

6 miles to an open and safe spot for a camp. Big Bear had four men killed by the explosion of a shell in a rifle pit, but, as usual, there were no Indians to be seen to fire at—only the smoke from their rifles. The next day, General Strange sent Major Steele's mounted corps of 80 men to see if Big Bear were still in position, and he found that the Indians had retired northwards towards the vast forest which stretches north, east and west. General Middleton, hearing of this action at Frenchman's Butte, started with all the mounted men available, about 230, including Steele's corps, which we caught up in two days, to follow Big Bear. He took me as his staff officer, and one A.D.C. We took with us only what we could carry on our saddles, viz., a blanket, hair-brush, and water-proof, etc., and two or three wagons with food and supplies. These we intended to transfer to pack horses if necessary, our indefatigable Colonel Bedson having improvised the pack-saddles from them. The country was unsurveyed and practically unknown. We passed through a small Indian reservation of Chippewayans, of whom we could only find two. They could, or would, tell us little about Big Bear's band, but they both agreed that there were about 12 white prisoners. On this day about 20 of Big Bear's prisoners came in to Fort Pitt; they had escaped the day of the fight, and had been wandering about Frenchman's Butte. Some of their stories of murders and outrages were heartrending, and they agreed that there were some more prisoners, notably the families of McLean and Mann, Hudson's Bay employees. We soon found traces of the lady prisoners, for at every Indian camp we passed there were small pieces of linen tied to the branches as signals to us. Big Bear was evidently now getting frightened, for he got rid of most of his impedimenta. We found many carts, clothes, furs, pots and pans, and other scraps littered about the trail. At the first one was a large circular booth of branches, where a sun dance had been held. The principal object of the dance being to promote grown-up boys to the rank of braves, after they have shown their stoicism under various forms of torture. On the second day we arrived at Loon Lake, 50 miles north of Fort Pitt, a most complicated jumble of forest, water and swamp, here called muskeg. As we spent several days there, I made a rough survey of it. Just as we got up to it we met Steele's scouts, who reported that the previous day they came upon the Indians striking camp on the shores of the lake. They said they killed 15 Indians as they were fording the narrow part of the lake A. but they did not dare to follow.

Big Bear's band consisted of Crees, who were accustomed to the open prairie, and we believed that now they had got into country which they did not know at all. Also, everyone said that Plain Indians were quite nonplussed in the woods, and vice versa. That a Prairie Indian, although accustomed to make a living on the open plains, would starve in the woods; and this is really what came to pass. We followed the trail across the ford and round the lake