and stimulus to greater achievements in the future."

He touched a responsive chord amongst the fur trade men when he spoke of improving the scope of the pension scheme and setting up a capital fund of $1,225,000.00 to be administered by trustees and be non-contributary so that the men, after serving the Company many years, cut off entirely from the outside world, would be provided for and made secure in their declining years.

"I look to the future of the fur trade," he continued, "with a feeling of utmost confidence. *The last three years have shown the best results of any*

years in the history of the Company. The work of those engaged in this branch is arduous and severe, and we have under consideration several matters relating to the improvement of the conditions of service. We are naturally meeting with competition; you meet with that in any trade, and I welcome it; the better organized the competition, the better I welcome it, but I do not welcome mean competition. When you have a rising trade like the fur trade you are bound to meet with all kinds of competition, but in spite of this we feel we are stronger than ever in the fur business."

Hardly had the Governor concluded his speech ere the seven hundred employees were upon their feet singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" with the utmost zest and feeling. Cheer after cheer followed and some little time elapsed ere the program could continue. Sir Robert's speech made a very deep impression. It was not the cant of the usual after-dinner speaker, or the easily forgotten platitudes of a chairman to his board. It was obvious that the Governor meant every word he uttered.

The celebration did not finish when the gathering broke up. In all the better class hotels in town traders, ships' captains, clerks and officers from the fur trade posts and districts gathered in congenial circles, visited each other's rooms, drank to one another's health and long life, and to another two and a half centuries of success for the unconquerable Hudson's Bay!

There was the genial and enormous Captain Mack of the "Nascopie,"[1] Captain Freakley of the "Stork"; Louis Romanet, the French Inspector of the fur trade posts with his peculiar broken English; the eagle-eyed Angus Brabant from the gloomy valley of the Mackenzie; Boyd of the Athabasca country; Tommy Sinclair, representing a family with nearly two centuries of service; Chris Harding, veteran of the Arctic who had carried the red flag of the Company to the land of the unknown and savage Cogmollock Eskimos of Victoria Land, and Ralph Parsons, the quiet unassuming "Uncrowned King of Labrador and Hudson Straits."

They were a genial, unaffected and jolly crowd, more like schoolboys on holiday than men grown gray in the service, all of whom had uncomplainingly braved the icy blizzards of the Arctic, the polar ice of the Bering Sea, and put up an everlasting fight with the immutable forces of nature in the isolated and lonely trading posts of the exacting Northern wilderness.

It was through this Pageant that I and my assistant, Leslie Laing, were both destined to forsake our state of bachelorhood. At a nearby desk in the office sat a pretty girl with big humorous gray eyes and soft wavy brown

hair. When one day she brought over a telegram to me I seized upon the occasion to become acquainted and found her full of fun and ready repartee.

Her name was Jean Turner, she told me, remarking that some one had been leaving boxes of chocolates upon her desk while she was out at lunch, and she wondered who the mysterious admirer was. Evidently it had been Leslie Laing trying to steal a march upon me as usual.

A few days later I took Jean down to visit the Lower Fort where she immediately displayed that peculiar Scotch trait of being able to obtain an Indian's confidence and friendship practically at sight.

Thereafter our visits became quite frequent, and in the quiet tranquillity of this romantic and sequestered spot the friendship between us quickly ripened into something deeper and more abiding.

Meanwhile Laing was also feeling the prick of Cupid's barbs and commenced to loudly extol the virtues of a young lady whom he had met at an old-time dance near Lockport. His description, however, was both vague and unsatisfying for beyond remarking that she had a "red sweater and kind eyes" his powers of poetry and expression seemed to fail him, and the rest was left to our imagination until we had the pleasure of meeting Miss Moffat, who taught at a nearby school.

I was cleaning up the loose ends connected with the Pageant and not looking forward particularly to my forthcoming isolation at Long Lake when Larry, the office boy, stopped at my elbow and said that the Fur Trade Commissioner wished to see me.

Mr. Thomson sat behind a large desk with an oil painting of Sir George Simpson on the wall above him. Slowly and haltingly, as was his way, he congratulated me on the success I had made of the Red River Pageant.

He then went on to add that the Canadian Committee had approved my promotion to the post of Inspector for the Mackenzie River District and that I was to leave at the earliest possible opportunity and take the steamer through to the Arctic, first getting into touch with Angus Brabant, the District Manager, in Edmonton.

I had no illusions whatsoever as to what this really meant. The Mackenzie River District had always been notorious for poor living, exceptionally difficult traveling conditions, and frequent periods of almost semi-starvation. The romantic appeal of the great open spaces had become somewhat dulled by my prolonged stay in town, and I realized that the future held long and difficult journeys by dog-team and on snowshoes

through deep snows over broken river ice, of poor food, and even poorer accommodation.

I thanked the Commissioner and set about making my preparations to go away. I must admit, however, that my keenest regret was the prospect of parting from Jean who had been my almost constant companion every evening. This question, though we realized it could not be very far away, was never discussed between us, instead we left such realism for another time and place.

But on the evening of the 5th of June I looked out of the Pullman car window and watched the massive gray silhouette of the Fort Garry Hotel foreshortening in the distance and realized that I was about to enter another chapter of that ever-changing book called Life.

My stay in Edmonton was not a very long one. I learned from Mr. Warne, the fur buyer, that Mr. Brabant had just left to take over the Commissionership as Mr. Thomson was retiring, and Mr. Bassett had resigned. One of Mr. Brabant's first acts had been to reinstate his old friend and associate Charlie Sinclair as manager of the now combined Mackenzie and Athabasca Districts, and I took great pleasure in conveying the good news to Mrs. Sinclair who was living in Edmonton at the time.

It was the middle of June when I stood upon the platform of the little station of Dunvegan Yards, five miles from the city, the terminus of the newly completed Alberta and Great Waterways Railway, en route to Fort McMurray and the North.

The place was thronged with a picturesque frontier gathering of Indians, squaws carrying papooses on their backs, grizzled trappers and traders returning North after a riotous visit to the "white lights," Mounted Policemen in scarlet uniforms and polished Sam Brown belts, black robed priests and nuns, Government officials and the representatives of the fur companies. There was also Mr. Conroy, the aged Inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs, and Jim Cornwall, "Peace River Jim" as he was frequently known, who, in years gone by, had buried his old friend "Twelve Foot Davis" on top of the nine hundred foot peak overlooking the Peace River, and had engraved upon the headstone the epitaph:

"He was everybody's friend, and never was known to lock his cabin door," a monument which may still be seen for many miles around.

It was a noisy crowd, and many of the prospective passengers, as well as those bidding them farewell, were obviously feeling the exhilarating effects of their many parting drinks.

The “Muskeg Limited,” a conglomeration of dirty red box-cars, flat-cars, and one very rickety old-fashioned coach with a caboose tacked on to the rear, at length backed protestingly into the station. Every one immediately made a wild dash for the nearest car, threw on his bed-roll and grub boxes, clambered aboard and used his baggage in place of a seat.

The lucky ones got hard plush-covered berths in the coach but the majority were forced to make the best of the open flat-cars. As the engine gave her last wheezy whistle the nondescript train, with much bumping and a good deal of noise and ostentation, commenced her swaying journey through prairie land and muskeg.

Twice a day there would be a brief stop for meals, then the passengers would all pile out onto the track with frying pans and tea kettles in their hands, build hurried camp-fires, sling on the kettles, warm up a tin of pork and beans and snatch a hasty meal.

After the first fire every one knew everybody else and the artificial barriers which civilization imposes were very soon let down. There were four white ladies aboard; a missionary’s wife bound for Aklavic near the shore of the Polar Sea, a very practical Scotch woman who arose to every emergency; a Mounty’s wife, all paint and lipstick, silk stockings and smiles, who proved a positive thrill for the mosquitoes who demonstrated their appreciation, much to the poor girl’s discomfort and disgust; Mrs. Doyle, a recent bride, on her way to join her husband at Fort McPherson, as pretty as she was sensible, and Mrs. Harris who was to winter with her trader husband at Fort Good Hope, six miles from the Arctic Circle.

A truly remarkable railroad was the A. & G. W., as the rotting box-cars, which had fallen from the crazy track into the ditch, so amply testified. Straight ahead it went, up hill, down dale, through the woods and into the deepest muskegs where, for hours at a time, the rails would be invisible beneath the watery slime. Once or twice, after frenzied efforts to reach the top of some ridge, the engine would stop with a loud despairing snort, then the conductor would apologetically ask all passengers to please jump off and walk in order to reduce the load.

After backing up a couple of miles the engine would come swaying along, puffing and wheezing mightily, and finally top the hill. “All aboard” some overalled trainman would yell and we would jump on once again. Erelong the train would come to another stop—a clay-cut—and each passenger would have to take hold of the business end of a shovel and help remove a few tons of clay and earth which had fallen in upon the track.

When on the second night we arrived at Lac La Biche we received the discouraging news that it would be a week or more ere we could proceed, some of the track ahead having been washed out by the rain. A few days later the same thing happened behind us and for two weeks we were literally marooned in this smelly oasis, surrounded by an ocean of swamp and mud on every side.

The little "one-horse" town did boast an "hotel"; a big packing case affair with dirty gray blankets separating the rooms in place of doors, where, for an hour before each meal, unsavory odors from the kitchen penetrated every room and proclaimed the menu in advance. After a ten days' diet of pork and beans some of the more fastidious passengers commenced to lose patience and say harsh words concerning the Company and their advertised trip to the Arctic, and as I was the only representative amongst them I was being continually sought out and asked what I intended doing about it. Meanwhile, with the help of Jim Cornwall, we had managed to get a few belated and not very industrious work gangs out on the road.

As I was anxious, for business reasons, to get to Fort McMurray I persuaded Mickey Ryan to use his auto, which was mounted on flanged wheels and could run upon the track, to take a few passengers with most pressing business in ahead of the train. But when the car pulled up at the station to take on its appointed load of five, thirty-seven angry passengers, with nearly a ton of baggage, were fighting and clamoring to get aboard, so to avoid having his car wrecked Mickey had, perforce, to call the trip off.

Late that night, like thieves in the dark, we sneaked through the woods until we reached a meeting place agreed upon about two miles out of town where we found "Gasoline Gus" waiting with the car. As this was immediately filled I was forced to perch high up upon a bulky load of mail sacks lashed upon the "Jim Crow" car, or trailer, while a steady rain poured down upon me. The flood-gates of heaven seemed to have opened from the moment Gus turned on the gas and for two days it poured down incessantly upon myself and my drenched companions in misery. The only stops we made were for meals, which were prepared regardless of the rain, and at night again when we crawled between our blankets on the mud floor of some leaky and deserted cabin.

Just as we reached the end of steel the sun broke through the clouds and far below we espied the glimmering surface of the beautiful Clearwater River almost obscured by the swaying leaves of the poplar and heavy cottonwood trees.

[1] Quotation from the *Manitoba Free Press*, May 1st, 1920: "Captain Mack is known to his colleagues as 'The Jellicoe of the Company's fleet.' During the war, while in charge of the 'Nascopie' transporting supplies to Russia, he destroyed a submarine one morning before breakfast. The 'sub' was sighted just after daybreak amid the ice floes of the North Sea. The 'sub' crew was asleep but a shot from the 'Nascopie' wakened them in time to return one wild-fire shot before a second round from the freighter ended their career."

CHAPTER XVI

Over Mackenzie's Trail to the Polar Sea

The only temporary home I could find at the end of steel was a discarded coal car on a siding and here I took up residence after depositing my bed-roll and grub-box within, kicking myself for not having known enough to bring a small tent along. About a week later the train rolled casually in and the group of angry swearing passengers commenced wading ankle deep through the mud towards the river, expressing very definite opinions about railroads which took two weeks to convey its passengers a short three hundred miles.

Having some work to do here I did not go on down to Fort McMurray and was still occupying my unpretentious "digs" when Charlie Sinclair arrived some ten days later and inquired as to which was the best place to stay. I introduced him to my coal car home with the assurance that his accommodation would cost him nothing as he could share my bed-roll with me. That he was thunderstruck at this introduction to the far-famed Mackenzie River District is but putting it mildly, though it was only the first of many similar surprises. Mr. Brabant had certainly not squandered any of the Company's money upon unnecessary buildings or equipment. He wanted furs and got them but as for creature comforts the district boasted few.

The following morning we made our way down the sliding slippery bank to the river side where the freight was being hurriedly piled aboard some scows. There was a big raw-boned teamster there called "Red" who was in anything but a pleasant mood. What he wasn't going to do to Mickey Ryan the freight contractor was not worth telling, and as he threw the ninety pound pieces around he continued to mumble about the "cussin" he had given Mickey in a note he had sent him that morning. There came the pounding of hoofs, then a horse and rider emerged from amongst the poplars. It was Mickey Ryan, the cool, casual small-boned Irishman, one time prize-fighter, who had arranged our trip on the "Jim Crow" car to the end of steel. Sliding quietly off his horse he made his way towards the teamster, surveying him with a hard cold smile while he slowly chewed a wad of gum. Red became uncomfortable and his belligerency seemed to evaporate as he caught the boss's penetrating blue eye.

"Say, Red," drawled Mickey softly, "I jest received that there message of yours, and I came over to see you about it!"

"Why, er, Mickey!"

"Did'ju write that note?" said Mickey as he held out a slip of paper.

"Well! You know, it was just like this, Mickey!"

"All right. You either eat them words right here and now or take a lickin'," and Mickey held out the offending letter. "Now, eat them words, and make it snappy!"

Gradually the piece of paper disappeared into Red's capacious mouth, then he commenced to munch away like a cow chewing her cud. Mickey watched until Red's Adam's apple rose and fell a couple of times, grinned slightly, then made his way back to his horse. Without another word he disappeared along the trail leading back to Fort McMurray.

Later that day we boarded the stern-wheeled river steamer "Fort McMurray." Soon we were wending our way past the tar sands and into the wider and more heavily wooded stretches of the Athabasca River, while ever and anon Captain Haight, resplendent in nautical cap, gold braid and brass buttons, loudly bellowed orders from up on the Texas deck. Nobody except the few lady passengers were impressed by the old fellow's noisy ostentation, least of all the half-breed crew who often yelled derisively back.

Early in the morning of the third day we made our way out of the shallow marshes at the mouth of the river and commenced to traverse the beautiful stretch of island dotted waters known as Lake Athabasca. With one accord Mr. Sinclair and I gazed at each other and in the same breath remarked how closely it resembled Playgreen Lake. It was a perfect day, the water as blue as sapphire, and not a sound was to be heard but the thud, thud, thud of the paddle wheel and the screaming of the white seagulls who followed in our wake.

We were gazing upon one of the most romantic and historical spots in Canada's Northland, the discovery of which dated back a century and a half to the days of the enterprising and aggressive North West Company, and of that picturesque free-booter of the wilderness, Peter Pond, who opened up the entire Athabasca region.

Soon we were beneath the towering rocks upon which the red-roofed white painted Fort Chipewyan stood sentinel. There was something unutterably commanding and tranquil about this spot which had witnessed the last chapters in the bitter struggle for supremacy in the fur lands, and I was deeply impressed as I gazed upon the interesting scene, for it was from the original post on Old Fort Point, just five miles away, that Alexander Mackenzie and his companions had paddled their four frail craft on just such

a summer's day in 1789 in search of the "Great River of the North," and so discovered the Mackenzie River and explored it to the mouth. From the same spot he had again departed in October, 1792, on his successful overland journey to the Pacific, thus completing the discovery of the far Northwest.

Innumerable squat skin and cotton lodges of the Chipewyans and Caribou Eaters were pitched along the shore, which was also covered with scores of empty bark canoes and many roaming dogs. Upon the rocks were gathered the swarthy tribesmen accompanied by their squaws, while the acrid tang of wood smoke from the cooking fires was wafted towards us upon the gentle morning breeze.

John James Louttit, the factor, immediately came on board and greeted us, as did the venerable Colin Fraser, free trader, whose father had been the piper for Sir George Simpson when he was emperor of the fur lands. I was forced to refuse Colin's hospitable offer of sloe gin which he kept for all "distinguished" guests, hurried up to the post, looked over the affairs along with Charlie Sinclair, and got back on board just as the deck hands were hauling in the gang-plank.

Soon the "Fort McMurray" was wheezing and snorting her way down the Slave River, vibrating to the rhythm of the paddles. Finally we reached the mouth of the Peace River and as we chugged along I listened to the story told me in broken Cree by the Slavey Chief, Pierre Squirrel, of how the river came to get its name.

Between the Peace River and Great Slave Lake lies a large preserve known as the Wood Buffalo Park of which the bank of the Slave River, along which we were steaming, forms the eastern boundary. At the present time this comprises an area of 17,300 square miles where buffalo roam unhampered and unhunted under the protection of the Mounted Police and Game Guardians, whose cabins we would pass from time to time. Once in a while some shaggy wood buffalo would gaze contemplatively at us, flick at the flies with his tail and disappear into the nearby woods.

When Ernest Thompson Seton visited the range in 1907 he estimated these buffalo at three hundred, though later he concluded there were more. As a matter of fact there are two distinct herds, with a wide strip of muskeg separating the one entirely from the other, the northern herd numbering approximately thirteen hundred, and the southern herd around twelve hundred.

During recent years some six thousand prairie buffalo have been shipped by rail from Wainwright, Alberta, to Fort McMurray, thence by scows down

river and turned loose on the southern range. Many of these, of which a large number were two-year-olds, made a frantic effort to get back to the dry prairie land to which they were accustomed and died or were drowned in the attempt, while others were killed by the heavier wood buffalo, so it is difficult to say how many still remain. According to official estimates there are supposed to be, I believe, some ten thousand buffalo in this preserve, but those who should know consider this estimate as *far too high*.

Wolves are always reported in large numbers wherever the buffalo range and are supposed to do great damage. They have their own sly way of cutting out a calf or old blind bull, hamstringing it and severing the jugular vein with a few quick slashes of their ivory fangs. Usually they travel around in ones and twos, though occasionally they move in packs of from ten to seventeen. I think, however, that I know the names of quite a number of the *wolves* who are reputed to do so much damage, and if I am not mistaken they have but two legs, swarthy faces, and go to the mission church on Sunday!

Of course the Indians will rarely admit killing buffalo as it is contrary to the law imposed upon them by the whites, but I do not think that any one who knows these natives intimately has any doubt whatsoever that they still, in spite of Mounted Police and rangers, indulge occasionally in their ancestral food.

We reached at last the uninviting and squalid spot, Smith Landing, recently re-named Fort Fitzgerald in memory of Inspector Fitzgerald of the Royal North West Mounted Police who perished with his entire patrol in 1911 on the winter trail between Fort McPherson and Dawson.

A slow moving team of horses carried us over the eighteen miles of muddy portage road, above which the foliage of cottonwood and poplar trees swayed, to Fort Smith, circumventing the bad rapids in the river which drops one hundred and nine feet between the two places.

All the freight brought up on the “Fort McMurray” for the North had to be hauled across this muddy trail on rickety Indian carts and re-loaded aboard the “Mackenzie River” which was berthed below the towering sandbanks at Fort Smith. Not far away lay the “Northland Trader” whose deck hands were hustling the cargo feverishly on board. This little craft belonged to the opposition firm, the Northern Trading Company, once known as Hislop and Nagle, and each year there was a hectic race between it and the Company’s boat to see which could load up and be first to get away.

At this time of year there was always a shortage of goods and provisions at the down river posts and much high grade furs in the hands of trappers

and Indians, and to the first arrival usually went the spoils. This fact was not lost sight of by the Indian freighters on the portage. About the time the "Mackenzie River" was half loaded they struck for higher pay. Meanwhile Mickey Ryan's outfit, employed this year by the Northern Trading Co., were rapidly piling goods across the portage and their boat was in a fair way to leave ahead of ours.

Old Angus Brabant had employed methods all his own in handling these Indian and Metis freighters. Usually he took care to own at least one essential part of each man's equipment which he would refuse to sell outright. He would thus own the wheel of one Indian's wagon, one horse belonging to some half-breed's team, the whiffletrees of another, and the harness of still another. If one of these men became unreasonable, or undertook to haul freight for the hated opposition, old Angus was over like a shot, took away his wheel, or his horse, or his harness, and thus usually won the day. But with Mr. Brabant's departure from the district these peculiar methods were no longer practicable. We were held up and for the time being were forced to face the music. But the following year, and for every year thereafter, Ryan Brothers hauled the Company's freight across the portage and the Indians howled in vain.

The following afternoon there was a sudden cessation of activity on board the opposition boat, then as dusk commenced to fall she slid quietly and unostentatiously into the current and, like a phantom vessel, disappeared into the gathering darkness and was gone.

With much tooting of whistles, howling of dogs, and yelling from those ashore and on board, the "Mackenzie River" pulled out into the current the following evening, turned her nose downstream and commenced her long tiresome journey of two thousand, six hundred miles to the Land of the Midnight Sun and back.[1]

The boat carried more than her allotted hundred tons and was so overcrowded that only the lucky ones obtained berths or cabins in which to sleep. The others, when drowsiness overcame them or they were tired of playing cards, spread their bed-rolls upon the deck and were soon snoring lustily. Excepting for short stops at the wood-piles to load on wood the great wheel revolved continuously and our white painted craft pushed ever onward in a hopeless endeavor to overtake the "Northland Trader."

It would be difficult to imagine a more cosmopolitan or picturesque crowd than the one we had on board. There were Mounted Police, Police Inspectors, priests and nuns, trappers and traders, squaws and children, Indians and "Improved Scotsmen" as the mixed bloods were facetiously

known. Upon the lower deck, chained amongst the cargo, were a score of Indian sleigh dogs who sent their long drawn and eerie howls to high heaven every time the whistle blew.

Upon the for'ard part of the saloon deck were piled several thousand dollars' worth of permits. To the uninitiated I should explain that the Northwest Territories, being occupied principally by natives, has always been under a prohibition law. Permits are issued annually by Ottawa, upon application, to every responsible white resident entitling him to import *for medicinal purposes only* two gallons of liquor each year. Here, then, were the permits, soon to bring joy and headaches to the rightful owners and their friends.

Captain Gardiner, of Indian ancestry, had gathered his tribe around him. His wife and daughter were stewardesses and the white wife of one of the engineers, with the tactlessness peculiar to some women, decided to bring the "color line" aboard with her so she deliberately "cut" them each time she came to table. Upon the Texas deck, alongside the pilot house, the skipper and his wife took turns working the washing machine after which lines were strung the entire length of the vessel and the family laundry decorated our strange craft from end to end. Thanks to the tactlessness of the white woman it was not long before a bitter racial war convulsed the crew and destroyed any remote bit of efficiency that might originally have existed.

It was not so many years before that the food supplied the vessel each summer had consisted principally of a number of bales of leathery dried meat from the meat post at Fort Rae, a chest or two of tea and a few sacks of flour and beans. Later, as a special mark of consideration, Captain Mills of the "Wrigley" had been allowed a case of condensed milk for his especial use which he kept below the bunk in his cabin for safety.

Times had improved since then but still the *pièce de résistance* at both the noon and evening meal was the inevitable pork and beans, or bacon. Potatoes there were none, boiled rice being served instead, though later we managed to get some spuds down river. The ship's supplies had, it appeared, also got mislaid in the general mix-up of the freight this year.

When Gerald Card, the Indian Agent, a one time Anglican minister, was asked by the Captain to say grace before we made our usual assault upon the pork and beans he vigorously protested.

"Indeed I won't," he remarked emphatically. "After paying the Hudson's Bay Company fifty cents for a meal, against which even my stomach registers the most vigorous and continual protests, I fail to see any reason why I should lift my voice in thanks to God!"

While the steamer is chugging her way downstream between the forested clay banks of the Slave River, let us take a glance at the vast area, opened up by the early pathfinders, now known as the Northwest Territories, which extends from the 60th parallel almost to the Pole. Here is an area of a little over one million, three hundred thousand square miles, of which fifty thousand is water and the rest mountain, rock, forest and treeless tundra.

It is over a century and a half since Leroux built Slave Fort, now Fort Resolution, and Mackenzie explored the "River Disappointment" as he called the magnificent stream which bears his name,[2] yet the population of this enormous area, *one third as large as the United States*, comprises today 4,046 Indians, 4,670 Eskimos and only 1,007 whites, principally traders, missionaries, priests, Mounted Police and trappers—less than 10,000 souls all told. It can only be compared with the western portion of the United States at the time of Lewis and Clark; the Mackenzie and Peace Rivers with the Mississippi and the Missouri in the days when the Indians still hunted the buffalo.

For ten days after leaving Fort Smith the steamer thrashes her way through an almost uninhabited wilderness touching at the little trading posts upon the river bank, the commercial centers of the land. One has to make this journey to realize the immensity of this magnificent and undeveloped country.

There was no want of variety and excitement on board for twice the ship caught fire though it was quickly extinguished on each occasion by the deck hands down below.

Until the oil boom took place at Fort Norman in 1920, which attracted many people and oil men to the North, only about four hundred tons of freight crossed the Smith Portage en route to the down river posts each year, of which about three hundred was handled by the Hudson's Bay Company and the balance by the Northern Trading Company. Now, however, as a result of the oil boom, and the new Lamson and Hubbard Company revolutionizing things throughout the land, the limited resources of the transport were taxed far beyond their limited strength, and of this there was daily, and almost hourly, evidence.[3]

At Fort Smith the new American fur company was engaged in building a luxurious two hundred and twenty-five ton river steamer to compete with the much smaller "Mackenzie River" for the transportation of the North. White men had been brought in from Edmonton to do the work and while we were at Fort Smith had gone on strike, giving the quality of the food as their reason for their action. Yet, from the standpoint of the fur traders in the

North, they were living in the lap of luxury, rarely lacking even *such delicacies* as fruit and eggs. The Indians and half-breeds watched the actions of these newly imported whites quietly but keenly, and the white man's prestige and infallibility went down just another notch.

At length we reached the mouth of the Slave River and the wide horizon of that immense body of water known to the Crees as Gitche Atchinew Sar-kay-yikan and to the world by its literal translation, Great Slave Lake.

It was the picture of desolation for the low marshy shores, the crooked contorted carcasses of dead trees and huge logs of driftwood nodding to the rise and fall of the seas which swept in from the inland ocean, gave the surroundings a very dreary aspect. A swiftly sailing York boat carrying some Dog-Rib or Yellow Knife Indians over to Fort Resolution to get their Treaty money was the only moving object upon the wide panorama of gray waters.

The "Mackenzie River" sailed majestically down the channel toward the open lake with a large loaded scow lashed beside her in the stern of which were camped Clawhammer and his Slavey family. Suddenly there was a resounding crash as the vessel plowed her nose into a sandbar, the projecting gangway sweeping ninety pound bales, cases and cook-stoves around the heads of the native occupants as the ropes gave way and the scow continued its journey on alone. Never in all my life did I see a more miraculous escape. Although the heavy bales and crates were swept over their heads not a single native in the stern of the scow was injured though, for a while, they could almost have been mistaken for white people so pale did they become with fright.

Jack Hornby, the recluse and wanderer of the Barrens who was with us, launched a small canoe and paddled off in pursuit of the disappearing scow which was being carried out to sea by its own impetus and the powerful current. As he clambered aboard we watched him through our glasses. Knowing the treacherous and dangerous character of the lake he realized it was imperative that the overloaded craft be anchored while still within the protecting banks of the stream free from the danger of being swamped in a sudden squall. Hurriedly he tied a stout rope to a big crated cook-stove, then with Clawhammer's help it was pushed overboard with a mighty splash. Roars of laughter followed at the astonished look upon Hornby's face, *as the stove remained afloat*. It must have been full of air to enable it to perform this peculiar trick before it finally sank, and for the time being the whole affair was the source of much merriment to all on board the scow who momentarily forgot their own predicament.

Twenty-four hours after running onto the sandbar our ship was worked back into the channel and we proceeded to make our way slowly and very carefully out into the lake. The sun was suspended like a huge fiery ball above the western horizon as we dropped anchor before Fort Resolution and gazed at the large encampment of Dog-Rib and Yellow Knife Indians on the flat before the fort. They had come in to trade their spring hunts and meet Mr. Card, the Indian Agent, who left us here.

Pierre Mercredi, the factor, told us that the Indians, of whom there were about a thousand camped around, were in a most rebellious mood, determined not to take their Treaty money on account of one of their number having been fined at Fort Smith that spring for killing a duck. This, they said, was entirely contrary to their Treaty and if such was the white man's way of observing treaties they would have nothing to do with it.

I learned afterwards that Indian Agent Card had a pretty hot three days with these disgruntled Dog-Ribs and Yellow Knives. It was only the good offices of Pierre and his influence with the motley tribesmen that caused them to accept King George's Treaty money once again.

But our stay was a very short one for these flat bottomed river steamers are not suited to the lake and Captain Gardiner was anxious to make the crossing to the Mackenzie River while the waters remained calm.

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[1] The exact distance from Fort Smith to Aklavic is 1,358 miles by river.

[2] Slave Fort was built in the summer of 1786 by Cuthbert Grant and Laurent Leroux. The first fort was built about thirty miles from the mouth of the Slave River but was later moved to Moose Island. The Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Resolution in 1815 on the mainland about two miles from the Nor'Westers' fort, the latter being abandoned after the amalgamation of 1821.

[3] Note also Fullerton Waldo's reference to this transport the following summer in his book "Down the Mackenzie."

CHAPTER XVII

In Topsy-Turvy Land

There had been a battle royal that winter for the newly organized American firm, the Lamson and Hubbard Canadian Company, had challenged the supremacy of an organization which, until that time, had been almost paramount throughout that section of the North. Under the stress of competition fur prices had soared until they exceeded, at many posts, the highest prices being realized at any markets throughout the world. It was a short-sighted policy, due largely to the bitter personal feeling which developed between the rival traders for by Christmas time the posts were almost destitute of provisions and supplies, the stocks having been quickly exhausted on account of the enormous prices paid for skins.

Still the Indians continued to trap feverishly, brought in their furs and turned them over to the traders to be credited up to them in the books and paid for when the new goods arrived on the steamer in the summer time. While wealthy on paper many of these natives were almost starving when we reached the posts for there was practically nothing left in any of the stores. In some instances even the postmanagers and their families were actually going hungry, having sacrificed almost the last of their tea and provisions in exchange for furs or to keep the Indians quiet. At every trading post along the river thousands of dollars were owing to the hunters.

Not long before the steamer's arrival the Mission at Fort Simpson had put on an auction sale of surplus food supplies which they alone possessed. Flour had sold for a dollar a pound, a two-pound tin of syrup for ten dollars, a fruit cake for thirty-five dollars, butter for thirty-five dollars a pound, while Ed Heron, the native postmanager from Fort Nelson, had breakfasted magnificently on half a dozen eggs at six dollars apiece. Food of any kind was of almost untold value, and money, paradoxically, was useless.

At the April fur sales that year fur which had continued to pyramid in values since the days of the war panic had suddenly crashed to almost nothing, yet, owing to the lack of communication in the North, we were the first ones to bring along the news, and it was with wry faces that the traders learned that the marten skins for which they had paid a hundred dollars just the day before were now worth only ten and that muskrats had dropped in value from four dollars to seventy-five cents apiece.

One serious mistake made by the Lamson and Hubbard Company was bringing in a large number of white trappers from the States and elsewhere, grub-staking them, and scattering them along the Mackenzie River and up the tributary streams. They were merely following the precedent set by earlier fur companies in the United States but conditions were very different to what they had been there.

The opening up of the Alberta and Great Waterways railway, over which the renowned "Muskeg Limited" hauled freight almost to the banks of the Athabasca River, had enabled the Lamson and Hubbard Company to enter the North with ease. It also permitted a swarm of half-breed and other trappers to come into the country quite apart from those brought in by the American concern, all of whom invaded the ancestral hunting grounds of the Slavey, Yellow Knife and Dog-Rib Indians without a word of explanation. These tribes had never borne the white man much love and had reason to remember the ill effects of the visit of the Klondykers some years before. Now they looked on with bitter anger and resentment as they saw these hated "Big Knives" robbing them of the furs they thought their own.

The professional trapper does not make an occasional short trapping journey as does the Indian, then forget about his trapline for a while, neither does he "farm" his territory as was done by many Indians until just a few years ago. Instead he brings in a complete grub-stake from the "outside" in the fall, usually sufficient to see him through the winter, then he builds cabins every twenty miles or so apart along his trap-lines. From the first snowfall until the ice breaks up he is tirelessly on the go, and in the course of a single season will accumulate three or four times as much fur as an entire Indian family has been in the habit of taking out of the same territory over a period of years. Once a section of territory is worked out the trapper piles his belongings into his canoe and sets out in search of new pastures where the practice is repeated.

Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that fur-bearing animals are now becoming scarce in many sections of the Northland, and that it has even been necessary for the Government to furnish help to needy Indians who, until quite recently, had always been entirely self-supporting, for, when the Indian saw these strange white men take casual possession of his hunting grounds, his dogs poisoned, and his trapping lines dotted with the usurpers' traps and poison baits, he deliberately trapped all the furs he could to prevent the hated "Big Knives" from getting it.

So the Slaveys, Dog-Ribs and other tribes trapped and snared as their ancestors had never done before, stimulated also by the desire to obtain the

many novelties which grasping competition had introduced amongst them, for other small independent traders had swarmed in on the heels of the Lamson and Hubbard Company.

Forest fires, set deliberately by the Indians to drive out these white invaders, burned over many thousands of miles of forested country with an appalling destruction of animal life.[1] This deforestation caused a drop in the water level, drying up large areas of marsh which had been the breeding grounds for countless muskrats, preventing them propagating in the large and profitable manner of earlier years.

It was not until ten years later that the full effects of these undesirable conditions made themselves severely felt; the laws of nature are slow but immutable and such abuses could not fail to bring disaster in their train. The older and more experienced traders of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northern Trading Company realized this and warned the Indians but to no avail.

Never, within living memory, was fur so scarce as in the winter of 1930-31 and 1932. Every seven to ten years fur usually followed a fairly regular cycle, becoming extremely plentiful, falling down to a low ebb as the bush rabbits died from inbreeding, and again recuperating in quantity within the period. This cycle had occurred with such uniform regularity that it had come to be looked upon as one of the laws of Nature.[2] But this is not entirely the case today. In some areas the fur has gone never to return in the quantities of bygone days, in others its return is spread over a longer period of time than formerly and its return is likely to be in progressively lessening quantities. Fur farming will undoubtedly gradually take the place of primitive trapping and trading.

The Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior has come to a realization of the seriousness of the situation and is taking steps to meet it, having recently refused to issue any new permits to non-residents to either trade or trap in the Territories, while certain areas have been restricted for the use of native trappers only. Not, however, until the Government establishes preserves in wooded areas throughout the length and breadth of the land where the forest dwellers can find sanctuary and raise their young without danger from wantonly lit forest fires, and the perpetual pursuit by white and Indian trappers, can the foundation stock of the fur country be restored and the overflow make good the wastage sustained from steady trapping elsewhere. Failing this, and closer restriction on hunting, trapping, *and the sale of ammunition to natives*, and the admission of white trappers and undesirable traders into the North, Canada

is likely soon to be confronted, I am afraid, with a difficult and expensive Eskimo and Indian problem.

One thing is very noticeable in connection with parks or game preserves which have already been established and that is the large and steady overflow of fur-bearers into the surrounding territory, a fact which first came to my attention when living at Fort Smith in the vicinity of the Wood Buffalo Park.

I was, in fact, exchanging opinions on these points with Mr. Conroy when two loud blasts from the siren took us out on deck. We were rapidly approaching Fort Providence where a host of the most primitive Indians on the river were saluting the steamer with volley after volley from their guns.[3]

Just as the line was cast ashore and secured to a "dead-man," the factor, Mr. J. A. R. Balsillie, came hobbling down the long plank walk proudly displaying upon his breast the Hudson's Bay medal denoting his twenty-five years' service with the Company. The Lamson and Hubbard man, Kitson, stood apart, looking rather lonely and I soon learned that he and Balsillie had not been on speaking terms for many months. As soon as the factor got on board he said that they were almost starving and that his children were crying for something to eat, so he rushed off to find the purser and get some food supplies sent up to the post.

Hardly was the gang-plank thrown ashore at Fort Simpson the following day ere we were boarded by a formal deputation comprising the different members of the staff in order of precedence, all wearing their best suits and nautical caps decorated with Hudson's Bay badges. Like so many wooden soldiers they paraded down the steep and slippery bank in as dignified a manner as the circumstances permitted, then up the companionway they came to the saloon deck when each man raised his hat with a sort of stilted mechanical motion, shook hands with Mr. Sinclair and myself and made way for the next. This bit of awkward pageantry, which we both found rather amusing, was evidently a sort of hang-over from Angus Brabant's primitive régime, for, like old McTavish, he had also taken himself and his office very seriously.

Meanwhile the ship was simply over-run with hungry, almost starving, people with pockets full of money which they were unable to use ashore.

Immediately the freight commenced to go off, being led by a parade of the foremost residents of the place each of whom carried his two gallon permit of liquor on his shoulder and wore a broad smile upon his face. An hour later all were back again, noisy, talkative and exuberant. Bitter

enemies, who had not been on speaking terms for many months, were simply beaming as they talked animatedly with each other.

There was a general holiday air about the place for the first boat of the season brings six-months-old letters, papers, news of the great "outside," and provisions, including a very small quantity of such delicacies as oranges and eggs, so everybody made merry and for the time being forgot the isolation, fights and fur land intrigue of the past nine months.

I noticed that the purser was not checking off the freight so promptly went in search of him and found him in his little office doing a roaring trade in chocolates with a noisy crowd surrounding the doorway.

"Here, Cummings," I called, "the freight is going off unchecked. You'd better look after it or there's liable to be a mix-up!"

The Scotch purser looked at me, winked prodigiously and placed his finger alongside his massive nose.

"To hell with the freight," he remarked, "why these blighters here have all got pockets full of money and I'm selling 'em fifty cent boxes of chocolates for five dollars apiece, and those birds outside are howling to get them at the price."

As Fort Simpson was to be my headquarters for the ensuing year I looked the place over with considerable interest. Twenty years before it had been headquarters for the District and Chief Factor Julian Camsell. "The Glass-eyed God of the Mackenzie," as he was known to the Klondykers, had ruled here in almost regal state. Now, however, the fort had degenerated both in standing and appearance, being just an ordinary post, and on close inspection looked, I thought, rather ill-kept and unkempt. The walls of the officers' quarters were papered with ancient faded copies of the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*. There was neither cook nor established mess. Fred McLeod and his family from Fort Liard, and Ed Heron, with his native wife and children from Fort Nelson, occupied temporary quarters in the building, while Fred Camsell, the factor, had his private living room and bedroom downstairs.

Fred Camsell, a well educated and very decent fellow, was feeling rather miserable. His wife had died that spring, leaving him with two young children to look after as there were no women around who could be depended upon to do so. He was a son of Chief Factor Camsell who, in the spring of '98, had brought fifty or sixty white men into the fort, all in the last disintegrating stages of scurvy, and looked after them until they either recovered or died. The dapper little Chief Factor with the monocle eternally in his eye had exercised an almost despotic sway over the fur hunters of the

Mackenzie valley, and his name has become almost an oracle throughout the country. He was one of the type who did so much to establish and maintain the prestige of the Company amongst the wayward tribesmen. Fred had much of his father's influence over the Indians whom he handled in a very quiet and unobtrusive way. Like so many of the old-timers he had dispensed with creature comforts for so long that he considered them effeminate, and he laughed when I expressed my views about the spartan surroundings.

Inspector Fletcher of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police soon had his hands full. Three of the native belles had received unwanted visits from the stork upon the same day—all within a couple of hours—each of whom conferred the questionable honor of paternity upon an unassuming little fellow who hardly looked the Lothario he was reputed to be, and blushingly protested his innocence.

Fred Camsell said he thought it must be in the air and referred to an old entry in the *Daily Journal* which ran as follows:

> "January 1st, 18—.
>
> "Weather fine. Wind north. Mrs. Belcourt gave birth to a bouncing baby boy this morning."

For the following nine days the daily entry in the *Journal* was: "Ditto—ditto—ditto."

Charlie Sinclair and I proceeded to inspect the post and learn the worst about the past outfit's trade while Jim Cornwall did the same with regard to the Northern Trading Company. "Peace River Jim" was inarticulate when we met him later. And well he might be for the losses at every one of the trading posts were enormous while, jointly, the traders owed the trappers and Indians nearly fifty thousand dollars for furs worth perhaps a fifth of the price, *and the white men wanted cash*.

Amongst other lessons which the Indians had learned from the white men was how to make home-brew, or alcohol, from dried fruits, potatoes or whatever they could get. For generations Fort Simpson had enjoyed an unenviable reputation in this respect. Years before, Fred Camsell told me, Old Man Brass had made a copper still with which he was in the habit of furnishing his friends with fiery potent brew. Word reached the Commissioner and orders were sent out by the Company that the owner was to throw the offending article in the river on pain of summary dismissal. Some say that he obeyed orders by doing this *in the winter time*, recovering the article from the frozen surface of the river after having *literally* followed

out instructions, while others tell of how he cast it into the river with a mighty splash which disguised the float and piece of line accompanying it then, when darkness had fallen, he was seen hauling hand over hand upon the line until the still came into his possession once again.

Mr. Camsell also told me of a lone naturalist who was visiting the post and brought along just enough whisky to whet the appetites of Judge Johnston and his cronies. The visitor marveled as the sounds of boisterous revelry continued until far into the night. It was not the whisky that was causing all the noise but the alcohol the revelers had drained from the jars containing his specimens of beetles and other bugs. History fails to relate what the scientist said when he made the discovery, or how the merrymakers felt the following day.

Here and there we dropped off the odd woodcutter, his grub-stake for the winter, and his cross-cut saw. The voracious appetite of the engines had to be catered to for a year ahead so cord-wood was cut and piled during the winter in readiness for the following summer's navigation.

The heat on board as we continued northward between tall white-capped mountain ranges was almost unbearable. There was no respite at night for as we neared the Arctic Circle the sun merely dipped below the horizon for an hour or so and immediately proceeded to circle the sky again. Each time we went ashore for wood the mosquitoes swarmed aboard in millions and only the screens on the cabin windows prevented the rooms becoming filled with the annoying pests. Bull-dog flies swarmed over the windows of the saloon and pilot house in thousands, being swept up by the deck hands each morning *and shoveled overboard*.

By this time we were getting short of food supplies which, combined with the heat, the overcrowded condition of the boat, and the lack of system or efficiency aboard, produced a state of irritability amongst both passengers and crew.

One afternoon as I was looking over the books of one of the posts, laughing to myself at the unintentional humor in the heading "*Prophet* and Loss" on one of the pages in the ledger, I heard the purser's voice raised in anger up for'ard.

"Well, you're a hell of a purser!" piped the Captain in his squeaky voice.

"*And you're one* HELL *of a Captain!*" came the quick and angry response of the obviously incensed Scotsman. Something, I think it was an ink-bottle, hit the wall opposite the purser's cabin with a thud, then there was a crash and the Captain came scurrying, coatless and hatless, down the saloon looking like a frightened rabbit, hotly pursued by the swearing purser.

Around tables and chairs, in one door and out another, they dodged and pursued each other until the Captain managed to evade the perspiring Cummings for a moment, scuttled up the companionway to the safety of the pilot house and disappeared from sight.

At The Ramparts the full force of the majestic river is thrown into a narrow rock-girt channel barely three hundred yards wide. Having, according to the Indians, tired of traveling on its stomach for so long the stream here decided to run upon its side. Debouching from these precipitous walls we found ourselves in a wide stretch of placid water only about six miles from the Arctic Circle. The sun shone brightly on the white pickets and red mud-painted buildings of Fort Good Hope perched serenely upon a high bank crowned with green verdure and spruce forest.

Climbing three flights of rickety steps we reached level ground and saw large fields filled with splendid potatoes and other vegetables surrounding the buildings. The summer season is short here but the intense heat and almost perpetual sunshine makes things grow apace, though there is a tendency for this rapid growth to cause the vegetables to run too much to head.

The post was thronged with Hare and *Gens du Large* Indians to whom large sums were owing from all the trading companies. Bill Boland, the genial and very popular postmanager, was leaving the service, much to every one's regret, and we had brought along Mr. E. R. Gowan from Hay River who was to take his place. Hardly, however, was the poor fellow ashore ere he was besieged by crowds of belligerent Indians.

The dwelling house had been burned down that winter; there was hardly any accommodation for the new trader and his wife until he could build himself a new home; a large quantity of freight had to be carried up the steep bank, goods had to be opened up and priced, and the Indians were striking for twelve dollars each a day to carry up the stuff. Yet they all clamored for immediate payment for their furs and poor Gowan was nearly crazy.

No sooner had we stepped inside the pickets than we were surrounded by the Chief, headmen and scores of angry natives. Finding that Mr. Sinclair was the "Big Master" the Chief unbosomed himself of a speech which for sheer logic was ahead of any Indian rhetoric I had ever heard before. He concluded his aggressive and very tactless address by first pointing at the bell and remarking that if the "New Master," meaning Mr. Gowan, thought for one moment that just because it rang he was going to bed or to eat he was very much mistaken as he was not going to sleep until all the Indians had got their pay. Then he pointed to the "Mackenzie River" and added that

the whites were far too proud and that the first white men who came down that river had done so in leaky bark canoes and had begged the Indians for dry-meat and guides. “Now,” continued this Red agitator as his followers loudly grunted their approval, “you come down in this fine big ship. Where did you get it? From the profit you made out of buying the Indians’ furs so cheap. Now the Company is rich and their traders are proud, but it was done with the Indians’ money, and that ship, by rights, belongs to us.”

He added that they did not want the Company’s medals which were being presented to the leading natives to commemorate the 250th Anniversary as they no longer wished to be under any obligation, nor would they promise their allegiance. They would take the tea, flour and tobacco offered them for the Anniversary feast upon these conditions only, he said, and upon this note the speech concluded; the most perfect piece of “red” talk I had ever heard from an Indian which showed, if nothing else, the spirit of the times.

I learned later that this particular band of Indians were considered the most difficult ones to handle on the river.

As the steamer pulled out into the river after having placed the freight ashore at the foot of the bank we could still see the gesticulating figure of Mr. Gowan in the center of a bunch of Indians, all wanting to be paid at once.

On the second day from here we entered the narrow twisting channel of the Peel River with its luxuriant and almost tropical growth of vegetation and at length tied up before the mud flats of Fort McPherson.

Again we were due for a surprise as the Indians and Eskimos flatly refused to unload the boat and carry the goods up to the post, some two hundred yards away, for less than twenty-five dollars each a day. For a while the freight was piled on the shore then every one, missionaries included, started to carry it up to the fort, though a compromise was effected with the natives later on at eighteen dollars a day.

The fur trade world was topsy-turvy and the Indians and Eskimos, for the time being, masters of the situation. That spring, while fur prices were still at their peak and the battle between the fur traders for supremacy in the North was at its height, a large number of American fur buyers and adventurers had flocked across the divide from the Yukon and Alaska, bent on reaping a rich harvest from the natives of the Delta.

As the stores were practically empty they found a ready demand for their cash and rapidly exchanged it for Indian and Eskimo furs, though the natives were shrewd enough to demand extremely fancy prices. Soon the Eskimos

were possessed of cash galore but there was nothing they could spend it on. In fact, at this particular time, it was no unusual thing for one of these smiling Huskies to have a roll of three or four thousand dollars in crisp American or Canadian bills shoved carelessly into a mukluk or hunting bag and hung within his tupek.[4]

Amongst the throng of adventurers who had flocked into the Delta was a neatly dressed little Jap named Wada. He was well known on the Alaskan side for he had once led an expedition in search of a fictitious gold discovery in Alaska and barely escaped paying the penalty for his deception at the end of a rawhide rope when the incensed miners found they had been duped. Then, by a queer twist of fate, some of these miners *did find a few nuggets* and erelong this area developed into one of the largest gold mining centers in Alaska, the modern city of Fairbanks being a monument to the discovery.

Wada and some of the traders soon devised a means of helping the Eskimos solve their difficulties in disposing of this unexpected wealth. Being, like most natives, inveterate gamblers they welcomed the kindly importunities of these adventurers to come and learn the white man's game of poker.

When the "Mackenzie River" pulled into Fort McPherson with the sorry news of the complete collapse of the fur market Wada stepped smilingly on board with his winnings, en route to New York, while the visitors from across the mountains groaned at the enormous losses confronting them, and the Eskimos, most of whom had been stripped of all their wealth, besieged us for flour and tea on credit, yet still refused to work.

Corporal Clay told us when he came on board that just before the boat arrived an old Indian had walked up from the river with a big jackfish in his hand. "How much for you sellum?" inquired a Huskie in the pidgin English used along the Arctic Coast. As the Louchoux hesitated the Eskimo extended his hand with fifteen dollars in it which the Red Man took as he handed over the fish. A little while later on an old squaw passed by bending under a bundle of firewood. This time the Eskimo offered her a dollar apiece for every billet of wood. The deal was promptly closed and she passed on minus the wood but eighteen dollars richer than she had been just a little while before.[5]

Shortly after we arrived "Old Man" Firth, the gray-bearded sixty-five-year-old retiring factor, came on board to see if he could locate a bottle of "whuskey." The hale old Orkneyman had left his home when a youth of eighteen and spent forty-two years in this God-forsaken spot, feared and revered alike by all the Louchoux Indians and the Eskimos of the Delta.

Married to a native woman he had adopted many of the Indian customs, one of which was to always eat alone. Not quite always for once each year, on New Year's Day, his wife was permitted to sit at the table with him, though at other times she dined in the kitchen after her lord and master had got through.

Having located one bottle of "whuskey" the old gentleman decided that he needed at least one more to get properly started in celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Company, and after I had located another for him he proceeded towards the post feeling quite happy, followed by Corporal Cornelius and Sergeant Clay who turned, grinned and winked profoundly at all on board as he departed.

Some hours later I climbed the bank and entered the unpainted log dwelling at the post. What a racket was going on! Long before I reached the building I heard loud voices and when I finally entered the room, which was opaque with tobacco smoke, I beheld Mr. Firth with a red nightcap on his head and a glass of whisky in his hand loudly holding forth upon and extolling the merits of the Company. Clay, to keep things going right merrily, was disagreeing on principle with everything he said, and the old man was becoming both noisy and boisterous.

The place was packed with trappers in brown fur-trimmed parkis and sealskin mukluks, all of them drinking, smoking, and feeling decidedly voluble and good-natured. Corporal Cornelius, who had appointed himself bartender, was pouring out the drinks from a pine table upon which stood half a dozen empty bottles and quite a number of full ones.

"Weel, weel, here's auld man Godless!" roared the old fellow as he saw me. "Hae a drink. De ye no ken it's the twa thoousandth and fiftieth anniversary o' tha Coompany?"

"Two hundred and fiftieth," I unwisely corrected.

"Ye're a dom leer! It's the *twa thoousandth twa hunnert and fiftieth*. Dae A no ken? A've bin fourty-four years wi' them masel'!"

I stood corrected, and to avoid unnecessary argument agreed that he was right then downed the stiff drink which had been poured into a tin mug and placed within my hand. There was much loud talking and arguing then, without any warning, a long attenuated trapper, Slim Bell, burst into song:

"*There's a husky dusky maiden in the Arctic,*
In her igloo she is waiting there in vain,
And some day I'll put my mukluks on and ask her
If she'll wed me when the Ice Worms nest again."

Yells of applause and hammering upon the pine table greeted the first verse of The Song of The North. Then a loud and stentorian chorus followed, yelled in a medley of different keys:

"*In the land of pale blue snow,*
Where it's 99 below,
And the Polar Bears are roaming o'er the plain,
In the shadow of the Pole
I will clasp her to my soul,
We'll be happy when the Ice Worms nest again."

"Here, gimme a drink," interjected the songster as he grabbed a bottle, poured out half a mugful of fiery "Johnnie Walker" and tossed it down with a grimace.

"*Our wedding feast will be seal oil and blubber,*
In our kyaks we will roam the boundless main,
How the Walruses will turn their heads and rubber,
We'll be happy when the Ice Worms nest again."

"Come on, boys. Now for the chorus," yelled Slim.

"*In the land of pale blue snow-ow-ow-ow,*
Where it's 99 below-ow-ow-ow,
And the Polar Bears are roaming o'er the plain,
In the shadow of the Pole
I will clasp her to my soul-ul-ul-ul,
We'll be happy when the Ice Worms nest again."

"Throw him out! That's enough," somebody shouted, and in a moment the khaki clad impresario was being shoved unceremoniously through the door by a dozen lusty arms.

"Hold on! What the Hell's all the hurry? I'm only just started, there's sixty-two more verses," he roared as the door slammed to behind him. Through the boards came the remnants of the song, delivered with the full might of the ejected trapper's lungs:

"*And some morn at half-past two when I crawl in my igloo,*
After sitting with a friend who was in pain,
She'll be waiting for me there with the ham-bone of a bear,
And she'll swat me when the Ice Worms nest again."

Then the dogs commenced to bark and howl, drowning out further sounds from without. Somebody pounded on the door.

"Who in hell's there *now*?" yelled half a dozen voices.

"Hugh Kindersley!" came the response, so the door was thrown open and a tall good-looking fellow entered and was introduced to the white bearded factor who first eyed him narrowly with penetrating gray eyes. The scrutiny evidently proved favorable for old Firth extended his hand with the remark:

"So, ye're the Governor's son, eh? Weel, ye canna help that; ye don't seem sae bad yoursel', an' A'm thinkin' ye'll get by aricht."

Young Kindersley accepted the drink which was then proffered and agreed with Mr. Firth that the "*Twa Thoousand, twa hunnert and fiftieth anniversary*" was being celebrated in a very fitting and whole-hearted Northern manner.

As this was the end of the route there was a stay of two days while the engineers cleaned the mud-encrusted boiler, then the "Mackenzie River" commenced to chug her toilsome way upstream again to Fort Smith.

All that summer I spent aboard the steamer endeavoring, as far as was possible, to rescue the transport from the chaotic condition it was in, and as she made her last stop of the season at Fort Simpson in September I stepped ashore and bid the crew good-by. Previously I had obtained what crockery could be spared, and some bed-sheets to be used in place of table cloths.

While at Fort Smith I had engaged John Robillard, a handsome fellow of French-Indian ancestry, to act as cook and drive my carriole in the winter time. A short while after the steamer departed I set out with him in a small canoe to make an inspection of Forts Liard and Nelson.

We tracked our canoe up the turbulent current along the base of snow-capped mountain ranges, the habitat of mountain goats and big-horn sheep. It was a wonderful game country, almost unknown at that time except to very few white men. Even today the country to the northward of the route we traveled is probably one of the least explored and finest big game countries on the continent of North America, but it is extremely inaccessible owing to its rugged character and the fact that the mountain streams which flow through it are hardly navigable by canoe.

Immediately I returned to Fort Simpson I set about getting things fixed up for the winter with the aid of Fred Camsell, manager of the post. John Robillard was delegated to the position of cook; Jackson, a young missionary who had quickly become surfeited with religion and had come to

me for a job, I placed in charge of the accounts, while Fred looked after post affairs and trading.

As a chef poor John was anything but a success. Later he confessed he was somewhat "tight" on home-brew when he told me he could cook, and now admitted that cooking in a kitchen was quite different to doing so around a camp-fire. It was intensely amusing to watch John don his gold-braided yachting cap ere entering the dining-room and carrying in the dishes.

One day John came marching in with a self-approving smile upon his face, proudly bearing a huge rusty japanned serving tray in the center of which reposed three small partridges, each swimming in an individual pool of grease. With a flourish he placed the tray before me and turned to leave the room.

"By the way, John," I inquired, "where did you get the fancy tray?"

"I find him in de dog-yard," replied the smiling half-breed proudly. "Dug him up from under de earth and dirt in front of Ranger's kennel—but I wash him," he added a little truculently as he observed the disapproving look upon the fastidious Jackson's face.

Evidently at one time in its career the tray had been used to feed the dogs upon but for the time being we either had to use the thing or risk hurting John's hair-trigger feelings and probably lose our cook.

He made a rabbit stew a few days afterwards and Mr. Camsell did the serving, stirring it around with a big lead spoon before dishing it out. First a furry ear would pop out above the surface, then a pair of dull eyeballs and a grinning skull would appear, float around and dive back under as though ashamed to face the light of day. As the stew was served poor Jackson commenced to get pale around the gills and, much to Walter Johnston's amusement, remarked that he did not feel very hungry. Catching sight of the skull the infant Camsell yelled lustily from his high-chair that he wished to eat the eyes. As the head was handed to him on a plate he promptly gouged them out and conveyed them to his mouth. It was the last straw. Jackson turned a sickly green, placed his hand upon his mouth and dashed wildly from the room.

[1] In the summer of 1926 two Sikinni Indians from the Sikinni Chief River visited Fort St. Johns where I was stationed at the time and complained of some white trappers and Charlie Calahazen, a Cree half-breed, trapping between the North Pine and “their” river. Shortly after they left on their return journey heavy smoke denoted bad forest fires to the northwest. In company with a Cree guide I followed their trail on my way overland to Fort Nelson and found that bad fires had ravished the country beyond the Pine in all directions, and were still burning and smoldering all along the way. For many miles we were forced to cut a path through the tangle of fallen trees which obstructed the trail with our axes. Investigation showed that the fires had all originated in the vicinity of various trappers’ cabins, the trappers being “outside” at the time buying their grub-stakes. There was not the slightest doubt that these fires had been set by the two Sikinnis on their way homeward, and for no other purpose than to destroy the equipment of the white men and ruin the country as a trapping area for a considerable time to come.

[2] The influence of sun-spots also has its effect upon the situation.

[3] There is a small tribe of Slavey Indians trading here who still adhere to their primitive customs, Medicine Men and Prophets, and keep very much to themselves.

[4] Skin summer tent.

[5] Absurd and fantastic as some of the incidents recorded in this and the previous chapter may appear they are accurate in every respect and are not recorded from hearsay but from personal observation. Other responsible people who witnessed these unusual conditions, and were passengers on the steamer with myself, include the late Inspector Conroy of the Indian Department, the Rev. C. C. Carruthers of Holy Trinity Church, Winnipeg, Mr. W. H. B. Hoare, late Investigator for the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, Dept. of the Interior, Ottawa, and Mr. C. C. Sinclair now of Winnipeg.

On page 20 of *The Beaver Magazine* (official H.B.C. organ), dated October, 1920, there is a reference to both the fish and firewood episodes.

CHAPTER XVIII

Corporal Doak Talks of the Cogmollocks

For weeks the ice flowed thickly between the lofty banks of the Mackenzie River and not until the first of December did the intense cold cause it to set. Four days later I departed from Fort Simpson upon my winter inspection trip to the different posts along the river, accompanied by John Robillard, who drove my carriole, and a young native named Sibbeston who drove the "grub-sled" containing food, dog-feed, bedding and baggage.

For some days beforehand John had been engaged in cooking up bannock, pork and beans, meat balls, and freezing them outside before placing them in sacks. A few tins of jam, some tea, sugar and bacon completed our commissary. Before putting up these rations I would figure out the number of nights' journey it was to the next post where we could obtain supplies, then they would be weighed out on the basis of three pounds per man per day and distributed accordingly, in the same way the requisite number of frozen fish were laid out for our sleigh dogs.

This trip came very near to being my last one. A thick sticky snow was falling when, at three o'clock in the morning, our teams were driven through the gateway of the fort. At his cabin, ten miles away, we were to pick up John Hope, our guide. For the time being Robillard drove both teams while young Sibbeston walked ahead breaking trail on snowshoes. The ice, being newly set, was not overly strong though we considered it sufficiently safe to travel upon. Covered with an eiderdown robe I was strapped tightly within my carriole upon the back of which was lashed a heavy grub-box. John was driving my team ahead, Sibbeston's followed—or were supposed to, but with the usual canine cussedness they would lie down once in a while knowing that there was no one with a whip behind them. At last I told John to put the other team in front. We traveled in this manner for some time and I must have dozed off to sleep for I was rudely awakened by an inarticulate cry from John. Sitting bolt upright I saw a gaping hole in the ice before me while Sibbeston's team had disappeared from sight.

"Woa! woa!" yelled John excitedly, pulling with all his strength upon the guide rope of my sleigh and bringing the dogs to a standstill. Only a few feet away the oily black waters of the Mackenzie swirled wickedly around, the head of the submerged toboggan barely showing above the surface.

Unbuckling the strap I leapt from the carriole, held the team while John circled the dangerous air hole and grabbed the lead-dog of the other train, dragging him upon the ice.

Realizing by this time that something serious was amiss Sibbeston approached affrightedly, added his strength to Robillard's and pulled his dogs and sleigh up on the ice. Testing every step we carefully led the teams towards the shore and heavier ice. It had been a narrow escape. Had I not changed the order of the sleighs I should undoubtedly have been drowned for the heavy box upon the tail of the carriole would have held my head beneath the water. From that time on we closely hugged the shore.

Traveling on the Mackenzie was vastly different to that which I had been accustomed to around Norway House and in Northern Ontario for the river was a piled-up mass of heavy ice ranging from the size of a barrel to that of a house, over which we had to hack our way with axes. Often for days we did not meet a living soul, though we considered ourselves lucky if we managed to reach some dirty unoccupied Indian shack at night and were able to stretch our robes upon the floor, thus taking refuge from the bitter cold.

It was a silent lonely land. Apart from the cries of the drivers, the faint tinkle of dog-bells, and the cracking asunder of trees from the severe frost, not another sound broke the stillness of that mighty valley. It was almost as though we were traveling in another world.

On our fifth night out we were in the mountainous country in the vicinity of Fort Wrigley and prepared to enter with the pomp and ceremony which generations of association with Indians has been found to be the best way to earn and hold their respect. The frying pan was converted into a wash-basin; we shaved and cleaned up. Then my drivers put on their best decorated moccasins, mountain goat-skin parkis and fancy quill-worked mittens. The harness was checked over, the standing-irons straightened upon the dog collars, and away we went, dashing gayly across the snow.

As we approached the desolate little post the Indians could be seen gathering upon the bank, the red ensign of the Company was unfurled, and to the cracking of whips and excited howling of the dogs my carriole was driven through the gateway and brought to a stop before the factor's house.

Then followed two or three days checking and valuing furs; adjusting fur tariffs; looking over the Indian Debt Book and holding counsel with the Slavery hunters in the dim light of candles for, as we neared the Arctic Circle, the hours of daylight became very short indeed.

At four in the morning, when the inspection was completed, I awakened Robillard who hastily hitched up the dogs, slipped into my carriole, and while the Northern Lights crackled and scintillated we hit the trail once more.

It was, as the natives would say, six sleeps to Fort Norman from Fort Wrigley, and at length we saw Bear Rock silhouetted against the rose-hued skyline shortly after dawn. Some hours later we passed the burning banks which still smoulder as they did when Alexander Mackenzie paddled down the river in his birch-bark canoe a century and a half before. The pungent odor was noticeable far up and down the frozen valley, spirals of white smoke rising lazily in the still cold air to dissolve in the steel blue sky above.

Many of the Company's traders in the Mackenzie River District at this time were partly native and their surroundings quite primitive. Wooden beds devoid of springs, hand-made spruce wood tables, babiche-netted couches and chairs, and a few beaded velvet, or black cloth, pouches attached to the mudded walls usually comprised the furnishings of the average trader's home. Salaries were small, many of them only receiving five or six hundred dollars a year and mess.

Yet, in spite of Angus Brabant's opinions to the contrary, it was an expensive economy for these men often raised huge families at the Company's expense. Most of them were married to women from the surrounding tribes and a host of relatives invaded the kitchen each time the Indians came in to the post, and Indian relationship is very far reaching, especially when indulgences are to be obtained through the connection.

Again, the trader was often unwilling or afraid to refuse these relatives big debts, or was dominated by his wife, and big losses were sustained yearly from unpaid accounts which originated from this source. Unlike the white woman the native is most extravagant in using foodstuffs. Rarely is meat left over from one meal placed again upon the table; it is either given to some Indian lounger or thrown out of the back door to be picked up by stray dogs.

As my carriole swung into the square at Fort Norman a smiling faced man wearing an Eskimo ahtegi leaned over and shook me by the hand. It was Corporal Doak of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a friend of the Norway House days of twelve years before.

Soon I found myself shaking hands with Tim Gaudet, the tall broad-shouldered factor with the simple manners of a boy. Shortly afterwards I met the trader, D'Arcy Arden, from Dease Bay at the east end of Great Bear Lake, who dealt with the stone-age Eskimos from Coronation Gulf, the

Cogmollocks as they are called by the police and traders along the Arctic Coast. He had arrived only a few days before, his sled loaded with a wealth of white fox skins which he had traded from these Huskies.

When I left for Fort Good Hope a short time later I was accompanied, much to my delight, by Bill Doak who had decided to make his patrol along with me so that we could each take our turn at breaking trail and enjoy one another's company.

As we sat around our camp-fire at night we talked of old times and of friends we had known throughout the North. No better traveling companion than the good-natured Corporal could be found anywhere. He was as fond of fun as a boy and this had doubtless affected his promotion for he seemed to be continually in some scrape or other.

"Say, Godsell," he remarked one night after staring at the red embers for a while, "did you write a nasty letter to Tim Gaudet last fall about something?"

"Good God, no!" I replied.

"About his nose!" suggested Doak. "When the winter mail came in and he opened it up he sure was mad. Told me he'd got a letter from you ordering him to rub his nose on a grindstone. You know Tim's nose *is* kind of big and he's quite sensitive about it. Well, a few days before you came along I noticed him carrying a big grindstone across the fort and watched him put it down right near the door of the house, so I asked him what all the excitement was about. He said *there* was the grindstone; he was going to show it you and tell you that *there was his nose too*. If you wanted to rub it on the grindstone to hop right to it and see what you could do."

We both laughed, then I remembered a circular letter I had sent out during the summer in which I asked each man to "keep his nose to the grindstone," hardly expecting such a literal interpretation, neither did I know that the huge but simple Tim was so sensitive about that organ.

"Of course, Bill, you didn't say anything, did you, eh?"

"Well er', ahem! *You know*, Godsell, we've *got* to make the most of opportunities and get what fun we can out of life in a God-forsaken hole like this," and Bill grinned like a naughty school kid.

"Sure!"

"So we told Tim he oughter write the London Board; give 'em his resignation and tell 'em that no Hudson's Bay man was ever goin' to take liberties with his nose."

"Meetsuk! Meetsuk"—yelled Robillard as he swung a frying pan full of steaming beans towards us, and lifted the copper tea kettle off the roaring fire with a stick.

A few nights later we crouched over the camp-fire, scorched in front—our backs almost freezing—as a bitter wind swirled the white clouds of smoke amongst the swaying snow covered tree tops. Doak commenced to talk about his beloved Arctic. I knew of the killing of Fathers Rouvier and Le Roux by Eskimos but now I heard the story direct from the lips of the man who had taken charge of the murderers.

Seven years before two priests, Fathers Rouvier and Le Roux, had set out from their little log mission at Fort Norman bound for the Arctic Coast, the land of the Cogmollocks, with hopes for their conversion. Following a long and arduous journey on snowshoes they at length reached their destination and beheld the squalid snow-houses of their hoped for converts nestled closely together in the bluish-gray of an Arctic dawn. But they were doomed to disappointment for the primitive Cogmollocks did not like these strange men in sombre garb attired like women, and refused to heed their words. Meanwhile the Medicine Men saw their hold on the people endangered if the priests made good their teachings, so did their part to poison the minds of their superstitious followers against the hairy-faced white Shamans.

One thing these missionaries had with them which was of almost priceless value in Eskimo eyes at that time was a modern Winchester rifle, a treasure to be secured at almost any cost. Hardly had the tired Fathers turned their backs upon the snow-houses on their homeward journey when, like shadows in the night, two Eskimos, Sinissiak and Uluksuk, stole silently in their wake.

With creaking snowshoes Father Rouvier tramped through the deep snow stamping down a trail over which the dogs, driven by Father Le Roux, could follow. Slowly they pushed ahead through the biting cold toward the height of land. Suddenly, that sixth sense which all humans seem to possess, warned them that all was not well and they urged their tired dogs onward. Looking backwards they observed two moving objects overtaking them. The distance between the priests and the Eskimo pursuers rapidly lessened and finally the Cogmollocks drew abreast.

Leaping forward Sinissiak attempted to snatch the rifle from the sleigh, the priest resisted, a wild struggle ensued, then a copper knife, driven between his ribs, brought the white man lifeless to the ground. Father Rouvier, some distance ahead, did not realize in the dim light exactly what

was taking place until bullets began to fall around him. Turning, he commenced to run. Too late, however, for the Huskie had got the range at last and soon a well directed bullet laid the cleric low. Then following a custom peculiar to this savage tribe the two Cogmollocks ate the livers of the murdered men so that they might also acquire some of the knowledge and cunning of the whites.

Slowly the "Moccasin Telegram" carried the story through fifteen hundred miles of sub-Arctic wilderness to the Mounted Police Barracks at Smith Landing. A month later, in the summer of 1915, Corporal La Nauze and two constables took up the trail. At Fort Norman they met D'Arcy Arden the trader who had sent in the report of having seen Eskimos on Great Bear Lake attired in articles of clothing belonging to the priests.

Up the foaming waters of the Bear River the patrol made its way, being forced by approaching winter to go into winter quarters at Dease Bay. Meanwhile Corporal Bruce had set out from the Herschel Island detachment on Stefansson's schooner "Alaska" and was braving the polar ice and blizzards in search of the killers of the priests.

Not until the end of March could the patrol again set out. Then almost blinded by the sun glare they made their way past Dismal Lakes and Bloody Falls, the scene of the murder, to Coronation Gulf where they saw spread before them the frozen surface of the Polar Sea.

In a squalid igloo on Victoria Land they arrested Sinissiak and a few days later, thanks to Corporal Bruce's splendid work, Uluksuk was also located and submitted tamely to arrest.

On July 13th the police party, with their prisoners, started on their return trip to civilization on board the schooner "Alaska" and fifteen days later reached the old American whaling station at Herschel Island which had been converted into a barracks for the North West Mounted Police. Owing to the lateness of the season it became necessary for them to spend the winter in this desolate and isolated spot. Not until May 9th, 1917, was the patrol able to set out on its two thousand five hundred mile journey up river to the end of steel.

Owing to the bitter feeling in Edmonton the trial was held at Calgary. Here, while lawyers argued and the prosecuting attorney thundered his demand for the death sentence, the two Eskimos succumbed to overpowering drowsiness from the unaccustomed heat and slept peacefully throughout the trial. The death sentence was passed, but commuted to imprisonment, and it was Corporal Doak who took charge of the Eskimos

while they worked out their sentences as police interpreters at Herschel Island.

Doak was most caustic in his criticism of the leniency shown to these prisoners, though he had become quite attached to the prisoners themselves, and prophesied further trouble amongst the Cogmollocks.

"You know," he remarked in an unusually serious strain, "ever since Uluksuk and Sinissiak were taken on that joy-ride to Edmonton and Calgary, shown the 'bright lights' and the picture shows and given a couple of years as police interpreters at Herschel Island I've expected trouble. Why, at the end of their time they returned to the Cogmollocks with trunks loaded with white man's clothing, rifles and ammunition, and enough white man's culture to 'high-hat' the rest of the tribe. Now they are big men amongst these natives, and the Huskies seem to think all they have to do if they want a good time at the white man's expense is to commit murder. First thing you know it won't be safe for any white men in Coronation Gulf."

Doak and Sergeant Clay had both spent some time amongst the Cogmollocks and Bill never tired of talking about them, hoping that erelong he would be fortunate enough to be stationed along the Arctic Coast again.

While not disparaging the courageous efforts of the Anglican missionaries in their attempts to convert the natives Bill often enlivened the evenings around the fire with endless amusing anecdotes concerning the effects of their administrations.

Soon after Stefansson discovered these so-called "Blond Eskimos" in May, 1910, white traders appeared for almost the first time amongst them. Billy Phillips established a post for the Company called Fort Bacon at Bernard Harbour. Carroll, Klinkenberg, D'Arcy Arden and others also opened up trade with these stone-age natives who still hunted with the bow and copper-tipped arrows. Lacking schooners they established contact with them through Dease Bay on Great Bear Lake.

Winchester rifles, costing about thirty dollars apiece, sold for anything from three hundred and fifty to six hundred dollars each, the equivalent in furs being from twelve to twenty white fox pelts which often brought from thirty to sixty dollars each in the fur markets outside. A box of twenty 30-30 cartridges, costing about two dollars laid down, sold for one white fox pelt, or around thirty dollars a box.

Thus, for the first time in his life, the Eskimo was able to slaughter to his heart's content. Caribou were killed in large numbers, sometimes for their skins alone, which were sold to traders for around seventy-five cents apiece. Soon the immense herds became decimated and ceased to follow their

customary paths of migration or make their annual crossings to Victoria Land and back. Yearly the natives were growing more dependent upon the imported food and other supplies brought in by the traders.

"About this time," remarked Bill Doak, "these sky-pilots came along and set about giving the Huskies a new religion and new Gods, taught 'em to sing hymns and how to thank the Lord. You should have heard the racket behind the post once they started in to sing. Talk about your revival meetings, it had anything skinned I ever heard! Then all the dogs would start to howl. Maybe those Cogmollocks thought it was being done to frighten the devil away, anyway they sure made a hell of a noise. I guess them sky-pilots must have told 'em if they took up the white man's medicine they'd go to a happy hunting ground when they passed out where there'd always be lots of good fat caribou around. Anyway, there was a hitch somewhere for one fall the caribou didn't turn up and there was a hell of a row in camp! The Huskies promptly hiked over to the missionaries and told 'em to *bring along the caribou*! The preachers tried to explain but that didn't satisfy the Cogmollocks one damn bit. They were hungry after meat! Well, they gave the sky pilots until the next day to produce the goods and if the caribou didn't turn up they proposed to hang them just as they used to do their own Medicine Men once they let 'em down. We had to get those fellows away until the Huskies cooled off, but things sure looked pretty tough for a while. "But the funniest thing of all," continued Doak, "was when the church sent out a gas-boat to help 'em in getting around their parish. On one trip they camped for the night on a small island, went ashore and put on their pajamas. Later on one of 'em thought he smelt gas so he hiked on board with a lighted match looking for the leak."

Here Doak laughed uproariously and for a while was unable to proceed.

"Sure, he found the leak all right!" he continued. "He was blown ashore, the boat was burned to cinders, and there they were, the three of 'em, *in their pajamas* on a little rocky island with neither grub nor boat nor nothing else! Luckily, some Cogmollocks found 'em the next day, loaned 'em mukluks and turned 'em loose over on the mainland. But they sure had some hike back to the mission. They had lots of guts, those fellows. But it always seemed to me a waste of time trying to civilize them Huskies!"

It was not until that April that I finished my eighteen hundred mile journey and arrived once more at Fort Simpson. The ice was rotting and getting bad along the shore. To my intense surprise I noticed an aeroplane stranded in the mission field. It was the first visit of these winged monsters to the North, and upon reaching the post Mr. Camsell told how old

Chippesaw had shot at it with his gun, panic stricken at the thought that the *Thunder Bird* was after him.[1]

At the very time Doak and I had been discussing the Cogmollocks around the camp-fires events were taking place in Coronation Gulf which were to prove of widespread interest not only in the Northland but throughout the length and breadth of Canada, and which were also to furnish the Corporal with the fulfillment of his desire to once more see the Arctic and his friends the Eskimos.

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[1] The plane, which belonged to the Imperial Oil Company, had damaged the skids and broken the propeller when landing, and Captain Gorman, the pilot, was very unhappy at the prospect of being marooned until the steamer's arrival in July. One of my employees at Fort Simpson was Walter Johnston, who had once been a cabinet maker. *I suggested that he try and construct a new propeller out of oak sleigh boards and moose-hide glue.* Although he had never seen a plane before he was successful. Three weeks later the plane left for Peace River Crossing with the new propeller adjusted, carrying letters from myself to Jimmie McCashen, the factor there, and to the Company in Winnipeg. When the steamer arrived in July I learned that the plane made the journey without mishap and also received replies to my letters *which constituted the first air-mail from the North*, having been *carried by an American plane* using a *country-made propeller*.

CHAPTER XIX

The Corporal Follows His Last Trail

One of the peculiar oriental customs practiced by the Cogmollock Eskimos of Coronation Gulf was that of destroying unwanted female children at birth. No doubt it arose from the fact that life in the Arctic was difficult enough without the hunters having to provide for a surplus population of women who, from the native point of view, were looked upon as being non-producers and were considered, therefore, as anything but an asset to the tribe.

To such an extent had this practice been carried out that in 1921, the winter Doak accompanied me down river, there was a decided shortage of women amongst these people, so much so, in fact, that the rising generation of young hunters, when they desired mates, were sometimes forced to follow the ancient cave-man custom of obtaining their women from other men by force.

In this way many killings and blood feuds had originated amongst them, as the approved Cogmollock method of disposing of the superfluous husband was to dispatch him with a quick stab in the back when off his guard and entirely unsuspecting.

Thus it happened that Tatamagana was deeply preoccupied as he crouched over the air hole in the ice watching the little ivory marker which would be disturbed the moment the seal came up to breathe. As he waited his mind wandered back to the snow igloos of the Cogmollocks five miles to the westward. There dwelt Pugnana's wife, Kupak; fat, broad of back, and capable of carrying heavy burdens, having, in fact, all those graces which made a woman desirable in Eskimo eyes.

He had long wanted a woman of his own but only by taking another man's wife could he satisfy this desire. His eye had roved in the direction of Pugnana's wife and he was satisfied that she looked upon him with favor. But what caused the Eskimo such deep preoccupation was the question of how Pugnana could best be removed, and he continued to ponder deeply as he watched the snow-filled hole before him.

A sudden movement of the ivory indicator disturbed his soliloquies. Quickly he raised his harpoon and plunged it through the breathing hole. A sudden thud and a commotion beneath the ice told him he had struck home.

Quickly wrapping the harpoon line around his leg he pulled upon it and brought to the surface a large fat seal blowing stertorously in anger and surprise, which he dispatched with a sharp blow from the wooden handle. Then Tatamagana straightened up and gazed towards the igloos.

Through the blue haze of the Arctic night his eye roved in search of his eighteen-year-old nephew Aligoomiak. At last he located the youth and together they started for the village. For a long time they walked in silence but at length Tatamagana told his plans.

He and Aligoomiak would take Pugnana out caribou hunting, then in the excitement of the chase one of them would slip behind and shoot him in the back. Would Aligoomiak agree? If so Tatamagana would make him a present of one of those wonderful death-dealing weapons which the traders had recently brought in to Coronation Gulf and sold to the Eskimos for twenty white fox pelts apiece.

Such a tempting prize could not be ignored and before the bluish-white cones of the igloos were sighted all arrangements were completed.

Not many days later a small hunting party comprising Tatamagana, Pugnana and Aligoomiak left the village and struck out towards the mainland in search of caribou. On the first day tracks were seen. On the next, as they topped a snow-swept ridge, they almost ran into a bunch of forty or fifty Barren Land caribou who gazed at them for a second, then with a flick of their tails were off.

As Pugnana and Tatamagana fired their guns and dropped their quarry they rushed forward in pursuit of the fleeing animals. As they ran Aligoomiak halted, raised his rifle and fired. The explosion was followed by a short sharp cry from Pugnana who toppled to the ground, quivered for a moment and lay still. Covering the body of the murdered man with a cairn of stones the two Eskimos returned to the village and reported the "accident," then Tatamagana moved into the igloo of Kupak who, according to Eskimo custom, thereafter became his wife.

There was now only one cloud on the Eskimo's horizon, the presence of the nine-month-old daughter of the murdered man, who, being a girl-child, was unwanted, while her cries disturbed her step-father at night. Again Aligoomiak was approached. This time he was to receive four boxes of cartridges for his newly acquired rifle if he would rid his uncle's igloo of the child. The deal was completed and ere many days had passed the infant followed her father into the Great Beyond and her cries no longer disturbed Tatamagana's repose.

Six months later Corporal Doak was leaning back in a babiche-netted chair with his feet on the window sill surveying the broad reaches of the Mackenzie River with disgust. It was July, 1921, and for nearly a year he had been confined to the isolated trading post at Fort Norman with only Constable Brackett, Tim Gaudet, the Hudson's Bay factor, and a few trappers and traders for companions. As the door of the log barracks swung open D'Arcy Arden entered with a smile and viewed the disconsolate features of the Corporal.

"What's the matter, Bill?" inquired the visitor. "I never saw you look so fed up in my life!"

"Huh! Am I fed up? I'll say I am, this rotten hole gets deader every day. Nothing to do but play poker or read the riot act to the Hare Indians. Boy! what wouldn't I give to be back along the Arctic Coast where I could trap white foxes again. A fellow could get a couple of hundred in a season, aside from police duties, and at forty dollars apiece that's not bad pickings."

"Did you say 'trade' or 'trap'?" inquired Arden with a grin.

"I said trap, of course. Don't you know it's against police regulations to trade with natives?" responded Doak with a broad smile.

"I dunno," the trader remarked. "Those Huskies are getting too all-fired cocky for my liking. You can't depend on the Cogmollocks these days, and I'm not fussy about having my liver make a meal for them as they did with those two priests."

"Hello!" exclaimed Doak as he leaped from his chair. "What's going on now? Tim's putting up the flag. Surely the steamer's not back from Fort McPherson already?"

Throwing on his hat and tunic he hurried out to the river bank where Indian bucks, squaws, trappers and traders were already thronging the front of the stockade with eyes directed up-river. Two miles to the northward the stern-wheeled steamer "Distributor" was forging her way against the stiff current on her thirteen hundred mile journey back from the fringe of the Polar sea to Fort Smith. Even as they glanced the white painted vessel shook out her flags and gave vent to two shrill blasts of welcome which echoed back from the lofty mountains of the nearby Bear River.

As soon as the gang-plank was thrown out the priest secured the mailbags and carried them up to the log mission house behind the fort. In less than two hours the paddle wheel commenced to revolve again and with a warning toot the vessel slid out into the current and was soon lost to view around the bend.

For some time Doak stood alone upon the bank watching with lonely eyes the wooded point around which the boat had disappeared, then swinging on moccasined heel he strode towards the mission to get his mail. He returned with a bundle of letters which he opened with jocose remarks concerning their contents. Finally picking up an official letter he commenced to read. Suddenly he became galvanized into life and action.

"Hurrah!" he yelled as he grabbed Arden and commenced to execute a jig around the floor. "Good-by to Fort Norman and the tall timbers, me for the coast at last and the liver-eating Cogmollocks."

"What the devil's all the excitement about?" inquired the constable, eying his superior with surprise.

"Nothing much," answered the delighted Doak, "except that there's just been another family rumpus somewhere around Coronation Gulf and a couple of Huskies have been precipitated out of this Vale of Tears by a kid named Aligoomiak and yours truly has been assigned the job of bringing the fire-eating youngster and his esteemed uncle in to Herschel Island for trial."

"H'm! Just what I expected," exclaimed Arden. "The Government was far too lenient with Sinissiak and Uluksuk and here's the result. I'm glad you're getting the break, but for God's sake be careful, old man! You think a devil of a lot of the Huskies but those darned Cogmollocks are as treacherous as hell."

A week later as the "Northland Trader" pulled in to the bank Doak was waiting with his dunnage bag in hand and a bed-roll at his feet and hardly was the gang-plank ashore when he leaped nimbly on board. With unerring instinct he found his way to the purser's cabin and, with glass in hand, was soon discussing the up-river gossip and news of the outside world with other old-timers who were also northward bound.

Soon they chugged past the Arctic Circle and at last the mud flats of Aklavic hove in sight with a host of motor schooners belonging to the Nunatagmuit Eskimos drawn up along the bank. Here the passengers disembarked and the Corporal found an Eskimo willing to convey him to Herschel Island on his schooner, and that night he was looking over the bow of the little vessel at the ice-filled waters of the Beaufort Sea, red and angry in the smoky light of the low-lying midnight sun.

It was nearly mid-day ere they reached the harbor at Herschel Island and the Corporal beheld the familiar white buildings of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As he skipped down the narrow gang-plank Inspector Wood was awaiting him and after shaking hands they made their way together to the barracks.

There was little time for delay. The trading vessels from Vancouver and San Francisco had come and gone some time before and were now thought to be safely past Point Barrow having once again won their fight with the polar ice. Constable Woolams had been assigned to accompany Doak and was ready to leave, so bidding a hasty farewell to the traders and other passengers Doak and Woolams boarded the Hudson's Bay motor schooner "Fort McPherson," the lines were cast off and the sturdy little craft turned her bow to the eastward and headed out to sea.

Through fog, ice and Arctic blizzard she continued resolutely on her way. There was little accommodation and for days and nights on end sleep was out of the question as the vessel fought her way through thundering ice-filled seas. Drenched often to the skin, passengers and crew remained continually on duty, ready to lend a hand at any moment should an emergency arise.

At length the "Fort McPherson" entered a deep rock-girt inlet and rounding a point the few small huts and galvanized iron buildings of the Company's post at Tree River came into sight. Long before she reached her anchorage a host of skin kyaks and oomiaks were seen pulling out from the shore loaded with Cogmollocks, and in a short time the deck was over-run with these dusky visitors attired in their best deerskin garments. Only by the long tails on their skin ahtegis could the men be distinguished from the women, though occasionally a diminutive red face framed in short black hair, and with sloe black eyes, peeped over the top of the hood in which the mother carried it.

The few lonely white residents of the Arctic outpost who had been cut off for a year from the outside world lost no time in greeting the new arrivals. Pete Norberg, explorer and trader; Otto Binder, Hudson's Bay factor at Tree River with his rosy cheeked Eskimo wife, and Clarke, Inspector of the fur company, all climbed aboard.

Next day the vessel was unloaded and Doak found himself standing amongst a pile of lumber, galvanized iron, provisions, and coal costing two hundred and fifty dollars a ton laid down, faced with the necessity of erecting a barracks ere the snow commenced to fly.

In a short time a shack, fifteen feet by twelve, had been built but hardly had it been completed when, without the slightest warning, a blizzard from the northwest burst upon them with all the savage fury of the Arctic. Day after day the wind shrieked and howled around the little shack as though bent on demolishing it, while the snow drifted higher and higher until even the windows were obscured and darkness reigned within excepting for the

dim light of a smoky coal-oil lamp. For nine days the storm raged, confining both men within, then abruptly it ceased and after much digging the inmates penetrated into the open and saw their world completely enveloped in a shimmering mass of hard drifted snow.

Soon the sun disappeared for the winter and daylight dwindled until artificial light became necessary all the time. Then snow blocks were cut and a wall built around the building and the roof covered as an added protection against the Arctic cold.

Eskimos at last commenced to come in to trade their white fox skins for rifles, cartridges, knives and copper kettles, and from these visitors, with Binder's aid, the whereabouts of Aligoomiak and Tatamagana was discovered.

Clad in Eskimo clothing, the only apparel suited to withstand the rigors of the climate, the two policemen with their native interpreter, Silas, and one dog-team set out on their patrol.[1]

Days of arduous travel followed, with nights spent in improvised snow houses, and at last the distant shore line of Kent Peninsula could be seen through the dim half-light. Rounding an ice-girt spit of land there lay before them the dome-shaped igloos of a large Cogmollock village and realizing that this meant rest and extra feed the dogs gave tongue. In a frenzy of excitement they galloped at top speed into the center of the camp.

Long ere they reached it skin-clad figures emerged on hands and knees from the depths of the igloos and a hundred pairs of dark mysterious eyes looked questioningly at the *Kablunats*. The air seemed full of menace and the ready welcome which the ever hospitable Eskimos invariably extended to strangers was entirely lacking. Instead the natives stood aggressive and suspicious, then slowly an old man, evidently the patriarch or Medicine Man of the band, emerged from the largest igloo and approached the strangers. All eyes were fixed upon him.

"What do the Kablunats desire in Olibuk's village?" demanded the Chief with an unfriendly look.

"Tell him," answered Doak, "that we come from the Great Father across the sea with presents for Olibuk, whose name as a mighty hunter and a good and righteous man has spread even to the land of the Kablunats."

Doak realized fully the hazard of the situation for, although armed, they were entirely at the mercy of the natives should they turn hostile. One false move alone might easily mean instant destruction. Tact and diplomacy alone could win the day and insure the arrest of the two murderers who he felt sure

were in the camp. But the mention of presents was evidently having its effect upon old Olibuk whose attitude seemed to soften as he gave orders for their dogs to be fed and belongings carried to his igloo and signed to the visitors to follow him within.

Doak lost no time in opening his bundle and displaying to Olibuk's crafty eyes the presents he had brought, and the Corporal felt relieved as he heard his ejaculation of pleased surprise.

"All this the Great Father has sent you, Olibuk, because he knows that you will not countenance evil doing. Therefore, he wishes your help to bring justice upon the murderers of Pugnana," continued Doak through his interpreter and waited.

For a long time Olibuk remained silent while his cupidity battled with his native shrewdness. The suspense became intense while the seal-oil lamp cast a smoky red radiance upon the skin-clad natives seated around him upon their caribou skins, speaking not a word.

"Your Great Father is indeed wise to deal thus generously with Olibuk," the old man said, addressing Silas. "Last night I saw you in a dream and have awaited your coming. The men you want are in this village. My son will show you where they live."

Striking while the iron was hot Doak arose immediately and led by Olibuk's son soon found the igloo which he sought. Followed by Woolams and Silas he crawled inside. Aligoomiak, a slim sloe-eyed youth of about eighteen, was devouring a dish of ookchuk and paid little heed to the newcomers except for a fleeting smile, but Tatamagana, a thick-set swarthy ruffian, seemed nervous and avoided the policeman's eye. Shaking hands Doak squatted down on a bed of deerskins and quietly made known his errand. With the oriental fatalism of the Eskimo not the slightest attempt was made to resist capture and in a few minutes the arrest of both Aligoomiak and Tatamagana had become an accomplished fact.

At an early hour they set out with their prisoners for Tree River and as the dim and inhospitable shore of Kent Peninsula slowly sank from sight Doak turned to Woolams: "Thank God that's over," he quietly remarked.

By the time they reached Tree River Doak had conceived quite a warm liking for the Eskimo lad for Aligoomiak had proven both willing and adaptable. There was no cell to lock them in, and as it was out of the question to keep them shackled, the prisoners were allowed a considerable amount of liberty. So they assisted in the routine work; caught and hauled in seal for dog-feed, mended sleighs and harness, and performed numerous other odd jobs around the post.

Some time after their return Woolams and Tatamagana left for the seal camp, an Eskimo village about eight miles away, where, with Clarke, a Hudson's Bay man, they busied themselves putting up a supply of seal meat, for dog-feed was already running short. The only white men now left at Tree River were Otto Binder, the trader who lived at the Hudson's Bay post a hundred yards from the barracks, and Corporal Doak himself. To break the utter loneliness Binder usually dropped in every evening to play a game of cards, and also formed the habit of making a call about nine o'clock each morning.

On the morning of April 1, 1922, Doak rolled out of his bed, rubbed his eyes, and called to the young Eskimo for his sealskin boots. The Cogmollock grinned and tossed them over. It was one of his duties to chew them each morning in order to soften them, an occupation which usually falls to the lot of the women of the tribe. This time they had not been properly fixed and were still stiff so with a frown of annoyance Doak threw them back and bade the lad finish the job.

Aligoomiak did as he was told then, with a piercing look at the policeman he picked up the large gasoline tin which had been converted into a slop-pail and turned to go outside, but hardly had he lifted the pail when, without warning, the handle parted, spilling the contents upon the floor. With a growl the Corporal leaped from his chair, ordered the native outside and commenced mopping up the mess.

Binder dropped in again that evening for a game of cards and the customary chat. As he arose to go Doak bid him good night, glanced at the apparently sleeping Eskimo lying in the corner, then rolled into his eiderdown robe and promptly fell asleep. But the Cogmollock did not sleep. Instead he watched Doak's corner with black beady eyes—eyes that smoldered with a strange light.

Out at the seal camp the following morning Clarke and Woolams decided to go further afield in search of seal. In the springtime these mammals are in the habit of disporting themselves upon the snow, and a dozen or more had fallen to their rifles when Woolams' attention was attracted by a fast moving object approaching from the village. This soon resolved itself into a dog-team being frantically driven across the ice. Time and again the wicked eighteen-foot lash would rise and fall with a report like a rifle shot, accompanied by the terrified howling of the dogs. Calling Clarke's attention they watched the rapidly approaching sleigh, realizing that something was seriously wrong for no native, under ordinary circumstances,

would maltreat his dogs in this manner. With anxious faces and hearts full of foreboding they waited.

As the Eskimo drew closer it was clearly to be seen that he labored under great excitement. Bringing his dogs to a sudden stop he mumbled something to Silas in the guttural Cogmollock tongue which the interpreter received in open-mouthed amazement. Recovering the faculty of speech he turned to the policeman and spoke with trembling lips.

"Aligoomiak, he killum Doak, killum Binder. Come seal camp with gun for killum all white mans," the agitated interpreter announced. "Come for kill you," looking at Woolams, "and you too," he added, addressing Clarke.

Pale and speechless the two white men stood, incapable of realizing the full significance of the Eskimo's words, then questioning him hurriedly they discovered that shortly after they had left that morning Aligoomiak had arrived, rifle in hand, at the seal camp with the intention of shooting them both and returning to Olibuk's village. Not finding his expected victims he had entered Tupak's igloo and the old man had secretly dispatched his son to warn the whites.

Immediately they prepared for a return to the seal camp and in order not to cause alarm Woolams went ahead with Tupak's son, telling the others to follow at a more leisurely pace so that the police team would not excite the escaped prisoner's suspicions. As they neared the village the policeman instructed his driver to proceed to the door of Tupak's snow-house, covering himself meanwhile with a number of deerskins, leaving only a small aperture through which to watch. His mind was in a state of utter chaos. Doak killed! Impossible! He did not believe it!

The distance seemed interminable but at last the dogs halted near the igloo and the Eskimo crawled inside. Pulling his hood well over his face and pushing his hands into his polar bearskin mittens so that their whiteness would not be observed, Woolams' also entered.

Aligoomiak was eating leisurely, explaining boastfully to the crowd of dusky Cogmollocks squatted inside the snow-house that shooting a white man was as simple as killing a white partridge, when Woolams straightened up. The Eskimo at first glanced casually around then, petrified with astonishment, realized that he was staring into the accusing eyes of the hated Kablunat.

"Come on, you murdering hound!" ordered the Mountie as he roughly grasped the native by the wrist and bundled him outside.

Silas and Clarke had already arrived with the dog-teams and throwing the Eskimo upon his sleigh Woolams cracked his whip and called to the lead-dog. At that moment Tupak, the Chief, stepped forward, spoke hurriedly, nodding at the same time significantly towards the prisoner.

"What does he say?" inquired the constable.

"Him say mebbe better killum right now so he make it no more trouble!" replied the interpreter, pointing to Aligoomiak and glancing at the proffered gun in the old man's hands as though fully endorsing the suggestion. And it was with much disgust and wonder at the white man's strange ways that the Cogmollocks saw the prisoner borne away from the village alive.

The eight-mile stretch of broken and up-ended ice to Tree River was crossed rapidly and as the Hudson's Bay post came into view their worst fears began to be realized. Not a sign of life was to be seen. Not a wisp of smoke curled from the stove-pipes of either trading post or barracks, while a significant brooding stillness seemed to hover over the bay. Halting in front of the post the policeman entered. Not a soul was to be seen. On the table the soiled breakfast dishes remained and upon the cold stove sat a pot half-full of frozen porridge.

"Come quick!" called Silas excitedly. "Seeum something on de snow. Dogs they plenty scairt."

Looking in the direction pointed out by Silas they noticed what looked like a fallen caribou mid-way between the barracks and the post, and together they walked towards it. Attired in deerskin clothing, and lying upon his face with arms outstretched, was Otto Binder the trader, shot right through the heart. Leaving the dead man they hurried to the police shack. Fearfully Woolams opened the door, stepped inside and glanced around. At first all seemed to be in order, then looking towards the bed he started back and gasped. For there lay Doak and he saw at a glance that he had left on his last long trail!

Examining the little storehouse attached to the building they discovered that the door had been forced and that one of the 30-30 rifles which had been taken from the prisoners was gone.

Four and a half months later the settlement of Herschel Island was thrown into a tumult of excitement by the announcement that the "Fort McPherson" was approaching. As she drew closer a strange sensation spread amongst the onlookers. There was something peculiar about the attitude of those on board. The answering cries of welcome were half-hearted. Then suddenly the question went around. Where was Doak? Had anybody noticed

him? It was not like the Corporal to be backward in shouting a welcome to all his friends!

As the gang-plank was thrown ashore the serious faces of all on board showed that something was amiss. Then like wild-fire the story spread. Doak was dead! Killed by the Cogmollocks! A hushed and horrified silence pervaded the little group of men as they pressed forward, hoping against hope that the news would not prove true. Woolams, with set face, stepped ashore, shook hands with Inspector Wood and slowly they made their way towards the barracks.

By this time Captain Jacobson and the crew were intermingling with the crowd and the story of Doak's murder became known to one and all. A deep gloom descended upon the tiny settlement. Soon the story reached the mainland and within a month had found its way along the two thousand mile reaches of the Mackenzie and Athabasca Rivers. Even in the distant tepees of the Yellow Knife and Dog-Rib Indians the killing of the "Smiling Mountie" was discussed with awe and sorrow.

Aligoomiak had spoken freely of what had occurred that fatal day. Doak had spoken sharply to him and the Eskimo was mad. Anyway, he thought the policeman ultimately meant to kill him and, Eskimo-like, was merely waiting time and place and sooner or later would either shoot him in the back or knife him. That last night he had lain awake and finally decided to bring matters to a head. He would shoot Doak in the leg and wound him, he wanted him to suffer for his angry words but did not really desire to kill him, he wished to hurt the policeman and force him into action.

Near sunrise the Eskimo had left the police shack quietly and forcing the door of the warehouse had found a rifle and four cartridges. Reëntering the shack he had stood near the stove, taken deliberate aim at the thigh of the sleeping man, and fired. Doak had lived about four hours and had frequently asked why he did this thing. When he died Aligoomiak thought it would be well to kill Binder too, so, standing by the window, he had awaited his usual morning visit. The trader was about half way to the barracks when the Eskimo raised his rifle, fired from the window, and Binder had fallen in his tracks. Then he had gone over to Binder's house, told his wife he wished to show her something and had led her to the spot. Then, added the Eskimo, he had set out for the seal camp with the intention of killing the two remaining white men and returning to his home.

Slowly the ponderous machinery of the white man's law was set in motion. Meanwhile Tatamagana and Aligoomiak were placed in the guard-room at the barracks and allowed out for daily exercise, but as time went by

their liberty was increased until Tatamagana became the official seal-hunter for the police and Aligoomiak pantry-boy and laundryman for the wife of the Inspector.

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[1] Contrary to accepted opinion Mounted Police, when on winter duty in the Arctic, are not attired in red serges, Stetson hats and leather boots, as some writers of fiction would lead one to believe, but dress in Eskimo skin clothing.

CHAPTER XX

A Bride Comes to the Northland

When the anxiously awaited "Mackenzie River" arrived at Fort Simpson early in July, 1921, I received word that the Commissioner wished to transfer me to Fort Fitzgerald so that I could repeat the work I had performed in the lower Mackenzie section and reorganize the posts on Smith Portage and around Great Slave Lake.

Spring and open water had seen another fight with the Lamson and Hubbard Company whose postmanagers repeated precisely the same methods which had caused such heavy losses to every one the year before. As soon as it became obvious that the method of pyramiding fur values was again going to continue, and that the Lamson and Hubbard men were prepared to repeat their tactics of the previous year, I decided to give our largest competitor a lesson which they would not forget for many years to come. Only by such means would this stupid system which was ruining the trade be finally brought to an end. If their agents desired high prices I would see to it that they got them.

I sent word, confidentially, to all down river postmanagers that, irrespective of what rumors reached them from Fort Simpson regarding fur prices, they were only to buy very few small lots of skins from white trappers and traders, just enough to establish high prices, and let the opposition company buy the rest.

About this time a few trappers came in to Fort Simpson and before the bidding started I persuaded them to let me look their furs over and divide them into two lots. The first lot was of extra fine selected skins for which I could pay a very high price *on grade* yet lose no money; the other fur was very poor stuff, worth about a quarter the value of the good furs.

FUTURE SLEIGH DOGS.

When the bidding finally took place I put the highest possible price on the good skins *and got them*. Then the other lot was put up for sale *and sold to the Lamson and Hubbard Company at a higher average price per skin than the fine pelts had realized*. Prices were, therefore, immediately established far in advance of market values.

I refused to bid on any more lots until all the trappers arrived, and arranged that a sale should be held and all the bids written out and given to Flynn Harris, the Indian Agent, *none of them to be opened until all were handed in and signed*.

Assuming that I would go still higher than his last bid Mr. King, the Lamson and Hubbard agent, surpassed himself. When the first bid was read out my price was about two thousand dollars for the lot. Walter Gibson, the Northern Trading Company's man, bid slightly less, while the Lamson and Hubbard Company's offer topped four thousand dollars. King turned a sickly white as the other bids were read out, not understanding exactly what had taken place, unable now to withdraw his offers on the remaining lots.

After every lot had been knocked down to him I loaned him some of my men to carry the enormous bundles of fur over to his post. The trappers, of course, were wild for they merely wished to use the opposition traders as a lever to extract big prices from the Hudson's Bay Company and be paid with Hudson's Bay drafts which were as good as gold throughout the North.

Poor King was immediately assailed with requests for thousands of dollars in cash, and when Mr. Bassett, the Superintendent, put in an appearance the interview between the two men could not have been a happy one for the former was speedily replaced.

But the harm was already done; word of values had spread down river, and at nearly every post the Lamson and Hubbard Company had purchased the white trapper's furs at enormous prices, for which they promised to pay cash.

GODSELL ON AN INSPECTION TRIP VISITING HUDSON'S BAY POSTS.

This firm had been considerably weakened through the methods employed by their agents in the country the year before. Unfortunately for the success of the enterprise attempts had been made to forge ahead too fast and as a consequence there had never been sufficient organization developed to control the head-strong men at the posts. Many of these agents seemed to forget entirely the purpose for which they had been placed there—to make money for the firm, and when they found that the Company's men were not prepared to give up the trade, built up over a period of many years, without a fight they simply lost their heads and decided to obtain the furs at any cost, and did so.

The outcome was a foregone conclusion. For three years they continued to struggle valiantly and finally, to the regret of all the whites and most of

the Indians throughout the country, they went into liquidation, their assets being taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Although many of the whites had welcomed the advent of the new company on the grounds that keen competition would cause the Indians to get better prices for their furs, and otherwise improve conditions, the Indian was not in any sense the gainer. True, he had obtained better prices for his furs but he had simply squandered the money on a lot of useless trash and became more improvident than ever. The fur resources had been seriously affected by the more intensive trapping, and white trappers were now scattered throughout their hunting grounds. Their dependability had suffered to such an extent that it soon became almost impossible to trust them or give out very much credit.

True enough they obtained less for their furs when the Hudson's Bay Company and Hislop and Nagle had things pretty much to themselves, but they always got the best of everything from the stores for neither company ever imported trash. Furthermore, in those days the hunters had to keep their credit good and pay their debts as there was nowhere else to go. Consequently the trade was conducted along orderly lines which worked to the advantage of every one concerned, *especially the Indian*.

Strangely enough every big fur company that has ever gone into the North to trade with the Indians has always made the same mistakes, yet there were not wanting numerous examples from which this firm could have taken warning had they studied the history of the fur trade at all closely.

On the other hand it was this American Company which introduced the more up-to-date methods of transportation which the country so urgently needed at that time, and I can still remember the ridicule with which many of the Hudson's Bay Company's men greeted their first attempt to negotiate the Liard River with a high-powered gas-boat, the "Lady Mackworth," the only logical method, and one which has been employed up to the present day.

It was not until September that I was able to pay a hurried visit to Winnipeg and there, on Monday the nineteenth, Jean and I were united in a quiet little wedding ceremony by the venerable and kindly Rev. R. C. Johnstone, a life-long friend of her grand-uncle, in All Saints Church.

Two weeks later we were floating down the icy waters of the Athabasca River in an open scow, anxious to get to Fort Fitzgerald before the freeze-up. The "Bridal Chamber" consisted of a number of sacks of flour upon which we spread our bed-roll; a dirty tarpaulin, stretched on hoops of willow, being our only protection from the snow flurries and fall rains which frequently

beat down upon the heavily laden craft. In the bow was a rickety little cook-stove supported upon some empty cans, and this, with a few battered tin plates and pots, comprised the "galley."

Early the first morning on board there was a commotion amongst a pile of freight which formed the wall of our quarters and suddenly a yellow face with swollen oriental eyes peered stupidly down upon us and the lips commenced to move.

"Wow! I got a headache. Anybody here got an eye-opener?" inquired a somewhat stupefied Jap. "Oh! I'm sorry, missie, I must have got turned around and come in the wrong direction."

With that Wada's face disappeared and we could hear him crawling betwixt the freight and tarp towards the kitchen, moaning as he went.

A little later Jean and I crawled along the edge of the scow to the culinary department. A grizzled old trapper, Paul Miller, was getting a free passage to Fort Fitzgerald on the understanding that he would act as cook, and as soon as my wife was seated upon a projecting piece of freight he picked up a chipped enameled plate, moistened his thumb with his lips, scratched the dirt off and polished it upon the seat of his overalls. By this time Jean's eyes were large with astonishment, but when he handed her a pan in which some bacon floated in a sea of grease she was forced to beat a hasty retreat. A little later I found her seated on a keg of gunpowder attempting to puff nonchalantly upon a cigarette, but looking somewhat pale.

Yet she enjoyed the novel trip thoroughly for we had a merry crowd of passengers aboard. Amongst them were Wada the Jap, the Patterson boys who trapped and traded in the winter and worked on the boats in the summer to buy their "grub-stakes," and Constable MacDonald, a raw-boned good-natured lad, who kept us in gales of laughter as he related his experiences while on the stage. The job, he assured us, was a good one as long as it lasted for he was making thunder in a theater at five dollars a night. One evening he had celebrated not wisely but too well and waxing enthusiastic had continued to make thunder long after the storm had ended. He was "fired" and joined the Mounted Police.

About this time a popular music hall song called "The Love Nest" was going the rounds in civilization. As I left the camp-fire one evening and made my way towards the boat I heard the laughing voice of my wife inquiring if "The Love Nest" was ready.

The following afternoon Constable MacDonald espied one of the Patterson boys seated upon his bed-roll.

"Hey, you," he yelled, "what the hell are you doing on my Love Nest?" Shrieks of laughter followed, and from that time forward every roll of bedding on board was called a "Love Nest."

It was the eighth of October when we stepped ashore at the drab and forlorn looking settlement of Fort Fitzgerald and waded through seas of mud up to the Hudson's Bay post.

A short time after our arrival we were comfortably settled in our new home. What a change it was from the conventional life at a trading post to have spotless linen throughout the house, dainty curtains at the windows, and to enjoy well cooked meals, properly served, instead of the greasy fried foods prepared by Indian women.

Each evening Constables MacDonald, Grinstead and Baker would drop in for a chat or a game of cards and so we spent many pleasant hours. Finally we decided to hold a house-warming and dance. It was a cosmopolitan affair, attended by the red-coated Mounties, half-breed girls in their best silk dresses and moccasins, Indians, other traders and their wives. Jean had secured a couple of fiddlers, their lively music adding greatly to the pleasure of the evening, and for days afterwards she spoke with delight of the success of her first house-party. However, her joy was short-lived for soon those who had been our guests commenced going over like nine-pins with a mild form of small-pox. Not until then did we discover that one of our fiddlers, Billy Larocque, was convalescing at the time the dance took place, having carried the infection with him, and to this day that affair is still known in the North as "*Mrs. Godsell's small-pox dance.*"

December finally arrived. I was making preparations for my winter trip around Great Slave Lake when I was also taken ill. When Dr. MacDonald arrived in the fort a few days later he came up to look me over. I was running a temperature of one hundred and five degrees he said, adding that I had contracted typhoid fever and would require extremely careful nursing.

Then Kelly, the postmanager, discovering that I was confined to my room and unable to get around commenced to whoop things up. Everything was going right merrily when the Mounted Police stepped in, arrested our one reliable choreman, John James Daniels, and sentenced him to a month in jail on a charge of making home-brew.

Vainly Jean tried to get some one else to take his place but so afraid were the natives of my illness that they refused point-blank to come anywhere near the house so to her other duties was added the work of carrying in the wood and even hauling up water with a neck-yoke from the river.

In spite of the doctor's orders Jean always sneaked the mail up to my room when the dog-teams brought in the packet, took dictation, wrote my letters, and kept things going North and South so that the Company's business should not suffer.

The reforms and changes which I had been forced to institute in my capacity as Inspector had naturally made me a number of enemies, though as long as I was upon my feet they were afraid to show their hands. Now it was a different story and, unfortunately, Jean had to bear the brunt of everything.

It is one of the peculiarities of the Northland that there is no distinction between business and personal affairs. If you have a business misunderstanding with some trader his wife will cut yours the next time they meet. If a Mountie in the course of his duty arrests some one who happens to be well liked in the settlement then his popularity suffers in consequence, regardless of the fact that he is but the instrument of others, and so it goes.[1]

As soon as I was allowed to go downstairs for a little while each day I called John James in and told him what arrangements to make for our journey to the posts. It was getting late in February and little time was to be lost if I was to make my round of Great Slave Lake before the break-up. Then one morning, in defiance of the doctor's orders, for I was still convalescent and barely able to walk, Jean and John James helped me into my carriole, tucked me in an eiderdown robe, and away we went on our eight hundred mile journey over the snows as Jean waved good-by from the doorway of our home.

Often during my travels throughout the North I have found that many a true and faithful heart beats beneath a tawny skin. Never was it better exemplified than upon this occasion; John James, my native dog-driver, displayed a tenderness and care towards me I shall never be likely to forget. His kindness and devotion on that trip will ever linger in my memory, and it only served to deepen the regard I have always felt for the original owners of this land, and for the inherent nobility which is so often a part of the Red Man's character.

The trails were good, the dogs fresh, and soon we were crossing Great Slave Lake towards Fort Rae.

We made good time to the Fort where I was faced with one of those amusing sidelights on the fur trade and its methods which required considerable tact to straighten out.

Ed Heron, the Company's native postmanager, had done a thriving trade that winter, and at first there had been keen competition between him and a Russian Jew who had recently opened up a trading post there, the Indians

having, of course, flocked immediately to the new trader. However, Ed soon devised means of his own to recover the lost trade.

The Dog-Ribs who traded here are still very primitive in their beliefs and mode of life. The devoted fathers have made considerable progress in converting them, though I had often wondered how deep-seated were the actual effects of their teachings. Now, however, I was given an opportunity of finding out.

Calling in some of the headmen who had been dealing with the Russian Ed had adopted a worried air and said he had something serious he wished to tell them.

"You believe in God and worship in the church, and know that you will go to hell if you don't follow His teachings?" queried Heron.

"Aha! Aha!" grunted the Dog-Ribs in assent.

"You have heard that his Son was killed by the Jews?" continued the trader.

"Aha! Aha!" came the awed response.

"Then," demanded Ed in a loud and wrathful voice, "why do you, if you believe those things, deal with this bearded man who has come amongst you? *Do you not know that it was his Grandfather who killed the Lord you worship?*"

Ed's "medicine" evidently worked as, for months and months thereafter, the natives were afraid to approach poor Necrasoff's post and he came to me in wrath and anger stating that if something was not done about it he intended to sue both Heron and the Company as his season's trade was ruined by the story Ed had told.

Soon after the ice had gone out Mr. Romanet, the Fur Trade Inspector, arrived. A short time before this he had reached Fort McMurray for the first time, being entirely unacquainted with the West. Accustomed to the pageantry, the firing of cannons and raising of flags, which had often greeted such visits to the posts in Hudson Bay he was somewhat bewildered at the casual treatment and lack of attention he received.

Here, where the "Jack's as good as his Master" spirit still continued to prevail this good-natured Frenchman appeared pompous and important and it was some little time ere he managed to adapt himself to his new environment.

Perhaps his first contact with the truly democratic feeling of the West occurred at Fort McMurray where he was standing upon a muddy, slippery bank, watching hay, oats, horses, wagons, bales and cases being loaded into

a scow which was to leave shortly for Fort Fitzgerald carrying equipment with which to conduct the transport on the portage. Striking one of his best Napoleonic poses: arms folded, small hat sitting like something that didn't belong upon a shock of badly trimmed black hair, he surveyed the scene with severity. A long, lanky, red-headed teamster approached with uncertain steps.

"Hey! My Man!" called the official. "Where am I supposed to sit?"

"Red" Martin lurched forward with leering face: "An' who tha hell are you?" he inquired truculently.

"*I'm the General Inspector for the Hudson's Bay Company for the Dominion of Canada and Labrador*," answered the Inspector impressively, drawing in a deep breath after having delivered himself of this formidable title.

"Red" wagged his head from side to side as he gazed dazedly upon the Frenchman: "Say, you're *some* guy, ain't cher?"

Fumbling in his hip pocket "Red" finally produced a bottle of lemon extract: " 'Ere, let's 'ave a drink on that," he invited as he extended the bottle. But Mr. Romanet was already walking down the bank.

I was glad to see the mercurial Frenchman again when he drifted in to Fort Fitzgerald later on. Charlie Sinclair had already arrived, having come down the Peace River by canoe, and we immediately set about the regular summer inspection of the posts.

I had an interesting journey with Louis Romanet visiting the posts around the lake with the little schooner "Fort Rae," and when I finally shook hands and saw him depart upon the "Athabasca River" I was sorry to see him go.

Soon afterwards I received word saying that he had been appointed to the charge of the District owing to Mr. Sinclair's illness.

After the ice went out at Fort Fitzgerald, about the middle of May, we began to watch anxiously for the arrival of the steamer with the mail. Hour after hour, and day after day, everybody scanned the river—anxious to see new faces and to hear new voices. The monotony of existence had caused strained relations between the white residents, many of whom, by this time, would barely speak to one another.

At last a puff of white steam was seen above the tree-tops two miles up river. "*The boat! The boat!*" yelled a score of excited voices, and people commenced to run frenziedly to and fro for no apparent purpose. The large white painted vessel steamed around the bend, the flags were shaken out,

and two loud raucous blasts proclaimed to every one that the long looked for boat was here at last.

Louis Romanet walked down the gang-plank very full of dignity, came over, shook hands and smiled.

“Bo’jou, Madam Godsell! ’Ullo, ’Arry!” he greeted us, then commenced to tell us all the latest news.

“Well, by heck, things are all right, eh?” he inquired, and beamed when I told him of the results at the different posts.

“Bon! Let us take a walk up to the ’ouse, I’ve got some good news to give you. The Commissioner, Mr. Brabant, he’s very pleased with the way things go. Now he wants you to get ready to inspect the Western Arctic. You will go, eh?”

By this time Mrs. Godsell’s face was as long as a fiddle.

“How long do you think he will be away?” she inquired.

“Ce pas! Mebbe one year. Mebbe a year and a ’arf, who can tell? You can send Madam to Winnipeg to stay there while you are away. Eh! Madam, you would have a good time, eh?”

Mr. Romanet added that, upon my return journey, after inspecting all the posts along the western Arctic coast, I should also inspect the posts upon the Mackenzie River. He admitted that it was a pretty big job but assured me that the Commissioner had the fullest confidence in my ability to do the work. Then he handed me some letters and telegrams from Mr. Brabant which bore out what he said. Needless to say I agreed.

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[1] Shortly after Mrs. Godsell arrived in Fort Fitzgerald she became quite friendly with the wife and daughter of an opposition trader. Early in the winter I surreptitiously sent off two dog-teams one night to a Caribou-Eater camp where I knew there was lots of fur. Two days later my wife met these ladies on the trail and neither of them would speak to her. Worried at their strange behavior she hastened home, wondering what she could have done to offend them, and at first could not believe it was simply due to my having stolen a march upon the trader.

CHAPTER XXI

The Land of the Nunatagmuits

Less than a month later I stepped from the deck of the "Mackenzie River" on to the mud flats of the uninviting and dirty looking settlement of Aklavic. It consisted of a few log huts and buildings, the Hudson's Bay post and the Anglican Mission. Having recently become the terminus of navigation for the stern-wheeled river steamers people from all along the Arctic foreshore and Herschel Island came over while the ice was still good and remained there until the arrival of the first steamer, about the middle of July.

The place was crowded with Mounted Police, missionaries, also traders and trappers of many nationalities from Negroes and Hawaiians to Portuguese. Drawn up along the shore were about sixty motor schooners belonging to the Nunatagmuit Eskimos. That they had become quite sophisticated in their ways was evidenced by the strains of "Red Hot Mama," "Dardanella" and "How Are Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm" which were wafted on the Polar breeze from the gramophones within the cabins.

After a lunch consisting of bully-beef and hard-tack I took a walk along the water-front with Mr. Christie and gave him all the latest up-river news. Suddenly my attention was arrested by the sight of an old Eskimo seated upon an upturned soap box on one of the schooners pounding slowly and deliberately on the keys of a *Corona* typewriter, a pair of horn-rimmed glasses perched gravely upon his nose.

"What the dickens is going on here?" I asked my companion in surprise and amusement.

"Oh! that's nothing. Just watch him," he laughed.

I did. In a little while the native withdrew his letter, then substituted an envelope as he had evidently seen the traders do. Eventually he called to a skin-clad child who was playing upon the deck; next moment the boy was speeding down the gang-plank with the letter in his hand. Passing us he disappeared into the willows. A few seconds later we heard the deliberate, *tick, tick, tick* of another typewriter within a tent beside the trail.

“You see,” Mr. Christie continued, “that Eskimo on the schooner is one of the wealthiest and best trappers around here and has quite a big savings account in one of the banks outside. Last winter, while staying at his shack, I made some notes with a portable typewriter which I always carry with me. He wanted one like it, so did his friend Payak in that tent over yonder; the machines just arrived by the boat.”

“But do they understand English well enough to write?” I inquired.

“Good Lord, no!” replied Charlie, laughing heartily at the suggestion. “They are just writing a jumble of figures, letters and punctuation marks which don’t mean a darn thing. But they love to imitate the whites. It gives them quite a little prestige with the other Huskies who don’t know the difference, with whom they trade in the winter time.”

Before I left the Arctic I could believe almost anything of these Nunatagmuit Eskimos and their attempts to imitate the white people. They are a most intelligent race, of somewhat Oriental appearance, nearly all of them being really good mechanics. To illustrate this point and show the adaptability of the native mind I cannot do better than mention one instance in particular.

The year prior to my trip a dentist named Dr. Millar made a journey through the country, attending to the requirements of the Company’s staff, finally reaching Herschel Island where he remained for quite a while. Day after day he was watched by an Eskimo named Mike who volunteered to help him. At first the dentist laughed but soon he found Mike’s help invaluable. When the ship arrived he commenced to dismantle his little foot-drill. Mike watched disconsolately, finally asking how much he wanted for his outfit. Although Dr. Millar did not take the suggestion seriously at first he soon found that Mike was very much in earnest. So, before leaving, he sold his entire outfit, with a supply of gold for crowns, to the native for five hundred dollars.

Mike returned to Herschel Island a year later after spending the winter at a trading post amongst the Cogmollocks, bringing with him furs worth around five thousand dollars. Every one wondered how he had managed to acquire so many skins until Mike explained the mystery. Apart from his duties as interpreter he had set up his dentist’s drill at the trading post, persuading the Cogmollocks to let him provide them with gold teeth (for decorative purposes) at the modest fee of two white foxes, about seventy dollars, per tooth.[1]

I found a fat Nunatagmuit woman the center of much interest and amusement as I entered the store. She had just purchased a pair of *scarlet*

silk bloomers, pulled them over her skin trousers, and was strutting around as proud as a peacock exhibiting her newly acquired finery to all who wished to look.

It had been a good winter for white foxes along the Arctic Coast and all the traders had done well. Quite a number of the natives and white trappers had killed as many as two hundred, and even three hundred, of the little animals, and sold them at the trading posts for an average price of about thirty-five dollars apiece.

There are times when these foxes become extremely scarce and almost entirely disappear. Then as suddenly they will return in considerable numbers much to the joy of practically everybody for they represent almost the only form of wealth which the barren coast provides. There is, as a rule, an average of three really good white fox years in every seven, and in these years the foxes are so plentiful that the experienced trappers along the coast often reap a very rich reward.

The year prior to my visit one trapper alone caught two hundred and six white foxes and sold them for seven thousand dollars at Baillie Island, and a sixty-three-year-old fellow, known familiarly as "Dad," had trapped over five hundred at Pierce Point and realized fifteen thousand dollars when he disposed of them at Herschel Island.

A few days after I landed the shrill toot of the siren announced the arrival of the "Distributor." It was the middle of the day and most of the people were still in bed, preferring to sleep during the heat and arise in the cool of the evening. Daylight is perpetual here during the summer months and it is often customary to serve breakfast about *nine in the evening* and so commence the "day." Notwithstanding, every one was on the river bank when the steamer finally tied up.

There were some interesting passengers on board, en route to Herschel Island, where Tatamagana and Aligoomiak were to be put on trial for their lives. Judge Dubuc dropped over, shook hands and introduced Mr. Cory, the defense lawyer, and Mr. Brown the hangman, the latter being promptly designated "Neck-tie Bill" by one of the trappers, a name which seemed to appeal to the Eskimos, and stuck to him thereafter. The prosecuting attorney and a Mounted Police escort completed the party which had journeyed nearly two thousand miles to bring the white man's justice to the Land of the Midnight Sun.

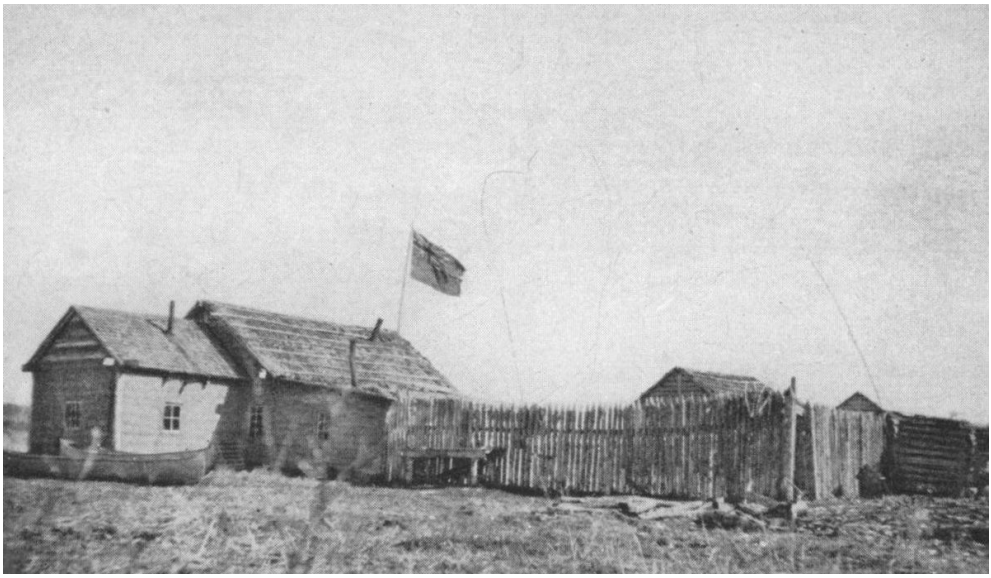
They were anxious to get over to Herschel Island as quickly as possible so Herbert Hall placed the "Mud-scow" at their disposal. It was a peculiar

craft with a pilot house built of beaver board, totally unsuited for work in the Arctic, having previously done service on the river.

Although I had been warned in Winnipeg that I would probably find affairs somewhat disorganized I had not anticipated the conditions which faced me from the moment I stepped ashore at Aklavic.

Almost the first news that greeted me was that Clarke, the Inspector from the Coronation Gulf region, had come in to attend the trial, bringing along with him a number of white foxes which he claimed were trapped by himself and members of his staff. In his bitter animosity against Mr. Christie he had sold these skins to an opposition trader named Kenny Mackenzie about a week before in defiance of the well known regulations of the firm.

Nearly all the posts appeared to be overloaded with trading goods, much of them very unsuited to the primitive trade of the Arctic. There were powder and rouge compacts, wrist watches, expensive jewelry, silk underwear and colored silk bloomers galore; hundreds of pairs of house shoes, or romeos, all for the *Eskimo* trade, and enough ammunition coming in on the "Lady Kindersley" to start a fair sized war.



FORT WRIGLEY, LONELY POST ON THE MACKENZIE RIVER.

Most of the previous season's "outfit," nearly eight hundred tons in all, had been hurriedly dumped at Herschel Island the previous fall when the "Lady Kindersley" had turned tail for fear of getting caught in the ice pack

and made her way back to Vancouver. Now all this had to be distributed, while another cargo was also coming in.

It was like pulling eye teeth to get Herbert Hall, the District manager, to look at the inventories and accounts, which he affected to despise, and he seemed obsessed with the idea that there was going to be a shortage of goods throughout his district.

This curly-haired, good-natured giant who boasted native blood on his mother's side was really one of the finest travelers and explorers that the Arctic had ever seen. He had explored for the Hudson's Bay Company and carried their trade beyond the known frontiers of the Saskatchewan and Hudson's Bay region. He could live, dress, and eat like an Eskimo; could thrive where others would starve, and endure, without complaint, hardships which few would care to face; but he hated books, and despised discipline, which, under the circumstances, was not hard to understand.

Courtesy Dept. of Interior

ESKIMO SCHOONERS IN THE HARBOR AT HERSCHEL ISLAND.

Hall had largely favored "beach-combers" as they were called, men who eked out an existence as trappers along the Arctic Coast and lived with Eskimo women, instead of using men brought up within the discipline of the service who could, no doubt, have been obtained from the posts around Hudson's Bay or Labrador. Those he actually hired were quite willing to endure hardship; they were pretty rough and tough but they had no romantic illusions about the Company, and its traditions meant nothing; they were

interested primarily in themselves. It was a hard life in the Arctic and they felt, no doubt, that they were entitled to get everything out of it they could.

Word soon reached the "Outside" of the astonishingly large white fox hunts made by some of them: often by men who, when devoting their entire time to trapping, had never been known to kill any considerable number of the animals before. At Herschel Island, and around the Delta, Mounted Police, missionaries, and less fortunate traders laughed and spoke slyly of "Pencil Bait" whenever these big hunts were mentioned.

The news of the big killings made by these erstwhile "beach-combers" had spread all through the Mackenzie River and, naturally, the stories of the fortunes they were making were having an unsettling effect upon the men there, and also bringing in quite a number of American trappers from across the mountains and Alaska.

When I asked Mr. Christie where the District Office, or headquarters, for the Western Arctic was he merely made a wry face and pointed to a big box containing a few books and records and remarked disgustedly that wherever the box happened to be—Herschel Island, Aklavic or Kittigazuit, *there was the District Office*. He went on to say that during the previous winter the dwelling house at Herschel Island had been headquarters for the time being but he could hardly get any work done as the place was over-run day and night with Eskimos. Mr. Hall, he added, seemed to prefer the company of Eskimos to that of the white members of the staff, and the natives would often sit down at the table in the places set for the employees without anything being said.

In the Indian country the Company had always made it a practice to keep the natives at a distance in order to enhance their prestige, by which alone they had ruled the country in the past, and never were they permitted to sit at the table with the whites. Undoubtedly the Eskimo was quite different to the Indian inasmuch as he considered the white *only slightly inferior to himself*, and insisted upon being treated as, at least, an equal. There is no inferiority complex where the Eskimo is concerned.

Both Mr. Christie and MacGregor rebelled at such close proximity and intimacy, and expressed themselves most heatedly upon the subject. But the burly and good-natured Hall had merely laughed.

Clarke's action in contravening the regulations of the Company only added to the difficulties of a sufficiently awkward situation. He was the only man at that time who really understood the Cogmollock trade in the east and there seemed little doubt that if any action was taken with regard to his breach of discipline he, and possibly his men, would walk out and be readily

welcomed by the American trader, Captain Pedersen, who was bringing in a big trading outfit on his ship to Herschel Island. I realized that tact, and lots of it, would be necessary ere my year's work was completed.

Before leaving I reported to Angus Brabant upon the conditions, and wrote him a personal letter by return of the river steamer as arranged, then I hired the Eskimo, Illivernik, to take me over to Herschel Island with his motor schooner and that evening I looked upon the placid waters of the Beaufort Sea, which were now entirely free of ice, as the vessel chugged along at a good eight miles an hour.

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[1] Mr. W. H. B. Hoare, formerly Investigator for the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Canadian Government, told me that, some years later, he came across Cogmollock Eskimos having in their possession *dental charts* given them by Mike, bearing blue crosses against the teeth that had been "treated," and bearing the legend "Pade," with the number of white foxes charged for the fee and Mike's signature.

CHAPTER XXII

The Stone-Age People

For many years the harbor at Herschel Island was the headquarters for the whaling fleet, which, at one time, often comprised a dozen or more vessels, mostly American, and the barracks now occupied by the Mounted Police had once been an American whaling station.

The first visit of these whalers occurred in 1889 and from that time onward they came for a while in ever increasing numbers. A large bowhead whale, which would provide nearly a ton of whalebone, or headbone as it was usually called, was then worth from eight to ten thousand dollars, and as some of these whalers often secured twenty-five or more whales on a single voyage, enormous profits were made in this industry which were further augmented by a lucrative trade in furs carried on with the Eskimos.[1] But in 1906 the invention of artificial whalebone caused the price of headbone to drop, almost overnight, from around four dollars to forty cents a pound, and a whale from about eight thousand to eight hundred dollars. Soon the whaling fleet was reduced to two or three vessels which depended more on their trade in furs than upon anything else for profits.

R. H. Hall, father of Herbert Hall, who became Commissioner about this time, had long been aware of the activity of these American vessels in prosecuting trade amongst the Eskimos of the Delta, and knew that only a small part of the Nunatagmuit trade went to the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort McPherson. It was largely as a result of his knowledge of these conditions that the "Ruby," flying the Canadian flag, nosed her way into the harbor at Herschel Island on August 16th, 1915, and Captain Cottle commenced to unload both building and trading supplies.

She had been chartered by the Hudson's Bay Company and brought with her Chris Harding and his wife, a daughter of Chief Factor Julian Camsell, and he proceeded immediately to open up the trade of this vast region.

Thus, *after a lapse of one hundred and thirty-four years*, the dream of Peter Pond and Alexander Hendry had at last come true and a post had been established "in some convenient bay and harbour" amongst the Eskimos, while, furthermore, the "Fort McPherson" had been brought along, a small motor schooner, to carry the trade eastward along the barren coast.[2]

Some ten years before the old sea-rover Klinkenberg had sailed his little ship the "Olga," manned by Mackenzie Delta Eskimos, as far east as Victoria Land and they returned with fabulous stories of the queer race of people, whose language they could not understand, whom they had encountered on their cruise. Like all natives they exaggerated every point of difference between themselves and the new people who, at that time, nobody knew existed. Then in 1910 Stefansson and Dr. Anderson came into actual contact with this strange race and shortly afterwards the newspapers of the land were telling the world of the new biological discovery in the Arctic—the "Blond Eskimos."

Blond or not these stone-age people offered excellent material for exploitation by the whites, and a determined effort was immediately made by the veteran trader Chris Harding to establish trading posts amongst them. Erelong "Swogger" Hendricksen and Rudolph Johnson were piloting the boat of the newly arrived company through the ice-filled polar seas towards that human magnet—the primitive Cogmollocks.

Soon flimsy trading posts of lumber and galvanized iron were established four hundred miles to the east of Herschel Island, then at Cape Bathurst, near the entrance to Coronation Gulf, five hundred miles further east. The latter post, named Fort Bacon, situated close to what had been the headquarters for the Canadian Arctic Expedition, was in charge of Billie Phillips and opened up a profitable field of trade with the Cogmollocks of Victoria Land and Coronation Gulf. Between this point and Hudson Bay lay the long sought for, but useless, North-West Passage.

Later on Phillips had to be removed elsewhere as these blood-thirsty Cogmollocks took a dislike to him and openly expressed their intention of killing him when the opportunity presented itself which, those who knew the Eskimo realized, was no idle threat.

Only a short while before my visit to the Western Arctic the line of trading posts had been extended to Tree River, about sixty miles from the mouth of the Coppermine River where Samuel Hearne's Indians had massacred the Eskimos in 1771, also to Kent Peninsula on the east side of the Gulf.

It was the Company's desire at that time to complete a string of posts along the Arctic Coast to link up with those on Hudson Bay, and I had been instructed, while on this journey, to establish one or two posts on Victoria Land and to send an expedition to King William's Land, east of Kent Peninsula, which had become the graveyard of the ill-fated Franklin Expedition, and was close to the location of the Magnetic Pole.

The earlier work of extending Canada's frontier to the rim of the Polar Sea and across to the Arctic Islands, had been accomplished by Mr. Harding and his men, despite all obstacles, in a quiet and unostentatious manner, and for that reason has even yet failed to receive general recognition.

The beach at Herschel Island was quite crowded as Illivernik's schooner chugged ashore and I was immediately greeted by Inspector Wood and his very charming wife, who seemed to be quite enjoying her sojourn in the Arctic. Then I shook hands with Corporal Pennyfather and his young bride, a very recent arrival, and renewed acquaintance with Pete Norberg, a small-boned, thin-faced, and bright-eyed Viking. This rough and tough explorer, with a heart of gold, had three times sailed around Cape Horn while still a youth, had worked in the gold-fields of Australia and the Klondike, and more recently braved the rigors of the Arctic in exploring the way and carrying the Company's trade into the land of the Cogmollocks.

Pete, or Pe-gal-ik (The Great Peter) as the Eskimos called him, seemed to lead a charmed life. Once his Eskimo wife had tried to poison him, but failed. Again, quite recently, the Cogmollocks had thrown him into the fur press at Kent Peninsula and attempted to squash him to a pulp for knocking one of them down. Fortunately his yells and cries had been heard by Harold Noice who rescued him, though only just in time.

Although Pete was nearing sixty he was as active and quick in his movements as a cat, and when liquored-up, as the saying goes, was a fighting fool and a terror to all around him.

Herbert Hall, Clarke, Judge Dubuc and many others were at the Island, some of whom had been brought in very much against their own inclinations to act as jurymen in the trial of the two Eskimos.

There were a large number of small trading vessels in the harbor, most of them flying the star-spangled banner from the mastheads and it was hard to believe that the place was a Canadian port and not an outpost belonging to our great neighbor to the southward, for there was hardly a Canadian flag or ensign to be seen.

Much difficulty had been experienced in obtaining a satisfactory jury as every trapper, trader and beach-comber along the coast had known Doak and Binder quite intimately, and also talked with both the prisoners. Some were bitter, though others, from long contact and daily intercourse with the two Eskimos, had developed a more sympathetic feeling.

Smiling and unperturbed Aligoomiak entered the dock and glanced interestedly around him, looking far more like a well trained Oriental servant than an Eskimo facing a charge of murder. Then he observed that

one of the jurors lacked a seat. Without a word Aligoomiak slipped from the dock, disappeared through the doorway, reappearing a moment later with a chair which he handed to the white man with a grin and stepped back into the dock.

The evidence proved overwhelming; it was obvious that something drastic would have to be done to protect the lives and property of white men, otherwise it would not be safe for them to venture into Coronation Gulf.

Radford and Street, explorers for the Smithsonian Institution, had been killed by the Cogmollocks in 1912; then two priests, Fathers Rouvier and Le Roux, had been barbarously murdered and mutilated the following year. Infanticide had become quite common; blood feuds followed, one of which, near Kent Peninsula, had taken toll of eighteen lives; then Doak and Binder had fallen victims to that murderous trait which lies beneath the smiling surface of almost every Copper Eskimo.

When Judge Dubuc nervously passed sentence of death upon them, perhaps the least affected of all those present were the two natives in the dock, for no Eskimo looks very far ahead. The sentence was not to take effect until December 7th and for the time being nothing serious was going to happen, so they left the court room with smiles upon their faces. Aligoomiak was pulling a cigarette out of a package given him by one of the jurymen as he passed close to Judge Dubuc. With a grin he extended the package towards the man who had just decreed his death, and the magistrate accepted the proffered smoke.

Brown, the hangman, now proceeded to erect a scaffold in the “bone house,” a large shed in which the whalers at one time stored their headbone, often watched interestedly by Aligoomiak who, fortunately for his peace of mind, did not appear to have the faintest suspicion as to the function it was to be called upon to perform. On the contrary he appeared to take quite a liking to “Neck-tie Bill” and, if current rumor had any foundation, was in the habit of playing poker with him in the evenings.

Another event took place about this time which aroused quite a lot of interest, and even quiet amusement. It was the trial of a very fat, and equally good-natured, Cogmollock woman named Ah-goo-tuk, who was accused of having hanged her husband. Some policeman had taught her how to shimmy and she acquired the art to absolute perfection, being able to make her superfluous flesh dance and gyrate around in a most remarkable manner to the sound of either clapping hands or fiddle. She would have made a fortune in a circus!

So much amusement had this aroused that the moment Ah-goo-tuk was introduced to any white strangers she would go through these peculiar and rather *risqué* contortions quite unasked, flattered and satisfied by the convulsions of laughter which inevitably followed. She also acquired the disquieting practice of lifting up her skin clothing to display to these strangers the beautiful green silk bloomers she had recently obtained from a trader in exchange for a pair of mukluks, and this, to her mind, gave her distinction far beyond that of the purely skin-clad members of her tribe.

In court she became the essence of honesty and hardly seemed to know what the fuss was all about. *Certainly she had killed her husband!* But he was no use to her any more. *He was too old and could not hunt.* She had just placed a knife beneath her skin bedding with the intention of stabbing him in the back as soon as he could be taken unawares. But the old man evidently knew his better half and had a suspicion of what was in store for him. With true Eskimo fatalism he had handed her a rawhide line saying he would prefer to die that way. She had made a noose, slipped it over his head as he lay upon his face in the snow igloo, pulled upon it, *and he had died*.

She was sentenced to two years' detention at Herschel Island and seemed to be having an exceedingly good time. At all events she did not have to worry as to where her next feed of seal meat, or *ookchuk*, was coming from, which, for an Eskimo lady of her time of life, meant quite a lot.

As soon as possible after the Eskimo trials were over and their task completed the judicial party left for Aklavic to catch the river steamer on her second, and last, trip of the season on their long jaunt back to town, *leaving hangman Brown behind*.

About this time news reached us from Whitefish Station that some of the Eskimos we had met at Aklavic had died from eating a whale which had drifted ashore at the former place. Six of them in all had been poisoned from partaking of the tainted flesh.

On the third of August an Eskimo lad came running in to say that the "Lady Kindersley" had been sighted, then a little while afterwards the three masted vessel sailed majestically around the headland and swung in towards the harbor where she tied up before the barracks. Captain Foellmer told us that he had experienced little difficulty with ice this season and had rounded Point Barrow without the slightest trouble.

This was indeed good news and encouraged our hopes in the enterprise before us of establishing new trading posts on Victoria Land, and in the vicinity of King William's Land.

On the Atlantic side it is customary to look for a way around any heavy ice which may obstruct progress but an experienced navigator never follows a lead into the ice pack of the Western Arctic where totally different conditions prevail.

The captains of the whaling vessels always took care to keep between the ice pack and the shore, and for this reason were often contemptuously referred to as "Mud-Pilots." Nevertheless, they knew what they were about, and it was largely the failure to observe this fundamental law of Western Arctic navigation which caused the tragic loss of the Canadian Arctic Expedition's vessel the "Karluk" in the fall of 1914.

The ice pack rarely moves far from Point Barrow, the northernmost point on the continent. Usually wind and current cause it to drift a few miles to the northward about the first of August and until this happens vessels bound for Herschel Island, and beyond, are forced to wait as patiently as possible. Once the channel opens they lose not a moment but sneak along as close to the shore as possible until they reach the Island; then they make a dash for their destination, knowing that the ice will probably close in within a month and that if they have not passed Point Barrow on their homeward way ere then they will, in all likelihood, be forced to spend the winter in the Arctic.

Alex Seymour, the ice pilot, had his Eskimo wife on board, also his half-caste daughter, a very pretty girl who had been educated at a Ladies' College in San Francisco and promptly took all the traders' hearts by storm. She had forsaken her civilized garb for well fitting mukluks and a blue cloth ahtegi, her snapping black eyes looking out roguishly from the wolverine fur which encircled the hood.

There was, of course, an immediate stampede aboard and healths were drunk profusely, but little time was lost in discharging the cargo and taking on the lumber, coal and other supplies required for the new posts.

As the Eskimos refused to do any manual labor all this work had to be done by Mr. Hall and his staff while the natives sat on piles of lumber or gasoline barrels and smoked in quiet contentment.

Captain Foellmer was nervous and anxious to get away as he was very much afraid of ice, having received a thorough scare the year before.

Just as we were on the point of pulling out Pete Norberg, in an attempt to emphasize something he was shouting to Hall upon the beach, took a header into the sea where he swam around for a short while, deliberately eluding the efforts of his would-be rescuers. He had been indulging in far too many parting cups, mixing whisky, rum and gin with rare impartiality. Hardly had he been fished out ere he repeated the performance and again fell overboard.

His ardor was by no means dampened by this double immersion and the old Viking commenced to sing lustily "For Hall's a Jolly Good Fellow" as the ship at last pulled out from shore, in which unmusical refrain he was joined by the equally inebriated Otto Torrington who was to accompany him to King William's Land.

Twenty-four hours after leaving we were only eleven miles away, while many of those on board were desperately ill. As the ship was evidently becoming unmanageable, Captain Foellmer swung her nose around with considerable difficulty and permitted her to run before the wind until we reached the protection of the harbor once again. After the storm had abated, and we had rounded up MacGregor, Pete Norberg, and the rest of the passengers, a far more difficult task than one might imagine, we sallied forth once more beneath a blue and smiling sky and in a few days reached Baillie Island.

A nondescript crowd of trappers were waiting to meet Captain C. T. Pedersen who, we knew, was right behind us on the "Otilla Fjord" of San Francisco, as he was also preparing to leave Herschel Island when we sailed.

As I remarked elsewhere few places can boast a more cosmopolitan population than the Western Arctic coast. Between Point Barrow and Coronation Gulf can be found not only the Eskimos but Frenchmen, Norwegians, Americans, Portuguese, Hawaiians and Negroes, and the half-breed progeny of fathers of some of these nationalities and Eskimo mothers.

I think it was "Swogger" Hendricksen, the popular representative of the Company here, who told me of what will probably prove to be the last big killing of musk-oxen on the continent of North America, which, he said, had taken place that spring between Great Bear Lake and the coast. Thirty or more of these animals were reported to have been killed by the Eskimos, and as the matter was kept pretty quiet by the traders it is doubtful if it was ever reported to the Mounted Police.

Similar killings had occurred from time to time in spite of the Government's attempts to prevent them. Dr. Anderson, who spent the winter of 1910 and 1911 on the Dease River, heard reports that the Slaveys hunting on Bear Lake had killed eighty a couple of years previously, while in 1911 the Cogmollocks of Kent Peninsula disposed of about thirty musk-ox robes to those on board the U. S. schooner "Teddy Bear."[3] There is no doubt but that the Dog-Ribs also killed an occasional one for in the spring of 1922, while I was at Fort Rae, I was offered two musk-ox skins by the Chief, "Jimmy."

The creation of that vast preserve known as the Thelon Game Sanctuary by the Department of the Interior, together with the restrictions placed on hunting these animals, *and the establishment of Mounted Police detachments* along the Arctic Coast, and on the eastern end of Great Slave Lake, should materially assist in preventing their further decimation, and also serve to protect the caribou.[4]

It is within comparatively recent times that the eastern Eskimos have become armed with repeating rifles. Previous to that they could not do anything like the same execution with their primitive bows and arrows. To a considerable extent the same thing applies to the Dog-Rib and Yellow Knife Indians who, until about 1900, and in some cases much more recently, were equipped with only muzzle-loading guns.

The modern rifle, placed in the hands of irresponsible natives by traders, together with all the ammunition they could pay for, has proved to be a curse rather than a blessing for, as I have already pointed out, the wanton destruction of the northern game herds during the last two decades has been appalling.

According to well informed circles at Ottawa the present number of living musk-oxen is estimated at about fifteen thousand, of which approximately fifteen hundred survive in Greenland, five hundred on the American mainland, the remainder inhabiting Melville Island, Ellesmere Land and the other Arctic islands.

Our stay at Baillie Island was very short and soon after leaving there we entered the treacherous waters of Dolphin Union Straits, sailing along uninterruptedly until we arrived opposite Pierce Point. Here, at last, was ice in plenty which stretched to the horizon and seemed to threaten any further progress.

Up to this time there had been very little to denote that we were sailing polar seas for on either side of the Straits the rolling moss covered rocks and hills looked delightfully green and refreshing in the heat haze.

We succeeded eventually in working our way through the heavy floe ice, though by slow degrees, and on August 16th dropped anchor in Bernard Harbour opposite a couple of huts, the trading post of the Hudson’s Bay Company, previously known as Fort Bacon but called Fort Thomson at this time.

It was a long while ere we were able to get ashore with the lighter as there was so much heavy ice floating in the bay and all around us. A stiff westerly wind at length opened up a passage and we set foot on the uninviting, wind-swept spit of land.

Cogmollock Pete, the brawny Swedish factor, invited us to the house and presented his colossal Eskimo wife and rather pretty half-breed daughter who queened it over the local Huskie belles. Their dwelling, which had to brave the savage fury of freezing Arctic gales, was merely a board shack, fifteen feet by thirty, with a low, flat roof which made it easy to heat and cover with snow blocks in the winter time as further protection against the elements. With coal, the only fuel, costing at that time two hundred and fifty dollars a ton laid down, everything possible had to be done to economize in heating.

To the intense, and unconcealed, amusement of those on board who knew Cogmollock Pete and his indolent easy-going habits it transpired that his private *hunt* of white foxes amounted to one hundred and sixty pelts. It was a subject that neither he nor Clarke seemed anxious to discuss, and was said to be considerably below his average hunt since he came east.

A bright, alert fellow named Miller met us here, having come over from Tree River some time before. He had done considerable trapping near the mouth of the Mackenzie River ere joining the Company the year before, was most enthusiastic about the Arctic, and volunteered to take charge of the new post which we intended to establish on Victoria Land.

We had brought along an Eskimo named Silas with his wife. He spoke fair English and, having met the Cogmollocks before, also understood their dialect. It had been decided, therefore, to send him to the new post to act as interpreter and help to develop the Cogmollock trade. It was now resolved that Miller should take charge of this post and accompany the "Lady Kindersley" on her exploratory journey to Victoria Land, an arrangement which suited him admirably although it meant a year of almost complete isolation.

I had met a considerable number of Cogmollock prisoners at Herschel Island but it was at Fort Thomson that I first came into contact with these people in their own surroundings.

I asked Pete Norberg how these eastern Eskimos came to get the name "Cogmollocks."

"Why, you see, it wus like this. You've seen these 'ere Huskies dancin', and them big drums made like tambourines the high-steppin' Spanish gels use? Well, when they hold them drums close to their bodies the noise can be heard a hell of a long way off. That there word 'Kogmolik' just means the far-off sound of them drums. Well, when the Nunatagmuits around the Delta heard from old 'Klink' of these new Huskies they jist used the name 'Kogmolik' for 'em, meanin', I suppose, far-off or unknown people.

Stefansson called 'em the Blond Eskimos and others call 'em the Copper Eskimos. Anyway when the whites fust heard o' them Huskies it was from the Nunatagmuits and they figgered that Cogmollock was the name of the tribe. It ain't really as there's quite a number o' different tribes. There's the Ekallugtagmuit, the Kogluktogmuits, the Puiplirmuit an' a whole raft o' others; but who the hell wants to twist his tongue around names like them when Cogmollock answers just as good?"[5]

Until Stefansson met them thirteen years before they had been *absolutely isolated* from the other Eskimos seven hundred miles to the westward, and lived under stone-age conditions. They hunted with bows, the wood of which had to be obtained by a long journey into the hostile Indian country to the southward, the so-called Land of the Little Sticks. Their arrows were tipped with native copper, and they used bone or copper knives. Some had knives made from metal taken from vessels wrecked in earlier efforts at Arctic exploration and a few wooden articles from the same source.

In the summer and fall they went inland, killed fish, and hunted caribou, thus obtaining skins for winter clothing. When the ice set and there was sufficient hard drifted snow upon the surface to furnish good blocks for their igloos they moved out onto the ice, built their snow villages, hunted seal, and, after the white man came, trapped white foxes for their pelts. They lighted their igloos with pieces of sea ice in lieu of windows, and heated them with their dish-shaped stone lamps in which seal oil was used for fuel and a piece of moss, or cotton-plant, for wick.

Before the coming of the white traders to Coronation Gulf some of these Eskimos would make their way each spring from the interior of Victoria Island to the southeastern coast, follow the E-ka-luk-tuk River, cross over on the ice to the mainland and travel inland until they met the Hudson Bay Eskimos from Chesterfield Inlet with whom they would trade for needles, fishhooks, knives and other articles they valued, the latter acting as middlemen in this aboriginal trade. It was a long and toilsome journey for the Cogmollocks and they would not arrive back at Cambridge Bay until the fall.

Some years before Herbert Hall opened up the Company's trade at Chesterfield Inlet he had established a winter post nearly two hundred miles north of Reindeer Lake, called Fort Hall, to trade with these natives, but the difficulties of transportation had been enormous and the distance which the Eskimos had to travel had been very great indeed. It was said, with what truthfulness I do not know, that more than one trading party perished from

the difficulties attendant upon this long journey. If such was the case it was probably from failure to meet the caribou and consequent starvation.[6]

This, however, was now a thing of the past. Apart from the posts already erected amongst them by the Company there was also Captain Klinkenberg who had established himself firmly upon Victoria Land and waylaid the Eskimos on their way down to the Company's posts to the southward, while a number of white trappers had already discovered this source of hidden wealth and were making considerable money trading with the natives, bringing their supplies in with small schooners.

The traders had brought them rifles, ammunition in unlimited quantities, kettles, knives, coal-oil, compacts and chewing gum, to say nothing of silk underwear. At first the Eskimo's wants had been simple and he had little incentive to trap. The first phase in the introduction of civilization was to teach the Eskimo to want things he had never seen or heard of before, then to teach him how to trap white foxes in order to obtain them. So the white fox became, for a while, the standard of trade in the Arctic as the beaver skin had once been with the Indians.

In 1923 a 30-30 Winchester rifle usually sold for twelve white fox skins, which was later reduced to ten; three boxes of cartridges represented the value of a fox, and these were sometimes used for counters when buying smaller things.

From the very first the rifle had proved the best seller. But at last each Eskimo had one and the trade had reached the saturation point, a fact deplored by all. It was Captain Klinkenberg who arose to the occasion in a characteristic manner by importing hard steel ramrods, giving them to the natives and telling them to scrape the inside of their rifle barrels freely to take the powder out. This, of course, soon ruined the rifling so that the guns would not shoot straight, and the erstwhile trade in rifles was resumed.

Now, just as Doak had told me at our camp-fires on the Mackenzie River, the indiscriminate sale of rifles and ammunition had led to such a slaughter of the caribou that they had become quite scarce. Not only that but they had forsaken their customary paths of migration to and from Victoria Land to have their young. Now the natives waited in vain at the crossings which the caribou had used as far back as the oldest man in the tribe remembered, and they could not understand. As a consequence the erstwhile self-supporting Eskimo was becoming more and more dependent on the traders and commenced to look for debt.[7]

One trader with whom I discussed the serious effects these conditions were likely to have upon the natives only laughed: "The sooner the caribou

are gone the better," he said, "for then more foodstuffs can be imported and the natives will be forced to trap and become fur producers or starve."

Personally I disagreed with him and we had quite a heated argument on the subject.

It is a case of the Indian and the buffalo over again. As long as the caribou are plentiful the Eskimo is independent of the white man but once the caribou are gone he becomes nothing but the white man's slave. Thus, in the space of twenty years, the once almost limitless herds of caribou, estimated by Ernest Seton at thirty million in 1907, have been reduced to approximately three million, and one of the main sources of native food supply is rapidly disappearing from the Northwest Territories as it did along the Alaskan coast many years before.

This is greatly at variance with the opinions expressed by Ernest Thompson Seton when he wrote "The Arctic Prairies" after his visit to Artillery Lake and the Barren Lands in 1907; for he considered that the natural increase in these caribou herds which he estimated at thirty million would more than cover the wastage. His estimate of the Indian population preying, in part, upon the caribou was 3,411 and the Eskimos of the central region at 1,100. As a matter of fact the latest Government estimate of natives living in the Northwest Territories is: Indians, 4,046 and Eskimos, 4,670, the white residents numbering 1,007, of whom probably less than half are hunter-trappers who hunt and kill the caribou.

But in considering the natives that live upon the caribou we must include many that live south of the Northwest Territory border line, the 60th parallel. There is the Caribou-Eater tribe which trades at Fort Fitzgerald, and a mixed population of Crees and Chipewyans which stretches along the edge of the wooded area from Fort Chipewyan as far east as Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay. From there a scattered Eskimo population completes the circle round to the mouth of the Mackenzie River.

This means that the caribou are now quite encircled by Indians and Eskimos, all of whom are in contact with white traders and armed with modern repeating rifles.

In Mr. Seton's time it was both costly and difficult to bring in cartridges and other weighty freight by scow from Athabasca Landing to such, then, isolated places as Fort Resolution. Consequently ammunition was sold, and used, sparingly, and valued proportionately. All this has been changed with the opening up of the country by the railroads, and by the trading ships which annually visit the Western Arctic. I have actually known an Eskimo to purchase his 30-30 cartridges, not by the box containing twenty *but by the*

case containing a thousand, whereas in the old days I have, when short of cartridges, often refused to sell an Indian even a full box of twenty but was only able to allow him ten. *Transportation has made all the difference.*

Nobody, in 1907, could have foreseen the rapid developments of the past twelve years, nor the breaking down of the morale of the natives by irresponsible whites. Had this section of the North country remained in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company and Hislop and Nagle (now the Northern Traders) as it did in Mr. Seton's day, his views might still to a large extent hold good. In my opinion his estimate of the number of natives living directly, or indirectly, off the caribou was very low indeed as well as his estimate of the number of animals being killed. Many of the natives and trappers feed their sleigh dogs on the meat and one caribou will only feed a team for a couple of nights or so. Furthermore, caribou are killed by the Eskimos as often for their skins, to furnish clothing, as for meat, and *I have actually seen eighteen large bales of caribou skins shipped from one trading post alone*, most of the animals having been killed *solely* for their skins *which had been sold for seventy-five cents apiece*.

In the report already referred to, "Conserving Canada's Musk-oxen," the Department of the Interior estimated the Barren Land caribou as low as three million in 1930. In the latest report of the Northwest Territories Branch (1933) the following statement, however, is made: "Reports received some years ago that caribou had greatly decreased in numbers was investigated. While these reports were found to be somewhat exaggerated yet the reduction was sufficient to show that prompt action should be taken."

To replace the wastage in the Delta the Porsild brothers have been engaged since late in 1929 in driving a herd of three thousand reindeer in from Alaska. These animals were purchased by the Government from Lomen Brothers' reindeer farm and are being conveyed from Buckland Point in Alaska to the Kittigazuit Peninsula, east of the mouth of the Mackenzie River, an area supposed to contain fifteen thousand square miles and to be adequate to support a quarter of a million reindeer. At last they are nearing their destination, having been driven nearly two thousand miles over mountain ranges and barren tundra. The original herd has been reduced to about two thousand grown animals but an addition of three hundred calves was looked for last spring. Four experienced herders have been brought out from Lapland, to look after the herd when it arrives at its destination.[8]

[1] On some occasions fifty whales would be secured on a single voyage.

[2] In 1781 the veteran fur trader Alexander Hendry actually visualized the opening up of commerce by the "Great River" (Mackenzie River), "to the sea," the establishment of a post "in some convenient bay and harbour" and the building of a vessel for coastal trade in what is now the Western Arctic.

[3] See Stefansson's "Friendly Arctic" and "My Life with the Eskimo."

[4] Estimated at nearly a million a century ago, on the mainland of North America they are now understood to number about five hundred. About two hundred and fifty roam around in the vicinity of the Thelon and Hanbury rivers. About fifty are reported south of Adelaide Peninsula and the remainder are to be found in the Murchison River district, between Committee Bay and Rae Straits. Until put a stop to by Major Moodie of the R. N. W. M. P., considerable numbers of these skins were traded annually by the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Churchill. Mr. W. H. B. Hoare gives some interesting information on this subject in his book "Conserving Canada's Musk-oxen," published by the Department of the Interior. I discussed this matter, and that of the disappearing caribou herds, with him at The Pas, after his return from the Arctic, in the summer of 1931.

[5] Fur traders have been habitually lax in their use of tribal names. "Kogmolik" is undoubtedly the correct spelling of this word though "Cogmollock" is the one in general use amongst traders. Archbishop Stringer, now of Winnipeg, who spent many years amongst the Eskimos told me that the origin of this word, as explained herein, is correct. The term "Nunatagmuit" is used collectively also to describe a number of Delta tribes.

[6] This information was obtained from Corporal Doak in the winter of 1921, and from Mr. Hall when I was in the Western Arctic. I made further inquiries when inspecting Lac du Brochet on Reindeer Lake in 1925 and these reports were also confirmed by those at the post.

[7] The effect upon Eskimos of giving up customary food and skin clothing for imported woolen and cotton goods —quite unsuited for Arctic wear—and imported salted and canned provisions, etc., is to greatly lower their native vigor and resistance to disease. Already these natives are showing evidences of tuberculosis, pyorrhea and other unaccustomed ailments resulting from the change in their mode of life.

[8] Investigation shows that there are other suitable grazing grounds at Clinton-Colden Lake on the northeastern section of the Thelon Game Sanctuary, north and east of Great Bear Lake, near Baker Lake, and also on the western shore of Hudson Bay. Under favorable conditions a reindeer herd will double in three years, and the Government expects to ultimately establish new herds in other localities and to teach the Eskimos to herd them. The meat of the domesticated reindeer is excellent and almost resembles beef. A number of carcasses were brought in on the “Lady Kindersley” this year and we lived largely on the meat during that part of the winter I remained at Herschel Island.

CHAPTER XXIII

Extending Canada's Frozen Frontier

On board Pete Norberg and I frequently talked over the expedition to King William's Land, went carefully over all the maps, charts and reports which were available, and decided that the best place for a post would be the north side of the swift, narrow, channel called Simpson Straits which separates that island from Adelaide Peninsula.

We did not know definitely of any Eskimos in that vicinity other than the vague rumors obtained from the Cogmollocks. Pete felt sure that there were natives to be found on Boothia Peninsula, near Spence Lakes, and also on Adelaide Peninsula. He had also heard from the Cogmollocks of a tribe of Eskimos who lived some distance up the Back's, or Great Fish, River and never hunted seal but lived on fish and caribou.

Pete was quite enthusiastic, and anxious to make some money trapping. He had gone through two small fortunes already while visiting the "White Lights" and wished to repair his somewhat shattered finances. Speaking the language of the Copper Eskimos as he did, there were few men, apart from the veteran Klinkenberg, who had such a vast and accurate knowledge of the resources of the Arctic. While the supplies at Fort Thomson were being lightered ashore we went over the details of his forthcoming journey once again. Then the "Lady Kindersley" hove anchor and we got under way.

The island dotted waters of Coronation Gulf were both picturesque and impressive. Although it was past the middle of August the sea was full of ice and the compass, owing to the proximity of the Magnetic Pole, could not always be relied upon, and navigation became dangerous owing to the presence of fog which so often accompanies ice in these latitudes.

Late in the afternoon we dropped anchor before Tree River post and started to unload the Kent Peninsula outfit on board the "Fort McPherson" which immediately hove alongside. An atmosphere of tragedy still lurked about the place where, only the year before, Doak and Binder had both lost their lives. High up on the hill a cross marked the resting place of the gallant and kindly policeman whose one mistake had been his implicit trust in others, and of Otto Binder, the trader.

While the ship was unloading Pete went about his arrangements with a casualness which was amusing. He had brought with him from Herschel

Island a small nondescript scow, which he aptly called “The Hobo,” with a motor engine in it. The only available vessel for his forthcoming journey was a small twenty ton schooner called the “El Sueño” which had once been the plaything of some Californian business man and had later been brought to the Arctic by Captain Alexander Allen.

This small craft was soon loaded up with ten tons of coal; ten tons of assorted trading supplies; axes, knives, copper kettles, rifles, ammunition, and so forth, and an old sail with which to make some kind of a dwelling, a little lumber and a good team of husky dogs.

Just as midnight approached, and the sun dipped momentarily below the horizon, Pete and his helper, Otto, shook hands, stepped on board “The Hobo,” cranked up the engine and were away. Soon the *put, put, put*, of the motor was lost in the distance. Pete had left for the Unknown.

Nearly a year later, while in Winnipeg, I received a shabby looking letter and wondered whence it came. It was from Pete Norberg, and told in a few curt phrases of the successful outcome of the expedition. With fair winds they had sailed the “El Sueño” and towed “The Hobo.” When the wind or ice were bad they cranked up “The Hobo” engine and towed the “El Sueño.” On the southern shore of King William’s Land they built their shack of sailcloth and lumber and covered it with snow blocks when winter came along. Afterwards Pete scoured the country with his dog-team. He visited Adelaide and Boothia Peninsulas and at these two places, and at the mouth of the Back’s River, located altogether four hundred unknown Eskimos with whom he had done a thriving trade. Knud Rasmussen, the Danish explorer, had passed through the Arctic that winter so he received one visitor to break the monotony of his isolation.

It had been my intention when leaving Herschel Island to spend the winter in Coronation Gulf and when spring came to leave Tree River, travel overland by dog-team to Dease Bay, on Great Bear Lake; cross the lake, make the traverse to Fort Norman, and to proceed on down to the Delta posts either by dog-team or canoe.

However, matters which came to my attention at Tree River forced me to change my plans and return to Herschel Island by the ship.

The Captain was under orders to act upon whatever decision I might make with regard to the building of trading posts on Victoria Land, and it had been suggested that the “Lady Kindersley” should proceed to Kent Peninsula, and beyond, if I considered it necessary.

I had gathered sufficient information from Pete Norberg and others to make it seem desirable to erect one post at the mouth of the E-ka-luk-tuk

River where it entered Cambridge Bay, the route previously followed by the Eskimos when crossing over from Victoria Island to the mainland on their way to Fort Hall.

As conditions of navigation were so uncertain it seemed risky to take the ship any further east for there was still the post on the western side of Victoria Land to be established, so I decided with the Captain that it would be better to return from Tree River. Before leaving, however, I completed arrangements for a post at Cambridge Bay, which was not built until the following year. In 1929 this small trading post attracted world-wide attention when McAlpine of the Dominion Explorers and his party of lost fliers were finally found near there.

From Tree River the "Lady Kindersley" retraced her course along the south shore of Victoria Land. On the whole we experienced good weather but as we neared Cape Baring at the entrance to Prince Albert Sound a heavy wind sprang up from the westward which was soon blowing with the fury of a gale and driving the ship inshore. With her low power she seemed almost helpless as she neared the menacing rocks. Ahead loomed a point of land around which Captain Foellmer was anxious to get his vessel as once beyond it he felt we would be safe.

To his chagrin and consternation when we rounded this he discovered that Cape Baring was still two miles ahead. Nearer and nearer we drifted towards the rocky coast until we could plainly see the waves breaking upon the shore and had made up our minds that a few minutes more would see the vessel piled up on the beach where we would be forced to spend the winter. By a bare quarter of a mile the ship sailed past the danger point, the Captain watching, pale-faced and tense, upon the bridge, until at last a long stretch of open sea lay before us and we were safe. Captain Foellmer was white and shaken as we retired to his cabin and all partook of a drink.

Crossing over to the north shore we found ourselves in very deep water amongst a maze of rocky islands which had all the indications of being an excellent fox country. Although we made numerous landings in the whaleboat, and searched the shore with field glasses and telescopes, not a sign could we find of Eskimos. In the morning we commenced to coast the shore looking for the inlet into which a river called the Kag-lor-yuak, having its source in the interior, was supposed to drain. Finally we dropped anchor and with Warrington, the second mate, some of the crew, and the trader Miller, we set out to explore the land. Try as we would we could find neither Eskimo signs nor any indication of the river which we sought.

Upon returning we found a huge polar bear sprawled upon the deck. A ship's party had come across the animal only a couple of miles away and killed it, the huge beast having been hauled on board with the derrick.

It was not until the following day that we detected some rocky mounds along the shore which looked like Eskimo caches. Immediately the whaleboat was lowered Miller and I set off to investigate. They were caches sure enough. An old sleigh, a harpoon handle, a copper kettle and a stone lamp were found buried beneath a pile of rocks. Nearby were two or three more caches, also a stream of crystal water which drained into the sea. Miller and I then decided to do a little exploring, followed the stream inland and came across a large fresh water lake in which fish seemed to abound. From a high promontory we traced the river far inland with our glasses through a stretch of rocky, desolate and abandoned looking country.

This, undoubtedly, was the Kag-lor-yuak River which we sought, evidently a highway for the Eskimos to and from the interior. Returning to the mouth of the river we marked off with stones sites for the two buildings —a store and dwelling house, well above high water mark, and I gave orders for the freight to be unloaded and lightered ashore.

Within twenty-four hours lumber, sacks of coal, kegs of nails, tins of gasoline and coal-oil, a cook-stove and bales and cases of trading goods were heaped promiscuously upon the beach. Then arose the question of a name for this desolate outpost of Empire and I decided that "Fort Brabant" would suitably perpetuate the name of one of the oldest and best known traders of the Company. And thus the place was named.

The tide was going down, snow clouds were scudding past, and it was necessary to get back aboard the ship. Bidding farewell to Miller and his sole companions in this land of desolation, the Eskimo Silas and his wife, I stepped aboard the lighter. Gradually the pile of freight and three pathetic specks of humanity became a blur in the distance and finally vanished from sight.

For the first time in weeks the Captain smiled, for the "Lady Kindersley" was now heading as fast as her engines would drive her towards Point Barrow. The weather remained calm and ten days later I stepped ashore at Herschel Island and watched the vessel disappear around the headland on her long journey back to Vancouver.

As soon as she passed from sight I made my way over to the post and picked out a small room for myself in the fairly commodious frame dwelling which had been erected by Chris Harding. Here I would have to remain until the ice set and I could start out by dog-team to visit the Delta posts—

Demarcation Point on the Alaskan boundary, Shingle Point, Kittigazuit and finally Aklavic, so I made myself as comfortable as conditions would permit.

My companions consisted of Herbert Hall who slouched around in mukluks and ahtegi, and spent most of his time hunting seal; Carroll the manager with his cleanly and *petite* Slavey wife whom he had married while living on Great Bear Lake, and a young Scots apprentice clerk named Gall.

Once in a while we received a call from Corporal Pennyfather and his young bride, and occasionally I enjoyed a visit with the hospitable Inspector Wood and his wife. Unfortunately the feeling between the Company's people and the Mounted Police was not very cordial here so, to avoid creating distrust and suspicion that I was taking sides in the quarrel, I was unable to make such visits very often. The Mounted Police kept pretty much to themselves, the Hudson's Bay people did likewise, and so it went, for in this respect the Caucasian race is very different from the natives who are far more sociable and friendly in their habits.

Erelong the fury of the Arctic burst upon us in earnest. The days became shorter and shorter until the sun finally disappeared for the winter. Daylight soon became a thing of the past except for a short twilight which ultimately dwindled to about an hour's duration. This affected our habits of life considerably. We would arise about noon, breakfast by the faint Arctic twilight, after which the lamps would be lighted, and we pursued our daily routine by artificial light, usually retiring about three o'clock in the morning.

Aligoomiak and Tatamagana wandered freely around, sometimes armed with rifles in search of seal. Frequently the former would pay us a call ere returning to his cell at the barracks and retiring for the night. Had they wanted to escape it would have been impossible for they were literally marooned in a desert of ice and snow which was even more effective than fetters would be elsewhere.

So little concerned did Aligoomiak appear over his rapidly approaching trip to eternity that he was actually getting his sweetheart, Kunnellie, to make him a suit of Eskimo clothing to go hunting with.

In spite of the isolation time passed quite rapidly. Twice Eskimos came in and reported polar bear tracks near the buildings, and just before freeze-up a huge bowhead whale came spouting up the bay to be quickly obscured by a driving snowstorm from the northwest. As soon as the storm abated a small schooner made its way into the harbor and tied up before the barracks. It was Klinkenberg, the Trader Horn of the Arctic, along with his two half-

caste sons and over three thousand white fox pelts which he had traded up on Victoria Land.

No one looking at this slim, mild mannered, and slow spoken Dane would for one moment have associated him with the lurid and sensational career which had succeeded his first appearance in the Arctic as a cabin boy on a whaler. It was not until this sea-dog had taken possession of a vessel which was not his own and disappeared into the unknown polar seas that people at Herschel Island began to wonder what kind of a man he was. Then he had arrived back at Herschel Island, traded furs for a year's supplies, left the crew behind upon the beach and disappeared again.

As soon as he had sailed away queer rumors commenced to travel around the settlement. Klinkenberg and the engineer had quarreled. The engineer had been shot and wounded, then carried to his bunk. Just as he was recovering nicely, so the story went, Klinkenberg had appeared again in the fo'castle, gun in hand, and this time the mate had died. Three others of the crew were also missing.

The men said they had actually been in mortal terror of their lives, and had been threatened with swift reprisal if they ever breathed a word. Years later he was tried for murder at San Francisco but acquitted.

We allowed the Captain to occupy a small building belonging to the post while he waited for the freeze-up and I would sometimes drop in and listen to his dry humor and his comments on both the people and the ways of the Arctic. He always spoke very quietly with a not unmusical voice in which there was just a faint foreign accent.

"Some of these fellers," he remarked one night as he mended his dog-harness, "seem to think that all you've got to do to catch foxes in this country is to put salt on their tails. Sometimes a man makes a pretty good killing *if he works hard*, provided the foxes are plentiful or there's a whale drifted up on the beach on which they've been feedin', or some other feed around. Patsy here, with his wife, was trapping about thirty miles north of Kent Peninsula last year. They worked damn hard all winter but they only got a hundred and fifty skins between them.

"Of course, there's two ways of trappin'," and his blue eyes danced whimsically. "I remember one feller had a quarrel with that missionary guy; he was working for a tradin' outfit at the time and was doin' quite a lot of indoor trappin'. Anyway, to make it look all right he'd put out two or three traps an' went off with his dogs 'bout once a week to visit 'em. But that missionary was wise to what was goin' on an' used to send his native lad over to watch each time he came back from visitin' them traps. Of course,

he got scared the news would get around he'd caught all his foxes with '*Pencil Bait*' and not with traps, for you know what this 'Moccasin Telegram's' like in the Arctic! So he came over to see me one time, told me all his troubles an' asked me what he'd better do. He sure was worried." Klinkenberg grinned and hesitated.

"Well! I suppose you told him?"

"Sure. Asked him if the lad was watchin' when he left the store in the mornin' to visit that there trap line of his. 'No,' he said, 'what the hell's that got to do with it?' *So I asked him why he didn't load up his sled with foxes from the store while he wasn't watched* then when he came back the boy would see him bringin' them in, a load of 'em," and Klinkenberg laughed heartily. "He made a good hunt after that," added the shrewd Klinkenberg. "But that missionary's still puzzled about how he got them skins."

It was over three thousand miles from Herschel Island to the nearest market, most of the distance being devoid of any organized means of transportation, with the Rocky Mountain range as a further barrier. We tried to buy Captain Klinkenberg's skins, but the wily old fox had his own ideas about values and was never very partial to the Hudson's Bay Company, so instead of accepting our offer he left the skins with Inspector Wood.

Taking just a few samples along with him, a sleigh load of dried fish, some seal meat and provisions, he left with his two sons and a couple of dog-teams. Making his way across the mountains, through the Yukon and Alaska, he boarded one of the Guggenheim ships and sailed for San Francisco. There he sold his furs for over a hundred thousand dollars, bought an outfit and a hundred ton, two masted schooner, the "Maid of Orleans," gave his sons a course of training in handling marine engines, and made preparations for a more extensive assault than ever upon the Cogmollock trade of Victoria Land and the east.

It says much for the shrewdness and tenacity of purpose of this old sea-dog that only a few years before he had been almost penniless. While trying to navigate the Dolphin Union Straits in an open scow Chris Harding had given him a tow over to his future home on Victoria Land, this being considered an act of unusual good-fellowship on the part of a Hudson's Bay man at the time. Here, like a pirate of old, he established his stronghold; taught the Eskimos to trap, gathered an increasing harvest of white foxes annually, and became a thorn in the side of the Company and every other trader in the country. Usually he disposed of his furs to Libie's ship from San Francisco which he met annually at Baillie Island. Being married to an Eskimo woman he had quite an advantage over the Company's traders.

About two weeks after Klinkenberg's departure I set out with an Eskimo guide for Aklavic. It was an eerie experience traveling over the rough *shadowless* ice in the unnatural bluish twilight of the Arctic night. As there were no direct rays of light there were neither shadows nor perspective, and it was difficult to judge whether a piece of ice was a good sized berg quite a distance away or a comparatively small hummock near at hand, for there is nothing the eye can use as a measure in these vast white expanses.

When I reached Aklavic I found it quite busy as Eskimos, Indians and trappers from all over the Delta were arriving daily with their dog-teams to spend Christmas at the post.

One afternoon, while a bitter wind from the polar sea was rattling the stove-pipes overhead, there came a sudden jangle of sleigh bells outside and barking of dogs. Next moment a fast speeding toboggan thudded against the log wall of the house, the door swung open and Constable Mayhew from Herschel Island entered, followed by a cloud of frost and a cold blast of wintry air.

Throwing back his ahtegi hood, and shaking off his polar bearskin mittens, he handed me a letter which he drew from within his snowshirt. The envelope contained a wireless telegram to Fort Yukon, Alaska, the nearest radio station at the time, instructing me to come to Winnipeg along with Mr. Hall, and to be there not later than March 4th.

It had been brought across the mountains by Sergeant Thorne who had arrived at Herschel Island the day before that set for the execution of the Eskimos, carrying with him the confirmation of the death sentences with their postponement until the first of February.

The constable told me that Thorne had left Edmonton over two months before, and had made the last thousand miles of his long journey by dog-team up the Porcupine River and through the snow-filled Rocky Mountain passes. Aligoomiak, he said, had received the news with his customary smile but Tatamagana was more affected and had asked for a drink of water.

There were two courses left open to me. To travel up the Mackenzie River, a journey of roughly two thousand miles to the end of steel at Waterways, or to take Louchoux guides and cross the Rocky Mountains—which is anything but a pleasant jaunt in mid-winter, to Fort Yukon about seven hundred and fifty miles distant. Two hundred miles further on was Fairbanks and the Alaskan Government railway to Seward from which place steamers left weekly for Seattle.

I finally decided on the latter course as it would be much faster than the long tiresome grind up-river. There was little time to be lost, and while

every one else was having a good time celebrating the Christmas holidays I hurried through the work on hand and made preparations for my sleigh journey across the Rocky Mountains.

Herbert Hall arrived a few days later, a welcome addition to the party as he knew the country well.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Winter Trail Across the Rockies

On the morning of December 29th we said good-by to Charlie Christie, Kenneth Stewart, and the few Eskimos who had gathered around to see us off, and set out towards the mountains. To make fast time we took four dog-teams, one of which carried extra supplies and dog-feed in case we were caught in one of those six or eight day blizzards which are so prevalent in the mountains about this time of the year. Our party comprised Herbert Hall, myself, and three drivers: Peter Erasmus, Jimmy and Lazarus Sittichinli, also John Doe as guide and trail breaker.

In the biting cold of early dawn we commenced our ascent of the mountains. It was heart-breaking work hauling the heavily loaded toboggans up the steep, snowy inclines; frequently it was necessary to double up the teams and get all our man power at work to haul the sleds, one by one, up the precipitous slopes.

We had a warm camp that night, as we were still within the timber line. The following day was fairly mild, and as the creeks which we followed had been swept clear of snow by a recent blizzard the dogs jogged right along hauling the sleighs at a fairly smart pace over the smooth icy surface. By noon we were above the timber line, at a high altitude, traveling along Willow Creek, jagged purple shadowed peaks rearing thousands of feet all around us. Finding a few dead willows in the bed of a frozen stream we boiled the kettle, prepared a hasty meal, then loaded the toboggans with all the wood we could find to use in our evening camp.

That night, New Year's Eve, we huddled together for warmth in a small igloo which we erected in a narrow coulee. While the Indians were preparing supper and feeding the dogs Hall and I chatted and speculated upon what our friends were doing in civilization, visualized the warm homes and brightly lighted hotels, and spoke of other such nights when we ourselves had been taking part in the merriment. As the fuel ran short we crawled into our bed-rolls in order to keep warm and went to sleep.

Having crossed the summit by noon the next day the dogs galloped madly down a steep shadowed gorge while the Indians sat upon the toboggans cracking their whips and yelling in sheer delight. As we dashed out into the open again the sight which met our eyes was so magnificent that

it will ever remain engraved upon my memory. We were literally upon the roof of the world and around us, in all directions, reared thousands of snow-capped mountain peaks tinged with a smoky red radiance from the diffused light of the sun which lurked below the horizon. Deep purple shadows, merging into blue and black, filled the valleys, throwing the snow-capped mountain tops into bold and startling relief against a copper colored sky. It was an impressive and awe-inspiring scene of intense grandeur, and for several moments not one of us could speak.

Proceeding westwards we were forced to follow a narrow defile between two towering mountain ranges. Peter was driving his team ahead when, without the slightest warning, the snow commenced to give way under the weight of his toboggan. Then with a smothered sound he and the team both disappeared from sight. Next moment the whole surface of the mountainside appeared to be slowly moving down upon us.

Pale with fright Hall shouted hoarsely, leapt forward, stumbled through the loose snow, seized the buried lead-dog by the collar and dragged the team around a spur of rock just as Peter, white and scared, came crawling into safety. It was a narrow escape for us all, as hardly were we safely behind the ledge of rock when the entire mountain appeared to undergo a convulsion and thousands of tons of snow, loosened by Peter's sleigh, roared downwards. With loud reverberations, and ever increasing speed and volume, the avalanche thundered down into the valley below carrying huge rocks and boulders in its path.

Caribou tracks were becoming more numerous, and both Lazarus and John Doe were eternally on the alert. At length we left the mountain range behind and beheld ahead the treeless expanse of tundra through which the Driftwood River meandered crookedly. Frequently ptarmigan whirred up almost from beneath our snowshoes.

"Caribou!" yelled Lazarus, pointing to a distant range of snow-clad hills. A large herd of caribou, mere specks against the white background, were moving swiftly over the snow. Unleashing his rifle from the sled, and handing the team over to me, he was off in hot pursuit. John Doe had long since disappeared and Hall had taken his place breaking trail ahead.

The whip-like crack of a rifle split the silence of the Barrens, followed by a fusillade of shots. Five frightened caribou came tearing by in front of us, spraying the dogs with snow. Frantic with excitement they were off like wild things in pursuit of the fleeing animals. Topping a wind-swept ridge at racehorse speed, swinging the toboggans from side to side as though the weight were nothing, the teams swept into a long meadow where, milling in

all directions, were thousands of caribou. Attempts to halt the dogs were useless. Not until they were utterly exhausted did they give up the chase and make it possible for us to prepare our evening camp.

While Hall and I were erecting the tent and searching the creek bed for enough scrub willow to make a fire the hunters returned, one at a time, loaded with spoils of the chase. All night long the kettles boiled merrily upon the little stove while our Indian companions gorged themselves on boiled meat, tongues, roasted caribou ribs and marrow fat. The dogs were not neglected; they accounted for two entire carcasses that night which they eagerly devoured.

It turned bitterly cold again that night, and not far away a lone wolf howled dismally until he was at length joined by others of his kind. They also wished to kill and feast.

At the Indian settlement of Old Crow we rested the tired dogs for twenty-four hours, our drivers being entertained with a dance by the natives of the place.

We now followed the deep gorge of the Porcupine River, bounded on either side by high snow covered mountains. One day as we rounded a bend in the river we beheld the peak of a distant mountain gilded brightly with the morning sun. Our Indians, stoical though they usually were, immediately became all excitement, welcoming the sight with shouts and cries of joy. Soon we reached the trading post of Rampart House perched on a mountain side at the edge of the Alaskan boundary. Rushing down to greet us Dan Cadzow, gray-bearded American veteran of the Klondike days, shook hands heartily and insisted on our staying overnight to give him all the news of the Mackenzie side of the divide.

With his squaw and half-breed retainers the old fur trader lived in a capacious and heavily beamed log house, surrounded with all the pomp and ceremony of a bygone age. We were permitted to do nothing. Even our dogs were unharnessed and the loads unlashed from the sleds by willing hands. Soon we were comfortably seated around a large table laden with caribou tongues, roasted moosemeat, beaver tails, and vegetables, including even the plebeian potato which we had not seen for many months.

Unearthing a bottle of Scotch whisky from some secret cache in honor of the occasion old Cadzow made the most of our company, and it was not until the small hours of the morning that we were at last allowed to stretch out upon the floor and go to sleep.

The following morning we bade farewell to our hospitable host and the Kutchin Indians who had come down to see us off; then pushing our feet

into the snowshoe lines we hit the trail once more.

Seventeen nights after leaving Aklavic our dogs, with tails arched over their backs, galloped into Fort Yukon to the merry tinkling of sleigh bells, conscious, apparently, of the admiring eyes cast upon them by the inhabitants of this frontier settlement, so, dog-like, in order to show off, they rushed after and pursued every strange dog they met as they galloped down the long, narrow street and we arrived in front of Jim Haly's roadhouse an undignified scramble of tangled harness and snarling, fighting dogs.[1]

"Hello, Godsell. What kind of a trip did you have?" I heard a familiar voice address me and upon looking around I observed a tall, clean-shaven man clad in mukluks and mountain goat parki approaching. It was Harry Anthony, an old sourdough of the Alaskan trails with whom Doak and I had traveled down the Mackenzie two winters before. Promptly we proceeded to swap experiences for, though widely separated, we had frequently heard of each other during the intervening years. Hall and I then walked over with Harry to his comfortable log home to discuss our future plans for we had decided to send the Indians and dog-teams back from this point to Aklavic.

Quite unexpectedly a blizzard burst upon us from the northwest. For four days the storm shrieked around us, buffeting Haly's flimsy roadhouse as though bent on demolishing it, and blanketing the surrounding hills and forests in three or four feet of snow.

As we were seated before the large open fireplace, in which the logs crackled cheerily, a boy of about sixteen entered.

"Just dropped in to see if you would care to attend Granddad's funeral," he remarked, and added awkwardly, "You know he was always fond of meeting strangers, and I'm sure he'd like to have you come along!"

Expressing our regret as suitably as possible at being unable to accept the deceased gentleman's invitation we concluded our final preparations for the last stage of our dog-team journey, upon which Harry had agreed to accompany us as guide.

That evening we walked up to St. Stephen's hospital and enjoyed a visit with Dr. Grafton Burke who entertained us with true American hospitality. Some years before he had undoubtedly saved Mr. Stefansson's life when he was brought across the mountains to Fort Yukon from Herschel Island for medical treatment.

The doctor had just imported one of the new radio-telephones, the first I had so far come across in the North, and after extolling its wonders he proceeded to turn it on. Apart from sundry staccato explosions and ear-

splitting noises, which he informed us was static, nothing really interesting happened, though with the exercise of a fan's enthusiasm the doctor interpreted one sound as a human voice, and another as applause, which he said came from Vancouver. If anything the static seemed the best.[2]

Six days later, with faces and ears blackened by the intense frost, and utterly exhausted from the battle with the snowdrifts, we left the treacherous surface of the Yukon River and entered Circle City. Once it had been the largest log cabin city in the world, and boasted in its halcyon days over two thousand wooden cabins. Now the place was almost deserted and consisted of little else but a frame hotel, a wireless station and a trading store. The thermometer registered 72° below.

It was exactly thirty nights after leaving Aklavic when we reached the railroad. Soon a small, but very noisy, train was conveying us past the skeletons of deserted mining towns towards Fairbanks, one of the largest cities in Alaska. The wireless had carried the news of our coming ahead of us and hardly were we ensconced in the hotel, which boasted both electric light and running water, when we were besieged for news of our journey; of the old-timers we had met along the trail, of word regarding the execution of the two Eskimos at Herschel Island, and a thousand other things.

Escaping from the news-hungry residents we locked ourselves in our rooms, discarded our dirty Eskimo clothing and indulged in the luxury of a bath.

As we crossed the Divide and approached the port of Seward it was like entering another world for mild temperatures and balmy breezes replaced the bitter cold which we had become accustomed to.

Boarding the steamer "Alameda" here we sailed across Resurrection Bay and on down the beautiful scenic coast of Alaska, gazing with keen interest at the glaciers, burning mountains and Indian villages with their community houses and painted totem poles.

Speeding luxuriously across the prairie, with the engine shrieking defiance at the driving snow, no sight was ever more welcome than the skyline of Winnipeg which became silhouetted in the distance on the morning of February 19th, 1924. Shortly afterwards the train came to a halt within the depot and I espied Jean upon the platform. I had reached the end of another trail.

Within an hour I was seated in the commodious office of the Commissioner in Hudson's Bay House, gazing across the top of a mahogany desk into the eagle eyes of Chief Factor Angus Brabant. Rarely, however, is the bearer of ill tidings very welcome. Thus it proved to be in this instance.

About a month after we got back Herbert Hall resigned from the service. Later on he obtained a schooner and set out for the western shore of Hudson Bay on a trading expedition of his own.

In April the northern mail arrived, having been relayed two thousand miles from post to post by dog-team. There was a letter from Carroll of Herschel Island describing the execution of the Eskimo prisoners. Both had gone boldly to their doom, he said, although, he added, Aligoomiak's last words had been that the Eskimos always knew the Mounted Police disliked them.

Some months later the last chapter was written in this strange tragedy. An old Eskimo sat in his snow-house near Kent Peninsula listening quietly to the story of the hanging of Aligoomiak, his son. Finally he left the other natives and moved slowly across the village to an isolated igloo on the outskirts of the camp. Next morning the old man was missing and immediately a search was made. From a line attached to a harpoon handle which rested across the top of the snow-house was hanging the lifeless body of the old father. He had died rather than continue to suffer the disgrace.[3]

The trial was said to have cost the country seventy-five thousand dollars. But the money was well spent for the execution undoubtedly made a deep impression upon the natives; far more so than would have been the case had it taken place "outside." From that time onward tranquillity was restored to the Arctic, and the white men were able, at last, to penetrate with safety into the land of the Cogmollocks.

A little over a year after my return from the Western Arctic Angus Brabant called me into his office.

"Say, Godsell, you know the Fort St. Johns country pretty well, don't you?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well, Romanet's having a lot of trouble up in that country. A free trader named Kenny Mackenzie has just taken about forty tons of freight overland by sleighs to the Sikinni River. I understand he is going to build scows there and float the stuff to Fort Simpson and on down the Mackenzie. If he succeeds he'll raise Cain with the trade for, as you know, he can get down six weeks ahead of the steamer. The posts are short of goods; he'll probably clean up the best of the spring fur hunts, just as he did last year, and we'll lose a lot of debt."

So, early in June, I was on my way once more to the Peace River country. The Diamond-P Company was no more. It had been absorbed by

the Lamson and Hubbard Company, and later by the Hudson's Bay. Now I traveled up the river on a large and comfortable stern-wheeler, the "D. A. Thomas," and looked with keen pleasure on the familiar knolls and verdant stretches of the river. For two years I traveled ceaselessly, following upon the trails of the free traders, summer and winter, until Mackenzie finally gave up the ghost.

When the "D. A. Thomas" made her last trip up-river in the fall of 1926 Captain McLeod brought word that Sir Robert Kindersley had retired from the Board, a fact greatly regretted by every one throughout the service. Mr. Charles Vincent Sale, the Captain said, had been appointed Governor in his place.

He was, however, a totally different type of man to his predecessor and never succeeded in obtaining the confidence of any of the fur traders at the posts with whom I came into contact. Almost immediately a feeling of insecurity seemed to sweep throughout the service. It was like the first cold breath of an autumn wind which presages early desolation.

The North is a land of many rumors, a few of which prove true but many the reverse. Soon we were hearing stories of huge projects being undertaken by the erstwhile conservative Company, and of the large store being built in Winnipeg, reputed to be the finest on the continent. The cautious Brabant was said to have shaken his head at all this and disposed of the few shares he owned, fearful of the results of what he considered a new and lavish policy of expenditure, for he was of the same conservative type as old Chief Trader Anderson who had once carried a tin of jam eight hundred miles on his dog-sleigh from Fort Simpson, only opening it as a special treat when he arrived at Lac la Biche.

On his visits of inspection it was said that the new Governor would occupy a large suite in the Fort Garry Hotel, while the rotunda would be filled with traders, ships' captains, store managers and executives awaiting admittance into the "sanctum sanctorum" of the much feared "presence." These persistent stories, which were often carried by even the Indians and the half-breeds, seemed to have an unsettling effect upon many of those whom I met, and the old-timers prophesied all sorts of evil things.

Just as we were commencing to watch the river for the first steamer the following spring I received a message. It was from Louis Romanet who wished me to return to the Mackenzie River country and inspect these posts again, so, bidding good-by to Jean, I set out for Edmonton with my pack-train and was soon back once more in my old stamping grounds.

[1] Fort Yukon was established in the year 1846 by Chief Trader Alexander Hunter Murray. When Alaska was sold to the United States by Russia an American army officer visited the fort in 1869 and ordered it moved across the International boundary, so it was transferred to the Ramparts of the Porcupine. In 1890, when the boundary was surveyed, the post was found to be still twelve miles within American territory and was again moved to Rampart House. This post was later abandoned and Dan Cadzow commenced to trade there on his own until his death which occurred two years after the meeting referred to in this chapter.

[2] Before leaving Fort Yukon I accompanied Dr. Burke to the old graveyard in which the remains of the Hudson's Bay Company's old employees of the fort had been buried. It was in a very dilapidated state, and it was arranged that he write to the Company suggesting the restoration of this little cemetery while I promised to take the matter up with the Company's officials upon my return to Winnipeg. This was done, and shortly afterwards the Company restored this historic spot at their own expense and erected a monument there. Hugh Kindersley had visited this place in 1920, and had also taken the matter up with his father, the Governor.

[3] This information I obtained from Mr. W. H. B. Hoare of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch who, at the time, had just completed a survey of the Arctic in order to estimate the numbers of the caribou.

CHAPTER XXV

The Nearing North

What a change a few years can sometimes make! When I first entered the Mackenzie River area in the summer of 1920 only a little over four hundred tons of trading supplies and other freight crossed Smith Portage annually for the vast interior country. Then it was hauled haltingly across on rickety wagons drawn by miserable Indian cayuses. A month old newspaper was eagerly sought after by every one to get the *latest* news, while the stores still carried only old-time trading goods upon their shelves. Now everything was changed.

Nearly four thousand tons of freight were being rushed across the Portage by Ryan's fleet of motor trucks and tractors. Daily news of what was going on throughout the world was obtained each noon and evening by every trader and Mounted Policeman in the land through the simple device of twisting a little ebony dial upon a radio. Indians leaned back luxuriously in their canoes and *put-put-putted* over the lakes and rivers of the land, scorning even to carry a paddle as they let their outboard motors do the work.

Upon the shelves of the trading posts were to be found spark-plugs, polarine oil, and even salad dressing. The white ladies, of whom there were barely two dozen in the entire country, enjoyed their afternoon teas, delighting in social circles and class distinctions, though often there were but two or three living in a settlement. Always, however, there had to be a "Mrs. Jones" to make things unpleasant for those who were, for the time being, not so well endowed with worldly things. Talk and gossip spread like wild-fire through a land of lonesome souls. If Mrs. X—— gave a tea at Fort Smith and failed to invite Mrs. Z—— soon the matter was one of talk and conjecture at all the forts along the river. At "Government House" at Fort Smith you signed a guest book if you were sufficiently distinguished, which was jestingly referred to by traders and trappers, also teamsters, as "*The* Social Register."

Half-breed and Indian girls had bobbed their hair in imitation of the whites, only to be referred to as "buffalo heads" by the less advanced of their kind who refused to be "high-hatted," and a free-for-all between these two factions took place upon the steps of the Mission church one Sunday,

both Mounted Police and priests being forced to take a hand in parting the dusky combatants.

Mrs. Conibear was doing a flourishing business in her little store with these same girls in face powder, bath salts and other toilet luxuries which they had discovered from mail-order catalogues were indulged in by their pale-face sisters, whom they loved to emulate. Only once was Mrs. Conibear nonplussed and that was when the trim but dusky Alice Berens tripped mincingly into the store in French-heeled shoes and drawlingly asked for a "Jar of *Varnishing* Cream." Skin-bleach also had a great vogue, being hopefully used by the swarthier girls under the impression that the constant application of this much advertised product would cause them to awaken some morning with skins transformed to a shining lily whiteness.

As credit was still easy to obtain from the wholesale houses "outside" traders of a dozen nationalities and creeds brought scow-load after scow-load of goods down river which soon found their way into the possession of the wily Indians in *debt*.

By this time even the best of the natives had become insolent and unreliable, believing evidently in the old proverb of making hay while the sun was shining. Toboggans, dog-harness and other heavy equipment were cast thoughtlessly aside in the woods each spring wherever they had last been used. The following fall similar articles would be obtained again in debt from one or other of the traders. Many of the Indians were, in fact, fast reverting back to their earlier nomadic habits, roaming around with canoes and "kickers" from post to post in search of some new trader who could easily be fleeced.

Were they not "Minors" according to the white man's law? Were they not still looked upon by a paternal Government as guileless children of nature? Had they not been told by their sons and daughters who had been educated in the white man's schools that they could not be compelled to, and in fact did not have to, pay their debts? So they got all the goods they could in debt wherever possible and left the traders to do the worrying, while they had a good time.

A pall of smoke overhung the entire Mackenzie valley that summer, the result of forest fires. So dense was this at times that the Captain was forced to tie the "Distributor" to the bank, waiting for the wind to lift the heavy, pungent clouds. Once, while I happened to be on board, she became lost on Great Slave Lake, landing at the mouth of the Buffalo River instead of Hay River—her objective,—so poor was the visibility.

These fires spoke in no uncertain way of the destruction of valuable timber and animal life, and wanton carelessness of the time. Civilization was advancing with a vengeance, bringing in its train not only destruction but the same inflationary confusion which, only a couple of years afterwards, threatened the entire economic structure of the world.

At the trading posts things were equally bad. Indians, owing big debts, would hold back their furs to see which trader would give them the biggest "gratuity" in order to obtain their skins, which, as likely as not, would go to the one to whom they owed the least. In its way it was nothing short of a form of native blackmail; yet, in this manner, they extracted from the harassed traders thousands of dollars' worth of so-called "gratuities." Sometimes the "gratuity" would be a canoe, an outboard engine, but more frequently would consist of a case of tea, a side of bacon and some sacks of flour. The Chiefs and headmen would also exact their toll and receive more "gratuities" from the traders for keeping their tribesmen "loyal."

As mentioned elsewhere word had spread rapidly throughout the North of the Company's departure from the somewhat traditional conservative methods of the past and now the native postmanagers seemed to consider themselves free to cut loose from all restraint.

Louis Romanet, the District Manager, whose headquarters were in Edmonton, had his hands full with the multifarious duties connected with the rapidly increasing and complex development of the river transport. Consequently little control was being exercised over the traders at the posts, most of whom were utterly unqualified to meet the rapidly changing conditions without close control and supervision, and I saw with regret that the work I had completed some years before was now entirely undone.

Late one night while I was still at work in the office at Fort Simpson the interpreter ran in to say that the steamer was approaching from down river, and shortly afterwards the "Distributor" tied up at the foot of the steep bank before the fort. Factor Romanet's little hat soon bobbed up over the stairway and he came striding importantly down the wooden platform past the sun-dial.

"Bon! 'ullo, 'Arry. 'Ow is everything going, by heck?" inquired the Frenchman, and I told him how things were. It was a rather worried and disillusioned Mr. Romanet who asked me if I would be willing to remain in his district to straighten matters out and repeat the work I had done some years before.

I knew, though he did not, that it would take at least three years of heart-breaking and unpleasant work to again bring the Indians to their senses and

fix things up, but I was under an obligation to this mercurial and good-natured Frenchman for many evidences of kindness and thoughtfulness in the past.

"All right," I replied. "I won't see you stuck, although I'll tell you frankly there's going to be some very hard, uphill, work ahead. The Indians are thoroughly spoiled and demoralized, and the postmanagers have been getting entirely too much their own way."

"By heck. Those men they are damn fools to let the Indians put it over on them."

"No, Mr. Romanet," I replied, "they are all good men. They have made lots of money for the Company before and they can do it again. All they need is guidance, and help in meeting the unusual conditions with which they are confronted. Strict and bold measures will be necessary. There will be loud complaints; can I depend upon you to back me up?"

About that time he would have promised anything and ere he walked back on board it was agreed that I would take up my quarters at Fort Smith, and arrangements would be made for Jean to meet me there when the summer's work was done.

Hardly had Factor Romanet departed ere John Robillard and I were speeding swiftly northward on the bosom of the mighty Mackenzie. Following the example of the Red Men I had attached an outboard motor to my small canoe and John lolled back in languorous ease, commenting favorably upon the changes which the last few years had made.

At every post I reached the Indian hunters were in from the woods and their wigwams were dotted here and there around the clearings, all of which gladdened Robillard's heart. While I was busy inspecting the posts John invariably improved the shining hour with a friendly game of poker with the tribesmen. When I stepped on board the steamer at Aklavic John casually handed me an enormous wad of one dollar treaty bills.

"Mon Dieu, Okemow, just playum poker," explained John. "Dere's 'bout eighteen 'undred dollars dere. Too many white mans on dis boat, mabee stealum; you look after him for me till I get back to Hay River, eh?"

I made John sit down and count the money ere locking it away in a trunk, and found to my astonishment that he had actually cleaned up over eighteen hundred dollars playing poker "on the side."

Winter was upon us almost as soon as I reached Fort Smith; and soon after freeze-up I was on my way through the Buffalo Park towards Fort Chipewyan. As I mentioned elsewhere, there lies between Great Slave Lake

and the Peace River a preserve, known as the Wood Buffalo Park, in which the original wood buffalo, and those imported from Wainwright, Alberta, roam in their wild state. On various occasions, when visiting Fort Resolution in the winter time, I traveled through this park by dog-team and had many opportunities of noticing the increasing evidences of these majestic animals.

Realizing, apparently, that they are under the protection of the Mounted Police, and having, no doubt, the same respect for the powers of that famous force as the Indians, these animals are now commencing to take liberties. Just as I arrived at the Hay Camp, about thirty miles from Fort Fitzgerald, I heard an awful racket going on near the log stable. Hurrying over I found Calahan, who was in charge of the camp, loudly cursing a huge buffalo bull which he was trying in vain to drive away from the hay corral with a pitchfork. Finally he gave up in disgust and followed me over to the house while he left the bull to munch away at the hay.

"Damn those—buffalo," swore Calahan. "I'm having one hell of a time with them bustin' up the corrals, stealin' the hay, and generally making themselves objectionable. Even found one in the stable the other mornin'. There's about seven of them around here right now. They'll be expectin' me to draw water for 'em soon."

After supper I slipped on my snowshoes and took a walk around with Cal. In about half an hour we came across seven buffalo all told, one of which was comfortably bedded down upon hay that Cal had carted in with his team.

Next morning I was given an opportunity of cussing them myself, for as I was crossing a portage one of these massive animals stood with head lowered right in the very center of the trail as though defying me to go on. I didn't quite like the light in his eye, or the way in which he snorted, so, deciding that discretion was the better part of valor, I grabbed the lead-dog by the collar, waded *waist deep in snow* around this accursed autocrat of the forests, dragging the barking and frenzied team of dogs behind me.

When I arrived at Fort Chipewyan both Colin Fraser and Brian Burstall of the Mounted Police laughingly informed me that at last the buffalo had been able to turn the tables on the Red Man, three of whom had come indignantly to the fort complaining that *they had been chased by buffalo bulls*. They asked the Police for permission to shoot them hereafter *in self-defense*, but were told emphatically that they would be arrested if they did so. So the Indians had to continue perforce to get their buffalo meat, if they wanted it, on the sly just as they had probably done before.

With the break-up came the usual rush, bustle and crowd of summer visitors; Mounted Police and Government officials, Louis Romanet, and, for the first time, a host of prospectors bound for all parts of the North.

Then, late in June, just as the "Distributor" was loading up for her first trip to the Arctic, two of the Lafferty boys arrived back from Edmonton where they had gone to sell their furs. A few days later they became quite sick; just a cold thought everybody and let it go at that. Hardly, however, had the steamer commenced to work her way down river ere David McPherson, the veteran pilot, was taken very ill and by the time I stepped ashore at Hay River there were quite a number sick on board. Then as the traveling plague spot, which the "Distributor" had unknowingly become, went cruising on her way she left behind at every post the germs of the disease. Twenty-four hours after her departure the entire population of each settlement became prostrated with malignant 'flu, and ere it spent its force in the Delta nearly six hundred of the natives had gone to the Great Beyond.

Daily the doleful tolling of the mission bells the full length of that vast river proclaimed the passing of another, and still another, soul. Soon it became impossible to dig graves for all the dead, so they were wrapped in their blankets and buried in a common grave.

Daily the broadcasting stations received fresh news of the ravages of the dread disease. Forty deaths at Fort Simpson, thirty-nine at Fort Providence, thirty more at Fort Norman, forty-four at Good Hope, and still the toll came rolling in.

Across Great Slave Lake I drifted for twelve days on board my disabled schooner, short of food, sick myself, with a crew too ill and helpless to work, two of whom died, while a Mounted Police patrol boat vainly searched the shores for a sign of our missing craft.

It all bore a striking similarity to what had happened on the Missouri nearly ninety years before. Only then it was small-pox which the trading steamer had carried to the Mandans, the Blackfeet and the Sioux. There the destruction had been more widespread, almost wiping out entire tribes, reducing the population of others to less than half their former numbers. Its destructive effects now climaxed what had gone before.

It is an unquestionable fact that so long as the Hudson's Bay Company enjoyed a monopoly in the North the fur trade followed an orderly existence, while the Indians were, on the whole, fairly happy and contented. This, of course, was in no small measure due to the upright character and fine loyalty of the employees at the posts. It was the Firths, Beattons, Camsells, Sinclairs, McTavishes, and others like them, rather than the shareholders

whose shares changed hands from time to time, or the members of the London Board who also frequently changed, that the Company owes its splendid tradition of service. For the soul searing solitudes of the isolated posts bred an unflinching honor, an undeviating zeal, and a spirit of sacrifice in those who carried on the wilderness trade. These men, most of whom came out as lads from Scotland and spent their entire lives in the service, knew one interest only and that was "The Company."

Small wonder, therefore, that the Company prospered, the Indians remained loyal and satisfied, and great traditions were built up. Forty years after the surrender of the charter this feeling and undeviating loyalty still remained a dominating influence in all the older districts, and it was from fur traders of this type that we younger men received our training.

Loyalty, however, cannot thrive upon sacrifice alone; it was the inspiring example, the wise and benevolent rule, of humane and understanding leaders such as Sir George Simpson and Sir Robert Kindersley which kept that vital spark alive.

But with the opening up of the North everything was changed and the Indians became quickly demoralized and weakened as a result of the advent of this flood of traders, trappers and adventurers. The destruction of the game herds and, to some extent, the fur-bearers, followed in natural sequence, and once again one can make comparisons with what happened to the buffalo and the Indians on the plains.[1]

But it was ever thus! Civilization never counts the cost; it always has been, and always will be, ruinous to any native race with whom its complex and unfriendly forces come into contact. It has happened in the South Seas, in Mexico, in the Andes, upon the plains and in the forests of America. The influence of the Old World upon The New has been a tragic one for the aborigines, upon most of whom it has brought ruin. First came the priest with kindliness in his heart and a rosary in his hand, then came the trader with his rum, and finally the soldiers of contending armies with their muskets.

Within three centuries the native population of Canada has been reduced by more than half. Statistics show that it is increasing, which is only one side of the picture, for many of those born never reach maturity, while those who do frequently suffer from tuberculosis and are carried off at an early age. The vitality and physical condition of the Indians of Canada is not an encouraging subject to dwell upon.

The coming of the aeroplane was civilization's last step in breaking down the age-long barriers of the North. In January, 1929, I prepared

landing places at Fort Smith and Fort Fitzgerald for the Western Canada Airways who, that winter, inaugurated an aerial taxi service into what the tourists love to call “The Land of the Midnight Sun.” Soon dog-teams, for centuries the recognized form of transport, were forsaken for the aeroplane, even the mail being carried through the skies. No longer did it take two months to get a letter from Edmonton to Aklavic; instead it became a matter of hours, the journey being accomplished, on some occasions, in less than two days’ time. Within a few months the impenetrable North, which had long resisted invasion, had been conquered by the courage and resourcefulness of the air-pilots. No longer was Edmonton “twelve days” from Fort Smith in winter; the distance was measured in hours, and not many of them at that.

AEROPLANES DELIVERING MAIL AND TRADING GOODS AT FORT SIMPSON, 1933.

And so the North became air-minded overnight. Indians casually hopped aboard to visit friends three hundred miles away; trappers scouted by plane for new hunting territory or hired these airmen to carry them and their grub-stakes to some erstwhile inaccessible spot; while many owe their lives to services performed by these crusaders of the air.[2]

To the “buffalo heads” and other native ladies of the fur lands the air-mail seemed to carry an inestimable boon as each became possessed of a fat mail-order catalogue, upon the gaudy pages of which appeared in bright and attractive colors all the latest things the much envied white women were

wearing in the cities to the southward. It did not take long for the convent raised girls to realize that here, at last, was the chance to fulfill their ambitions and be as well dressed as the traders' wives. It seemed so simple. All you had to do was just fill in the order form, and if you hadn't any money, why you just wrote on the letters "C.O.D." and left the rest to fate. So they filled out order forms galore for themselves and for those who could not write, and sent them on their way.

When the next air-mail arrived Paul Trudel, the postmaster at Fort Smith, looked askance at the mountain of parcels by which he was surrounded, each marked "C.O.D.," addressed to Dora Ratfat, Mary Rabbit-Lung, Elsie Lame-Duck, Mrs. Dry Meat, Helen Snowshoe and many other fantastically named ladies of the Lone Lands.

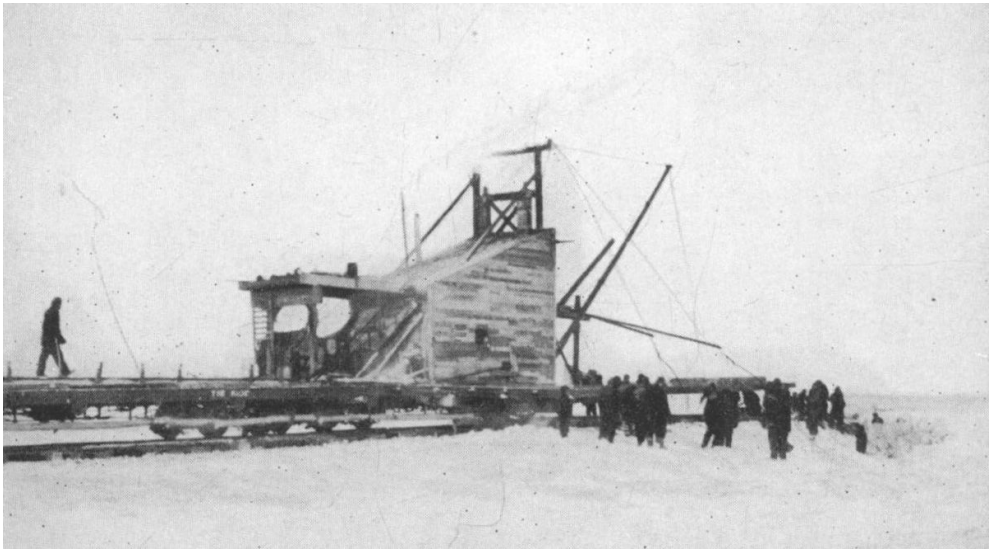
Then, one by one, the dark smiling faces of these backwoods beauties appeared at the wicket, and their indignation knew no bounds when they found they could not take the parcel off *in debt* but had to pay the cash. From house to house, and store to store, they went asking plaintively for the loan of anywhere from ten to sixty dollars cash. They would scrub, they said, wash clothes, make moccasins, in fact do almost anything at some distant and indefinite date *if they could only get the cash* to obtain the coveted parcels from that blankety-blank Paul who was withholding what was rightfully their own.

Most of the parcels went back, but others came in on the next plane; still more came in on the steamer, and it was quite a while ere the mail-order houses realized that Miss Rabbit-Lung and Elsie Lame-Duck were not, in spite of their substantial orders, the type of customers they craved.

The fall of 1929 saw the final conquest of the Northland following the search for McAlpine, President of the Dominion Explorers, and his party who, after hopping off in a couple of aeroplanes from Churchill, disappeared into the mists of the unknown. Flaming headlines in all the newspapers of the continent announced that the fliers were lost and sent out a clarion call for rescuers to dare the terrors of the Arctic in search of the missing men.

The call was quickly answered. Erelong Pilots Spence, Broatch, "Punch" Dickens, Roy Brown and other courageous pathfinders of the air were winging their way across the almost unknown Barren Lands, touched already with the snows of approaching winter. What followed is an epic story of dauntless enterprise and courage which cannot adequately be told in a few words. McAlpine and his party were located in the shadow of the Pole and brought back to civilization.

And with the conquest of the Silent Places has passed the glamor and romance of two centuries and more. Gone are the days of the picturesque and pompous Chief Factors. No longer do cannons roar and flags unfurl in honor of visiting potentates of the Fur Trade. Even the sleigh dogs seem to sense their passing glory and howl dismally as the winged airships drone by overhead. The Fur Lords no longer rule the Red Men; the erstwhile silence of the Lone Land is now broken by the sirens of ocean freighters carrying grain from Churchill to Europe, and the rumble and shrieks of freight and passenger trains as they speed swiftly across the Barren Lands.



LAYING THE STEEL FOR THE HUDSON BAY RAILWAY.

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[1] This refers to the summer of 1928. Now, *after a period of the greatest fur scarcity that the North has experienced within the memory of living man*, fur is at last becoming more plentiful, due, to a large extent, to the protective efforts put into effect by the Department of the Interior. In reports which the writer has received from points as far apart as Great Slave Lake, Mackenzie River and Norway House fur is again on the upward turn and foxes especially are reported as very numerous in some sections.

[2] Prior to the coming of the air-mail the winter poundage carried to Aklavic was less than 400 pounds. During the winter season of 1931-1932 the air-mail carried by Canadian Airways *in this area* amounted to nearly 50,000 pounds, and express totaled more than 150,000 pounds; more than 400 passengers being carried by air, quite a few of whom were natives. In one year alone aircraft belonging to four mining companies (apart from transportation companies) flew 527,900 miles over territory within, and adjacent to, the Northwest Territories.

APPENDIX

I. FUR PRODUCTION OF CANADA SEASON 1929-1930

(FROM DOMINION BUREAU STATISTICS)
REFERRING TO THE DECLINING FUR QUANTITIES IN THE DOMINION

Canada's output of raw furs for the twelve months ended June 30th, 1930, had a total market value of $12,158,376, compared with $18,745,473 in 1928-29 and $18,758,177 in 1927-28. These totals comprise the values of pelts of fur-bearing animals taken by trappers and of those sold from fur farms, the value of the latter accounting for 19 per cent of the whole in 1929-30, of 12½ per cent in 1928-29, and of 11 per cent in 1927-28. The prominent place occupied by the fur farming industry in relation to the fur trade of Canada is further evidenced by the fact that the silver fox, which is almost entirely a ranch-bred animal, led all other kinds of fur-bearing animals in total pelt value in the season 1929-30, reaching the amount of $2,716,264, or 22 per cent of the total value of the raw fur production of the season.

The muskrat ranked next in importance, although falling considerably below the silver fox, with a total value of $1,781,651, followed by white fox with $1,238,917. The beaver, whose name for so many years was emblematic of the fur trade, now occupies only fourth place in the list of the principal fur-bearers, the value of the pelts having dropped in 1929-30 to $1,025,033. Mink, ermine (weasel), red fox and marten are next in order of value, the first named with a total of slightly over a million dollars, and the other three with values of over half a million each. The pelts of the different kinds of foxes (silver, patch, white, blue and red) combined give a total value of $5,027,547, and this total represents 41 per cent of the value of all furs that season.

The following table gives some comparative figures:

	Season 1929-30	Average 9-yr. period 1920-21 to 1928-29
Silver fox	33,555	12,621
Muskrat	2,109,232	2,544,479
White fox	37,617	39,688
Beaver	47,775	137,400
Mink	81,328	141,735
Ermine (weasel)	719,909	469,838
Red fox	28,719	56,030
Marten	27,396	43,480

Among the provinces, Ontario occupies first place in order of value of raw fur production, its output in 1929-30 being valued at $2,880,039. Quebec is second in importance with a total of $1,658,358, followed by the Northwest Territories with $1,632,446, Saskatchewan with $1,328,545, and Alberta with $1,174,163. The following percentages show the relation which each province bears to the total value of raw fur production in Canada in 1929-30: Ontario, 23.69; Quebec, 13.64; the Northwest Territories, 13.43; Saskatchewan, 10.93; Alberta, 9.66; British Columbia, 6.98; Manitoba, 6.66; Prince Edward Island, 5.32; Nova Scotia, 4.37; New Brunswick, 2.89; and the Yukon Territory, 2.43. In Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan the muskrat is of chief importance as a fur producer, while in the Maritime Provinces, in Quebec and in Alberta the silver fox ranks highest in total value of pelts. In British Columbia the beaver is first.

Fur farms:

The number of fur farms in Canada in 1931 was 6,541, compared with 5,513 in 1929 and less than 1,000 in 1920. During the five year period 1927 to 1931 the number increased 94 per cent. The total number of fur-bearing animals born on fur farms in 1931, exclusive of muskrat and beaver, was 165,378 and the number of pelts sold: 133,248 valued at $3,071,460. During the same period (1931) 9,623 animals were sold from farms, valued at $492,000.

II. PRESENT STATE OF THE MUSK-OX AND ESTIMATE OF NUMBERS

FROM "CONSERVING CANADA'S MUSK-OXEN,"

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OTTAWA, 1928-29

BY W. H. B. HOARE

In *Lives of Game Animals*, Vol. III, 1927, Seton says:—

When one spreads out the buffalo range on the plains for Anno Domini 1800, and the musk-ox range for the same date, one is amazed to find that the musk-ox buffalo (i.e. musk-ox) had at that time a dispersal about as wide as that of the Plains buffalo. On the map its range is about 2,000 by 3,000 miles. But there could have been no comparison between the numbers. The 50,000,000 of Plains buffalo were probably contemporaneous with less than 1,000,000 musk-oxen.

Writing further in the same work Seton says:—

They (i.e. the original numbers of musk-oxen) were never to be compared with those of the buffalo. I suspect that never since the discovery of America, were there as many as 1,000,000; and, with a total accredited present range of about 1,000,000 square miles, it is doubtful if 50,000 musk-oxen are left alive today.

Therefore, according to Seton's estimate, about 95 per cent of the original stock has been exterminated and but 5 per cent remains alive.

It is the writer's opinion, however, that Seton's estimate is far too optimistic. I do not think that there are anywhere near 50,000 living musk-oxen to be found in the world today. Ellesmere Island probably has 1,000 animals; Axel Heiberg Island may have about the same number; it is probable that Devon Island has 200 animals; Melville Island may still have its 4,000 head; not more than 20, if any, remain on Victoria Island; smaller islands may contain 200 to 300 all told and the Canadian mainland 400 to 500, including the approximate 250 in the Thelon Game Sanctuary.

Therefore, a very liberal estimate of the number of musk-oxen left alive in Canadian territory would be about 9,000 or 10,000 animals. Add to this about 1,000 musk-oxen on North and East Greenland which gives approximately one per cent of the original estimated stock.

III. THE CARIBOU

EXTRACTS FROM "CONSERVING CANADA'S MUSK-OXEN",

BY W. H. B. HOARE,

INVESTIGATOR FOR DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—1928-29

Mr. Hoare quotes Dr. R. M. Anderson, Chief of the Division of Biology, National Museum of Canada:

"In a paper read before the Toronto meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in August 1924 ('The Present Status and Future Prospects of the Larger Mammals of Canada,' printed in *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. XI, Nov., 1924, pp. 321-331), I gave some estimates of the number of caribou based largely on the actual carrying capacity of ranges where the caribou are known to exist. Taking all the known factors into consideration it appeared that sixty acres of range would be required to support one caribou the year round. In that article I wrote:—

"Owing to the remoteness of the range of caribou, the comparatively few people who have had experience with them, and the impossibility up to the present time of obtaining reliable contemporaneous reports from different districts in the real heart of the caribou country, there are in circulation more conflicting estimates as to the numbers of caribou than of any other animal on earth, varying from a comparatively small number by the alarmist up to twenty or thirty million by the professional optimists.

"The range of the species extends from Labrador to northwest Alaska, and from northern Alberta and Saskatchewan to the most northerly Arctic islands, the forms in the latter becoming progressively smaller, an indication of harder climatic conditions and a lessening food supply. Caribou perform a sort of seasonal movement or migration, although in most parts of their range a few individuals are to be found at all seasons in suitable localities. The movement seems to be a shifting of groups, for a limited distance. We know that no very large numbers have been seen in recent years in Ungava, around the shores of Hudson Bay, near the Arctic coast, or on the northern islands, and the great masses of caribou are confined apparently to an area in the heart of the "Barren Grounds," measuring about 700 miles from north to south and 600 miles from east to west, roughly about 210,000 square miles. Estimating a carrying capacity of five caribou to the square mile, we get 1,050,000 animals in this area of maximum density, and the scattered herds outside of this area probably do not exceed half that number at the present time, although of course the whole area is capable of carrying much more than that number. Even with animals in sight, there is a natural tendency to overestimate numbers, and while great numbers are frequently reported near the edges of the main range, the herds do not always come near the same district in succeeding years, and even the caribou-eating Indians often starve.

"In my opinion a great fallacy is promulgated by estimating numbers on a comparatively small massed area and assuming that an equal number are to be found for many miles, or hundreds of miles, in any given direction. Such calculations often lead to erroneous conclusions as to the supposed enormous fertility and productiveness of the so-called "Arctic Prairies." This name was originally applied to areas such as the range of the wood buffalo, which are entirely sub-arctic, and it is not appropriate to the Arctic tundras, which have conditions of soil and assemblages of plants quite different from the prairies.

"The Arctic Life Zone is not, however, strictly a matter of latitude, as on a bio-geographic map we find northward extensions of the Hudsonian forested area running up north of the Arctic Circle, as in the Mackenzie River delta. True Arctic vegetation, while it may be comparatively luxuriant in favored spots sheltered from winds, exposed to sunshine, and on soil more or less enriched, is on the whole dwarfed. Lichens, some species of which are an important part of the food supply of the caribou, are of very slow growth, and when removed by over-grazing or other causes are very slow of reproduction. Some species require years to reach maturity, and we shall probably find that much of the irregularity in the yearly movements of the caribou is due to the fact that they consume several years' growth of fodder when passing over a given route. Other factors of course enter, including the time of freezing of the large lakes and straits which must be crossed.

"Counting out the large rocky areas with extremely little vegetation, and the very large surface of inland water areas, we find the possible grazing areas much reduced. On the Western Plains thirty acres was considered necessary to support a steer, and with half the growing season sixty acres would doubtless be needed in the North. Allowing one-fourth of the area to be non-productive, one-fourth lakes and swamps, we might allow not more than five animals to the square mile, a much greater acreage than is needed in more hospitable regions.

"It was a source of gratification to read in the report of the Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., submitted September 18, 1924, in the section on "Alaska Reindeer," page 24, that independent investigations in Alaska had substantially verified the above conclusion in regard to the range needed to support reindeer or caribou:—

"Studies of the abundance and distribution of forage plants to determine the carrying capacity of ranges have been continued. At the same time observations of quadrats have been continued to determine the rate of

reproduction of lichens and other forage plants. The results of these studies and of the ranges indicate that from 45 to 60 acres of range will be needed to carry each reindeer through the year. Information gathered appears to indicate that a burned-over range may require from 15 to 30 years to recover. A study of lichens on quadrats indicates a reproduction growth of from one-eighth to one-half inch a year.

"Additional data recently received, particularly from Mr. Guy H. Blanchet of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, indicate that the main range of the caribou should be extended a little farther east than in my former estimate. This would probably increase the main range to about 250,000 square miles in the heart of the Northern Plains. Mr. Blanchet also informs me that the proportion of rocky and barren land in this district as well as the number and area of the lakes is much less than formerly supposed. Allowing a liberal estimate of only 40 acres of rocks and water to the square mile, and ten caribou to the remaining 600 acres, this central area would be capable of supporting 2,500,000 caribou. It is evident that the number of caribou permanently living on the ground cannot be larger than the pasture area will support. The number of caribou in the area outside of the region of maximum concentration is probably less now than it was several years ago, due to more intensive hunting in the peripheral areas along the Arctic coast and Hudson Bay side, which has resulted in driving the herds towards the center, so that probably the total number of caribou in Canada is not now over 3,000,000."

IV. MINERAL DISCOVERIES IN THE MACKENZIE RIVER AREA AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AEROPLANE
EXTRACT FROM REPORT
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BRANCH
OTTAWA, CANADA, 1933

Although valuable mineral deposits were known to exist, it was not until aeroplane transportation became available that important discoveries were made. Deposits of copper have been recently discovered in the Dismal Lakes—Coppermine River district, lead-zinc in considerable quantities near Great Slave Lake, and nickel at Rankin inlet.

Early in 1930 rich veins of pitchblende and silver ores were found on the eastern shore of Great Bear lake. About a year later a further discovery of native silver deposits was made about seven miles from the original

discovery, which aroused the interest of mining men and drew a number of prospecting parties to the district.

At the end of 1932 the total number of mineral claims in good standing was 3,799, of which over 2,200 claims were staked at Great Bear lake. Twenty-six companies and syndicates were represented in that field during 1932.

Discoveries of what are stated to be rich deposits of silver, pitchblende, cobalt manganese, and copper have also been made in this area and showings of gold are reported at several places, notably in the Camsell River district, about forty-five miles southeast of LaBine Point.

Up to the end of 1932, from the producing mines fifty-five tons of pitchblende and probably a third of that quantity of silver ore have been shipped out. One lot of about ten and a half tons of hand-cobbed silver ore smelted in British Columbia is reported to have yielded an average of 3,450 ounces of silver per ton.

Coal has been discovered near Etacho Point on the western side of Great Bear lake, which will take care of the fuel problem. In 1932 Imperial Oil, Limited, reopened one of their wells in the vicinity of Norman and installed a small refinery. During that season approximately 20,000 gallons of fuel oil and 10,000 gallons of gasoline were shipped across Great Bear lake to the mining interests at the east end of the lake.

> NOTE BY AUTHOR: Twenty years ago, gold production in the Dominion of Canada amounted to $16,000,000 for the year. In 1934, total gold production will have an estimated value, at the present price of gold, of $100,000,000, while dividend payments are expected to exceed $30,000,000. To Canada's gold production this year, over 30 new mines will make their contribution. At many of the places mentioned in this narrative gold has since been discovered, the possibilities and extent of which are under investigation, notably in the vicinity of Island Lake, God's Lake and Long Lake, Ontario.—P.H.G.

V. THE ABORIGINES

BRIEF NOTE BY AUTHOR ON PAST AND PRESENT NUMBERS, CAUSES OF DECREASE OF, AND EXISTING CONDITIONS AMONG, THE ABORIGINES OF CANADA

When white men first set foot upon the continent of North America approximately 1,150,000 Indians roamed the plains and forests between

Mexico and the polar sea. Of this number probably 220,000 occupied what is now the Dominion of Canada.[1]

During the ensuing four centuries the Canadian Indians have been reduced to 108,000 souls.[2] The chief causes of the decrease, in order of importance, are small-pox and other epidemics, tuberculosis, sexual diseases; the whiskey trade during the earlier days of the fur trade and attendant dissipation, starvation and reduced vitality from subjection to unaccustomed conditions, and to the earlier intertribal wars.

The small-pox epidemic which came from the Missouri in 1781-82 was intensely destructive and raised havoc amongst the natives from Lake Superior to the Pacific and northward beyond Great Slave Lake. A further visitation in 1837-38 reduced the Plains tribes by almost half, and also penetrated into the North.

During recent times the 'flu epidemic of 1917 proved very destructive, especially amongst the tribes along the frontier. At that time I was in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Long Lake, Ontario, and was closely in touch with its effects. By sending runners to the surrounding camps, warning the Indians on no account to visit either the trading post or the railroad but to remain in their camps, I was fortunate in localizing the effects of the epidemic amongst this band to a few local Indians living near the post. By inoculating these with serum and segregating them, not a single death occurred. Of the neighboring Lake Nipigon band of Ojibways forty per cent died from the effects of this disease. In some cases whole families were discovered dead and frozen in their wigwams by relief expeditions sent out by the Indian Department.

In the winter of 1926-1927 a similar epidemic was carried to the Sikinni Indians, known as the Prophet River band, between Fort St. Johns and Fort Nelson, most of whom were wiped out.

The effects of introducing imported provisions to meat-eating Indians was brought home to me on an inspection trip I made of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts on the Liard and Nelson Rivers in the fall of 1920. At both Fort Liard and Fort Nelson I found a great deal of sickness amongst the Sikinni and Slavey Indians. These primitive moose hunters, instead of living on their customary diet of meat, and leading their usual active and healthy life, had lain around the post all summer obtaining unlimited quantities of flour and salt pork from the newly-established Lamson and Hubbard Company, in debt. Month after month they had gorged themselves with badly cooked bannock and greasy bacon. Intestinal diseases resulted, that summer and fall, in eleven deaths at Fort Liard and twelve at Fort Nelson.

The Canadian Government looks upon all Indians as minors, regardless of the extent of white blood in their veins, provided they are registered on the treaty rolls as “Indians.” Their affairs are administered by Indian Agents who, in the North, are frequently qualified medical men. Reserves have been laid aside for each Indian band which has “taken treaty” from the Government. In settled areas the natives are more or less confined to the reserves, though this does not apply to the Northern Indians who still hunt and roam at will, though their activities are hampered by the intrusion of white trappers.

During the year ending March 31, 1929, when they had reached the peak of prosperity the Canadian Indians owned 41,342 horses, 51,888 cattle; sowed 146,392 acres, harvested 1,721,681 tons of hay and large quantities of wheat, oats and vegetables. Their reservations totaled 5,087,788 acres, valued at $55,336,709. Three hundred and forty schools are maintained for Indian education, the upkeep of which, for year ending March 31st, 1933, amounted to $1,712,223.

Tribes which have long been in contact with civilizing influences, though still living a primitive life, and have withstood the shock of contact, are in some instances holding their own in point of numbers. Other tribes such as the Beavers, the Sikinnis and the Slaveys, are rapidly declining in population.

The Eskimos, according to the 1931 census, numbered 5,979, of whom 3,116 were males and 2,863 females. They are now administered by the Department of the Interior which maintains a number of medical agents in the Arctic to look after their welfare.

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[1] Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30, Part 2, p. 287.

[2] Report of Department of Indian Affairs, March 31st, 1933.

INDEX

Transcriber’s Notes

Changes have been made silently to spelling and punctuation, especially hyphenation, to achieve consistency. However, the hyphenation of the names of First Nations people is given as in the original.

A higher resolution copy of the map is available in the HTML version.

Some images have been repositioned to improve readability.

[The end of *Arctic Trader--the account of twenty years with the Hudson's Bay Company* by Philip Henry Godsell]