

much warmer than any other. After that we wrap our legs in "mitases," a kind of strong leggings, to keep out the melting snow. Not unfrequently the thermometer drops to 50 degrees below zero. When the wind blows at that temperature it is not precisely pleasant. Our first stop is made at noon for a drink of warm tea. When the thermometer is very low it is difficult to make the fire burn properly; the smoke will not rise. As you lace the fire you are burning in front and your lack is like an ice-house. The great danger in these winter journeys is checked perspiration after being over heated. It is hard to dry yourself, but when you get too warm, you must take off your coat for a moment, lest the over-heating might bring on pleurisy. Now let me describe to you

A WINTER CAMP.

The short day is drawing to a close, the dogs are evidently tired. We are looking for a good place to camp, not on the ice but on terra firma. The dogs, quick to notice that you are going to camp, put on a spurt of strength and rush on the sledge up the river bank. As soon as we have fixed upon a good location, we hunt up fir boughs for bedding and wood for the fire. Then we shovel the snow off the frozen ground with our snowshoes handled as shovels, we clear off stones and bits of wood, and then make our beds of pine boughs laid flat one upon the other to the depth of a foot. Before placing the dry wood for the fire we note the direction of the wind, so that the smoke will not blow in our faces. One great advantage in these pathless woods is that everything is common property; the wood you choose for your fire is yours, what you leave is for others. By this time the fire is burning brightly. We harness the dogs. They run and leap about, burying their snouts in the snow and eating it for very joy. The dogs must be fed first. Each one of us campers takes a frozen fish from the provision bags, turns it once or twice over the fire, shouts "Caesar! Pompey! Bruno! Bull!" and flings it to the dogs, who make wild leaps for the scorched fish. Their meal is quickly devoured, and as soon as it is over they walk round and round in one spot, curl themselves up, snout on tail and toes, and sleep all night. If the cold becomes too great they snuggle up to us and try to lie on our feet. Meanwhile we are taking our meal of pemmican and strong tea, drying our feet and melting our frozen beards before the fire. As we look at each other our faces seem to be as red as fire. After a meal of pemmican you feel well and strong. It seems to you that you could digest hobnails. Before going to bed we have prayers in common. Missionary priests, owing to the hardship of walking so far in the snow, are allowed to substitute the Rosary for the breviary. So we tell our heads inside of our mittens, while tramping behind the sledge. When the night prayer is over now comes the time when we enjoy a good long smoke. It would be pharisaical to find fault with a missionary priest for indulging in the solace of the fragrant weed, which seems to soothe our tired frames and lonely minds. God knows we have enough to suffer, and I am sure He is not offended at this fragrant comfort. When it is time to sleep we fold our blankets like a letter, put our coats under the pillows, envelop ourselves in the letter-blanket, closing the flaps over our heads. Some cannot bear to cover nose and mouth, but those exposed parts must be very cold by the time morning comes. Being thus completely wrapped up, you begin to feel uncomfortably warm. If so, all you have to do is to uncover a little and look at the

AURORA BOREALIS

till the frosty air drives your head in again under the flap. On the first morning after camping out on fir boughs you feel a bit stiff, but that soon passes off and you end by sleeping much better than you would in a regular bed. The cold gets hardened. After some days of this life you shudder at the thought of a featherbed. Taking the climate all in all, we find it very healthy. Our missionaries live long. At Prince Arthur we have Father Gastie, O.M.I., who spent more than forty years near Fort Churchill and is now 74 years of age.

The next question is, On what do people subsist in that great Lone Land? Before the whites came, the Indians used to live on game, which was then much more plentiful than now. They made use of snares, pitfalls and enclosures into which they drove the game. Now that the white man is among them, they can get tobacco more easily, they like tea, they must have powder; thus they could no longer enjoy life were it not for the white traders. There are, however, certain kinds of white man's food which the Indians have no relish for. Once some Indians came upon a white man eating lettuce. They asked for some, and when he gave one of them a bunch, the Indian told his squaw to boil it. When they thought it must be sufficiently cooked they tasted it and threw it away in disgust. Then the husband said: "I have long tried to discover something and now I have discovered it. I often wondered why the missionaries came so far to this country of ours. I now see why it is. In their own country they are obliged

TO EAT LEAVES

like animals. They come here in order to get better food. That is the secret." The Indians are getting to like flour, now that it has become less expensive than it was in the early days. At first they complained that it burned their stomachs. Their principal resource, however, is fishing and hunting. For us missionaries of the north fish is the staple food. We fish both on the water and through the ice in winter. This latter is the easier way. We make two holes in the ice. Through the first one we pass a long pole, to which an equally long cord is attached. The current of the river floats the pole, clinging closely to the under surface of the ice, down to the second hole, where you seize it, pull the cord on which the net is already hung. It is easier thus to put out the nets in winter than in summer, for in winter there are no waves. Our hauls of fish are almost miraculous. I remember one morning when we caught fourteen hundred large fish. The nets are sometimes 40 fathoms in length. The excellent whitelish is very abundant. The

CARIBOO

are still very numerous. They are a species of small reindeer. The east of Athabaska Lake and the west of Hudson Bay are full of them. They do not come much in the places where moose are to be found, for the moose do not like the reindeer, because the latter make too much noise. I have travelled half a day with nothing but countless multitudes of cariboo in sight. They are quite as plentiful as the buffalo used to be. They come in vast herds westward from Hudson Bay about the middle of October to get shelter in the woods. Wherever they pass the snow is trampled hard as it would be in a larnyard filled with cattle. They are not large, the heaviest not weighing more than 150 pounds and the smaller ones are often only 80 pounds. They are excellent eating. They return eastward in May. The Indians kill a great many in the autumn when the cariboo swim across the great lakes. With his spear each Indian, following in his canoe, can easily kill fifteen, and as the bodies float, he ties them behind his canoe. The skin is as useful as the flesh. When the Indian needs meat during winter he goes out to his frozen reindeer pile, which is his open air ice-house, and hacks off what he wants. Another interesting thing is

WILD GOOSE HUNTING.

On the shores of Lake Athabaska there is grand sport in this line. There are wild geese, bustards, swans and ducks, but the ducks are despised when the larger winged game is at hand. The wild geese come down from the north, where they have spent the summer, to seek the gravel which is found on the lake shore and the river banks. This is the time the hunter chooses. They hide behind bright colored bushes. It is a grand sight to see these great birds settle in hundreds on the water after a long flight. The hunter holds his breath—one cough would be enough to disturb the splendid flock—and then he imitates the honking of the wild goose. All the birds lift their heads. There are sixty of them within short

range. He fires and often kills ten or fifteen before they can all fly away.

THE INDIANS

of the Northland are divided into many tribes. Our wood Indians embraced the Catholic religion much more readily than the Indians of the plains. The Sioux and Blackfoot are very hard to convert. At Battleford, where our Fathers have labored so long, the Indians are still plunged in paganism. However, the government schools, especially the boarding schools, where the children are separated from their parents, are doing much good. A new generation is springing up. If the government continues this good work the Indians will soon cease to be savages. The condition of the Indians in the north is quite different. They are just like white people. At Ile a la Croix there have been Grey Nuns these forty years. If you went there you would be surprised at the piety and civilized appearance of these redskins. They cut their hair short and dress like white people. One Sunday I noticed that 300 of them received Holy Communion and 80 were confirmed. They could sing hymns all day long. As there have been no Protestant missionaries in those parts, all the Indians are Catholics and none of them are heathens. These Indians have really attained that degree of civilization which is attainable in the forest. Furs are still as abundant as ever and bring higher prices. The Indians live comfortably and buy watches, etc.

THE LANGUAGE

of my northern Indians is very difficult. When first I was sent alone among them I found the study disheartening, but I was young, determined and vigorous. I wanted to speak to them and they did not understand me. By little and little they taught me the names of various objects which they pointed to, and gradually I became familiar with their language, and the more I learned it the more I admired it. Then I began to enjoy their company. They are never in a hurry, they can talk all day long about everything under the sun. They speak of Moses and pretend that they are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, or they tell fairy tales about huge beavers, or they relate the traditions of ancient wars. They are very anxious to know if white people ever kill each other as the Indians used to do. When you understand the Indians you come to

LOVE THEIR SOULS

and thus forget many shortcomings. I was seven years alone east of Athabaska Lake, 150 miles from the nearest priest. This was one of the greatest trials of my life. Occasionally I could visit the nearest neighbor, my companion in these missions, but to do so I had to travel with my dogs from Monday morning till Saturday. In summer, when the ice breaks up in Athabaska Lake, about the least of St. John the Baptist, June 24th, I used to spend two months with my companion at the principal mission house. But when we were separated, if I wanted to go to confession, I had to travel a week, which gave me plenty of time for preparation, and then travel back another week, which gave me plenty of time to perform my penance. On my relating this experience in Europe, my hearers often ask me, But what can you do if you happen to fall into sin? There is only one thing to do, beg pardon of God. In such circumstances a holy fear keeps us from sin. Besides we have

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

in our huts. It would be too bad if, after all that we have sacrificed for the love of God, we should offend Him seriously. Faith is lively in such cases. The true consolation of the missionary is the Blessed Sacrament. Take away the love of Jesus and you have no true missionaries. With faith you have everything, but it must be a strong, real, inward faith, not the faith of those who want to appear good. The missionary who is alone several thousand miles from his own country, must say to himself: My life is to be spent here. God will reward me if I do sacrifice myself. The missionary must accustom himself to confide his troubles to God. When his heart is full of sadness he will not seek comfort from the Indians, who are not sufficiently advanced in the spiritual life. He

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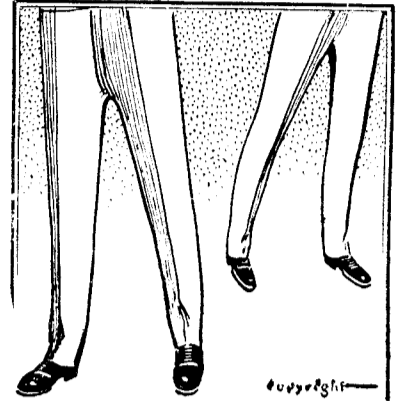
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