

The Windigo of Black Alex

By BRITTON B. COOKE

POSSIBLY it was because we had been paddling hard all day bare-headed in the strong sun and wind. Perhaps the strange fish we had caught at noon and broiled with herbs over the fire by means of split-rods had some effect upon our minds. But why on two minds the same? It is not unreasonable to suppose that the warning the old Indian gave us at the encampment had roused our fancies. But why both fancies?

In this country it is easy to forget civilization, especially with a canoe, a tent, a gun and some grub. About seventy miles from Port Arthur the C. N. R. train stopped and set MacNish and the two Indians and me and the outfit down in the middle of a wilderness of lakes and woods. There was a station agent and no more at this point. We camped by the railway tracks that night, but were packed and afloat on the lake by six in the morning. The lake, from the train, might have looked like any one of the thousands of lakes in this district: a mere gem of blue water set in the woods. But to us it was the beginning of a long trip which was to end at Fort Frances on the other side of Rainy Lake. The young Indian whom we had brought with Old Johnny from Fort William took the big paddle and sat on the gunwale at the stern. Old Johnny squatted low beneath his battered hat, in the bow. We sat between, a paddle on each side, straddling the tents and the dunnage bags.

ON the seventh day, having seen no other men for what seemed a life-time, we were interested to land at the Indian reservation on Lac La Croix, having first pitched camp on an island off the shore, facing down the river which races from La Croix down to a larger lake to the west. We lacked a

decent frying pan and offered cash to the Indians for such as they might spare us. Beating off the dogs that beset our landing place, we made parley and bought a pan. Only the one Indian, in all that camp could speak English—though the young Indians were playing baseball in English enough manner in a clearing behind the houses.

"You go down river?" said the old chief.

"Yes. To-morrow."

"You watch-um good for landing place above the Black Falls?"

"Yes. We watch good."

"Aye," he muttered. "Swift water after that. No other place to stop before falls. Falls big! Thirty men die once there—big canoe. Missed landing."

"We watch-um good," we said.

Another question was brewing.

"Where you sleep to-night?"

"On the portage by the falls."

"Bad portage!"

"No. Good. Easy ground for tents."

"Bad portage. No sleep there. Go next portage. No sleep by falls. Windigo! Windigo!"

"What's a Windigo?" I asked of MacNish.

"Ghost," said MacNish, laughing.

So we went back to our island camp and next morning started down the river.

THE Maligne has a brooding air. It is well named. At the foot of the first falls is a lake half a mile wide, and black, and it is never done seething and breaking into hideous spreading circles like mouths, gaping and stretching under the belly of the canoe, evilly—though the mouths are caused

merely by the rebound of the terrific volume of water which the falls pitch down against the bottom of the shuddering lake. In narrow, jagged canyons the trees almost arch over-head, making a weird shadow on the black water. In broad shallows the rush of water over rocks and pebbles makes a dismal—sh! Hideous to listen to. As I said, too, the sun was hot on our heads. At noon MacNish suddenly dropped his paddle across his knees, shouted:

"Look! Look! A big canoe! A big canoe!"

It was only his imagination.

Once I thought I heard echoes of a camp chanty sung as in carousal by a great chorus of strong, lusty men. But I was afraid to speak of it. It might have been the wind. . . . Just before dusk we came to the landing place, paddled hard to keep from sweeping stern-round into the river, and leaped ashore glad to get the cramps out of our knees. . . . We climbed the steep bank to a level spot overlooking the falls. In the dusk the white smoke of the cauldron was still visible. We pitched camp, cooked and ate and crawled under our mosquito bars, leaving the fire between our tent and our Indians' tent. It made one canvas wall quite bright.

THE same mysterious impulse waked me as waked MacNish. We sat bolt upright and whispered. "What was that?" Neither of us knew what he meant by "that." It may have been a noise. We never knew, but as we sat there facing the tent wall, where the glow of the fire still shone fitfully, we saw suddenly a great shadow on the duck, the figure of a man too tall for our big Indian, too—he wore hose and a doublet!

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Artists in War-Time

Written at the Sign of the Maple—By ESTELLE M. KERR

PEOPLE who mind their own business are rare in these days. Everyone seems to be horribly concerned about whether this man should or should not go to the front; whether if that woman were really as patriotic as she claims to be, she should give up her automobile, and now people who have never taken the slightest interest in art are saying: "Look at our artists—what are they doing? Now is their chance for really big aspirations and here they are painting landscapes!"

How do we know they are not inspired by the war? Masterpieces of art are not made in a day or a year. The fact that our exhibitions last year showed an almost total lack of war paintings proves nothing. The room devoted to sketches contained many suggestions, ideas that may

later take concrete form. Still with many of the artists, inspiration has been practically smothered by necessity. No class of people has suffered more from the war. The majority have been forced to use their talents in purely commercial work and it is only by an occasional week-end outing that they can keep the flame of art alight, and, please remember, that trees and brooks are cheaper to paint than living models at so much per hour.

Sculptors are usually more successful in depicting abstract emotions than painters. Florence Wyle, of Toronto, has shown two admirable studies bearing more or less directly on the war. One, the tragic, forlorn figure of a woman, is entitled "The Fruits of War." A more ambitious subject, "The Sacrifice," a woman is bending over her dead man, sorrowful, yet resigned. Henri Herbert, of Montreal, in his "Kultur Krieg," has produced a work of art that forces itself on our attention. Violent and brutal is the figure that depicts the German invasion. Half crawling, he crushes everything in his path by sheer weight and kills and puts afire with his sword and a torch. The Cathedral of Rheims shows that he has no respect whatever for the most sublime symbol of civil-

ization. The Cathedral, which in this case has been the stumbling block that prevented him from attaining his ultimate aim of the domination of the world. His eyes are put out, he sees nothing; his ears are deformed, he is deaf; he even hates breathing. It is a most powerful invective against German militarism. Mr. Herbert hopes soon to do something glorifying our arms.

Many of the finest monuments have been raised to the memory of dead heroes, and the South African Memorial, on University Avenue, Toronto, by Walter S. Allward, is the best work of art of its kind in this country. But the beautiful bronze group representing Canada and her soldiers is now hidden from view by a large and very ugly recruiting poster labelled "Take Up the Sword of Justice." The monument itself is the best call to arms that could be designed, and screening it from view is an insult to the brave lads who fought in the South African War, an insult to art and an insult to Canada's greatest sculptor. A monument to Edith Cavell was recently suggested, and this was to be placed on the same avenue. Probably it also would have served as a background for a recruiting poster had not the mother of Edith Cavell requested that a hospital would make a more fitting memorial.

SOME of our artists are fighting the Germans, some are tending the wounded. It behooves those who must remain at home to keep the flame of Art alive. This is a difficult matter, for Art was born of Leisure and Happiness in time of peace. The first man who tossed sleepless on his bed of leaves and wondered why he had been born was the first philosopher; the first man who, feeling happy in an idle moment, took a stone and drew upon it with another stone, was the first Artist. Now we are at war, there is little leisure and happiness is difficult to achieve, but we must not let ourselves be depressed and become obsessed by the war, and the man who has devoted a lifetime to the study of sunshine must not turn his attention to gloomy war subjects. It takes courage for those who cannot fight to hold to their vision and continue their life work as usual. Many will labour with small results, but one may produce a work of art that is truly great, and though swords may be beaten into pruning-hooks it will remain, and through it Canada may achieve renown even as she has done through her brave sons whose lives have been given



"Kultur Krieg," a powerful invective against German militarism by Henri Herbert.