

for furs. If the catch happened to be good we were the gainers; if bad, often considerable losers. It was, in fact, a game of chance. There were two sets of men we had to deal with: the plain hunters and fur traders. The former were, as a rule, splendid fellows; the latter too frequently thriftless and given to drink. It was customary in the early days for the plain hunters to combine together to form a large party—a brigade sometimes consisting of over 1,200 carts, as many horses, and some six or seven hundred oxen. Each party framed laws for the government of its members, and for days and days they would travel over the open prairie, until they approached the vicinity of the buffalo, when they would form a stationary camp.

It was a rule of the plain not to hunt the buffalo singly. The hunters went out in a body on horses trained for the purpose. Slowly they would approach the herd, until the word was given by the leader—"Ho!" Then it was each man for himself. Away they sped, dashing in amongst the frightened buffaloes; right and left the hunters fired, the horses, trained for the purpose, guiding themselves, and leaving the rider free to kill as he rode. The hunt would extend sometimes for miles. Then the return to camp was sounded, and so familiar were the men with the work that each one could single out the animals he had slain. Next came the skinning of the buffalo, and the preparation of the meat by sun-drying; and when sufficient had been collected to fill the carts the party returned to the traders who had supplied the outfit to render an account of the trip. In the finer furs—such as mink, marten, beaver, &c.—the traders had to deal with the wood Indians.

Sometimes, especially in the winter, we traders had to endure what may be termed hardships in the prosecution of our business. Frequently we had to travel for miles over the snow with sleds. These consisted of a broad board turned up in front, and drawn by our dogs. Each set of dogs could draw about four hundred pounds, but as the bedding, provisions, and furs belonging to the traveller generally filled the sled, he had to content himself with running on snow-shoes. The dogs were driven by word of mouth—"Chuck" meaning to the right; "Yew," to the left; and "Maich," forward. I have frequently travelled for hundreds of miles by this means, sleeping on the snow at night with no roof overhead but the clear wintry sky of the North-West, and yet I enjoyed it; never was frost-bitten, and never experienced better health.

I could give you some interesting details of my experience as a fur trader, but time forbids. Enough, however, has been said to show the rude state of the country when I first made the North-West my home. Along the banks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers there were a few scattered settlements, consisting of French, English, and Scotch half-breeds; but there were then few white men in the country. It was generally supposed that settlement could not be successful on the prairie at any distance over a mile from the river. Now the whole plain is dotted with farms and farm-houses. At that time there existed no proper means of