

Humours of a Survey Party.

By R. O. S.

There were thirteen of us, twelve men and a dog. The previous year number thirteen had been unlucky, for a certain contempt for tripods and a love of the chase after jack rabbits had prompted him to smash up the transit. Consequently, this year he was required to stay behind in camp whenever we went to work "out on the line."

In addition to the above-mentioned, there were three tents, three wagons, a buckboard, eight horses and a gramophone. This was an outfit which is perhaps representative of some fifty or sixty survey parties that are every year scattered throughout the great Canadian West.

These parties are all working under instructions from a chief domiciled in a red brick building situated at the corner of Slater and Metcalfe streets, in the City of Ottawa, and known as the Surveyor-General of Dominion Lands.

The instructions and work of the different parties is as varied as the immense country over which their operations extend — stretching as they do from the International Boundary to the great unknown North land, and from the Eastern boundary of Manitoba to the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia.

There are "parties" and "parties" in the Topographical Survey — as in politics:

There are the parties who merely divide the land up into quarter-sections. Most of this work is let out under contract, rigid inspection being made of the work to see that it is correct.

Then there are parties extending base lines into what is practically unknown country. This work is to a great extent exploratory, and needless to say, great hardship and difficulties have sometimes to be endured.

Yet other parties are surveying town sites. The geometrical regularity of the streets of a town in the West must be a source of wonder to a visitor from one of the older countries where for centuries it has been the custom first to build the houses, then after a century or two plan the town. If town site surveyors had been in existence and in general practice a few centuries ago, many a delightful old street in many an Old Country town would not to-day be in existence.

Yet other parties are busily engaged retracing surveys that were made 25 or 30 years ago, whilst still others are busy making corrections to surveys made in days when the high standard of accuracy required at the present day was not in force.

I may state that a surveyor must not only survey the land, he must also spy it out, for he has to report fully upon water supplies, the character of the soil and what is suitable for, the economic and climatic conditions, game supply, minerals, and so forth, in each township surveyed. Also, he does not return with mere desultory evidence in the shape of large bunches of graves as those spies of old returned to Joshua; instead, he is required to submit a very substantial report which eventually finds its way into a blue book.

* * *

It is doubtful if one can find a more cosmopolitan collection of men than that of the average survey party. Our party was no exception to the rule.

We boasted besides a Yorkshire bartender and a St. Neats' butcher, "Charlie" from Minnesota, whose sobriquets of "Hawkeye" and "Windy" betrayed respectively his