

These preparations being done, he proceeded to unroll his pack, consisting of a tent, blankets, and food. Clearing the small bushes off a piece of ground with his axe, he erected the tent, as close to the fire as possible. This tent was just for sleeping in, or a place of shelter from the rain; the meals were eaten sitting round the fire.

The tent set up, Louis pitched the blankets inside, and set about making bannocks for supper, with some flour, baking powder, salt, and water; cooking them in the frying pans over the glowing coals. He had done two panfuls when he heard footsteps approaching, and loud voices shouting.

"Hurrah, Louis, By the great jumping Jehoshophat, we hope you've got the grub pile ready, we are famished, and so beastly wet and cold."

Louis nodded assent, he was very busy tossing flap-jacks.

One by one the men appeared out of the gray mist, eight in all, nine counting Louis, the half-breed cook, and man-of-all-work. They were a Government Survey party, going from Edmonton to Fort McMurray, down the Athabasca River. They had been out since April, and were now returning to Edmonton. There was Douglas Ward, the boss, and the head surveyor; two young surveyors, Mitchell and Wood, just fresh from the University in Edmonton; they were the chain men, and carried all the chains and the iron pegs. The line men, Hardy and McGinnis, were Western Americans, and old-timers on the job. They carried spades, shovels, axes, and they prepared the lines for the chain men, cutting necessary timber, and digging the four holes at the section corners, and driving corner stakes.

Last, but not least, were three Indians, Straw Hat, Hawkeye, and Angel:—who were the guides, and paddled the canoes, and carried them over the portages. Their names were characteristic in some way.

Straw Hat was never seen without a bedraggled old straw hat without a crown, just the brim—with his jet black hair showing above; and below two long black pigtails, threaded with brass wire, and an old brass lamp burner attached to each end. One dangled over each shoulder, and they were his greatest pride and delight.

Hawkeye was chief guide, and he ran the canoes over the rapids on their way down the river: coming up they had to make portages over these rapids in many places. He had marvellously piercing black eyes, and also wore two long black pigtails.

Angel looked seraphic and also very meek. He had been at the Mission School in St. Albert, and had his hair cut like a white man. Yes—he looked seraphic—but in fact he was an incorrigible rustler, nobody's pipes, tobacco, matches, pencils, or socks were ever safe, when he was round. Very often in the morning Angel's blankets would be unrolled by someone and a systematic search made for missing property! It was no good asking questions, he would just shake his head, and pretend he did not understand, looking so very innocent all the while.

What a strangely assorted outfit of men they looked, as they sat round the camp-fire, and devoured pork and beans, and flap-jacks, and drank cups of strong, black, smoky tea. The fire burnt like a beacon light in a sea of fog, which shut out all the outer world. It illuminated the faces of the men, leaving the rest in shadow. Behind them, for a background, where their wet outer garments hung upon the branches of the trees, to dry in the heat of the fire. Douglas Ward, tall, dark, clean-shaven, was a natural leader of men; he was one of them, and yet he was the one *above* them. He was one of the circle round the fire, where there was no dividing line; he did the same hard work, and shared the same hardships, yet perfect order and harmony prevailed.