



RIDERS OF THE NORTH

If one were to chronicle the history of the Northwest Mounted Police from the date of its first organization down to the present, recalling every deed of bravery, every act of heroism, every bit of individual self-denial in the unflinching discharge of duties assigned, of tasks executed by those who recognized no obstacle so great as to be unsurmountable, what volumes would be necessary to record the valiant service done and what a number of heroes would thus be-

only as a matter of duty without the hope of reward and in a short time the deed brave though it was will have passed from the memory of all excepting those most intimately concerned. It is within the remembrance of probably the majority of the people living in Dawson today, as it occurred but a few years ago, when the entire country depended upon the police service for their mail. In '98 there were no comfortable roadhouses every few miles, no cut-

as the delay that was caused in the completion of their task. The magnificent service performed by the force in the memorable O'Brien case is of such recent occurrence that it will be remembered by all. How in the search for evidence that would fasten the guilt upon the murderers acres of ground hidden beneath the snow was gone over and over on hands and knees; the vast extent of ice that was cut away in the hope that the bodies of the victims might be found, the days and days of dragging the river and the infinite patience and perseverance observed in order that justice might be meted out to those guilty of a crime without a parallel in the history of the Yukon. And all because it was their duty, a part of their lives. Duty! What a cold-blooded, uncompromising word and what a multitude of heroic acts are done in its name.

The early history of the police in what is now the Yukon territory is a most interesting page in the chronicles of the territory yet to be written. The police were not always here no more than has Dawson occupied its present location for all time. There are a great many of the old-timers who will remember when there was no peace officer of any description from Dyea clear to St. Michael. But there was no need of any in those days. There was no crime in the country, everyone knew everyone else, there was no such thing as theft. Grub caches were free to everybody who found themselves in want of something to eat, a slab of bacon, a sack of flour or a few pounds of beans were taken if needed and if the owner were away a note was left giving the amount and the man's name. Settlement was later effected either by payment or the return of the goods when his year's outfit was secured. If disputes arose which could not be settled by arbitration a miners' meeting was called and there was no appeal from the decision of the camp.

It was during the winter of '93 that the attention of the Dominion government was first directed toward this portion of the vast northwest, this mighty empire then known to so few. Gold had a year or so before been discovered on Fortymile river, and the federal authorities so conversant with the riches yielded by the Cassiar, the Cariboo and Omineca districts had in mind the possibilities of a new Eldorado yet to be developed in the far north. This region was known to be rich in fur bearing animals, but if gold had existed before? Consultations were held during the winter with the result that it was determined to send a man inside to investigate and report upon the country in general and the advisability of establishing a detachment of the N. W. M. P. and assume actual control of a region which hitherto had known no guiding hand. The man selected was Captain Constantine who in company with Staff Sergeant Brown, of the old "B" division, left Regina in February, '94, for the Yukon. They arrived in Dyea in March, and with the assistance of some Indians secured for them by Healey & Wilson, packed their outfit over Chilkoot Pass, sledging it across the lakes to Linderman where lumber was whipsawed and a boat built. As soon as navigation opened the captain and sergeant set sail and in due time pulled up their boat on the beach at Forty-

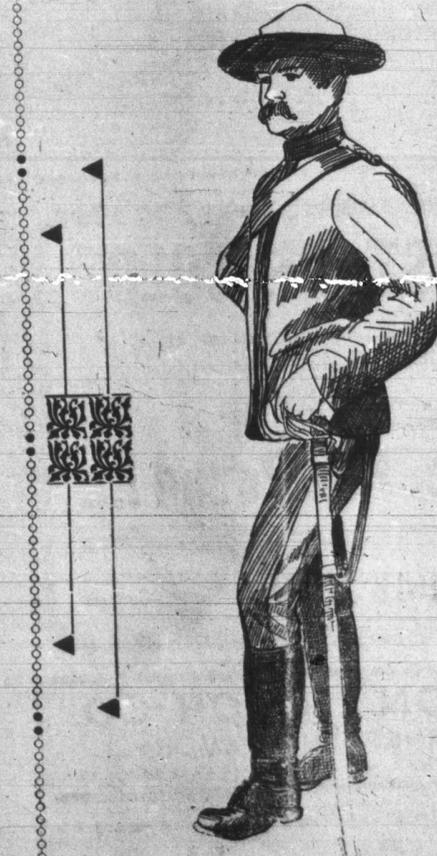
and Constable Murray. Upon the arrival of the detachment at Seattle "Excelsior" then about to sail for St. Michael, and three days later the long voyage to the north was begun. Bad weather was encountered and it required 14 days to reach Dutch Harbor. Three days out of the latter port ice floes were met with and for 14 days more they were buffeted and bumped around, tossed here and there like a cork. St. Michael was finally reached and after two days' wait the start up the river was made on the "P. B. Wear." The voyage to Fortymile consumed 28 days, the steamer reaching there July 29. No sooner had they landed than all hands began work on the construction of barracks, suitable quarters for winter. Inspector Strickland with 12 men started up the Yukon in search of suitable logs and it is a strange coincidence that before they came upon timber which answered the requirements they had arrived at the mouth of the Klondike river, and the logs with which the buildings at old Fort Constantine were constructed were cut on the flat where Daw-

son now stands. A dense forest at the mouth of the slough was cut by 2 firehalls, the trees were cut and dragged to the water, floated down to the mouth where they were piled together in a boom and sent down the river to Fortymile. Barracks were hastily put up and last sod was scarcely on the ground when winter began. The only relief occurring that winter to relieve the monotony was the departure of Sergeant Brown and a Mexican to break trail every foot of the way from Fortymile to Dyea, the taking nearly three months.

The following summer extensive repairs were necessary on the barracks they had to be re-constructed, roofed and other improvements made which would add to the comfort of the men. It was about this time that there was a crime, no arrests to make and prisoners to guard. When Constable Cormack made his strike on Bonanza in August, '98, a number of Fortymile detachments were hunting cordwood. They joined a stampede and some of them were claims which later yielded rich returns. Constable Ward struck above on Bonanza, one of the best the creek; Constable Jack who was killed early in the war, also struck on Bonanza, sold out his holdings in order to go to South Africa when the war broke out. Constable Jenkins, who struck it rich on Bonanza, sold out for \$75,000.

"We who were in Fortymile at the time the strike was made," Staff Sergeant Telford is quoted as that memorable event, "had in the report and there were a few of the boys who were stampeded from that point. I don't know why it did not look good to me, because none of the old-timers were concerned in it, they were sheehacoes who were not supposed to know a rocker from a shaft.

At that time there were no relations in existence which would have members of the police force and other federal employees from and owning claims, and everyone of the force who was to the new strike was busy enough in securing a good ground. During the winter of '98 things about the post were rocky. The influx of new men in summer amounted to nothing with no corresponding increase in steamer service on the coast and importation of a greater quantity of supplies. The result was that the winter was half over before provisions and the food was



could be avoided, no trail beaten as hard as adamant, and no one to chop out a road over the rough ice gorges. Two constables would leave with their dog team, their sled loaded down with bags of letters, a couple of robes, and barely enough provisions to take them to the next post, and they were few and far between. It they were unlucky enough to break through the ice and take a plunge into the chilly waters of the Yukon, camp was at once made and when they had dried their clothing on they pushed regretting not so much the accident that had befallen themselves

come known to the world whose praises today are unsung save by their own comrades. Within the past thirty days there has been an instance of personal bravery shown, coming up only in the regular discharge of their duty, which in a few short months will be forgotten, yet those two "boys," as they have been characterized, in accomplishing the capture of a criminal made desperate by the fact that he knew an interminable sentence awaited him in the event of him being taken, performed an act worthy of the most flattering praise. But what they did was done



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