

the tents on the following day a few hours down the valley. Peyto and I started ahead of the others to hunt sheep up a valley leading to the headwaters of the Brazeau river. On the way we found a considerable tract of forest on fire, the charred tree-trunks and half-burned foliage presenting a curious patchwork of green and black, while the peaty earth was still smouldering and emitting volumes of smoke. Two of our men, who had left the caravan to go hunting on the way up, had lit a fire to cook a fool-hen, and had carelessly omitted to perform what is every backwoodsman's first duty—namely, to thoroughly extinguish it. Had the weather been finer the previous week we should probably have found the whole valley ablaze and our retreat down the Saskatchewan cut off—a cheerful prospect for a party with next to nothing to eat! Leaving the fire, we pushed our horses on to the summit of the pass, where we tethered them and descended on foot some distance down the stream of the Brazeau. It was a pleasant valley, with low rounded hills, prettily wooded, on either side, that reminded me of Wales. We saw plenty of tracks, but no sheep, and returned to camp empty-handed, and for the third time soaked to the skin with rain. The morning was gloriously fine, and we made a forced march down the North Fork, so as to reach our *cache* of provisions at Bear Creek as soon as possible. The camp was pitched in a grove of burned trees, some of them

so rickety that a push of the hand sent them over. We were now on very short commons, having no meat and very little bread, and the poor dogs were absolutely starving; but it rained all next day, and we had to remain in camp. We ate our last sardine that evening, reserving three crusts of bread for breakfast on the morrow, when we pushed on as hard as we could down the left bank of the river. Arriving at the main stream of the Saskatchewan, we managed to ford it below the mouth of the North Fork, the cold weather having greatly reduced the volume of water. Bear Creek offered no difficulty. As we neared the *cache*, Collie tried to inflame our imaginations by drawing lurid pictures of a band of Indians gorged with our bacon and roaring drunk on our whisky; but we found everything just as we had left it.

Meat was still very scanty, so I spent most of the next day wandering about the woods of Bear Creek in search of fool-hen. One wants to be perfectly alone to fully appreciate the mystery and the utter solitude of these great forests. The scarcity of bird and animal life serves to heighten the impression of loneliness, and you may walk for hours without hearing a sound except the roar of some distant torrent or avalanche, and the sighing of the wind in the tall pines and the creaking of their gigantic limbs. Only the play of light and shade between the swaying branches causes the imagination at times to people their recesses with