

When the East Meets the West

By A. A. CHESTERFIELD

It was noon of the yearly gala-day to the braves and squaws on Ebb and Flow Indian Reserve. Early that morning the Indian agent's launch had anchored in the bay, and, with covetous eyes, the red men had seen the large metal cash box carried to the house of the chief. Even at the moment, the "money-master" was engaged in adjusting the annual accumulation of grievances, and, best of all, paying out the treaty money. Each man, woman and child would that day receive the amount specified in the treaty concluded when the tribe became wards of the Government.

The chief and councillors, dressed in their brass-buttoned government coats, the silver and bronze medals that constituted their badge of office pinned conspicuously upon their breasts, were concluding the long and meaningless palaver with the already tired agent. The lesser braves, dressed in the best clothes they could beg, borrow, or steal, stalked independently before the tents of the four assembled traders. For one day, with the crisp, new bills in their pockets, they forgot that, during the remaining days of the year, they approached those same traders full of promises and servility, in the hope of obtaining "a little more debt."

In spite of their assumed independence, each Indian knew that the sum total of the "debt" he had obtained from each of the traders amounted to more than his treaty money. Each red schemer was planning the best method of settling with two or three of the traders, with a view to further credit, and still have some money to spend on the tempting goods displayed in the trading tents. Evidently, at least one of the traders was going to fall short in his collections.

"I guess we're the ones who are going to come short this time, Mac," remarked Sinclair, the young factor of the nearest Hudson's Bay trading post. He had journeyed to the Reserve in order to collect his Indian debts, taking the usual gaudy finery to trade for any superabundant cash the Indians might have.

"I don't think so, sir; they always pay the Company," replied the old servant, who had attended treaty under the different factors since treaty payments came into existence; "but they like to run around with the feel of the money in their pockets before they pay up."

"You're wrong this time, Mac. It's three hours since the agent left, and they've been hanging around the other tents since then. My refusing to give them debt when they didn't pay up this spring has put them in a huff, and they've planned to punish me. I was foolish to advance them on their treaty money."

The view coincided with McPherson's ideas, although he had not cared to express them. As he could not make a hopeful rejoinder, he remained silent.

Sinclair, seated on an overturned tea chest, opened his account book and began to total the debts he had now lost hope of collecting. McPherson busied himself in arranging the goods in the tent. Occasionally a squaw, already arrayed in gaudy finery obtained from the rival traders, would enter the tent in order to make some trivial purchase. Sinclair knew that they had been sent by their lords and masters in order to give him a chance to ask pertinent questions, and enable them to report as to how the young factor appeared to be taking his medicine. Ten years' contact with the far northern undegenerate Indians had taught him to be as stoical as themselves, consequently the dusky spies were unable to learn anything.

"They're going to race," said Anderson, the factor's other assistant, entering the tent.

"Does that mean that they have spent all their money?" queried Sinclair, who had sent the man to mix with the Indians in order to feel their temper.

"I'm afraid so, sir," replied Anderson.

"Did you hear anything?"

"Only that they say it's because you would not give them any debt this spring," replied Anderson. "They're beginning to feel sorry already," he added.

"When it is too late to do any good," remarked Sinclair bitterly. He felt the setback keenly. It was the first loss in his career, and it occurred when he had been sent to manage an establishment that was fast losing ground, in the hopes that he would be able to put the business on a paying basis. He was afraid that even the small loss just incurred would put the balance on the wrong side of the sheet.

Bidding his assistants look after the tent, he walked over to where the Indians were engaged in foot racing contests.

"How much are we out," asked Anderson, after Sinclair had departed.

"About seven hundred and fifty dollars," replied McPherson. Both the men were sorry for Sinclair. Although somewhat of a martinet, he had won their regard by his perfect justness.

Arriving at the scene of the Indian foot races, Sinclair forgot all his worries. He was a thorough sportsman, and any contest claimed his whole attention. Running had been one of his favorite sports, and the younger generation who had succeeded him at the old school down East, were still striving to beat the school record made by himself twelve years ago.

Six lithe, clean-limbed braves, hollow in the flank and hard in the leg, were lining up for a dash about his one-time favorite distance. He hurried toward the finish, arriving in time to see the competitors tear down the lane formed by the lines of dusky onlookers. A brave named Manchese crossed the line five yards ahead of his nearest competitor, and Sinclair cheered the victor as lustily as any of the assembled Indians.

The spirit of contest entered his blood. He had not run a race for years; but he wanted to beat that Indian, and he judged the speed of the runner to be six or seven seconds less than his old record.

"I want to race with you," he said to Manchese, who was surrounded by admirers.

"For money?" asked the Indian.

"No, for fun," replied Sinclair. "I haven't any money," he added, smilingly. The remark produced audible smiles from the least stoical of the crowd.

"All right," assented the Indian; "but only half the distance, because I'm tired."

The two men walked to the start, and as Sinclair assumed the crouching position so well known to sprinters, he heard an Indian wonder if he was saying his prayers, but the position gave him the start of his adversary.

The Indians remained silent. They hated to see their best runner beaten by a pale face. But their silence gave way to frantic cries of encouragement when, after running about seventy-five yards, the red man pulled up to and passed the white. Striving to his utmost, Sinclair could not put on any more speed, and the Indian crossed the line two yards ahead of him.

Knowing that, in his untrained state, he could not hope to compete against even a third-class runner, Sinclair had

entered the contest merely to satisfy a theory: that no Indian runner was any good at a dash. In his own mind he was satisfied; for he knew that Manchese had exerted all his powers. While recovering his breath, an idea flashed into his mind. He smiled to himself and proceeded to put the idea into execution.

Going over to Manchese, he remarked: "I did not run well that time, and can beat you twice that distance—for money."

The Indian's eyes glistened at the idea of such easy gain. "How much," he asked.

"Twenty dollars," replied Sinclair. "We will each give it to McPherson, who will hand the forty dollars to whoever wins."

"But I haven't got twenty dollars," remarked Manchese, thinking he was giving the young trader some information.

"Then we will have to wait until you have. After threshing time you'll have the money, and then we'll race, eh?"

"All right," agreed the Indian, when he realized that he could not obtain the twenty dollars that day.

"Too bad you did not beat him, sir," remarked Anderson, when Sinclair returned to the tent; "he's been practising all summer, and thinks a lot of himself."

"But the trader made a grand race," said an old Indian who sat at the door of the tent. He was an old-style Indian, who did not say all he thought. Moreover, he remembered the fur traders in their glory, when they usually came out on top in the end.

"Beaten in everything this trip, Mac," said Sinclair to his assistant; "however, we've got a fair wind to the post, so may as well put the stuff in the boat and get back." To McPherson's ears, his voice lacked the proper amount of despondency, causing the canny old Scot to give another and more thoughtful glance at his master.

After a period of three or four weeks the inhabitants of the half-breed settlement situated a short distance from the post were thrown into a state of superstitious wonderment over regularly hearing the report of a gun come from the direction of the post. Every evening, soon after dark, the mysterious, lone report disturbed the stillness of the night. At first they thought somebody was shooting at a coyote; but, as the report continued its regular recurrence, and finding no satisfactory explanation, they grew into the habit of listening for it, while wondering what it would mean.

After it had been heard during a couple of weeks Batiste Swan, an old French half-breed, could not stand the suspense, and decided to find the explanation. Overcoming his natural superstitions, he crept toward the post, and hid himself in the midst of a bush beside the road.

His self-imposed detective duties were soon rewarded by a discovery. He saw three men come out of the house and walk silently to a level stretch of the road. One of the three, who carried a lantern, and whom he recognized to be McPherson, stretched a tape across the road, and stood holding the end, the light from his lantern falling upon something he held in his hand. He was so close to Batiste's hiding place that the old half-breed scarcely dared to breathe.

The other two men walked down the road and disappeared into the darkness.

"Be ready!" Batiste recognized Anderson's voice coming from out of the darkness. "Bang!" The unexpected report striking his tensely expectant nerves almost made him betray his presence. As he recovered his composure he saw Sinclair tear along the road and breast the tape.

"Twenty-eight seconds," said McPherson, as Anderson came up carrying Sinclair's hat and coat.

The three men went back to the house.

Batiste kept the knowledge of his discovery to himself. He even went out of his way to relate superstitious stories about shots being heard after dark, endeavoring to dissuade his neighbors from investigating the nightly report.

During this time all the Indians of the reserve were working on the wheat fields situated at the end of the big lake, helping to harvest the yellow grain. They were good harvesters, and in great demand by the farmers of the plains; and, during the time the harvest continued each Indian with his two horses would earn four or five dollars a day. Much of this money they would spend on fire-water, or gaudy trifles at the village stores; but each man would return to the reserve with fifty or sixty dollars in his pocket, to be used in purchasing things necessary for their winter's trapping.

They returned to the reserve a week before the day set for the race between Manchese and Sinclair, and decided to make the day one of feasting and rejoicing. All who could go would take their tents and camp near the post.

Two days before the race Batiste again crept to his observation bush. He witnessed the same silent preliminaries, but this time he learned a little more.

"Twenty-five seconds," said McPherson, this time.

"That's something like old times," remarked Sinclair, smilingly; "by changing these clothes I can knock three seconds off that. The Indian is beaten by fifteen yards, Mac," he added, as they started for the house.

"Every man for himself," Batiste soliloquized as he walked home. "Here's where Batiste Swan gets his winter's flour and bacon; and he'll buy it from Sinclair, too," he chuckled.

The great day arrived. All Ebb and Flow erected their tepees beside the post, making old McPherson remark, "It looks like the old days, when the Indians were all trappers and the Company the only traders."

Shortly before the race Sinclair called the old man aside and handed him a list of names having different amounts written against each. "Make every man bet the amount opposite his name," he said, passing a roll of bills. "Jeer, scoff, and laugh at them, but make them bet; and see that the money is held by one who will give it up."

Not until then did McPherson obtain a true insight into the method in the factor's madness.

Oh, but those Indians were civilized; they knew all about the art of betting, especially on a sure thing.

"They want some more," said McPherson, gleefully, when he returned after a short absence.

"That's enough for me," replied Sinclair. "But, Mac," he added after a pause, "it's safe."

The old man asked to be excused for a few moments. When he returned he reported the Indian runner to be ready.

It was an odd-looking pair that took their places at the starting line. The Indian, in order to make victory doubly sure by having perfect ease of limb, had reverted to the aboriginal breech-clout, and clad his feet in the lightest moccasins. His copper-colored, velvety skin indicated a man in perfect condition, albeit he was disfigured in places by a few dabs of colored pigment, fancifully adopted for the occasion. Sinclair, when he doffed the long coat he wore, stood forth in a blue and white swimming suit and rubber running shoes; his pink, satiny skin indicating

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GARDENING FOR PLEASURE AND FOR PROFIT

The attention of people in the country will very shortly be turned to the land and among other questions that they will be considering will be that of the preparation of their gardens, both vegetable gardens and flower gardens. We want to secure several articles relating experiences of our readers in the preparation and culture of vegetable or flower gardens. These articles should include the preparation and use of hot beds, the preparation of the soil, the selection of the seed, care of the garden and general results, and any other item of general interest. These articles must be not more than 1,000 words in length and must be written on only one side of the paper, and written very plainly. We want these articles at once, and will pay for all that we accept. You who have made a success at gardening should sit down and write us your experiences, and we will pay you for it.

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