

routine, and it becomes a scene of picturesque animation and bustle. If the band be an important one, its coming has been announced by a couple of braves sent on ahead as advance agents, and everything is in readiness. This means not only that the company's goods are ready for the barter, but that every precaution has been taken to guard against a sudden reconnaissance in force on the part of the red men, whose feelings are apt to be powerfully operated upon by the knowledge that what seems to them illimitable wealth is kept out of their grasp by only some rough wooden walls, and a handful of white men. The manner in which the business of bartering goods for peltries is then conducted has been graphically described for us by a writer familiar with the proceedings. The Indian with his bundle of furs proceeds in the first instance to the trading-room, where the trader separates the furs into lots, puts a valuation upon them according to their kind and quality, and, after adding up the amount, returns to the Indian a number of little pieces of wood indicating the number of "made-beavers" to which his "hunt" amounts. Bearing his bundle of sticks, the happy hunter then proceeds to the store-room, where he finds himself surrounded by bales of blankets, slop-coats, guns, scalping-knives, tomahawks, powder-horns, axes, etc., etc., and is thereby made to feel very much like a hungry boy let loose in a pastry-cook's, and would without doubt behave in a much similar fashion if he dared. Each article has a recognized value in "made-beaver." A slop-coat, for example, may be worth five "made-beavers," and the aborigine pays for his civilized finery with twelve of his sticks; for a gun he gives twenty; for a knife two; and so on until his stock of wooden "legal tender" is exhausted, when, with profound regret and longing eyes, he retires to make room for the next comer, and to proudly exhibit his purchases to his friends and family.

At every post, or at least in every district, there is a tariff established which varies little from year to year. The mind of the Indian, untutored to the rise and fall of the markets, and knowing nothing of what it means for furs to be "firm" or "unsteady," is not tolerant of

varying prices; and accordingly, to facilitate matters, the company takes the risk of changes, and unless the fall in price is of long continuance, gives the same price for fur as formerly when it was high, or *vice versa*; thus on some peltries the company loses, but compensates itself by making a large profit upon others. This system has one advantage. The Indian never attempts to raise the price of furs or beat down the price of the merchandise. The tariff is unchangeable. If he is not pleased with it he is at perfect liberty to go to the next shop, and this, combined with the fact that the company sells nothing which is not of the best quality of its kind, has given it advantage over all competitors that it will be long in losing.

Before the establishment of the mounted police the posts in the plain country, at which the wily, unscrupulous Black-foot and Crees were the principal customers, had to take many precautions when a large band of redskins came to trade. Guns were loaded and placed in the loopholes commanding the Indian and trade rooms, and the gates of the stockade securely fastened. All communication between the Indians and trader was cut off, and there remained for the customers only the narrow passage leading from the outer gate of the stockade to the Indian room, the Indian room itself, and the narrow hallway between it and the trade-room. This latter was furnished with two heavy doors, with a space between them which would hold from two to four Indians. Only two Indians were admitted at a time into the trade-room. This was divided by a stout partition reaching from floor to ceiling, in the center of which an aperture about a yard square was cut, and divided by a grating into squares sufficiently large to admit of the easy passage of goods, but not of the red man in person. As a still further precaution the passage leading to the window was in some instances made crooked, for the very good reason that experience had taught the trader that the Indian was apt to bring heated bargaining to a dramatic climax by shooting him from behind.

There has been a wonderful change in values since the good old days in the early part of this century. When Fort Dunvegan was established on the Peace