

throws a charm over life in the country.

Now those country dances, those long drives in the burlow "built for two," mean happy marriages, either before Lent sets in, or after. It is the spring of life for the young. For the old who sit in the corner and are so piously cared for by the children and grandchildren, it is a pensive retrospect which dims the old eyes with tears.

For all, the New Year with its happy abandon, its respect for old customs, its note of simplicity, its hope of the resurrection of nature after the long sleep of winter, is the date of promise.

One might say that where you have lutins and fairies and a cure, who can bring rain when it is needed and banish the grasshoppers when they are not needed, you have stagnation. It may be! but would you press the whole of life into the dollar?

Was It You?

Somebody did a golden deed;
Somebody proved a friend in need;
Somebody sang a beautiful song;
Somebody smiled the whole day long;
Somebody thought, "Tis sweet to live";
Somebody said, "I'm glad to give";
Somebody fought a valiant fight;
Somebody lived to shield the right;
Was that somebody you?

The Sled Dogs of the North

Written for The Western Home Monthly by H. Mortimer Batten

FURTHER back than any history dates man and his dog have been inseparable, and today we have pitched battles and lawsuits all pointing to the same old text "Love me, love my dog." But the sled dogs of the north are not, generally speaking, a lovable race; hard breeding and hard living go to destroy those gentle characteristics which we naturally associate with our canine friends of more civilized quarters.

In Canada today the dog team does not play so important a part during the winter months as it did in the days when Western Canada was under the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company. At that time the Northern Packet—the annual mail—arrived at Winnipeg just before Christmas, to be distributed over a vast stretch of country ranging from the Hudson Bay to Alaska; and this gigantic work of distribution was carried out entirely by dog teams. The work was so arranged that each team made a journey of perhaps two hundred miles, when the sled, with its precious load, would be taken over by fresh men and dogs. Sometimes, however, it was impossible to arrange for relays, in which case the one team

would make the through journey, covering many hundreds of miles before reaching its ultimate destination. There was, of course, keen rivalry between the various drivers, each team anxious to accomplish a record, and in the west one hears today stories of the wonderful "runs" made by the Hudson Bay men.

In 1887 a half breed and a Scotchman named McTavish covered a distance of 500 miles without resting, thus establishing a record which will live long on the lonely trails of the north.

On a smaller scale the same system of distribution exists in Canada today, and scores of outlying settlements are solely reliant upon their dog teams for transportation during the winter months. Horses are unsuitable for the work, for not only are they unable to negotiate deep snow, but the food problem is a difficult one, while dogs are able to live on the products of the country fish and meat, being the only foods they require during any ordinary trip.

The dogs generally used by the Hudson's Bay Company are the famous huskie breeds which came originally from

Mackenzie, though among prospectors and trappers the malamute is far more common in the north-west. Both these breeds are very nearly related to the timber wolf, and possess many wolfish characteristics. In order to strengthen the breed of their dogs it is a common practice among the Indians to introduce fresh wolf blood by tying animals outside in the forest to breed with the wolves. The wolf, of course, is capable of immense speed, and can travel great distances without food, while nothing in the way of cold is likely to trouble him.

Many experiments have gone to prove, however, that the pure bred wolf cannot be broken to harness. Fierce and distrustful at heart, his sullen independence of character and lack of true affection make him a most dangerous and awkward customer to handle.

It is only the wolfish instincts of the sled dog that enable these animals to survive the hardships of the northern winter. These instincts become most noticeable as night comes on. The driver loosens out his team, and having given each dog its allotted portion of food leaves the animals to look after themselves.

For a little while the dogs huddle round the fire, but presently one slinks off then another. Each makes a bed deep under the snow, and there remains till the driver's cherry call wakens it in the morning. However wild the blizzard may blow the sled dog sleeps snugly in its icy bed—perhaps curled up side by side with its particular chum.

When winter is drawing to a close and spring is near, the restless instincts of the wild sometimes seems to stir the sled dog just as they stir his wild kindred. Malamutes and huskies have been known to desert their masters at this time of the year, and remain absent in the woods for days on end. On moonlight nights I have known dogs to leave camp, and making their way to a high range to sit there and howl dismally in the cadences of the wild wolf. There he is—your tame huskie—his gaunt figure thrust out against the sky line, around him the great grey loneliness, and as his muzzle points towards the moon howl after howl of wavering sadness stabs the silence of the woods. And what sound is like the howl of the timber wolf as it sweeps heavenwards over the tree tops—expressing all the gnawing loneliness, all the vastness and silent grandeur of those glorious but infernal solitudes?

Viewed in cold daylight, however, the sled dog is a very prosaic individual, and the man who sets out with a raw team is in for a lively time till he converts the animals to his way of thinking. Not that he has much difficulty in making them go, the sole ambition of each dog being to bite the hind quarters of the dog ahead of it, and unable to accomplish this feat the sled is likely to be overturned and the harness tangled many times ere the driver thoroughly masters the situation.

The usual way of harnessing dogs is in single file, each dog being attached to the line by its collar. This enables the animals to negotiate narrow trails without crowding each other, for both the malamute and huskie are ever ready to avail themselves of the faintest excuse to fight. For negotiating wide rivers and creeks the "Coast" method is perhaps the best, the dogs being fastened in pairs to a single trace of rawhide. Sometimes the Labrador style is used, each dog being harnessed by a separate trace, and the team allowed to straggle out in fan shaped formation. There is not much to be said in favor of the latter method for Canadian use, except that the animals work individually and the idler can be carefully watched; but for neatness the Labrador style cannot be compared with the single file and coast.

Whatever the method of harnessing, the leader plays an important part, and upon him largely depends the success of the outfit. A good leader is well aware of his own responsibilities, and while working hard himself is anxious for all to go well.

I remember once trying to break in an exceptionally rowdy, well-meaning, ill-doing puppy. The leader of the team, a half breed huskie we called Dagoo, was one of the best dogs I have ever known,



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