

which poets sing, when men are thought to have naught but gladness in their hearts! Spring came, the hardest part of the whole year in the North Country and the bane of savage life; the days when the gods of heat and cold wrestle to the death for supremacy. The warm beams of the sun unloose, during the day, the bonds which nightly grip the country at the frost king's bidding, and they melt the little trickling streams along the rivers and lakes, rotting the ice and making it impossible to travel. Then at night the frost king struggles to regain that which he has lost during the day, freezing the water and putting a thin crust of ice over the thawing snow. And, as in all mighty conflicts, the humbler creatures bear the greatest suffering, so in this struggle between summer and winter, Maskwa and his family bowed and crouched as under the weight of a heavy hand. Trapping was impossible, for the snow upon which his steel traps were set became water during the day, and at night that water became ice, binding the springs so tightly as to make them immovable. And hunting was a foredoomed failure, for the larger animals, if by chance they happened to come within range, were speedily warned of their danger by the sound of snow-shoes breaking through the thin crust of ice. The birds had not yet come.

EVERY day at the first glimmer of dawn, Maskwa left the tepee in search of food, and every night he stumbled back weary, discouraged—empty-handed. One by one the train dogs were killed and eaten, which was more of a kindness than a sacrifice, for the unhappy creatures were starving no less than their masters. But to an Indian, killing his dog is as much of a sacrifice as that of an Arab killing his horse. True, the latter rises to poetic flights of eulogistic song about his beast of burden, while the former, inheriting the virtue of undemonstrativeness for generations, apparently treats the dog with indifference and cruelty. A mere matter of climate and temperament! The Indian is sincerely attached to his dogs, as can be well proven by any one who has the temerity to ill-treat one of them.

The day came when Maskwa left the tepee hungry in the morning, and as the sun climbed higher in the heavens, he scrambled with increasing weakness and difficulty across fallen trees. Toward evening he sank often to the soggy earth and lay absolutely still for a long time. He was able to traverse but a small number of miles, and each morning that number grew smaller. His squaw and the papooses had eaten the sinews of their snow-shoes in the agony of their hunger, and when the tired chief returned empty-handed at night, the

family gnawed their moose-hide moccasins in a futile attempt to beguile their burning stomachs from such ceaseless torment. For several days they had eaten the willow buds and stripped the outer bark from the spruce, nibbling at the tender inner bark and finding momentary comfort in feeling something between their teeth. But they cried for food!

Maskwa sat in the middle of the tepee beside a small fire wrapped in his blanket, apparently unmoved. The thought that for days he had looked closer in the face of Death than any of his family knew was wonderful comfort to him—it argued that he was still strong. But that one day soon, he

eyes of a million stars, look down upon Your Red Children and send us food! I, Maskwa, have kept faith with You and believed in You even as the white Prayer Man commanded; I know that not a bird falls to the ground unless You will it, and I know that everything happens just as You say. But Great White Father, have mercy here, now! I am a man and a hunter, I am a brave of the Crees and I do not fear to starve and die. I am ready to suffer for my family, if You will it so. But on them, have mercy! Take pity on my wife and children—look You upon Esque-sis, my youngest, behold her in her great agony, and send us food! Ugh, Jesu, notti-cottan-myin-mitzuen!"

Still trembling with emotion which he did not seek to hide, Maskwa called his squaw to stir up the fire, fill the camp kettle with snow and set out their few plates in readiness.

"I have prayed to the Great White Father," he said, "prayed as the Prayer Man taught me. I have called Him in our last need, and He has seen that I did not worry Him without striving to fight against hunger, alone. I have sent a message of love and faithfulness to heaven"—he waved his hand toward the ascending smoke—"I have asked for a little food, and I know that He will surely send it."

THE moaning ceased; each person in the tepee felt that a crisis had been passed and that relief was at hand. The snow in the kettle melted, it steamed and began to boil, and Maskwa, crouching beside the fire with a wolfish look upon his gaunt features, watched the plates in turn—the plates upon which he implicitly believed food would, at any moment, appear. They all sat tense and watched and waited.

And waited.

And waited!

A smothered sob from one of the children roused the chief. He looked slowly round the starving, strained faces and nodded confidently.

"Go to sleep, wife! Go to sleep, my children," he admonished, softly. "See, the White God does not like us to watch Him work His charms. I will call upon Him again and tell Him that we understand, that we will sleep, and in the morning, then we will surely find food!"

The fire burned low; one by one the embers died out, leaving the tepee in darkness save for the light of the stars which shone on in eternal silence. Only a moan from the squaw, or the whimpering of a little child broke the crushing stillness.

Hunger and the anticipation of having food stirred them up in the icy dawn of a gray morning. With one accord they reached out toward the kettle

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And lo, stood a band of moose.

would go off into the sodden, stirring wastes and not return, he also knew full well. He watched the smoke as it found its way upward through the opening in the top of the tepee, and beyond that he was dull conscious of the pitiless light of a million stars. For two hours he sat thus, listening to the incessant moaning of his squaw and the elder children, to the piteous appeal of the smaller ones as they begged for food, and he watched with immovable features but burning eyes Esque-sis, the child of his old age, tossing in convulsions of starvation.

Suddenly something within him snapped, and with a mighty cry, Maskwa cast aside his mask of indifference. He rose to his knees and with tears streaming down his lined cheeks, he raised his hands and cried.

"Oh, Great White Spirit, who sees us with the

When Nova Scotia Had a Navy

Will those who think that the "Colonies" have not yet taken part in the Defence of the Empire, read this Historic Tale of Captain Tonge, by a Professor of Dalhousie University?

By ARCHIBALD MacMECHAN

ON the eastern coast of Cape Breton lie two small islands called Isle Madame and Petit de Grat, known to all sea-captains as "Peter the Great." The narrow inlet between them was the scene of a fight which deserves to be remembered, because the victory went with the weaker side. It was courage, skill and resolution pitted against long odds; and, for once, Providence was not on the side of the big battalions.

In the year 1781 France had come out openly in aid of the revolted British colonists in America. From the first, she had supplied Washington with the munitions of war, and now French soldiers and sailors were fighting like the colonists themselves for American independence. It was the French fleet which compelled Cornwallis to surrender at Yorktown. All through the conflict little Nova Scotia stood by the mother country with unshaken loyalty, and the province suffered in consequence. Her coasts were constantly attacked by the enemy's privateers; and settlements were taken and sacked by landing parties from them. On the 19th of July,

1781, two fine French frigates of the largest class were cruising in company off Cape Breton, near Spanish River, where the busy steel city of Sydney now stands. They were notable ships. The *Astree*, of forty-four guns, was commanded by the famous explorer, La Perouse, who captured Fort Prince of Wales, and was destined, like Captain Cook, to find death in the islands of the Pacific. Her sister ship, the *Hermione*, of forty-two guns, had for captain Latouche-Treville, who rose to the rank of admiral, and whose name is borne by a French battleship of the present day.

Towards evening the French cruisers fell in with a motley little squadron of some twenty-one English vessels, and immediately cleared their decks for action. The odds were not as formidable as the figures might seem to imply, because sixteen were mere defenceless sloops and schooners chartered to Spanish River for coal to keep the huge Halifax garrison warm in the winter. Convoying

them were five small English ships of war. The largest was the captured "rebel" frigate *Boston*, renamed the *Charlestown* in honour of that notable British "victory," which the Americans call Bunker Hill. She mounted twenty-eight guns, and was commanded by a fine young officer, well liked in Halifax, named Evans. Two were sloops-of-war, that is, three-masted, square-rigged vessels of the class below the frigate; they were the *Allegiance* and the *Vulture*, with seven guns a side. The latter carried men of the 70th regiment, who had been detailed to dig coal, and now waited with fixed bayonets for an opportunity to board which never came. The other two were armed ships, not on the navy list, the *Vernon* of fourteen guns, and the *Jack*, a province vessel belonging to Québec, but re-commissioned by the government of Nova Scotia; for in those days the Mayflower Province had a miniature navy of her own, with Dreadnoughts of fifty tons and more. The connection with Quebec is interesting, but the reason for the presence of the *Jack* in these waters does not appear. She was