

slip through the patrols. The question was: who was the best man to send. A scout of Indian blood would be the most likely to get through the storm without losing his way, for the "red rider" travels by the wind—that is when darkness covers the trail, the Indian, like the moist-nosed moose, gets the feel of the wind on his face, and so gains the points of the compass. But on no condition can a scout of Indian blood be tempted to set out when a storm is brewing.

The choice fell on a young man from a home of luxury in an eastern city. He was a good pathfinder and one of the most trusted scouts. There was not yet much snow, so he set out on horseback with snow shoes strapped to his knapsack. The storm did not break for some hours and it was hoped that he had reached the police post. A week passed, but he did not return. Another messenger was sent and he found that the first had never reached his destination. When spring came, by chance, a detachment set out for the north, and on their journey the bones of a saddled horse were found on the lee side of a cliff. Then it was remembered that, on the night of the scout's ride, the wind had veered to the south-east, and the rider, travelling by the wind, knew that it should be on his back and turned north. The body was found on the bank of the river, where his horse had evidently given out. The brave fellow had pressed on till the river bank told him that he was off the trail. Then the long frost sleep had claimed him.

Faithful Mount Saves Life of Trooper

Almost as unfortunate was another scout sent with a despatch to one of the smaller outposts. It was towards spring, when the mid-day sun thaws the surface of the snow and the night frosts harden the melted crusts to a glare of ice as dazzling bright as the blinding flash of sunlight from polished steel. The thaw had crusted over the trail, and the scout had to keep a sharp eye on the way not to lose the path altogether. Suddenly the mid-day sun developed extraordinary hues. Magenta, purple, and black patches began to dance on the snow, alternately with wheels and rockets of cheese-colored fire. Then the light went black altogether, though the man knew that it was broad day. He had become snow-blind.

The only thing was to give his horse the bit. The horse stood stock still, and by that he knew that he had lost the trail altogether, for the broncho would have followed any visible path. He wheeled the horse about. It still refused to go on; and then the man inferred that the crust of ice had been so hard that the horse could not follow back the way it had come. That night the trooper slept under the saddle blankets, with the faithful horse standing sentry. For five days the policeman wandered blindly over the prairie losing all count of time, eating snow to quench his thirst, and sleeping in the holes that the broncho had pawed through the ice-crust to the undergrass. The trooper was now too weak to mount and keep the saddle. As a last hope the thought struck him that if he unsaddled his horse and turned it loose it might find its way back to the fort and so notify his friends that he was lost. He did this, but the faithful creature refused to leave the man lying on the snow, and stood over him in spite of all his efforts to drive it off. The pathetic scene enacted between these two, the blind and half-dead man and the affectionate horse, well able to look after itself, can better be imagined than described. On the sixth day the mail-carrier found the pair. The trooper was severely frozen, but rider and horse lived to see many another day's service.

Dealing with Indian Criminals

In the early days of the Mounted Police the prison where criminals from the Territories were confined was at Winnipeg, 2,000 miles by pack trail from the outermost police post. To have kept a horse thief at the scene of his action in a reserve of several hundred Indians, with only a defence of twenty or thirty policemen, would have invited disaster. In one case, scouts discovered

that the Blackfeet were planning to rescue their brave as he was being driven across the plains. A detachment of police rode away east without the prisoner. Quietly another detachment left at night and also rode away to the east. Finally a third detachment with the prisoner slipped out from Fort Macleod at midnight. The first two companies had spread themselves out in a patrol with relays of fresh horses for the entire distance between Fort Macleod and Fort Walsh, which was the next eastern fort, only stopping long enough to hitch fresh teams to the wagons, the escort had dashed across two hundred miles to Fort Walsh before the Blackfeet knew that their warrior had been carried off.

The Police in War

By 1882 the Mounted Police had become responsible for the lives of the people of the entire West, and for property scattered over 375,000 square miles. Trading posts were developing into towns, and cattlemen were bringing large herds into the country. At this time it became necessary to increase the force to 500 men. Permanent headquarters were established at Regina, substantial barracks instead of the log cabins and stockades which existed at other posts, being erected.

In 1885, the Riel rebellion gave the police plenty of work, twelve men being killed and an equal number wounded in the first engagement with the rebels at Duck Lake. A few years after the rebellion the force was increased to 1,100 men, the maximum strength to which it has ever attained.

One of the greatest achievements of the force was their persuading Sitting Bull and his six thousand Sioux to return and surrender to the United States authorities, after the massacre of General Custer and his troops, even when commissioners from the United States had failed in accomplishing this.

Police Duties are Being Extended

The duties of the police are being extended farther and farther. Forts are established in the farthest north, some isolated, such as Fort Churchill on Hudson's Bay, which is 700 miles from any other trading post. Others are closer together, as on the trail from White Horse to Dawson, where they are only twenty miles apart. A Police report recently received at Ottawa from Herschell Island, in the Arctic Ocean, was conveyed 1,000 miles by dog sleigh, 1,000 miles by water, and 3,000 miles by rail. It took over three months to make the journey.

As soon as the rush began to the Klondyke gold fields, a troop of police was sent up to the Yukon to maintain order. The cosmopolitan population of the mining towns marvelled at the adequacy of the force, as new settlers in western Canada do yet.

Boundary patrols are still maintained to intercept the horse thief who drives a ranch band across the line to be quickly sold. On the boundary patrol, the Police travel annually more than a million miles. The "rustler" who appropriates unbranded animals for his own herds, must also be watched, traced, and punished. Prairie fires that might sweep away the year's feed for the cattle and horses, must be guarded and checked. Foreign settlers who know not the laws nor the climate of the country, must be advised and frequently helped. All these duties distribute the 79 detachments of Royal North West Mounted Police from the International Boundary to the very gates of the Arctic in the Yukon.

Bravery Still Shown by Redcoats.

Even now there is opportunity for the display of those qualities of fortitude and bravery which has made the name "Mounted Police," famous throughout the world. One notable instance is the ride of Sergeant Tucker for sixty miles at a temperature away below zero to capture the murderer of Tucker Peach. The "Riders of the Plains," in their mid-winter patrols, frequently have to face the blizzards and Arctic colds that sometimes sweep upon Alberta from the north. Their reward is in the welcome assistance they often are able to render the lonely homesteader who by accident and sickness has been left in a precarious condition.



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