

big-timbered little schooner, like a surf-boat with a sail, and a square-cut bateau had brought the men and goods to the "carry." The men were half-breeds as of old, and had brought along their women and children to inhabit a camp of smoky tents that we espied on a bluff close by; a typical camp, with the blankets hung on the bushes, the slatternly women and half-naked children squatting or running about, and smudge fires smoking between the tents to drive off mosquitoes and flies. The men were in groups below on the trail, at the water-side end of which were the boats' cargoes of shingles and flour and bacon and shot and powder in kegs, wrapped, two at a time, in rawhide. They were dark-skinned, short, spare men, without a surplus pound of flesh in the crew, and with longish coarse black hair and straggling beards. Each man carried a tomp-line, or long stout strap, which he tied in such a way around what he meant to carry that a broad part of the strap fitted over the crown of his head. Thus they "packed" the goods over the portage, their heads sustaining the loads, and their backs merely steadying them. When one had thrown his burden into place, he trotted off up the trail with springing feet, though the freight was packed so that 100 pounds should form a load.

For bravado one carried 200 pounds, and then all the others tried to pack as much, and most succeeded. All agreed that one, the smallest and least muscular-looking one among them, could pack 400 pounds.

As the men gathered around their "smudge" to talk with my party, it was seen that of all the parts of the picturesque costume of the *voyageur* or *bois-brûlé* of old—the capote, the striped shirt, the pipe-tomahawk, plumed hat, gay leggings, belt, and moccasins—only the red worsted belt and the moccasins have been retained. These men could recall the day when they had tallow and corn meal for rations, got no tents, and were obliged to carry 200 pounds, lifting one package, and then throwing a second one atop of it without assistance. Now they carry only 100 pounds at a time, and have tents and good food given to them.

We will not follow them, nor meet, as they did, the York boat coming down from the north with last winter's furs. In another article I will endeavor to lift the curtain from before the great fur country beyond them, to give a glimpse of the habits and conditions that prevail throughout a majestic territory where the rivers and lakes are the only roads, and canoes and dog-sleds are the only vehicles.