

ROMANCE OF EXPLORATION

Indians in their natural state, but they seemed kind and peaceable. When we explained to them as best we could that we were going down-stream, they all raised their voices against it. Among other dangers, they indicated that inhabiting the lower river were many tribes of 'bad' Indians—'numerous as the sand'—who would not only kill us, but eat us; we should never get back alive, and friends coming to look after us would unjustly blame them for our death. All this frightened our men to such a degree that I had reluctantly to consent to our return, which, under the circumstances, was the only alternative. I learned afterwards that it would have been madness in us to have made any further advance, unprepared as we were for such an enterprise.

"Much depressed, we that afternoon retraced our course up-stream; but before doing so I launched on the river a sealed can containing memoranda of our trip, etc. I was so dejected at the unexpected turn of affairs that I was perfectly heedless of what was passing; but on the third day of our upward progress I noticed, on both sides of the river, fires burning on the hill-tops far and near. This awoke me to a sense of our situation. I conjectured that, as in Scotland in the olden time, these were *signal fires*, and that they summoned the Indians to surround and intercept us. Thus aroused, we made the best use of paddles and 'tracking-line' to get up-stream and ahead of the Indian signals. On the fourth morning we came to a party of Indians on the further bank of the river. They made signs to us to cross over, which we did. They were very hostile, watching us with bows bent and arrows in hand, and would not come down from the top of the high bank to the water's edge to meet us. I sent up a man with some tobacco, the emblem of peace, to reassure them, but at first they would hardly remove their hands from their bows to receive it. We ascended the bank to them, and had a most friendly interview, carried on by words and signs. It required, however, some finesse and adroitness to get away