

A BIVOUAC ON THE SKEENA.

C BATTERY'S EXCHANGE FROM THE PARADE SQUARE TO THE VIRGIN FOREST.

The advantage of their Novel Equipment—Valuable campaigning experience—A great Indian camp—A Missionary's idea of his mission.

(From a special correspondent.)

SKEENA RIVER, B.C., 29th July, 1888.—Though luxuriating in a lovely climate it cannot be said that C Battery, Regiment Canadian Artillery, has been particularly blessed since its departure from the East. Last November the Battery were deposited in a large building known as the Agricultural Hall, and during the winter, owing to the airy state of the structure, suffered more from cold, it was said, than they ever did in Kingston or Quebec; and only a week ago H.M.S. "Caroline" packed them ashore at the mouth of the Skeena, right in the virgin forest. Luckily this is the fine month in these parts; so every officer and man set boldly to work, and in the course of a few days a large piece of ground was cleared and numerous log houses had sprung up, carefully stuffed with moss and covered with tarpaulins. The advantages reaped by this experience cannot be overrated for here were learned lessons essential for all in time of trouble but to learn which no opportunity is afforded at other times, though such a thing could readily be done almost anywhere in Canada. Here, instead of the "extension motions," the men might be seen wielding the axe and educating themselves in a hundred little artifices absolutely necessary for any campaign in America. It is on an expedition of this kind that one becomes amazed at the ignorance of the parade ground soldier, and finds how thoroughly useless he is, and utterly incapable of even looking after himself. His contrast to those who hail from the country districts of Quebec and Ontario is most marked. While those lusty fellows are full of energy and fully conversant with every detail connected with work in the open, the typical popular soldier sits bewildered on a stump.

The equipment of the Battery is somewhat novel, being entirely on the miner principle, affording in fact the only possibility of working in such a country. It is wonderful to see the freedom with which the men do their work under such circumstances. The Provincial Government seeing the necessity of a serviceable outfit provided canvas clothing for all ranks, and then the reduction of weight was arranged by doing away with entire valise, belts and all. Each man's squad bag was rolled in coat and blanket and the whole wrapped in his waterproof sheet, with the bed straps so fixed as to act as slings on the shoulders. The tin plates and cups fitted in each camp kettle and so the canteen was not required. Cartridge belts of canvass, carrying about 40 rounds, were worn round the waist; and thus the sword bayonet, useless for the woods, was left behind. The cleaning rods were replaced by a string. In this condition travelling through the woods became easy work compared with a regulation marching order parade even on the hard roads. The men having nothing to look after but each his bundle, instead of the multifarious articles of the ordinary parade, endless confusion on board ship and on landing was avoided; and it was with surprise many capable of judging noticed the apparent ease with which the troops disembarked. Not only was the space taken up by the soldiers on ship board greatly reduced, but *no losses on the way* were reported, a blessing seldom experienced.

At Port Essington, about two miles from the camp, is a village containing about 1,000 Indians, assembled from all parts to fish. They are lusty, strong fellows and make a deal of money selling to the canneries. A man can easily average \$10 or \$15 per day. This appears high to a soldier. Though well to do they are most beastly in their habits, and the village is nothing more than a cess-pool for every description of filth and garbage. As usual many of the whites about are a depraved lot. Such men are the cause of all the trouble that ever arises, often the case in other places than the Skeena. The writer had the pleasure of meeting a most sensible missionary, who in the course of a long talk on the Indian, remarked: "Sending us missionaries among the Indians is only money thrown away. Leave them alone and they are far better." He is the most enlightened or outspoken man of that description I ever met; doubtless many of his cloth think the same, but they don't say so.

(Special correspondence Montreal Witness.)

PORT ESSINGTON, B.C., 30th July.

The "Caribou Fly" arrived here all right after a week's steaming through some of the most magnificent scenery in the world. As she returns immediately, I have only time to send you a short account of the Indian trouble as it appears here up to date.

While there is no doubt that the Skeena Indian disturbance has been overrated, it must not be concluded that the affair is in any respect trivial. The Indians have exhibited the usual phenomena of such excitements, and roused by one or two murders and a deal of tall talk have gone through all the phases of frenzy, ungoverned rage and passion which among red men usually mark the coming of a carnival of unreasoning, blind homicide and perhaps war. The special constables must have been dangerously indiscreet or they would never have blundered into the slaughter of Jim, who was a most amiable character and a very fine example of the British Columbian Indian. Washburn, who was in charge of the posse of constables, has much to answer for, in not foreseeing the danger himself and especially in leaving it to one who was, if possible, even less fitted than a coward to quiet a dangerous disturbance. Jim was more sinned against than sinning. To one who knows Indian character, and who allows for Indian customs and the absence of regularly constituted authority, Jim's action, incited by his wife—a regular termagant of the worst type—in killing a medicine man appears not altogether unjustifiable. Certainly the killing of Jim was most reprehensible. The later acts in the drama, namely, the slaying by an Indian crazy with excitement Mrs. Jim's father, the killing by the village chief of the murderer as a measure for the public welfare and the perilous arrest of the chief—were all misfortunes to the community. Jim was perfectly willing to follow the Indian custom and pay for the blood he had shed, and any white man with a proper amount of courage, firmness and forbearance, could have arrested him without disturbing the peace. The want of such a man with authority was deplorable. The Mounted Police throughout the North-West Territories have never failed in keeping the peace and enforcing respect for the law in such emergencies. As a result of all this blundering some most troublesome work will have to be done.

In the first place Mrs. Jim must be arrested, which will be a very disagreeable job. Next a hornet's nest sixty miles from Hazelton must be entered and a more difficult arrest, that of the murderers of two women, must be effected, at least before the snow flies. When the bulk of the Indians return from the season's work to their homes in the several villages near Hazelton there will be feasting, and feasting generally means rioting, and rioting means murder. So at Christmas there will be trouble anyway. To avoid trouble at these feasts, the native custom of Potlach, must be forbidden. But that again may cause a disturbance, so that trouble seems inevitable. But Supt. Roycroft is on the way with twelve constables, and there are five there already, and these eighteen men in all ought to be able to keep the peace. Supt. Roycroft is considered a reliable man, and supposed to have all the qualities needed to override the bad tendencies of these excitable Children of the River. I think he has a job before him that will put him to the test. But there is another view of the question. Gold miners, to the number of about forty, generally winter at Hazelton, and these are just as efficient as soldiers; perhaps more so for the sort of work on hand. It is to be hoped they will not kill any Indians by mistake this season, because such a mistake might, under the present condition of things, put an end to all hopes of quietness among the Indians for years. Both the Rev. Mr. Field and Mr. Clifford, of the Hudson's Bay Company, are respected by the community. Here on the spot the possibility of war seems absurd; the very mention of the idea raises a laugh at Fort Essington. Any anxiety entertained is regarding the three white ladies, but the general opinion is that they may rest in absolute confidence that the trouble will end as it began in that safety valve of human explosiveness, talk.

THE PACIFIC COUNTRY.

Though, perhaps, not as interesting for the moment as the Indian trouble, information regarding the Pacific coast is far more important to the people of Canada than news of any temporary disturbance. The west coast of Canada is a country of surpassingly grand scenery, its mineral wealth is suspected to be immense, in timber it is rich, and its seas teem with fish. Yet it is an almost utter solitude. Its few people are so thoroughly engrossed in business, to the exclusion of pleasure, that they seem to delight only in the worship of mammon and to forget manhood, nature and the hereafter. From Victoria to Behm's canal there are eight hundred miles of superb scenery. A sail along the coast is a continually changing panorama of the finest landscapes. As a Yankee would put it, the inhabitants have, on the average, more of the picturesque per head than the whole Eastern population have in their wildest dreams. The ordinary American tourists do not see very much of the grandest scenery as they pass in a business-like and unobservant way up the main channel, which is the regular tourist route. As they are the only pleasure seekers on this coast there remains a fine chance for some solitary observer of the works of God and the habits of men, as exhibited in the fiords and Sounds where are found the logging camps and salmon canneries visited only by our two Canadian steamers. These steamers are very little vessels, hideous and grimy, but loaded up to the