

The Royal North-West Mounted Police



It is a wonderful fact that throughout the vast prairie lands of Canada, and throughout the length and breadth of the unorganized territories that stretch from the shores of Hudson's bay to the boundary of Alaska, life and property are as safe as in any city of the realm, and law and order just as efficiently enforced. This fact is one that is universally recognized. It is part of the good name that has grown up with the Dominion, part of a prestige of immeasurable value attaching to the country. Nobody ever thinks of associating lawlessness and crime with any single district in Canada.

Sportsmen, prospectors, surveyors, explorers—none of these men ever give a second thought to the possibility of molestation when on a journey in the wilds of Canada. Settlers on the prairies, be they ever so far from town or railway, know themselves to be as safe as in any part of the civilized world. Newcomers ask all sorts of questions and make all sorts of investigations before settling down to homesteading in new and lonely districts on the prairie, and one of the most serious of all the questions that weigh with them is how far they will be from a doctor. The men do not mind. It is the women. They hate to be many miles from a doctor, and so serious a factor is this in settling people on the land that the Canadian Pacific railway at one time had a whole series of subsidized doctors dotted about in the homesteading regions of Western Canada.

Such points as these the majority of settlers are very particular about, but nobody ever thinks of asking: "Is it quite safe to go so far away from the organized communities?" People regard perfect safety in these regions as a matter of course, and their confidence is never misplaced.

How is it that a good name of such magnificent moral influence attaches to Canada? It is because throughout the immense regions of the northwest law and order and justice are enforced for white and red man alike by what, without exaggeration, has been described as "the finest organized mounted body devoted to police duty in existence"—the Royal Northwest Mounted Police.

Often has the prowess of the Mounted Police been related in story and song, but not a single line has been told of what these remarkable men have done in blazing the trail for civilization, and in inspiring fear and respect for authority in that part of the world in which they hold sway. Long ago the Indians learned, through these men, the iron power of British justice; long ago the lawless elements among white and half-breeds learned through the same medium its relentlessness. Their scarlet tunics have become the symbol of the empire's might; so greatly to be feared and respected that a single member of the force has been known in the early days to go into a band of blood-thirsty Indians, fresh from the warpath, or into a company of white or half-breed thieves and murderers and place the leader of the band under arrest. And what is more, he has marched him to where two horses were standing, and ridden off with him to the nearest post of the Mounted Police, perhaps one hundred miles away, without a hand being raised in attempted rescue or in attack upon the representative of England's King or Queen, as the case might be, for, as the saying went in those remote places: "If you shoot or stick a knife into a member of the Northwest Mounted Police, you are doing the same thing to the entire British nation, and the English will follow you to the ends of the earth and punish you."

The origin of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police dates back to 1873. Three years prior to that the province of Manitoba had been established by the Wolseley expedition, and a garrison was then located at the spot then called Fort Garry, but now known as Winnipeg. Beyond this fort on the Red river the country was practically unknown. Over the plains roamed Indians to the number of 40,000 or 50,000, and buffalo to the hundreds of thousands, while such white men and half-breeds as were in the country were mostly of a desperate character, and a law unto themselves. When, therefore, the Wolseley forces were withdrawn, the Dominion found itself in need of a body of regular troops to keep possession of the country acquired, and it was this need which resulted in the formation of the Mounted Police force.

The nucleus of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police was gathered in Manitoba in the fall of 1873, under command of Lieut-Colonel French, of the Royal Artillery, who had shown much aptitude and done splendid work for Canada in the organization of its artillery schools, and who arrived in Canada fresh from Australia, where he had won distinction and had been retired from the imperial army as a major-general. The remainder of the newly-organized force was recruited in Toronto, the entire force at that time numbering only 300. The force proceeded by railway to Fargo in June, 1874, and made a march to Dufferin of 170 miles, as a foretaste of their work.

Then the force immediately started on a bold expedition through the heart of a hostile country, inhabited by Indians and many white desperadoes. With two field pieces and two mortars, and relying solely on their own transport train for supplies, they marched 800 miles westward through an unknown country, until they reached the Rocky mountains. Here Fort

Macleod was established, in the very heart of the Blackfoot country, where no white man's life was safe. Another force was sent north to Edmonton, among the Assiniboines, and Wood Crees. The main body turned back, crossing the plains to Fort Pelly, and then to Dufferin. The thermometer, which had stood at 100 degrees in the shade when they left Dufferin, marked 30 degrees below zero on their return. In four months to a day the force had travelled 1,959 miles. Many good horses died from the bitter cold that came on during the early autumn, though officers and men gave up their blankets to shelter their horses, but these 300 police had accomplished, without losing a life, that which had been declared as impossible without the use of an army—the taking possession of the Great Lone Land.

This expedition had two great objects in view. One was to stop the sale to Indians of the liquor which kept them in a chronic state of devilry. The other was to establish friendly relations with the Indians. In both of these objects the expedition was most successful. Though not entirely stopped, the sale of liquor to the Indians was greatly diminished, while the Indians became convinced that these men in scarlet coats meant what they said when they declared they were friends and would see that other Indians, and white men also gave them justice. As one Indian chief said to Colonel Macleod of the expedition: "Before you came the Indian crept along; now he is not afraid to walk erect."

The Indians were given a general idea of the laws, told that these were for white man and Indian alike, and that they need fear no punishment except when they had done wrong. They were assured that their lands would not be taken from them, and that treaties would be made with them which would be respected, which promises, faithfully kept, have saved Canada from many costly Indian wars, in which hundreds of white persons would have lost their lives.

For a long time the chief work of the force consisted in managing the Indians, in acting for them as arbiters and protectors, in reconciling them to the coming of the whites, and in protecting the surveyors who had already begun to parcel out the country and explore routes for railways.

When the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway was begun, the duties of the force took on a wider scope. There came an influx of camp followers, gamblers, thieves, and other scum of the western border into the country. The police were not only compelled to administer justice and keep this dangerous element in order, but also to maintain law among the thousands of laborers who were employed in the construction of the railway. Good work was done also in preventing strikes.

Then, with the rapid influx of settlers, the police became responsible for the lives and property scattered over 375,000 square miles. Trading posts developed into towns and new centres of population came into existence, while cattlemen established themselves with their herds along the base of the mountains. The buffalo began to disappear with the coming of the white settlers, and the Indians, deprived of their chief source of food, became dissatisfied and unruly, thus adding to the cares of the police. Attacks were made by Indians on other tribes and on white men, but in each instance the police, small though the force was, perhaps only one or two men being at some of the minor posts, did not hesitate to arrest the offender, no matter if he was in his own camp and surrounded by dozens, hundreds or thousands of his tribe, and take him away to the nearest post where a commanding officer of the police was located, for the purpose of having his guilt or innocence established, for the officers of the police sat as magistrates and dispensed justice. Many a brave policeman, or "constable," as they are usually termed, has lost his life in the performance of duty, for while he could have killed his assailant had he decided not to "take chances," yet the rules of the force requiring every effort to be exhausted before a resort to force was made stayed his hand until too late.

By 1882 such progress had been made in the settlement of the country through the entry of the Canadian Pacific railway that it became necessary to enlarge the force, which was increased to 500. Permanent headquarters were established at Regina, substantial barracks, instead of the log cabins and stockades which existed at other posts, being erected. The Riel rebellion gave the police plenty of work, twelve men being killed and an equal number wounded in the first engagement with the rebels at Duck lake. Immediately after the outbreak the force was increased to 1,000. A few years after it was again increased; this time to 1,100, which marks the greatest strength it has ever attained.

At the present time the strength of the Mounted Police is about 640, of whom 236 are stationed in Alberta, 277 in Saskatchewan, 32 in the Northwest Territories, and between 90 and 100 in the Yukon Territory. There are no Mounted Police in that vast unorganized territory in Eastern Canada known as Ungava, but the question of extending the jurisdiction of the force over that region is already being seriously considered, and it is not improbable that in the near future a detachment of the force will be stationed there.

The headquarters of the force are now at Regina, and there are also large barracks in other places, notably at Calgary, where they

form one of the sights of the place. Posts are scattered all over the region under jurisdiction, some of them in the wilder parts, as at Fort Churchill on Hudson's Bay, being 700 miles from any other post, while in other cases, as on the road from White Horse to Dawson, they are not more than twenty miles apart. In some places these consist only of a couple of log huts, from which the policeman patrols his district, visiting settlers, obtaining information of every kind that may seem to be of value to the Government, such as the condition of the crops, cattle, etc.; news of any violation of the law either by theft, assault, the sale of liquor without authority, etc. Where crimes are committed the police never rest until they have caught the guilty party and many a time have they followed the trail of a criminal for months. On such criminal hunts they have covered thousands of miles, sometimes by portage and canoe, and sometimes on snowshoes, with dog teams to carry provisions. Such excursions into the wilds have meant the greatest hardships, but whatever be the danger to be faced, whatever be the demands on their pluck and endurance, the police never dream of giving up the chase until they have the handcuffs on the guilty party.

"I might here observe," says Commissioner Perry, in a report only made a few weeks ago, "that whether in bringing relief to isolated settlers in bitter cold and over the deep snow of the open plains, carrying mail to distant Hudson's Bay posts, to the Arctic seas, or to detachments interned in Northern British Columbia, or hurrying to the relief of unfortunate persons in remote parts, our men do not fail us. They undertake the work with cheerfulness, and carry it out indifferent to difficulties and hardships."

It will be seen that the duties of the police are not confined to criminal matters. They take a great part in preserving game, and they often give assistance to struggling settlers in out-of-the-way places, either in the sowing of grain, the erection of a log cabin, the search for missing horses or cattle, or aiding in whatever way may be possible those who are seeking to help in the building up and general prosperity of the country.

The police are, too, the pioneers in road making, their latest work in this respect being the construction of a trail from Edmonton to Dawson, a distance of nearly 2,000 miles, through the Peace River country. This section is indescribably rough and difficult of access, it having been necessary to cut a path through the primeval forest, ford deep and swiftly-moving rivers, scale steep mountain sides, and make their way through heavy grass and weeds and across lakes where at times it seemed impossible to get through or across. The difficulty of constructing this trail may be

understood when it is said that three years has been occupied in making it.

Its importance lies in the fact that it is the only overland route between Central Canada and the Yukon Territory. As such it is not only of immense value to trappers, traders, miners and others, but is a great military asset, inasmuch as it gives connection with Dawson without passing through United States territory.

Not long ago the duties of sailors were added to the many calls upon the police, a detachment being sent to patrol Hudson's Bay in steamboats, and assert the authority of the Dominion over the whaling fleets. As a result of this new duty, a division is now quartered at Fort Churchill, on Hudson's Bay, where the men have, with their own hands, erected a comfortable post, consisting of officers' quarters, men's quarters, guardroom and store building. The logs that were used were cut at a considerable distance from the post, part being floated down the Churchill river, in the summer, and part being hauled in by dog teams during the winter months.

In the eye of the law, the force is a purely civil body, its officers under the law being magistrates and the non-commissioned officers and privates constables. Its internal economy and drill, however, is that of a mounted infantry regiment, so far as circumstances will allow.

From the very first, a high prestige has attached to the force, and its success has been due in a large measure to the splendid quality of the men engaged. The standard was set by such men as Major-General Sir George French, K. C. M. G., under whom the force was organized; Major Walsh, who established a reputation for great courage and firmness in his dealings with the Indians, and more especially in his treatment of the Sioux chief, "Sitting Bull"; and Colonel S. B. Steele, C. B., who joined the force at the start, and accompanied it on its march to the Rocky Mountains. To the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, who became premier of Canada in the same year in which the nucleus of the force was gathered, and who took the keenest interest in its subsequent organization, is also due no small measure of its success. His government authorized the Mounted Police before they set out to take possession of the Northwest, to put into force a law for the absolute prohibition of the liquor traffic, and never was a law more abundantly justified by results than was that one.

Major General French subsequently had a brilliant military career in England and Australia, and he retired on full pay in September, 1902. Col. Steele did distinguished service with the Mounted Police until 1899, when, as commandant of Lord Strathcona's corps, he went to South Africa and served in the Boer War. He was there given command of a regiment, and subsequently the command of the "B" Division of the South African Constabulary, a force modelled on the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. He now commands the Military District No. 11 in Canada.

The affairs of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police are managed by a distinct department of the government at Ottawa, the permanent civil subordinate head being the Hon. Frederick White, whose official title is Controller of the Force, and who, as secretary of Sir John Macdonald, more than thirty-five years ago, was one of the chief movers in the establishment of the force. The executive command is held by Commissioner A. B. Perry, who holds the rank of major, and whose headquarters are at Regina. To assist him there is an assistant commissioner, ten superintendents, thirty-five inspectors, six surgeons, and a veterinary surgeon.

The rank and file have to pass the most rigid examinations as to their physical and mental fitness. Recruits must be between the ages of 22 and 40, of sound constitution, and must produce a certificate of exemplary character. They must be able to read and write either the English or French language and be able to ride well. Married men are not enlisted. The minimum height for recruits is 5 feet 8 inches, the minimum chest measurement 25 inches, and the maximum weight 175 pounds. The enlistment is for five years. The punishment for violations of the rules of the force are exceedingly severe. For instance, for the infraction of any of the following rules a sentence of one month's pay as a fine and one year's imprisonment at hard labor may be imposed: For oppressive or tyrannical conduct toward an inferior, intoxication, however slight; directly or indirectly receiving any gratuity without the commissioner's sanction, or any bribe; wearing any political emblem or otherwise manifesting political partisanship; divulging anything which should be kept secret; communicating anything to the press respecting the force, either directly or indirectly, without the commissioner's permission; using any cruel, harsh, or unnecessary violence to a prisoner or other person.

Many men who enlist are former soldiers, but there are also on the force a number of well-educated men, some of them college graduates and others who have been "plucked" at college and have decided to take up the free and adventurous life afforded.

As pay, the controller receives \$4,000 a year; the commissioner, \$2,400; assistant commissioner, \$1,600; superintendents, \$1,000, with quarters, rations, fuel, etc. A staff sergeant's pay is from \$1.50 to \$2 per day; corporals, \$1.10 to \$1.25 per day, and privates 60 cents per day for the first year's service, with an increase of five cents per day until the ninth year is reached.—Montreal Witness.

House of Commons Procedure



LONDON TIMES: It is surely remarkable that an Austrian professor, after referring to a list of more than eighty books relating to parliament, including twenty-nine specially devoted to procedure, should be able to assert that his historical

survey of the development of English parliamentary procedure is the first attempt at such an account taken from original sources. Yet this is the claim made, apparently with justice, by Dr. Redlich for the three large volumes that lie before us; and the claim is freely allowed by so high an authority as Sir Courtenay Ilbert, clerk of the House of Commons, whose preface, only too admirably forestalling the reviewer, says that "it has been left to an Austrian scholar to accomplish a piece of work which some competent Englishman ought to have undertaken long ago." He adds that the book "fills a conspicuous gap in English constitutional literature," and that it will be "indispensable to the student of English parliamentary institutions." An expert may praise the work on these particular grounds, but no reader can fail to admire the industry and research that are evident on every page, or to feel surprise that a foreigner should treat a peculiarly British subject not as a distant observer, but as though he had spent his life in the House of Commons and its library. Nor would any one guess, so well has the book been translated by Mr. Steinthal, that it was not originally written in English. As a matter of fact, it was first published in 1905, and now appears in English, without its chapter on Private Bills, but with a supplementary chapter by Sir Courtenay Ilbert on the changes introduced by the present government.

Parts of the work are necessarily technical, but there is much in it, thanks to Dr. Redlich's mastery of his subjects, that should attract the general reader, who is not likely to be well read in parliamentary lore. He may probably remember the flagrant abuses that caused the first introduction of the closure; but he will regard that device as an ingenious invention for checkmating Mr. Parnell, will not be fully conscious of the magnitude of the issue, and will assuredly have forgotten the impassioned debates occasioned by the proposal. As for later changes, their importance has been so imperfectly recognized that the public has for the most part mistaken them for the merely domestic concerns of the house. All the same, procedure is not harsh and crabbed, as many people suppose, but is of the

very essence of all parliamentary institutions, the question being virtually the same in all of them—namely, how to get the maximum of work out of the assembly without excessive interference with the rights of minorities. That, at any rate, is the modern problem; formerly, changes of procedure were determined by other and different considerations. The principal change effected by the medieval parliaments was the substitution of procedure by bill for procedure by petition. As Dr. Redlich says, "it was much more than a technical improvement, for the essence of the change was that the basis for discussion and the matter for determination in the house were no longer requests, but drafts of the desired enactments free from any formula of asking." In the author's second period, that of the Tudors and Stuarts, of which his account is, perhaps, rather less ample than one would have expected, the historic procedure of parliament was developed; and with it began the rise of parties, which "marks the coming of age of the people," and that conception of the complete equality of all members which involves, as its logical consequence, all the precautions taken for the protection of minorities. His third period extends from the Revolution of 1688 to the Reform act of 1832. This was a time of parliamentary conservatism, and during it the chair was occupied for more than thirty years by Arthur Onslow, who steadily upheld the old forms and rules on the ground, according to Hatsell, "that they were in many instances a shelter and protection to the minority against the attempts of power." Obviously, this adherence to forms tended to the encouragement of an organized opposition, that is, of a militant minority, with responsibilities proportionate to the protection that it enjoyed. No doubt it is also true of this period that, as Sir Courtenay Ilbert points out, procedure became a mystery, forms were multiplied, and politics were a game too largely dependent on their observance; but the broad result was parliamentary warfare such as exists, though with serious modifications, at this moment. A more strenuous era began with the first reformed parliament. New interests were represented, and new men entered the house whose zeal and loquacity added greatly to its labors, just as has been done in our own times by the Nationalists and the Labor members—not that we would reproach any parliamentary group for its legitimate activity. But all these new circumstances have had to be faced, and the consequence is that of all the standing orders in force in 1832 only

three remain unaltered. The greatest change of all, the closure, was forced on a house which accepted it only as an escape from still greater evils. Next to the closure in importance we should be inclined to rank the establishment of grand committees, and then the convenient, but theoretically objectionable, new rules for supply. These, by the way, with the recent standing order for the arrangement of public business, assume, for the first time in the history of the house, that the session will always begin at the same period of the year.

The modern procedure of the house occupies the second and third volumes, and each chapter is followed by an historical note on the evolution of the existing practice. These notes, indeed, are so complete that it would almost be possible to construct from them a typical parliamentary day; say, in 1640, when, as Clarendon says, "the house met always at 8 o'clock, and rose at 12, which were the old parliament hours." The most important of these notes, in view of recent changes, is that on the history of committees, a subject also treated in Sir Courtenay Ilbert's supplementary chapter on the changes of procedure since 1905. Dr. Redlich, while regarding obstruction as malum in se, describes it as "a repudiation of the existing constitution of the country"; adding that "in all such cases the majority principle, a fundamental convention upon which all parliamentary government is built, must needs begin to lose its moral force. At the same time, and to the same degree, the principle of protection for the minority begins to suffer from decay." That is perfectly true; but these or similar considerations were by no means absent from the minds of the great parliamentarians who had to cope with the crisis caused by acute obstruction. It has, in fact, been the peculiar good fortune of the House of Commons that its leaders have never failed to take broad and philosophic views of the nature and importance of procedure. The immediate problem is less philosophical than practical. It is how to economize time. The more complete allotment of the time of the house by the consent of all parties is not unlikely to be the principal reform of the future.

John Ruddy, of Lisburn, who was the driver of the last mail stage coach between Belfast and Dublin, has just celebrated his seventy-seventh birthday. As driver, he wore scarlet uniform, covered with gold lace, and was armed with a blunderbuss and two pistols. He saw service in the Crimea as one of Lord Raglan's military guard.