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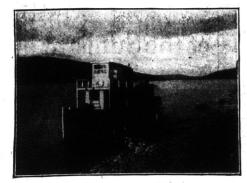
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The Valley of the Peace River. That the Wards might gaze on the country spread out below, the tired horses were pulled up before making the descent of seven hundred to the "Crossing." Although the scenes were new to them, yet it seemed as if they had arrived in a homeland. The waters of the Peace and Smoky Rivers were like silver streaks, while the hills and dark evergreens reminded Ada of her own Laurentian hills in far Quebec. Down, down, the horses went until the level of the river was reached, and the main street



House boat on the Peace River

of the little town building upon its banks. A bank in a wooden shack, hotels (of sorts), a small mission church, stores and a few houses formed the nucleus of a place predicted to dewelop into an importantly placed town "when the railroad came."

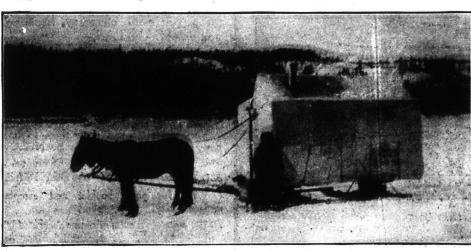
The "Peace Hotel" opened its doors

Food seemed at famine prices to one mouth-organs—the following morning accustomed to the plentiness of an eastern farm, but on the other hand, the

amount of game seemed marvellous. The Peace River was the highway, a river steamer plying between the Hudson's Bay trading posts, while the inevitable Hudson's Bay store was the centre of life at the Crossing, and a few Northwest Mounted Police held their wonderful sway over their district.

The first Christmas came and found Ada anxiously pacing the floor as Wallace was days overdue from his last prospecting trip. What could have happened? Only something serious to leave her alone on such a day, a box from home had come, and the dinner was arranged as much like old times as Ada could do it. A neighbor begged Ada to leave the house and come to hers, but no coaxing could prevail, in case Wallace should arrive at a shut up house. The afternoon passed, then night came, and Ada was thankful for the company of the neighbor's child. Two days Wallace drove in with a lame horse, and the tears had not come during the agony of uncertainty, flowed for joy at Wallace's safety. The poor Christmas dinner was warmed again, and eaten as a thanksgiving one.

New Year's Day was to be a grand event in the annals of the Crossing, and a wonderful charity ball was to be given at the hotel, to raise money for a cottage hospital. The little town was full of men in for the holidays, in parties, or twos and threes, but more of lonely men, desperately lonely men, determined though strangers all, to have as good a



"Caboose" in which the ward travelled

to the weary travellers, who felt it time as possible in the young apology of would be better to get to know every- a city. A great baking and cooking one as quickly as possible, instead of went on for days, and much scouring keeping more aloof in their own camp. around for chairs and crockery. After a few days prospecting about, ar- On the day itself, the little church rangements were made to rent one of the houses for the winter, as the owner was leaving for Calgary. No better piece of luck could have befallen the Wards, as with a comfortable fixed up familiar hymns. But the affair of the house, they could endure many of the evening was to be the cementing offer of winter discomforts of their surroundings, and were much envied by others who ing" to the strangers within their gates. Were rapidly pushing into the "Cross- There was a tremendous furbishing up were rapidly pushing into the "Cross-

first, but refused to be tempted by the high wages offered, feeling that he must keep his own aim and object in view-

timber limits and a mill. With a comfortable home to return to, and good horses to drive, the Wards pushed on to see Dunnegan for themselves. The country was very fine and quite parklike woods were driven through affording a good supply of fuel to the settlers who had already studded the trail with their log cabins. These new homes were just what the different types of women made them; some were desolate, others, while possessing no more much better, for the attempt to do as worldly goods, had an air of comfort. In one cabin, the Wards found the housewife had made curtains and covers of bright wool. Dunnegan in spite of the fair prophecies for it, seemed very blank and dreary, and with only a womanis instinct to guide her, Ada urged Wallace to settle once for all at Peace River Crossing. After returning there, Wallace often taking a man with him, left for harder trips, and Ada's was the weary role of waiting. Neighbors offered being half breed wives.

was crowded with many reasons, and with feelings only known to themselves, but there was no doubt as to the attraction to all of the friendship by the citizens of the "Cross-

by the guests, and searching of long Wallace could have had work from stored baggage. No one could boast an entire new outfit, but a new tie, or a pair of old evening slippers for one, a collar last laundered in an eastern city, or a fancy vest, made quite a fine effect, while the only concession one man could make for such a "real party" was to shave off his beard. The squaws and half breed women were gaily bedecked with ribbons, quite eclipsing the half dozen white women and Ada, who had looked in vain for the arrival of the long delayed freight boxes.

No one was very much the worse for the gathering, and many were very those in choicer surroundings were doing that very same night. The dancing was fast and furious, and the "grub' well washed bagging scalloped with disappeared like melting snow in a hot sun. It wasn't much, poor fellows, to meet with such a generous response, but it would have taken a great deal of enticement "back East" to have cleared three hundred dollars.

About the middle of winter, Wallace was completely discouraged in his attempt to find the timber limits he needed, and he decided there was nothing to to be helpful, the majority of the women be done but go down to Edmonton and see the provincial head of the crown

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