

thirty miles of rapid floating down Sutton Creek to the Clearwater River, and then forty more, still floating, would bring him to McMurray.

The rest of the way, three hundred and fifty miles, that lay between McMurray and Northtown, would be still pleasanter, traveling by motor boat, steamer and train.

But this first thirty miles was sure hell, he reflected as he trudged along. His leg bothered him considerably, as it always did with much walking. This, added to temporary aggravation of the heat and mosquitoes, turned his mind to bitter thoughts.

Why should Nature have handicapped him in the beginning; made one leg shorter than the other, and then, not content, willed that he should strike a spring in the muskeg and, with temperature at fifty below, sink this same foot, causing loss of four toes?

In the midst of going over grievances, came back memory of that snug little quarter section right next to the Old Man's. Morris brightened. Two thousand would buy it, barns and all; then with nice little bank account left over, perhaps he could marry Luella Parsons. There was no particular reason why he should. He had not seen her or written in five years; she might be many times a mother by now. However, it was a nice idea; as a boy he had liked

life. It came the more closely home when he went to sell his furs. Eight hundred dollars was the best offer made by any of the dealers for his black fox skins—and that after a week of visiting many different traders. And Morris had counted on at least four thousand, had hoped for five.

In the end he slumped the lot, black fox skins and all, for thirty-five hundred dollars to Levinson, biggest free trader of the district.

Even this was sufficient to grant his dream. Yet, after buying a few clothes, he made no move to take the first train for home; instead, he put the money in the bank, paid his hotel bill a month in advance, and stayed on.

The war interested him. Here, in the farthest north Canadian training headquarters, he came more fully to realize how close to home, how vital to every Canadian was the struggle in Europe.

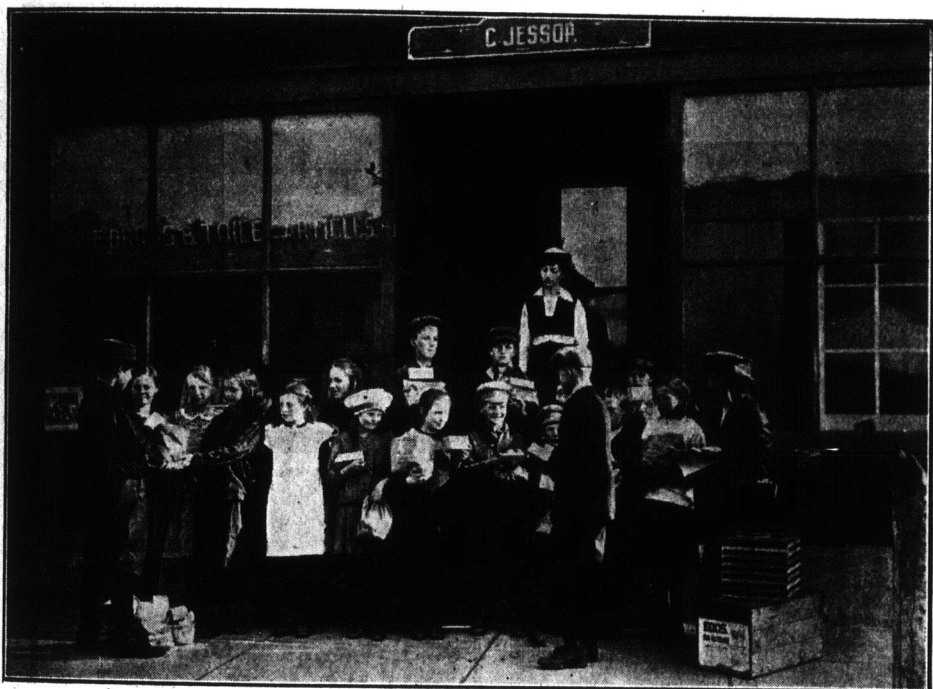
Without hope, yet true to intensely patriotic instinct—another inherent trait handed down from ten generations of fighting British stock—Morris presented himself at the recruiting office. The person in charge was unfortunately neither a gentleman nor a diplomat; he looked but once at Morris and his limping walk and said: "Why, man, we want men, not cripples."

A long moment Morris eyed him; steadily, unwaveringly he looked, his

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Luella; and later, on many a drive, at husking bees and dances with her, had, always, in dim vague way, pictured her as occupying a place in his home.

Wearily, and with shoulders raw from slight rubbing which even the best adjusted pack straps will do on a long hike, Morris made camp at sundown. It was ten thirty, and the long, gradual twilight of the region fading so slowly, so imperceptibly into dark, was just beginning to blur the near distant trees, making them no longer individual, but rather one long facade in whose shadows lurked invitation to rest.

Finding canoe untouched and in good shape, Morris made hasty fire, boiled tea, threw together a bannock, and afterward, in the same pan, fried a few slices of bacon. Then, stretching "four-point" blankets out he lay down to sleep with the low purring of Sutton Creek for lullaby.

Early afternoon two days later brought him to McMurray, where from the lips of Christine Gordon, mother to white men and Indians of the district, he heard the first news of the existence of war.

"Most of the boys around here, even some of the breeds is gone to war," she said in her bluff Scotch way, gazing significantly at the new comer.

Morris nodded, glancing with faint bitterness at his offending limb. "The war boys sure would never take me," he said with sad positiveness; then defiantly, the pride of the frontiersman asserting, "but at that, I bet I'd walk the most of 'em to death."

A week later, after arrival at the northern metropolis of Northtown, Morris began to comprehend the awful bigness of this world cataclysm, and its far reaching effects on every walk of

eyes flashing harsh message: "I'm a better man than you." But he choked down harsh words welling to be spoken, only said in voice quietly contemptuous: "That's not the way to talk—a little courtesy on the part of such men as you might get many a man, much less eager than I, to fight for his country."

Then he went sadly back to his hotel. For two weeks following his interview with the military, Morris lived war. In his interest, home and recently figured project slipped temporarily into the background. He bought all the magazines containing war articles, and, at the public library, ran through months old files of newspapers.

Out of all the things read, that which impressed most deeply, which stuck, was the fact that throughout all the Dominion everyone was doing something for the cause. From the humblest to the greatest came donations of money, or time or personal service—some farmers were devoting an acre of their land to the Empire, others had given stock, women were knitting during every spare hour of the day, or making bandages. Girls had joined the Red Cross, and so on ad infinitum.

And realizing, Morris cursed his impotency; grew to hate the limb, which, though perhaps stronger than many a man's in the ranks, was marred by deformity. As the days went by he grew sullen, felt strangely alien; felt like an outcast who, somehow, was not doing his share.

Yet, though he thought often upon the subject, there appeared nothing which he could do. At last, two days before his hotel bill again became due, he decided to go home. It was early afternoon when he made his decision; but finding there was no train until

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