



LONG VIGIL IN BELOW-ZERO WEATHER

These men sat seven days on Dominion land office steps, Calgary, waiting to file on homestead lands.

THE STORY OF A LAND RUSH

By FRANCIS DICKIE

SATURDAY morning, December 30th, saw the close of the latest land rush at the Calgary Dominion land office, and though the rush was small it was one of the most turbulent in some time. And the prize for which the rush was chiefly over was three quarter sections of land about one hundred and thirty-five miles north-east of Calgary in a well settled country right on the new line of the C. N. R.

And behind this rush lies a story of human cupidity and human desire for revenge, for revenge that was finally satisfied, when one of the first three men filed upon a part of this coveted land.

Early last fall an old, old man waited eight days and eight long nights to file upon a piece of land adjoining that which was snapped up on December 30th, only to be beaten out of his place at the last moment by a ruse that was both clever and cruel, but was fair in that those in the registry office recognize only the first man in.

On the night before the land was to be thrown open last fall two young men slipped into the corridor of the land office. The land office is a part of the post-office building, and between the hours of seven in the morning and ten at night access can be had to the land office by way of a passage from the post-office without the necessity of going around through the outer door before which the waiting land filers stood.

It was just post-office closing time when the two young men slipped into the corridor. Suddenly there appeared at the door of the land office a man whom the waiting filers took to be the janitor.

"Stand back," he said, "and let these men out."

The old man that had waited eight long days

and who was the first in line and already had bright visions of the land which was now most certainly his, moved away a little from the door and the waiting line behind, also thinking that someone wanted to get out of the building, stepped back, too. But the men, two in number, who stepped from the portals were not clerks, neither did they wish to get out. Quickly they stepped into the place that the old man and the crowd behind had made for them and the pseudo janitor in the meantime had made his escape. The old man who had waited so long and patiently stood stunned. Sick at heart he stood. He knew it was not right that this which had just happened should be, but he was very old and the time when he could have fought and perhaps won back his place was long gone. So quietly he stepped out of place and marked those long days of waiting down as a score to be wiped off at some future date.

True, there was other pieces of land to be had, pieces for which those behind him were waiting, but the old man had wanted but a certain one, that was why he had waited so long, and after the first glance at the men who had taken his place he knew that they, too, wanted that bit.

This all happened last fall. But before the old man left the city he told his little tale to two stalwart sons of the soil, and also told them that some time during the winter some adjoining land would be thrown open, and that the men who had displaced him were going to get some friends to file upon it.

So a little over a week ago these two stalwart boys, filled with the land hunger and a desire to square accounts for the old man, took up their position in front of the Government office's door and

waited. It was bitterly cold. For five days and nights the thermometer stood all the way from eighteen to thirty-four degrees below zero, but the men were not daunted. The lure of the land, good, rich land, that is more valuable than gold, was in their veins. For four hours at a time the men would stand waiting at the door, then one of them was relieved by a bright-eyed girl of sixteen, his brave little sister. So there was always two of them there at a time. When the brother had rested he relieved his partner who, in his turn, relieved the girl. As the time grew shorter the weather grew colder, and on the last night the two men stood guard without relief. A huge blanket they fastened over the door and dropped it down tent-like, and with blanket and furs beneath and two burning lanterns, they kept reasonably warm through the long night.

It was five o'clock on Saturday morning, two hours before the door would open, when a half-dozen stalwart men slipped around the corner out of the lane from behind the post-office building, and in a bunch rushed at the door guarded by the two sleeping men. The blanket came down with a rending and tearing. The lanterns were kicked out. Dazed, cold, still half-asleep, the two men who had been on guard the last week, instinctively rose and clutched for the door knob and latch of the land office door.

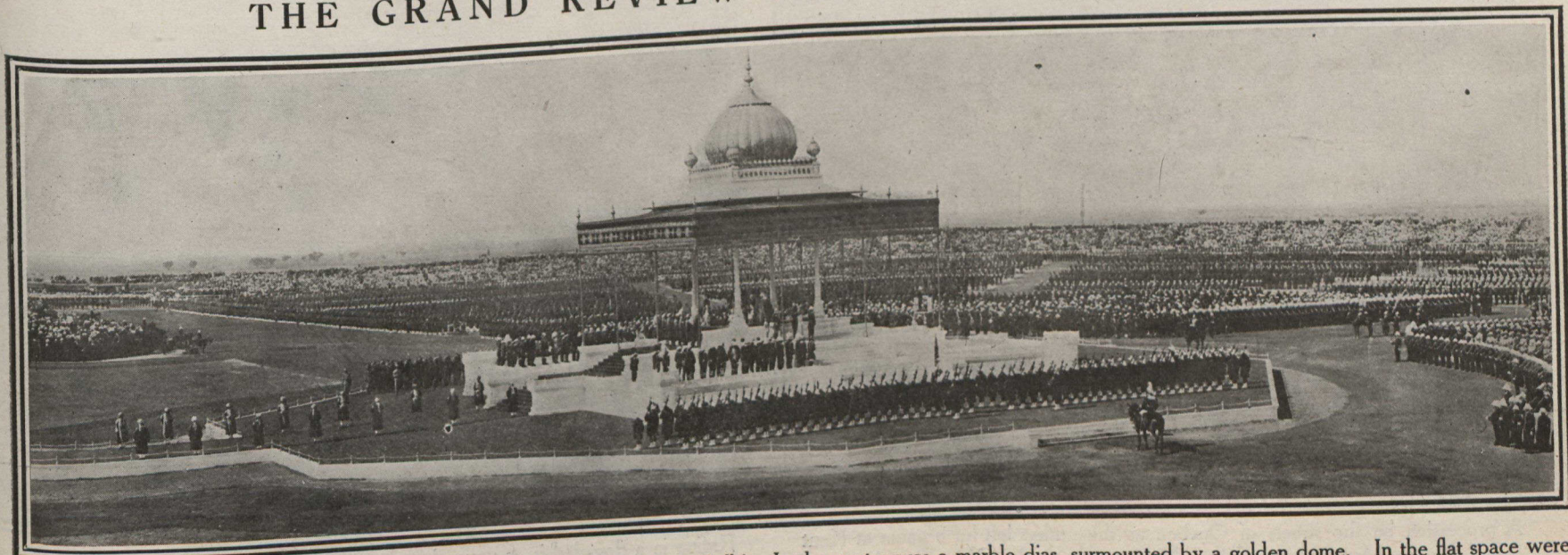
But the gang behind were not through yet. The lure of the land was also in the veins of two of them, the rest were there for hire. A sharp struggle ensued. The two men at the door hanging desperately to their places, striking with one hand while with the other they held to the door. Four narrow stone steps lead up to the door, and this to a certain extent hampered the new comers.

It would probably have fared badly, however, with the two men in front had not two strolling policemen, on night duty, passing down their beat, turned the corner and saw the struggling crowd. They knew the men first in line from constantly passing them night after night for the past week. Stirred by a natural desire for fair play, and also desiring peace, as became their positions, the two policemen butted in. The fighting ceased with the coming of the law, and the rushers-in were for the minute foiled.

At seven thirty the doors opened and the two who had waited long in the cold, stepped first through. But they were still a long way from filing on the coveted property. This was only the first step. The inner portals, the sanctum sanctorum, the registry office, does not open until nine thirty.

So the line stood again in the upper hallway. As the time for the inner door to open grew near the leaders of the early morning rush tried a last ruse. If the two men in front could only be incited to fight there was yet a chance to gain first place that meant so much. With every insinuation and jeer at their command the rushers tried to move those stolid two ahead of them. But the goal was too near now. The land seekers in front knew that to retaliate now at this moment would be fatal, so silently they took it all. And at last the door opened, an eternity it had seemed to these waiters. But now they had reached the end of the rainbow underneath which lay their pot of gold. Two quarter sections of rich, virgin soil was now theirs.

THE GRAND REVIEW AT THE DELHI DURBAR



This picture shows the larger of the two amphitheatres which were built at Delhi. In the centre was a marble dias, surmounted by a golden dome. In the flat space were 20,000 troops on the day of the Durbar, and on the banked-up portion 80,000 spectators were assembled. Here the King received the homage and congratulations of the Princes and Rulers of India. The actual crowning took place in the Fort.

Photo by Topical.