

himself he married a motherly little native who was clean and almost Christian, except that she used to grunt as she grew old. He had a white helper, and he, after awhile, married another native.

And that was the beginning.

In a few years, when other factors were appointed to that post, there was quite a little colony of half-breeds, and it was a tradition that went with the factorship that the breeds were to be looked after. In time the feeding of the half-breeds became a problem. The company raised the food allowance for the post and sent a letter by the boat, intimating that it was time the unwarranted staff of half-breeds justified its existence by bringing in more furs from the surrounding country. Presently even the increased food allowance became inadequate. Factor wrote that they must send him more food. Company replied to cut down the staff. Factor knew that that meant the woods for the supernumeraries, and that the woods meant death from starvation. He tried to stretch the rations, but failed. He put off the evil time as long as possible, and then, of a certain day, he announced his ultimatum: all but four of the men must be turned off; they must shift for themselves.

It was not easy. The fifty were eloquent. The factor was not a woman, but he locked himself in his house and would not listen. He knew it was useless. A few prayed. The others straightened up and prepared to depart.

In two days the post was peculiarly quiet. The fifty had melted away. In time, the factor forgot about them until the trading season came on, the time when the hunters come in with their furs. All the usual Indian hunters, except one or two, who had died of starvation because some little thing had caused the deer to avoid their usual grounds, came in. But there was no sign of the half-breeds that had been turned adrift, until one night, near the end of the trading time, the factor, walking in the edge of the bush, came across three huskies sniffing. He caused the thing at which they were sniffing to be given a decent burial, then he locked himself up in his house again and sulked. Two days afterward, three out of the fifty half-breeds crawled into camp. They had been successful; they brought furs

with them. They were healthy and had established their families well—but of the others—. They did not know and the factor did not press the question.

"Yes," said Hawes, slowly, without emotion, "that happened in —'s Factory. I hope it don't happen here. The man over there," pointing vaguely, "took to rum and religion both at once. They killed him."

The Hudson's Bay Company may deny this, and Hawes is dead, and there are no documents except a letter from the Bishop which I received years after leaving the post, in which he made an urgent plea that something be done to remove the superfluous half-breed population. He mentioned that the only apparent alternative was starvation. He was quite casual about it, as anyone would be who had lived as long among the breeds, and had witnessed the problems of their existence. But you cannot say that the company is to blame. It has done what it could for the breeds. In other posts, except a few in sterile country, such as Churchill, they do very well. It cannot afford to support indefinite numbers of half-breeds forever, because, of course, it supports the usual number of widows and orphans, which justify the existence of all great companies.

But when all is said and done concerning the Hudson's Bay Railway Company, when everybody has pointed out the obvious advantages which that railway gives the country and the bread-eaters of London, and the company which is to operate it, it is the half-breed who shall be most vitally affected by it. It may give him work and food.

I said before that I thought it was the half-breed problem that caused Hawes his fits of melancholia. But I was mistaken. He was sorry for them, that was all. He gave them as much food as he could. But the thing that worried him was, I found, a shipwreck, one of those wrecks that never gets into print, unless by accident, but which is written gravely against the profit and loss account of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Hawes had lost his ship in the bay. He had made some slight error in his calculations and the rocks and tides of the bay, resenting her intrusion into parts of the bay where she was not supposed to go,