

favoured with a more concentrated attention. On that morning Inspector Barker prepared his weekly report. A pile of letters and staff reports scattered his desk; a smaller pile, the morning's mail, was within reach of his left hand. His right clumsily clutched a fountain pen. Thirty years of strenuous Mounted Police duties, from Constable to Inspector, during a period when Indians, rustlers, cattle-thieves, and the scum of Europe and Eastern Canada, were held to a semblance of order only by the stern hand of the "red-coats," had robbed his chirography of any legibility it ever possessed.

His iron-grey hair was rumpled by frequent delvings of his left hand, and the left needle of his waxed moustache was sadly out of line. His tunic was open—he never removed it when on duty—more in capitulation to mental than to physical discomfort, though Medicine Hat can startle more records in July than in the depth of winter, cold-blooded official reports to the contrary notwithstanding. His pipe lay cold beside the half-spilled tobacco pouch that always adorned the corner of his blotting pad.

Over on the station platform before his window the crowd thinned. A man ran along the top of the cars with a hose, thrusting it into a tiny trap-door, flicking up a slide in the nozzle, holding it a moment till the tanks