

JOHN McLOUGHLIN

There were Cree and Assiniboiné and Sioux of the prairie, these for the most part act as packers and hunters and trappers in the horse brigades destined inland for the mountains. Then there were freemen, a distinct body of trappers owning allegiance to no man, but joining the company's brigades for safety's sake and selling the beaver they trapped to the trader who paid the highest price. Of coast Indians there were very few. The salmon runs of the river gave the coast tribes too easy an existence. They were useless for the hardships of inland service. A few Cayuses and Flatheads and Walla Wallas might join the brigades for the adventure, but they did not belong to the company's regular retainers.

"The company divided each of the hunting brigades into three classes—gentlemen, white men, hunters. The gentlemen usually went out in twos—a commander and his lieutenant, dressed in cocked hat and buttons and ruffles and satin waistcoats, with a pistol somewhere and very often a sword stuck in the high boot-leg. These were given the best places in the canoes, or mounted the finest horses of the mountain brigades. The second class were either servants to beat the furs and cook meals, or young clerks sent out to be put in training for some future chieftaincy. But by far the most picturesque part of the brigades were the motley—Indians, half breeds, white men—in buckskin suits with hawks' bills down the leggings, scarlet or blue handkerchief binding back the lank hair, bright sash about the waist and moccasins beaded like works of art. Then somewhere in each brigade was a musician, a singer to lead in the *voyageurs'* songs, perhaps a piper from the Highlands of Scotland to set the bagpipes droning 'The Campbells are Coming,' between the rock walls of the Columbia. And, most amazing thing of all, in these transmontaine brigades the men were accompanied by wives and families.

"A last hand-shake with Dr. McLoughlin; tears mingled with fears over partings that were many of them destined to be forever, and out they swept, the Oregon brigades, with laughter and French *voyageurs'* song and Highland bagpipes. A dip of the steersman's lifted paddle, and the northern brigades of sixty men each were off for Athabasca and the Saskatchewan and the St. Lawrence. A bugle call or the beat of an Indian tomtom, and the long lines of pack-horses, two and three hundred in each brigade, decked with ribbons as for a country fair, wound into the mountain defiles like desert caravans of wandering Arabs. Oregon meant more in those days