

THE LONG TRAVERSE

CHAPTER I

THE VOW

DAVID PATTISON, surrounded by steam pipes, watched with a certain perverse complacency the hunched, hurrying people who passed his office window. In all Winnipeg he was probably the only man who was not grumbling because of the extreme cold, who found in it a reason for satisfaction.

"Shiver!" he grinned at them. "Shiver! The lower she goes the better the fur."

That morning Mr. Pattison had been handed the annual report of the fur trading company of which he was director and sole owner. He had known that the previous year had been successful but in the written figures he found confirmation of his highest hopes.

He had received, that same morning, reports from the half-dozen posts he operated, all sent down from the headquarters post. None was less than five months old, but that is recent news in fur land. In each brief statement he read of added conquests, more hunters weaned from the Hudson's Bay Company, new outposts established, fresh territory gained.