

Hunt around for some dry sticks and we will try and get a fire on. I am freezing."

It was indeed cold, and Miller's trousers were stiffening as were his socks and moccasins. A small fire was soon got going and around this the men crowded. They had, of course, no axe with them, and were unable to procure any but the smallest kind of branches for burning. Miller and Johnson, who had been in the water, quickly stripped off their wet garments and sat close to the fire endeavoring to get warm and to dry their clothes. A flask, which one of the men somehow discovered was in his wallet, strictly against orders, helped to put a little life into the party, but it was a most miserable night. There was no sleep for anyone, it was too cold for that, the fire hardly kept them warm, and "sentry go" was the order of the night. At last dawn came, and before sun-up Miller had his men mounted and on their way. They were hungry; not a biscuit was to be found among them, but they did not give a thought to that; the business they were on would not take very long now and they could hold out till evening anyway. Christmas greetings were jokingly exchanged by the men and many remarks made as to Moonchild's Christmas box which Miller carried in his pocket.

On riding to the river's edge, Miller discovered that the water was running clear in the middle, there being a gap of about fifteen feet in the ice, and that it would be impossible to cross the flood there. In fact, it was an extremely fortunate thing that he had not chanced it the night before and attempted to cross. Had he done so there was little doubt but that the whole party would have been swept down and drowned. Accordingly, Miller led his men some two miles down the river before they could choose a place where the ice was sufficiently solid to cross. Once over, they put their horses to the gallop and made short work of the five miles between the river and the spot in which Moonchild was camped.

As Miller came upon the camp he noticed that there were in

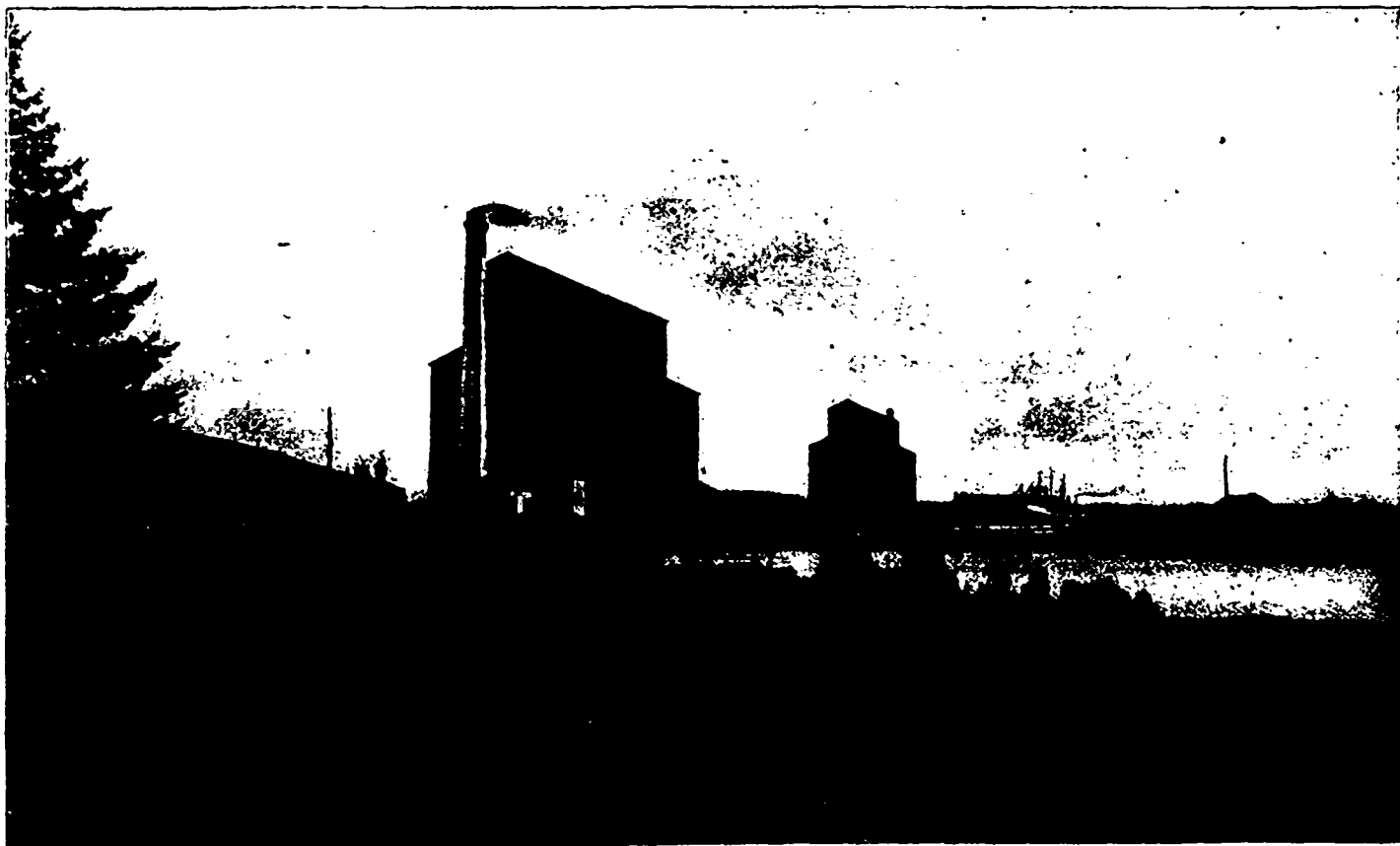
all about twelve tepees, one standing a little away from the rest, almost cut off from them by a belt of brush. From the top of this one a slight column of smoke was rising, and he had little doubt that this was Moonchild's abode. Making a slight detour, he passed behind the other lodges and came on the back of the isolated tepee. Suddenly a dog began to bark; then another and another, till the whole canine population of the little village was aroused. Heads were put out of the tepees and it was evident that the camp was awake. Hastily Miller posted his men around the tepee, giving them strict instructions not to fire on any account, unless they should hear shots in the tepee, into which he would go alone. Loosening his six-shooter in its scabbard, and giving his horse to Johnson, Miller walked to the flap of the tepee and stooping down, boldly entered.

He had not been mistaken, it was Moonchild's lodge. There, seated around a small fire of dry wood were Moonchild and three other Bloods. Moonchild, who was sitting cross-legged on the ground, nitchie fashion, had his Winchester rifle in his hands, pointed directly at Miller. He cocked it, and his little eyes glittered venomously. Miller, however, took no notice whatever of him. He shook hands with the other Indians, whom he happened to know, and sat down at the other side of the fire, coolly taking out his pipe and lighting it. Then he began to talk, of the Great White Mother, of the buffalo which were gone, of all subjects dear to an Indian's heart. Miller was an adept in the Blood tongue; he could speak it like a native. All the time he was watching Moonchild from the corners of his eyes, though apparently paying no attention to him.

"Does the red-coat know when more rations will come?" said one of the Indians.

"Yes, my brother," replied Miller. "The big men at Ottawa look after their red brethren. They will send heaps food up. Wagons coming now from Winnipeg. Bacon, flour tobacco."

"Good," granted the noble red man, "treat Indian well."



Typical Canadian Scenes — Grain Elevators at Fort William, on Lake Superior.