

When he spoke it was not a command, it was an expressed wish, yet his slightest wish was carried out without a murmur. The men saw he often took the heaviest end himself, and at nights, when all were dead tired, and had crept to their blankets in the tent, he would still be studying maps, and writing by the light of the fire.

The young surveyors were boyish and keen, but fearfully plagued by the swarms of mosquitoes, gnats, sandflies, ants;—all the myriad hosts of insect life that take no rest either day or night, and are determined that no man shall do so either. It was an unending, weary fight against them, and many a night the boys dozed by the fire, instead of going to the tent, for the smoke kept them off a little anyway.

The two Americans were more hardened to the mosquitoes, but both suffered from rheumatism in the rainy weather, the result of hardihood.

All wore dark flannel shirts, mackinaw coats and overalls, and some wore moccasins. They all looked burnt and brown, and very weary.

It had been a trying day. A portage of eight miles had been necessary. The Indians shouldered the canoes, but the other men had the tools, tripods, instruments, blankets, and provisions. The going had been very bad. Almost impassable muskegs and creeks up to their waists; or else over timber, the windfalls of generations. This was infinitely worse than either muskeg or deep creeks, this jumping from log to log, with a heavy pack on your back, keeping your balance all the while. To make matters worse the rain had started. Louis's burden had been lightened to enable him to get ahead quickly to the camping-place, and prepare supper for them.

To-morrow night they hope to reach the junction of the House and the Athabasca Rivers. Here was a stopping-house of a sort, and for one night they could have a roof over

their heads if they wished. Other survey parties were coming in, and they were almost sure to meet someone they knew; it would be a welcome change after months in the wilderness, seeing no fresh faces, and hearing no news.

Still, Douglas Ward was rather nervous of stopping-houses. Half-breeds and Indians are notorious gamblers, and at a stopping-house he was never sure that the canoes, provisions, guns, etc., would be forthcoming in the morning. When an Indian begins to gamble, his favourite canoe, or his precious gun or rifle, have just the same value as his last cent; he will bet one just as easily as the other.

Douglas had had this gambling propensity of the Indians impressed upon his mind in Fort McMurray in the summer. He saw eight solemn old Chiefs sitting in a circle on the grass, while one stood by them, waiting. Thinking to hear some words of wisdom from this Great Council, he drew near and listened. There was not a sound, and it seemed most mysterious. They had an old red blanket stretched all over their feet and hands, and under this were strange weird movements. Suddenly the Chief standing by made a quick jump and seized something moving under the blanket, speaking excitedly in Blackfoot as he did so. Douglas understood enough to know that he was betting one cayuse on something. He was taken on at once, while many smiles went round the circle, and great struggles under the blanket.

But the cayuse-better held on to the object he had grabbed, and it was brought to light amid the delighted titterings and headshakings of all the solemn old Chiefs. It was a hand, tightly clenched. When forced open there was exposed the silver paper cap off a salt bottle.

Over this valuable article Douglas discovered that a whole bunch of cayuses had changed hands that day!