

As I have before with other people, I try to get Creyke to name a favorite valley in this gigantic ocean of heaped-up land almost too enormous to comprehend—some splendid retreat. But he doesn't respond. His conception seems to be very different. His own assigned territory is twice as large as Delaware, limited though he feels it to be. He didn't huddle somewhere in a lovely valley; he traveled through; he went everywhere. There was a range of mountains for hunting caribou and another for hunting sheep—maybe still another for goat. There was a river for salmon and a river for trout. There were rivers after these rivers and ranges after these ranges, uncountable vivid valleys that were a heaving, pelagic green. Once the knack was acquired, it was nothing to go for a month or the summer, lazing along as calmly as a long-distance swimmer, and never encounter an end.

Nowadays everybody has shot their dog team, so if a boy wants to go out in the winter for moose, he borrows Ah Clem's son's dog and Dan McPhee's dog, Mike William's dog and John Creyke's dog, and combines them. Sheep are the glamor game because they live high and because they're high-strung. For some reason, goats don't look up, so that unless you kick a stone down on them, you can stalk them successfully by getting above. But moose are the beef of the north because you can eat the meat day in, day out. Sheep, even caribou, after four or five meals you lose the taste for.

Since I roused him out of bed and since he has given me enough of his time, he goes indoors to wake his wife and get the breakfast fire going. He stands erect as a captain of industry, and although he can't read or write, he's the cosmopolite of the town.



THE HUDSON'S BAY CLERK is a frail functionary. For most of his life he has switched about among isolated posts such as Telegraph Creek, and has grown as pallid as a cave creature. Moveless, friendless, he does without either sun or company. And the one schoolmaster I've met appears to have been completely bleached out by the long winter. He played some chess with the Catholic priest but read very little. He's a zestless young man, but does like the kids. He says they have good imaginations, if little or no curiosity to learn; he hammers the stuff into them. Says the parents get drunk constantly, as though they only existed for that, and the kids sometimes are neglected for days. It's interesting that the only antlers in town belong to him. It's so virginal here that game is still meat to everyone else, not a trophy.

They're a grim bunch, some of these institutional whites—the trudging pastor, the scolding nurse with her bobbed black hair, like a neurotic nanny, and the ashen clerk. The permanent people like the McPhees are wood sprites by contrast, or else witty, mischievous oracles, like Mr. Wriglesworth. They *are* wood sprites. Nothing goes on, and yet the village is carbonated; it tingles. Blithe old codgers walk down the steps from the terraces, like Rumpelstiltskin. For an old trapper to have any neighbors at all is a luxury. The resilience, the self-sufficiency, overflows.



A. J. MARION isn't particularly like that. He was a versatile hobo, a cabinetmaker and carpenter, and he left Ontario for Detroit, then Rochester, then Jamestown, Virginia, where he helped build an exposition that Teddy Roosevelt opened. A pal and he flipped to see whether they'd go to New York or St. Louis. St. Louis won. Later they proceeded to Seattle, where they were sitting around the union hall one time when the business agent came in and said jobs were going begging in Juneau. "Where's Juneau?" Of course they went, though, and sitting around the bunkhouse in Juneau, they heard about the Stikine. They bought eight dogs, two sleds and a ton of grub, and came up on the ice in 1913 (already he was past thirty). From Telegraph Creek they went on for 150 miles into the Cassiar Mountains. The creek which they staked was barren, but they worked so hard that World War I had been on for almost a year before they heard about it.

Marion has a horrendous reputation in town; he bites people's heads off. His house is a level below Dan McPhee's, and although his door is wide open the whole summer, he's left to his own devices by the others. I was told that the early afternoon was the time to chance him, when he would have warmed to the day but not yet heated up. I found a hard-boiled, amusing, quick-memorial man who reminds me of a circus straw boss I once knew. He opens up to a silent listener. We got out the photograph albums of mustached friends and plump, self-effacing half-breed women. Because he was a money-man too, he talks about the rich scions who arrived on the riverboat to get drunk and hunt, the Mellons, the Schlitzes. A Smithsonian collector who was a crack shot with a .22 searched for bushrats. One squeak of his lips in the right location and out popped a horde.

Marion is the "hard" variety of bush professional, like my Hazelton friend Jack Lee was. *continued on page eight*