

ROMANCE OF EXPLORATION

object of solving the problem of the North-West Passage by land, to ascertain what mines were near the mouth of the Great River, "to smoke the calumet of peace with the Indians, and to take accurate astronomical observations."

The man chosen for this work, Samuel Hearne, the "Mungo Park of Canada," was a trustworthy servant of the Company, who, on November 6, 1769, started on his voyage of exploration from Prince of Wales Fort, on the shore of Hudson's Bay. Owing to the desertion of over half his men, the attempt proved a failure, and he was forced to turn back.

Two months later he started again, and followed a north-westerly course over streams, lakes, and then inland across the "Barren Grounds." Food was very scarce, and they were reduced to great straits. "For a whole week cranberries, scraps of leather, and burnt bones were their only food." To add to their troubles, when 500 miles had been made, their only quadrant was blown over and broken. So again Hearne was forced to retrace his weary steps to the Bay.

Nothing daunted by these failures, this noble-hearted explorer once more started on his northward quest. This time he was more successful. With a strong band of Indians who were waging war against the Eskimo, he floated downstream, and ere long gained the sea, the first white man to reach the Arctic Ocean from the interior.

"The most unpleasant part of Mr. Hearne's story," wrote Bishop Bompas in his book on the "Diocese of Mackenzie River," "is that the party of Indians with whom he travelled, entirely without his sanction, made an unprovoked attack on a number of Eskimo encamped on the Coppermine River, and in the night barbarously massacred the whole body of men, women, and children, and spoiled their tents. The site of the massacre became known afterwards as the 'Bloody Falls.'"

Miss Agnes C. Laut, in her most interesting book, "Pathfinders of the West," speaking about this incident, says: