

A Reminiscence.

Did you ever see a cabin,
Chinked up snugly all about,
With a door on wooden hinges,
And the latch-string always out?
Do you mind how its old "chimbly,"
Built of sticks and daubed with clay,
Stood the test of many winters,
When the days were brown and gray?

Do you mind the poles for joicing,
And the rafters, smooth and strong,
And how oft the wind above them
Howled so dismal all night long?
When the shingles all were "ratt'ed,"
For the morning proved it so,
And you found you had been sleeping
'Neath a counterpane of snow?

Well, then, you were pioneering,
Just like I was when a "kid,"
And you know somewhat the lessons,
That so many wonders did,
And you cannot have forgotten,
In the woods the path we'd "blaze"
So that none would wander wayward,
Into wild, forbidden ways.

What of paths you since have followed?
Was the way "blazed" out as fair,
So you never went a straying,
In life's journey any where?
And I wish you to remember,
All along the toil-one route,
Has your door stood easy swinging,
With the latch-string always out?

Ah! there were some noble lessons
Taught by those who felled the trees,
And made better days so welcome
To the man that lives at ease.
And the best of these, I'm thinking,
Which the old times brought about,
Was the honest welcome greeting,
With the latch-string always out.

Luxury demoralizes
Many things the fathers wrung
With manly, patient striving,
From the days when we were young.
And the choicest of these lessons,
Large of heart and strong and stout,
Was the hearty soulful welcome,
With the latch-string always out.

Don't you know that any fellow
In those early days would win
All the wrath of all the neighbors,
If he pulled the latch-string in?
And the easier he was counted,
In the region round about,
Just the meanest fellow living,
By the latch-strings that were out.

So, for every day a blessing
Must descend upon the man
Who, in all of life's endeavors,
Helps his brother when he can,
And for such the heavenly mansion,
When life's sands "go up the spout,"
At its portals gives a greeting,
With the latch-string hanging out.

June, 1891. —Ebenezer Holdin in *The Great Divide*.

Outposts of Civilization.

The Hudson's Bay Company as a civilizing agency has formed the text for many a homily. When the whole Canadian Northwest was almost a sealed book to the outside world—isolated as completely as Greenland now is—it was the "Governor and Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay," who kept the spark of civilization alive, and built up a reputation for rectitude of dealing which has done more than ought else to smooth Canada's path in the treatment of her native races. Honesty was, you may say, obviously the best policy, and the Company itself has reaped the benefit. But how seldom do commercial bodies holding absolute power in new regions recognize and act upon the maxim as thoroughly as has done that corporation to whom 222 years ago Charles II. made over the whole region whose waters flow into Hudson's Bay.

The functions of the Hudson's Bay Company as a civilizing agency have by no means ceased with the cession of jurisdiction to the Dominion Government and the advent of the railway. Of this fact a forcible reminder is given by Mr.

Warburton Pike in the record of his wanderings which Messrs. Macmillan have given to the world. He was in search of the musk-ox in the region which lies between Hudson's Bay, the eastern ends of the three great lakes of the north, and the Arctic Sea—a vast and almost unknown desert modestly called the Barren Ground. Before one can reach this desolate Arctic land one must leave the Canadian Pacific main line 1,000 miles or more to the south as the crow flies—probably at least half as far again as man travels—and those who read of Mr. Pike's adventures will need no reminder of the difficulties and perils of the journey. Indeed, the only white men who had succeeded before Mr. Pike in getting far out into the Barren Ground were early explorers—Hearne, Sir John Franklin, Sir George Back and Dr. Richardson, while long afterwards Dr. Rae and Stewart and Anderson went in search of the missing Franklin expedition. They took all the precautions that experience and wealth placed within their reach, but we know how much suffering and loss of life from privation are interwoven with the tale of their journeyings. And yet the Hudson's Bay Company has for many generations had this vast region within the scope of its operations. Without its agency the difficulties of access from the outside world would be increased tenfold. No sooner has one left Edmonton on the far northern journey than the services of the Company are found to be well nigh indispensable. To reach the Athabasca River one of the freight carts of the Company are pressed into service. The road of 100 miles or so in length which has to be traversed across large streams and through thick pine copses is the work not of the Government but of the Company; and when at the end of two days the division between the Saskatchewan and Athabasca Rivers is reached, and in another day and a half the Athabasca Landing, it is the Company's steamer—a large, light draught stern wheeler—that has to be used to pass down the Athabasca River. What would the far north of Canada be without these steamers—the forerunners of the iron horse? Mr. Pike is only voicing the opinion of all travellers in the out-of-the-way regions of Western Canada when he compliments the Company on the efficient manner in which they are managed. The obstacles to navigation are of no ordinary kind. Reefs of rocks are often to be found lying half-hidden in the middle of the stream, and frequent rapids, and the consequent necessity for long portages, make the service one of much difficulty. The Indian and half-breed crews are not, moreover, easily "broken in," and it is therefore no small task to maintain communication; yet, as Mr. Pike says, "everything is done in a quiet and orderly way, and a very noticeable feature is the total absence of the swearing and profanity so essential to the well-being of a river steamer in other parts of the American continent."

But the most striking feature of Hudson's Bay rule in these remote regions are the posts which serve as very oases of civilization in a Sahara of plain and forest. To realize fully all that these posts mean to the extreme Northwest of Canada one must do as Mr. Pike did. Travel day after day away from all signs of human life in the midst of desolation; redolent

red Indians one's only companions; dependent solely upon the rifle and not for food; one's meals made up of half raw meat snatched from a dirty kettle, and no covering at night but the open heavens—live in this fashion for four months together, then come upon such a post as Fort Resolution at the foot of the Great Slave Lake and enjoy its hospitality, and you will never cease to bless the Hudson's Bay Company. Then you will feel what the enjoyment of a warm room is, what it is to have books and all ordinary comforts of life around you, and to know that so long as you stay in the house you have your own place, and the wind and snow have theirs outside. "For true hospitality," says Mr. Pike, "there is nothing in the world to beat the welcome back to a Hudson's Bay post in the north after one has made a long journey in the wilds; no need to trouble your head with the idea that you may not be wanted or that you will eat too much of the ever insufficient supplies sent in from the outside world to the officer in charge. What wonder, then, that to the traveller in this northern wild the simple letters 'H. B. C.' on an old red ensign have a world of meaning and consolation.

And not to the white man only. About a quarter of a century ago, when the country about the 49th parallel was in a state of political turmoil, the disturbance spread to the Indian population, and every vestige of civilization in the shape of a house paid the fiery penalty. Yet not every vestige of one house remained in an immense tract of land, and when asked the cause of its continued existence the Indian simply pointed to the red ensign with its mystic "H.B.C." sign and remarked, "That's the great White Mother." When Mr. Pike whiled away his time on the barren ground by chatting to his Indian comrades, he found it difficult to persuade them that the Hudson's Bay Company did not rule over the whole world. Marked as might be the magnificence of the Great White Mother, she was to the red man as nothing in importance when compared with the governor of the Company. "She may be your Queen," said the leader of the band, "as she gives you everything you want, good rifles and plenty of ammunition, and you say that you eat flour at every meal in your own country. If she were my Queen, surely she would send me sometimes half a sack of flour, a little tea, or perhaps a little sugar, and then I should say she was indeed my Queen. As it is, I would rather believe Mr. Ried, of Fort Province, who told me once that the earth went round and the sun stood still; but I myself have seen the sun rise in the morning and set at night for many years. It is wrong of you white men, who know how to read and write, to tell lies to poor men who live by the muzzle of their guns." And when one remembers the history of the dealings between the Company and the Indians, this reverence is not to be wondered at. The opportunities for sharp practice are endless, and the Indians know only too well what the "free trading" means which brings them gaudy clothing and dazzling tinsel in exchange for their rich furs, and leaves them in the woods, when the snow comes, without the necessities of life. In dealing with the company the Indian has always met with fair and even lenient dealing. The guns, ammunition, blankets, capotes, dress