

ROMANCE OF EXPLORATION

man was pushed back with jeers. Sobbing with horror, Hearne begged the Indians to put their victim out of pain. The rocks rang with the mockery of the torturers. She was speared to death before Hearne's eyes. On that scene of indescribable horror the white man could no longer bear to look. He turned toward the river, and there was a spectacle like a nightmare. Some of the Eskimo were escaping by leaping to their hide boats, and with lightning strokes of the double-bladed paddles dashing down the current to the far bank of the river; but sitting motionless as stone was an old, old woman—probably a witch of the tribe—red-eyed as if she were blind, deaf to all the noise about her, unconscious of all her danger, fishing for salmon below the falls. There was a shout from the raiders; the old woman did not even look up to face her fate; and she, too, fell a victim to that thirst for blood which is as insatiable in the redskin as in the wolf-pack."

"It is remarkable," says Bishop Bompas, "that there is a bird in those parts which the Indians there call the 'alarm bird,' or 'bird of warning'—a sort of owl which hovers over the heads of strangers and precedes them in the direction they go. If these birds see other moving objects, they flit alternately from one party to the other with screaming noise, so that the Indians place great confidence in the alarm bird to apprise them of the approach of strangers, or to conduct them to herds of deer or musk oxen.

"Mr. Hearne remarks that all the time the Indians lay in ambush, preparatory to the above-mentioned horrid massacre, a large flock of these birds were continually flying about and hovering alternately over the Indian and Eskimo tents, making a noise to awake any man out of the soundest sleep. The Eskimo, unhappily, have a great objection to being disturbed from sleep, and will not be awakened—an obstinacy which seems to have cost that band their lives."

Hearne, like Columbus, was not to have the honour of

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