



The smallpox shack and the quarantined men.

Quarantined on the Winnipeg River

By "SURVEYOR"

WE were working about sixteen miles below Lac du Bonnet—six of us, under Morton, a Government man and engineer in charge—investigating the water-power possibilities of the Winnipeg River. Grand du Bonnet Falls was the scene of our experience, and at this point the engineer of the Manitoba Power Company, Drake, by name, with his staff of six men, was also at work.

On our arrival several days before, Drake, who was already installed, hospitably threw everything open to our use, including the service of his cook, a typical Frenchman called "Bushy."

When asked to spell his name he would scratch his head and look sheepish, then with a shrug he would say:

"Oh tis de sem as de man w'at chops de meat!" But in all probability the name was Bouchier.

The mosquitoes were bad, but night after night we laughed them to scorn as we lay in the open, under our cheese-cloth canopies. The rather pretentious shack was at this season of the year a hot bed for flies and, so, was left neglected save for the bed of Bouchier, whose skin evidently was impervious to their attacks. They got their revenge on us, during the day.

A TIRED and fly-bitten outfit we lay on the rocks after supper and watched one of those glorious sunsets so typical of our Canadian West. A path of sunlight glistened and shimmered over the water and peace was upon the world; it seemed. Suddenly our post-prandial lethargy was disturbed by young Briggs, the irrepressible juvenile of the party.

"Ship ahoy!" he shouted. "A sail in the offing! His Majesty's mail, I'll bet my hat!"

A unique-looking flotilla had come into view—a clumsy boat painted red, flanked on either side by a canoe; a man propelled each. They came close and landed. A husky Swede stepped forward somewhat importantly.

"Drake and Morton here?" he asked.

Seeing no reason for a denial, the men figuratively held up their hands.

"Gentlemen," the visitor then announced in the tone one uses when wishing the compliments of the season, "bot' your camps ban hereby quarantined."

Briggs uttered a tragic howl. "Boys," he said, "further subterfuge is futile. I have prickly heat!"

The stolid Norseman shook his head. "It no ban prickly heat, it ban small pox!"

For a moment no one was serious, but it was soon explained that Bushy, the cook, was the suspect—his family, so the constable said, had developed small pox just after he left home, about ten days previous; so he (and therefore we) were walking menaces to the community.

Bushy was the least affected. "My fam'ly got de small pox, hein?" he enquired, proud of the distinction. "Well, w'at dat got to do wit' me, eh?"

In carefully chosen words the constable informed him what it had to do with him—it had so much to do with him, in fact, that all his clothes and blankets, and even his mosquito net, must be burned. Bushy refused; they insisted. Matters were be-

ginning to be serious. "Mebbe you dam healt' officer would lak to burn poor Bouchier, too, hein?" he said with really fine sarcasm.

The constables seemed to think, however, this action unwarrantably drastic and compromised on the clothing and personal effects, pacifying the cook with new clothes and blankets which were presented him after a personal fumigation as a gift from the Manitoba Government. These clothes, Bushy always referred to as, "de cloes King George gave me for 'aving nearly de small pox."

The constables turned their attention to the chiefs and formally presented them with about a trunkful of literature on small pox—its identification and prevention.

"You understand," said they in conclusion, "you ban under quarantine and no one can leave the point."

Morton protested. "This party costs the Government \$50.00 a day to keep in the field," said he, "and there is not a living creature within ten miles of us. Quarantine or no quarantine this outfit works to-morrow!"

Drake heartily endorsed these sentiments.

"Ver' well!" said the Swede. "In dat case, I will find it my duty to"—here he waited curiously expecting we knew not what—"to—inform de Medical Healt' Officer."

"I'll tell my mother on you, if you do," answered Briggs, in a cracked falsetto. Of course the two and the constables retired parties whooped in glee with some show of dignity.

We did work the next day, and "Ole Oleson" carried out his hideous threat.

THE following night the flotilla arrived again. Its crew looked bedraggled and very sick of the assiduous attention of the mosquitoes.

Briggs stood on a rock above them; his face was becomingly grave.

"Doctors," he called, "do you wish to look at the patient's tongue? It's hardly safe—all covered with pock marks. If you don't believe me come up and look at it."

A hurried consultation in their native tongue took place and the minions

of the law stood at a safe distance. Finally the spokesman cleared his throat and shouted,

"The Healt' Officer says you gentlemens must not leave this point, and besides, the shack must be burnt."

Drake grew genuinely angry. All the work was done in the open where we never met a soul; we were sixteen miles from habitation. But burning the shack was different. If Bushy developed small pox this was only reasonable; if he did not develop it burning a five hundred dollar house in a country where such luxurious dwellings were rare was sinful waste.

"If you don't do it, we will," said the constable.

"Impossible!" retorted the chief, stubbornly.

"There are twelve of us and three of you. Boys," said he, "are you ready to back me up in this and shall we sleep in the shack to-night?"

An enthusiastic outburst was the answer.

The constables retired to their camp across the bay and the dense smoke from their smudge told us that the mosquitoes were still with them.

Early next morning Morton was at their camp to say he was going to Lac du Bonnet. He needed provisions.

"You ban quarantined; ah'll loose ma job if you go," complained Ole plaintively.

"I'll lose my meals, if I don't," was Morton's unfeeling reply.

"Ah'll have to go for you," said Ole. "Thirty-two miles to the Lac and back, wit' t'ree portages."

Morton told the story when he came back to us, and there was some satisfaction in the thought that our wardens were making pack mules of themselves in our stead.

The following afternoon, the provisions were deposited on the shore and Ole called that he had seen the dangerous health officer. He said further that he had been told in simple language which could not be misunderstood that his job was as good as gone if the shack was not burned.

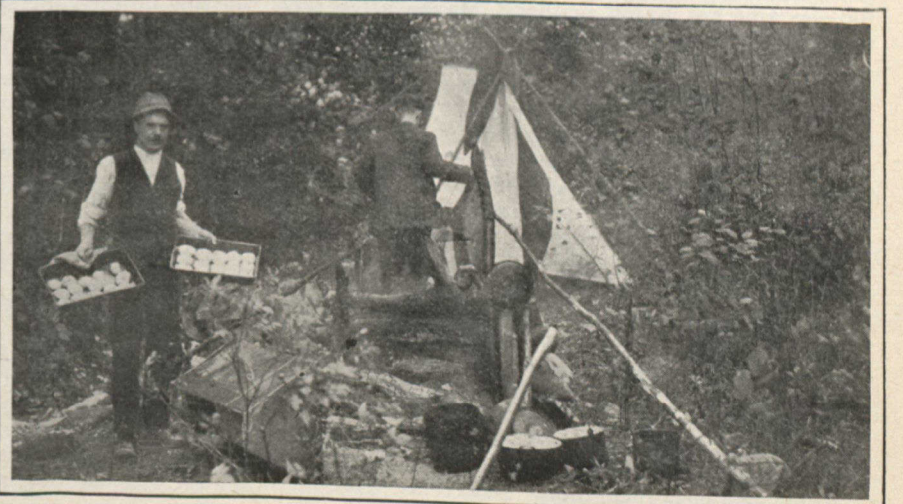
"Do it, if you can," Drake answered, "but the odds are still against you!"

At this critical point a canoe rounded the curve and made for our point. It contained two men from Lac du Bonnet and the conscientious Swedes tried to ward off their approach by waving their arms toward our yellow sign and crying "small pox, here!" They came on, however, and the news they brought was a relief to everyone, but to Ole Oleson most of all. Bouchier's family had not small pox, but chicken pox!

"This here quarantine ban off," said he.



The third and highest pitch in Grand du Bonnet Falls. At this point 25,000 horse-power, roughly speaking, could be developed.



"Bushy" in his outdoor kitchen. The biscuits went into the oven at his feet just before the constables arrived.