

FORWARD TO THE FRONT

ages are of good size. Mr. Cowley was just removing into a new house of a very substantial character."

Here Mr. Bompas had not long to wait, for the boats of the great Hudson's Bay Company were ready to start on their long northern journey, and he was to go with them. There were four boats, called a "brigade," each rowed by seven or eight men, "mostly Salteaux Indians, heathen, and unable to speak English—a tribe much averse to Christianity."

Then northward fled that fleet of boats, across great inland lakes, over hard portages where the freight had to be carried, past the company's posts, mission stations, and Indian encampments, where services were held when possible.

But winter was rapidly closing in upon them and threatening the daring voyagers. Sixty-three days had they been out from the Red River Settlement when Portage la Roche was reached on October 12, and there they found they were too late to meet any boat going farther north. Here was a difficult situation, but Mr. Bompas was not to be defeated. Engaging a canoe and two French half-breeds, he pushed bravely forward. The journey was a hard one. In some places they had to battle with drifting ice, and the water froze to their canoe and paddles. Still they pressed on, all day long contending with running ice, and the bleak, cold wind whistling around them and freezing the water upon their clothes. At night there was the lonely shore, the camp-fire, the scanty meal, and the cold ground covered with brush for a bed. The next day up and on again—the same weary work, the same hard fight. Such was the struggle for eight long days, till Fort Chipewyan, on Lake Athabasca, was reached.

Here Mr. Christie, the officer in charge of the post, gave him a hearty welcome; here the warm stove sent out its cheerful glow, and here, too, were to be found many comforts for the winter months, if he would only stay and rest. But