

the late governor-general of Canada. On the high sand-hills at the eastern extremity of this lake Captain Back observed some little rills of water, which took a northerly direction towards a small lake, which, though the height of the land, intervening between it and the lake he had just left, was not a great many feet, he was willing to hope might be the source of the river he had long been in search of; and so it turned out to be. To this source he gave the name of Sussex, in honor of the Royal Duke. Back soon satisfied himself that he had now discovered the Thlew-ee-choh, or, as the Geographical Society have very properly called it, and as we shall hereafter do—*Back's River*. The month of August had expired, and having made this important discovery, he deemed it prudent and indeed imperative on him to return. This he effected by a different route, and by a different river, which, falling into a large sheet of water, named by him the Artillery Lake, led to the eastern extremity of Great Slave Lake, near the spot where Mr. McLeod had been sent to establish their winter-quarters, and where, on their arrival, he found the newly erected frame-work of a house at the bottom of a snug cove, backed by the dark-green foliage of a wood of firtrees. The completion of this establishment for the winter went on cheerily:—

'The men were divided into parties, and appointed to regular tasks: some to the felling of trees, and squaring them into beams or rafters; others to the sawing of slabs and planks. Here was a group awkwardly chipping the shapeless granite into something like form; and there a party in a boat in search of mud and grass for mortar. It was an animated scene; and, set off as it was by the white tents and smoky leather lodges, contrasting with the mountains and green woods, it was picturesque as well as interesting.'—p. 190.

Numbers of Indians, especially the old, the sick, and the miserable, soon found their way to the house of the white man, in search of that succor and relief from starvation, which is rarely in the power of their own countrymen to bestow. It is a remarkable trait in their character that, kind and affectionate as they are to their children, they are totally indifferent to the wants and the sufferings of the aged and the infirm. A poor old woman was found on the opposite side of the bay, helpless and alone, 'bent double by age and infirmities, and rendered absolutely frightful by famine and disease.' As a specimen of too numerous a class, we give Back's description of this poor creature:—

'Clad in deer-skins, her eyes all but closed,

her hair matted and filthy, her skin shrivelled, and feebly supporting, with the aid of a stick held by both hands, a trunk which was literally horizontal, she presented, if such an expression may be pardoned, the shocking and unnatural appearance of a human brute. It was a humiliating spectacle, and one which I would not willingly see again. Poor wretch! Her tale was soon told: old and decrepit, she had come to be considered as a burden even by her own sex. Past services and toils were forgotten; and in their figurative style they coldly told her that, "though she appeared to live, she was already dead," and must be abandoned to her fate. "There is a new fort," said they; "go there; the whites are great medicine men, and may have power to save you." This was a month before; since which time she had crawled and hobbled along the rocks, the scanty supply of berries which she found upon them just enabling her to live. Another day or two must have ended her sufferings.'—p. 193.

It was not till the end of October that the river and the borders of the lake were frozen over; and meantime the sufferings of the Indians for want of food became extreme. These poor people, seeing the instruments in the observatory, were but too ready to ascribe to them the mysterious cause of all their misfortunes; nor were they singular in this: two of the *voyageurs*, says Captain Back, 'when we were taking the dip, hearing the words "Now!—Stop!" always succeeded by a perfect silence, looked at each other, and, with significant shrugs, turning hastily away from the railing, reported to their companions that they verily believed I was raising the devil.' It was not that there was actually any scarcity of deer or musk-oxen; several hundreds in a group were frequently seen; but the mildness of the season and the abundance of the reindeer lichen kept them beyond the usual period on the barren plains, where they could not be got at within gunshot distance. Not only the deer but the fishery failed them; and the mild weather continuing, by the end of November all their supplies had been exhausted. 'Distress was prevalent, and the din and screeching of women and children too plainly indicated the acuteness of their suffering.' At this moment the appearance of Captain Back's old acquaintance of a former expedition, Akaitcho, with a little meat, enabled him to grant a momentary relief. This ancient chief wore the silver medal which had been given to him at Fort Enterprise by Sir John Franklin, as a proof that he had not forgotten his friends. Many of the Indians went off with this old hunter, who promised the Captain that he and his people should not want as long as he could procure anything to send to the fort,