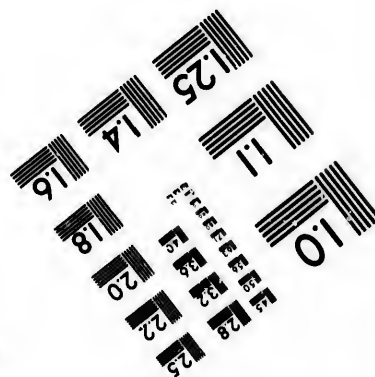
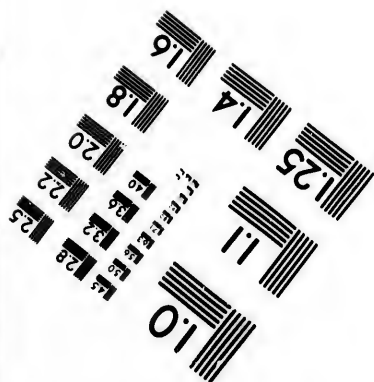
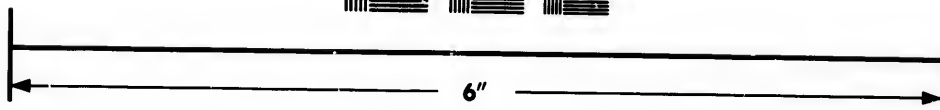
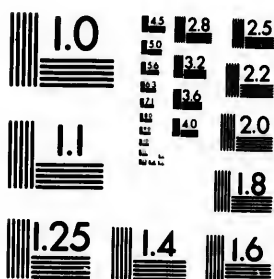


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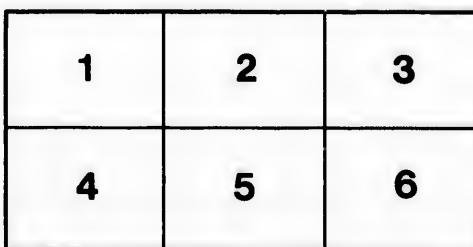
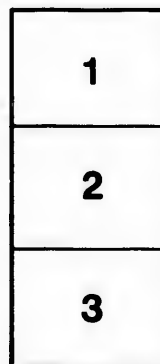
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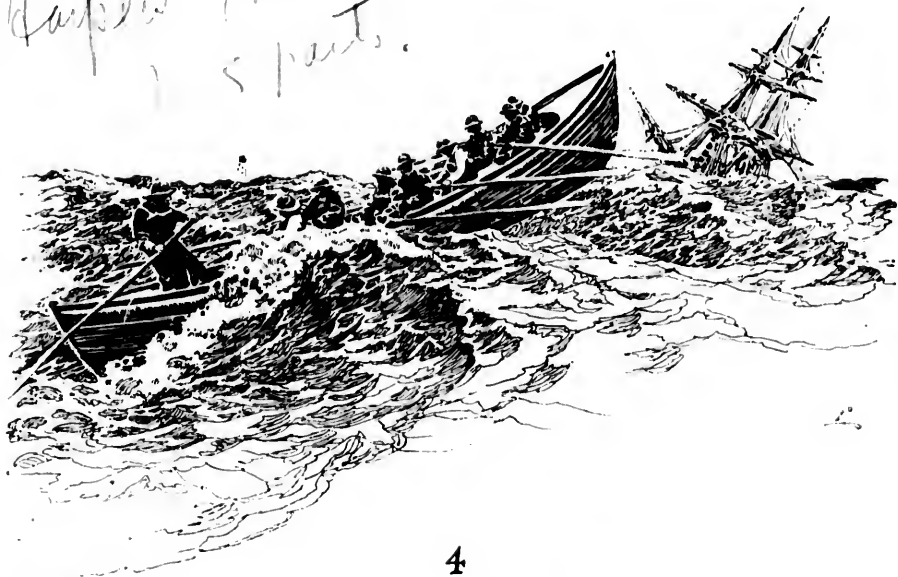
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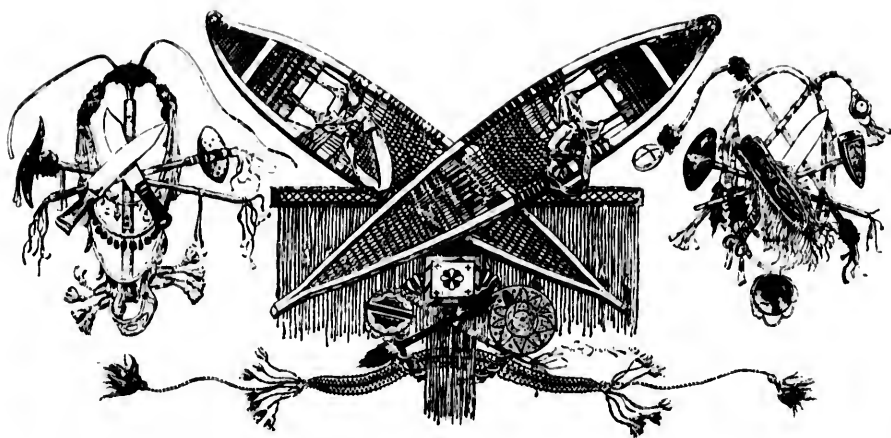
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FARLY in the morning the light-house-keeper and his granddaughter went out for a walk along the beach. The girl had just come down on a visit from the town, and she was curious to see the wreck on the beach she had noticed the evening before. The wind was blowing, and the air was full of the ceaseless monotone of the breakers, that at each recurrent burst sent a frothy sheet of water sliding up across the sand. The old light-house-keeper walked limpingly with his cane. He had been wounded in the knee in the battle of Bennington in the Revolution, and the government had given him the post of light-keeper. When they reached the wreck they stopped, and stood looking at it for a while. "'Polly Ann,'" read the young girl; and then, looking at the figure-head, "I suppose that is a likeness of somebody." "Ay, ay," says the old man, "the *Polly Ann*. She was an unlucky craft, they do say. She went ashore here in a gale last October, and two of the crew was drowned." Then he looked at the figure-head, squinting in the bright light as he did so. "'Tis like enough," said he, "that that be the likeness of the daughter of the owner." "I wonder who carved it?" said the girl. "'Tis very well done."





ON SNOW-SHOES TO THE BARREN GROUNDS

BY CASPAR W. WHITNEY

FAR to the northwest, beginning ten days' journey beyond Great Slave Lake and running down to the Arctic Ocean, with Hudson Bay as its eastern and Great Bear Lake and the Coppermine River as its western boundaries, lies the most complete and extended desolation on earth. That is the Barren Grounds, the land whose approximate 200,000 square miles (for its exact area is unknown) is the dwelling-place of no man, and its storms and sterility in its most northerly part are withstood the year round by no living creature save the musk-ox. There is the timberless waste where ice-laden blasts blow with hurricane and ceaseless fury that bid your blood stand still and your breath come and go in painful stinging gasps; where rock and lichen and moss replace soil and trees and herbage; and where death by starvation or freezing dogs the footsteps of the explorer.

There are two seasons and only two methods of penetrating this great lone land of the North—by canoe, when the watercourses are free of ice, and on snow-shoes during the frozen period, which occupies nearly nine of the year's twelve months. The deadly cold of winter, and greater risk of starvation, make the canoe trip the more usual one with the few Indians that hunt the musk-ox. But, because of the many portages, you cannot travel so rapidly by canoe as on snow-shoes, nor go so far north for the best of the musk-

ox hunting, nor see the Barren Grounds at their best, or worst, as you care to consider it. That is why I chose to make the attempt on snow-shoes.

And why did I turn my face towards a country which seemed to hold naught for the traveller but hardship? Well—certainly to hunt musk-ox, the most inaccessible game in the world, and to look upon his habitat at the period of its uttermost desolation; certainly also to study the several tribes of Indians through which I must pass on my way to the Barren Grounds; and *en route* to hunt wood-bison, undoubtedly now become the rarest game in the world. Possibly, too, I went that I might for a time escape the hum and routine sordidness of the city, and breathe air which was not surcharged with convention and civilization.

Arthur Heming, the artist, and I found ourselves, December 27, 1894, at Edmonton, the end of the railroad. We had travelled on the Canadian Pacific *via* Winnipeg and Calgary, and through the land of the Crees, Blackfeet, and Saree Indians, without seeing anything so picturesque in the way of costuming as the Winnipeg dragoon and a Saree young woman resplendent in beads and glittering tinsel. I really ought to include the mounted policeman, for he too has a uniform which, with scarlet jacket and yellow-striped breeches, is deserving of greater attention. But the mounted po-



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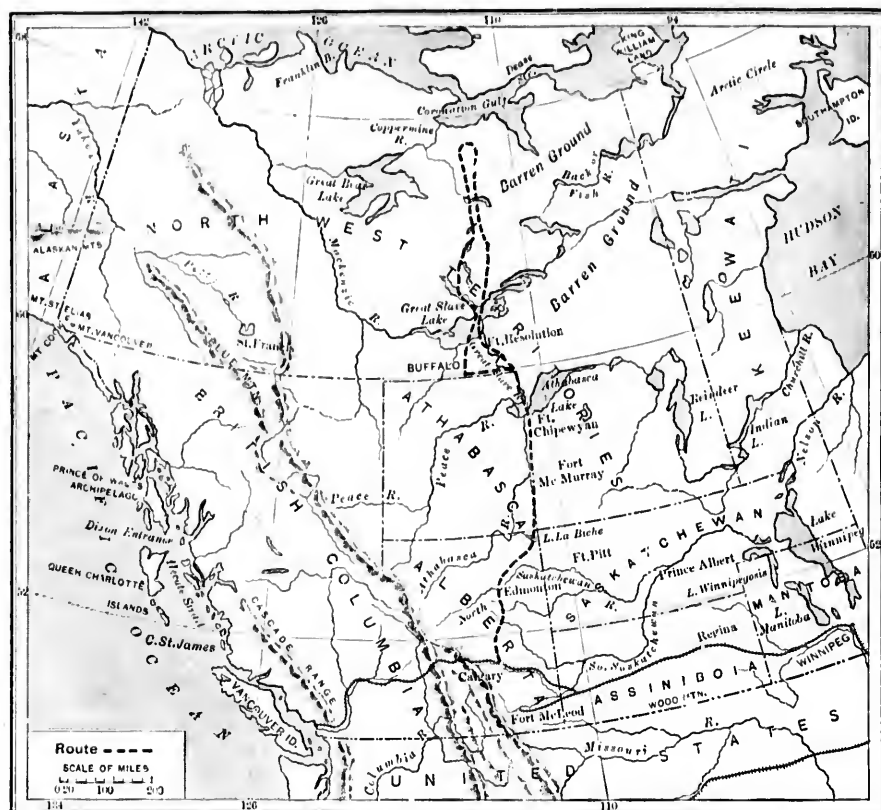
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TRADING IN THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY'S "OLD STORE" AT EDMONTON.





NORTHWESTERN BRITISH AMERICA, SHOWING BARREN GROUNDS AND MR. WHITNEY'S ROUTE.

liecman has that which is far worthier of comment than uniform. He has the reputation of being the most effective arm of the Canadian Interior Department. And he lives up to it. These "Riders of the Plains," as they are called, patrol a country so large that the entire force may lose itself within its domains and still be miles upon miles apart. Yet this comparative handful maintains order among the lawless white men and stays discontentment among the restless red men in a manner so satisfactorily and so unostentatiously as to make some of our United States experiences read like those of a tyro.

The success of the Northwest Mounted Police may be accredited to its system of distribution throughout the guarded territory. Unlike our army, it does not mass its force in forts adjacent to Indian reservations. Posts it has, where recruit-

ing and drilling are constantly going forward, but the main body of men is scattered in twos and threes over the country, riding hither and thither—a watch that goes on relief after relief. This is the secret of their success, and a system it would well repay our own government to adopt. The police are ever on the spot to advise or to arrest. They do not wait for action until an outbreak has occurred; they are always in action. They constitute a most valuable peace-assuring corps, and I wish we had one like it.

Although Edmonton has but a few hundred population, it is doubly honored—by an electric-light plant which illuminates the town when not otherwise engaged, and by a patience-trying railway company that sends two trains a week to Calgary and gives them twelve hours in which to make two hundred miles. But

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H. B. CO.'S ROUTE.

no one, except luckless travellers, at Edmonton cares a rap about intermittent electric lights, or railroads that run passengers on a freight schedule, so long as they do not affect the fur trade. Fur was originally the *raison d'être* of Edmonton's existence, and continues the principal excuse of its being. In the last three years the settlement of a strip of land south and of one to the north has created a farming or ranching contingent, but to date of my visit canned goods appeared to remain the chief article of sustenance, as furs were certainly the main topic of conversation. Edmonton may in time develop the oasis upon which it is built, between the arid plains immediately to the south and the great lone land to the north, into something notably agricultural; but for many years the town will be, as it is to-day, the gateway of the well-nigh boundless fur-producing country to the north, and the outlet for the numberless "packs" gathered by the great Hudson Bay Company.

And what a company is this!—with the power of a king and the consideration of a partner. A monopoly that does not monopolize, it stands alone a unique figure



SARCEE BELLE.



WINNIPEG DRAGOON.



WAPITI-HUNTER.

in the commercial history of the world. Given its charter by the impecunious Charles II. in 1670, the pioneers of this "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay" sailed for the southern shores of St. James Bay, where they set up their first post and took possession of the new country in the name of Prince Rupert. Here they found a rival French company, with a previous charter granted by Louis XIII., and an equally keen sense of Indian barter, so that for

many years there was more fighting than trading. When Wolfe, on the Heights of Abraham, crushed the power of France in Canada, the French company entered upon a decline that finally ended in dissolution. But in their stead came numbers of Englishmen, pushing their way westward, eager to trade for the furs of which they had heard so much and seen so little. Thus many trading-posts came into being, and eventually (about 1780) combined to form the Northwest Fur Company, the longest-lived and most determined rival that ever disputed trade with the Hudson Bay Company. It is not my purpose to fill space with historical research, but a

brief sketch of this company, and how it came in the land, is necessary to a proper understanding of the country into which I hope to carry the reader.

The Hudson Bay Company had not reached out to a very great extent, being content with the fur gathered by their half-dozen "factories," of which York Factory and Churchill were the earliest and most important. But the Northwest Company brought a new spirit into the country; they pressed for trade with such avidity and determination as to carry

down the river which bears his name. I have never been able to see the justice in the command that gave Mackenzie a knighthood and ignored Hearne. The latter's trip was really a most remarkable one—overland a great part, and always the more difficult. Mackenzie's trip, as compared with it, reads like a summer day's pleasuring.

For forty years these two companies traded with the Indians, and fought one another at every opportunity, meanwhile pushing their posts farther and farther into the interior; but in 1821 a compromise was effected, an amalgamation resulted, and the Hudson Bay Company reigned supreme. And so it has continued to reign ever since: for though it retired from the government of Ruperts Land in 1870, and handed it over to the Dominion of Canada for £300,000 sterling, yet, so far as the country is concerned of which Edmonton is the distributing point, the Hudson Bay Company is as much the ruler in fact as ever it was in law. But this particular section, extensive as it is, is only one of the many in which, from end to end of British North America, this company counts altogether something like two hundred trading-posts. Nor are furs its sole commodity; from Montreal to Victoria along the



SARCEE AND SQUAW "AT HOME."

them into parts hitherto entirely unknown, and cause bloodshed whenever they met the agents of the rival company. It was the greed for trade, indeed, that quickened the steps of the first adventurers into the silent, frozen land of the North. Samuel Hearne, the first white man to pass beyond Great Slave Lake, made his trip in 1769 by order of the Hudson Bay Company, and in search of copper-mines. It was in pursuance of trade for the Northwest Company that Alexander Mackenzie (1789) penetrated to the Arctic Ocean

Canadian Pacific Railroad, and at the centres of the Indian countries in which they trade, may be seen the "stores" of the Hudson Bay Company. Its £2,000,000 sterling capital stock is owned in London, but the business of the vast corporation is operated from Winnipeg, with "Commissioner" C. C. Chipman as its executive head.

One surprise at least awaited me at Edmonton. I had expected—I will be more honest, and say I had hoped—Edmonton would prove to be a bit untamed and picturesque. The realization of be-

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two companies and fought one city, meanwhile farther and farther interior; but in compromise was an amalgamated, and the Bay Company supreme. And continued to for since: for retired from command of Rupert in 1870, and over to the of Canada for clerking, yet, so country is con- which Edmon- e distributing

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Indian Running

BREAKING A TRAIL FOR THE DOGS.

ing on this Canadian frontier raised memories of other frontier days across the line, when Colorado and New Mexico were wild and woolly, and the atmosphere was continuously punctured by cowboy whoops and leaden pellets. Edmonton, however, never passed through such a period of real exhilaration. It had its days of waywardness, but its diversions were exceedingly commonplace. A few years ago it was almost surrounded by the battling-ground of the Crees and Blackfeet, and, as a matter of course, harbored red as well as white renegades; there was little law,

and that little was not respected; Indians out in the country killed off their foes from ambush, and in town renegades revealed their coward's blood and lack of originality by stabbing their enemies in the back. There were none of those blood-stirring nights in town such as we used to have on our own frontier; no duels on the main thoroughfare between two prominent citizens, with the remaining population standing by to see fair play; no cowboys to ride into saloons and shoot out the lights; no marksmen so expert as to knock the neck off the whiskey-bottle



AN ENCAMPMENT NEAR CALGARY.



A MEDICINE-MAN'S LODGE.

in the bartender's hands, and no bartenders who under such conditions did not turn a hair. There was murdering in plenty in and around Edmonton in the old days, but no man maintained a private burying-ground. This is not a distinction without a difference, as those with frontier experience will bear me out. I found Edmonton settled into a steady-going business community, with many hotels and few saloons, and the most exciting sight I beheld during my two nights and a day stop was a freighter

open until nine o'clock, and I, forgetful of being in a latitude where the sun in winter does not show himself before that hour, found myself chasing about the streets in the dawn that, before coming out of doors, I fancied due to a clouded sky. At last the shops and the sun opened for the day, and I succeeded in getting every one on the move. Still, we should not have been able to get away next day, I am sure, but for the consideration of the Hudson Bay Company factor, Mr. Livock, and his chief aid, Mr. Kennard, who were

wrestling with himself after a bout with "40 proof."

Indeed, when I set out, the morning after my arrival, to get all in readiness in the one day that we might make the start for Lac La Biche on the second, I doubted if the citizens had ever heard of the word "hustle." I had been delayed in leaving New York, delayed in having to stop over at Winnipeg to get letters of credit from the Hudson Bay Company, and now I had finally reached the frontier, I was determined to be delayed no longer if effort of mine would provide against it. First

of all, the shops did not



GOING FOR AN AFTERNOON DRIVE AT EDMONTON.

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kind enough to neglect their business to attend to mine. The one happy stroke we had made was in choosing the Queen's for our hotel; it was quite haphazard, but very lucky. Here I found the best board to which I had ever sat down in a frontier town, and host and hostess that did more for me during my sojourn than the bill showed or I could repay.

If such signs were trustworthy, I should have been much elated over the auspicious weather that ruled on the day of our departure for La Biche. Truly it was a beautiful morning, with the temperature some twenty degrees below zero, and a

not for a pieme. I knew perfectly well that I could not carry in a sufficient supply to last until I had covered the 900 miles that lay between me and Great Slave Lake, because of the impossibility of securing enough dogs and sledges to freight it, and I knew that even if I could eat as a civilized man until I reached that point, I should be obliged, when I began my journey into the Barren Grounds, to abandon all hope of eating well, or even plentifully, and live or starve as do the Indians on their annual hunt in that region. Besides, the greatest essential to the success of my trip was speed. I had



OFF FOR LAC LA BICHE.

glorious sun, which touched the ice-covered bushes and trees with sparkling brilliancy; and when we started on our 175-mile drive, all Queen's Hotel, and, I judged, half the town, turned out to bid us God-speed. We had two good horses and a strong box-sleigh, and our load was not heavy, so that I expected to make good time. I had taken only enough provisions from Edmonton to last us to La Biche. There was much that I could have taken, of course, in the way of canned vegetables, meats, etc., and which might have saved me from many a meal of the oftentimes unpalatable stuff which I secured from post to post. But I was going into the country for a purpose, and

set out to make my bison-hunt, to get into the Barren Grounds for the musk-ox, and get back again to Great Slave Lake on snow-shoes—an undertaking that had never before been attempted, and which every one assured me I could not carry out. It meant snow shoeing nearly 1900 miles, and left no time for leisurely travelling; but I was determined to accomplish what I had planned if it lay within human possibilities; and thus it was that we took no unnecessary freight from Edmonton, for civilized food is so considered in that great North land. Tobacco was the only article of which I took a greater supply; but tobacco is not considered freight up there; it is always a solace, and

becomes on occasion a stimulant when there is no meat, and an irresistible lure to facilitate intercourse with the Indians.

It was well we had a stout sleigh, for, much to my astonishment, the snow seemed not more than a foot deep anywhere, while in the road it had been worn down by much travel, and the rocks were numerous and aggressive. We made twenty-two miles by noon of the first day, and took our dinner at Fort Saskatchewan, the most northerly post of the Northwest Mounted Police. Up to this point of the day's journey the road had been plain, and the country not unpleasant to the eye. In fact, in some parts it is rather pretty, of a general rolling character, fringed with small timber, mostly of the poplar variety, though pine is fairly abundant. It looks like, and is, in truth, a grazing country more especially, though the horses and cattle I saw *en route* were rather poor—a condition to be probably expected in a land where everything is new and the settlers lead a hand-to-mouth existence, as all settlers do. An

Edmonton enthusiast—I think he must have had property for sale—assured me with great gusto that the land around that town would yield from 35 to 75 bushels of wheat to the acre, and from 100 to 200 bushels of oats, the latter weighing 42 pounds to the bushel; the timber, however, he acknowledged "wasn't much to brag on."

The one well-defined road we had been following all day broadened out towards sunset into a valley, showing in turn several depressions in the snow—here much deeper—which we assumed to be roads. No one at Saskatchewan was able to direct us intelligently, and not a soul had been seen since leaving there from whom we could ask our way. Grierson, who was driving us, and who is one of the Queen's

Hotel proprietors, had never before been over the road, but his bump of direction was well placed and abnormally developed. People in this country do not seem to consider knowledge of the roads necessary to reaching their destination. They just start off on the one main and almost only trail, which they follow to its end, when they continue on in the direction

of their objective point. Roads are few and far between in this section, and disappear altogether when you get one hundred miles north of Edmonton. The alleged road to La Biche, which bears to the east of north, is the longest, and the end; beyond, all travel is by dogs in winter and canoe in summer. Grierson knew that Beaver Lake Creek was the point we were booked to reach that night in order to make La Biche in three days' travel from Edmonton, and he was sure it lay to the northeast. So we pegged on, until finally, after chasing several lights that turned out to be the wrong ones, and once nothing less lofty than a planet, which in this far North hung near the horizon, we found the log cabin of Beaver Lake Creek's most distinguished settler. I say distinguished, because his was the only cabin in those parts which boasted of two rooms and a second story—an extravagance, he informed us, he had indulged in with the idea of one day, when the section in which he had located became more populous, putting a stock of merchandise into the "other room," and utilizing the top story as a dormitory for travellers. I concluded he was a host of discernment, with a delicate humor for inciting reform in his guests without offending their previously conceived sense of propriety, for, having refreshed myself in about one and a half inches of ice-water, I was confronted by this black-lettered legend on the cabin door: "Bad luck attend the man that wipes his nose on the towel."

We left the pioneer of Beaver Tail Creek's "400" next morning before the sun was up, and by one o'clock had gone thirty-eight miles to Victoria, on the Saskatchewan River. It is the site of a Hudson Bay Company trading-post, and the end of the telegraph line. Once past here, the most rapid means of communication is the "express," as the Indian runner is called. To me, as sportsman, the most interesting feature of Victoria was the fact of its being about the northern limit of wapiti in this particular part of the continent. Formerly, in the days of the bison, wapiti were numerous, particularly near the Battle River, but, although they have not entirely disappeared, they are not now plentiful, and are to be had only by the most skilful hunters. Because of this the Indians living near Victoria resort to every manner of device for a shot, but with indifferent success.



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This was our longest day's drive, for we had made very close to eighty miles by eleven o'clock at night, when we camped, and the road, or rather the multiplicity of roads, of the afternoon proved even more perplexing than on the day previous. Our direction lay along the border of a Cree Indian reservation, and was cross-sectioned at times with trails, or at least what in the snow had the appearance of trails, running to the four points of the compass. We knew we had but one point of the compass to follow—of that much, at least, we were sure, and proportionately thankful—but that point seemed to be such a broad one we were constantly at a loss for our bearings. I should be very much relieved to know positively if there was indeed any trail taking a northeasterly course that escaped us, and shall always regret I did not return by that route in the spring on my way back to the railroad, and when the snow had disappeared, just to satisfy my curiosity on that score. We were making for the White-Fish Lake Indian reservation, where we had been told we could find feed and a covering for the horses, and a schoolmaster who would give us a place to throw down our blankets, and the best of his larder. We were not concerned for ourselves, for we carried enough to provide a substantial meal, and, I think, all three of us would have preferred sleeping in the open to the average cabin. But the mercury had fallen a great many degrees since leaving Edmonton, a cutting wind was blowing, and our horses were pretty well worn, with still forty-five miles to go the next day before reaching La Biche. This was why we pushed on, hoping every turn would show the light in the distance that meant rest for us and an extra feed for our team. We finally reached some straggling cabins of the reservation, but should have been searching for that light yet if we had not roused an Indian from his slumbers, whom Grierson, by some startling Cree vocalization, the like of which I never heard before nor since, at length made understand what we were after. Then this drowsy child of nature led the

way to a schoolmaster, but not to the schoolmaster we had been seeking, whose house was a few miles farther on, we subsequently learned.

The schoolmaster we found was a study in filth. He lived like a dog in a wretched kennel, and talked like a cockney Englishman; indeed, he confided to me, the following morning, that he had come from London, and was living there

chiefly to learn the Cree language, that he might later preach "Jesus to the wayward heathen." Meanwhile he was educating him. This cockney's one idea of education seemed summed up in the single word coercion. If the Indians gathered for the dances of their tribe, he scattered them; if they played the games of their childhood, he stopped them; if they asked for reasons, he told them it was the devil in them that they exploited and which he wished to cast out. A logical way, forsooth, of educating the

ignorant! And this is why we find the broken-spirited Indian, who realizes he is the creature of an all-powerful master whose ways he cannot understand, so often "converted," but only in individual cases educated and civilized. He is "converted" because it requires only outward acquiescence, and he finds his material life made pleasanter thereby. He is willing to change his "Great Spirit" for the white man's "Great Spirit" when a few beads or an extra ration make the trade inviting. But he cannot be educated without being first civilized, and he cannot be civilized because in most cases the white man does not know how, or does not find it to his interest, to make the attempt in a rational way. At present he distrusts, and sees only that he is being "civilized" off the face of the earth, and remembers the white man in his successive rôles of welcomed guest, greedy hunter, settler, and exterminator. I am not dealing in heroics, and every one knows that the savage must disappear before the civilized man; but if we are to attempt the civilization of those that remain let us first endeavor to gain their confidence, and then follow it up by methods which



THE COPPER KETTLE IN WHICH WE
BREWED TEA FOR TWENTY-SIX
HUNDRED MILES.

they can grasp. It is not to be done in one season, nor in two; the civilized red man cannot be brought forth full-fledged, as from a patent incubator; he can be evolved only after long periods of gradual and natural development; yet we expect by mere word of mouth to make him forsake the sentiments of a lifetime, of generations of lifetimes. At the same time he should realize there is a law in the land which punishes and protects him as thoroughly as it does the white man. He should not be allowed to escape with no severer penalty for furtive war-path festivals than that of being merely herded back to his reservation, when

white men equally guilty would be hanged or shot. The surest way of civilizing the Indian is through his children, and possibly their children in turn will cease to remember that once their ancestors roamed over the country hunting, and learning the lessons of their common mother Nature, instead of living fenced in on a reservation, ploughing, and studying the precepts of the white man.

We left the Indian reformer early the next

rated us from our destination. As we neared La Biche we renewed our troubles over diverging roads, but this time our direction was so accurate that the delay was inconsiderable. Moreover, there were others abroad; for the morrow was New-Year's, and Indians and half-breeds were making their way to the company post to partake of the feast which is provided for them annually. They came from either side, and fell into the now well-beaten track we were all travelling; men and women, old and young, some walking, but the majority riding in a sort of box set upon runners, locally known as a "jumper," and drawn by a nondescript kind of beast which we discovered upon close scrutiny to be an undersized, underfed horse, but that more nearly resembled an overgrown jack-rabbit. And thus with the dying sun of the last day of 1894 we made our *entrée* into Lac La Biche with the gathering of the clans.

I do not believe I had ever been in a more advanced state of exhilaration than on first viewing the unsightly cabins of the La Biche post. Farther along on my trip I felt a deeper thankfulness, when hope had almost fled, and mind and body were too jaded to rejoice, but now I was as a boy given an unexpected holiday, who wanted to shout and throw his cap into the air; for here at last I beheld the actual frontier, and the real starting-point of my journey. It was not that the trip from Edmonton had been so long or so hard, for, as a matter of fact, it was pleasant and easy, but it was the realization of being on the scene of action, so to say. When one has planned an adventure, and discussed ways and means and dangers, there is a satisfaction in reaching the base of operations; and when one's friends have tried to dissuade and natives to intimidate you, there is added to satisfaction that other feeling, which puts you on edge, fires your blood, and makes you keen to toe the mark and be off. It was a blessing I arrived in such a humor, for it was sorely tried at La Biche during the three vexing days we were compelled to spend there. I had a premonition we were going to run against a snag when I saw Gairdner, the Hudson Bay Company officer in charge, saunter out of his cabin to greet us; and when he asked if we were not ahead of time, in a tone that implied he would have been better pleased had we been overdue, I felt convinced we were



BLANKET CLOTHING OF THE EARLY WINTER, BEFORE EXCESSIVE COLD DEMANDS FURS.

morning, after a broken night's rest on a dirtier floor than, I think, I ever saw in an Indian lodge. We must have proved a blessing to that fellow, for we put money in his purse, and such a meal in his stomach as I fancy he had not had for many a long day. The weather had grown colder, and one of our horses gone lame, but our big fur coats to keep out the one, and mustang liniment to relieve the other, put us in travelling shape. We had broken our sleigh, and patched it up again before we camped for our noon-day meal in a squall of snow, but we had covered by that time a good half of the distance which the previous night sepa-

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going to be delayed. We were a day in advance of our schedule, having taken but three instead of four days from Edmonton, but as an "express" had been sent Gairdner two weeks before to warn him of our arrival, and as the preparations were only the making of two pairs of snow-shoes, and the engaging of two trains of dogs and drivers, I could not see that our coming was ill-timed.

I think, nevertheless, he was glad to see us (especially Grierson, who had brought along a flask), and he certainly shared the best of his house with us. He told us we had come at the best time of the year to see the Indians; that they were always given a feast and a dance on New-Year's, and that some of them, hearing of our arrival, would probably drop in that night to dance a little for us. Well, they did "drop in," and they as certainly danced, though not a "little." Heavens! how those creatures danced, and what an atmosphere and a racket they created in that house! They began to arrive shortly after we had finished supper, shaking hands with us solemnly on entrance, and eying us stealthily after seating themselves in rows against the walls. Then one of them produced a fiddle, and from the time the first measure was sounded, I think there was no cessation until about two o'clock the following morning.

For a while the exhibition was rath-



HALF-BREED DOG-DRIVER.

er interesting, though never very novel. The common dancing of Indians appears to be about the same all over; there is but one type, though it may assume different expressions, according to prejudice or locality. Either they shuffle around in a circle, or they hop from one foot to the other in lines or separately, or they do all three, with more or less vigor and with or without costuming. At La Biche the dancing is not of the Indian type, it is of the kind one sees in the half-breed camps of Canada, and consists of a species of jigs and reels gone through at a pace that makes you dizzy only to watch. They have their dances where several couples perform, but the most popular seemed that in which separate couples engaged, as many as the floor would accommodate. These face one another, and the man enters upon a vigorous exploitation of the double-shuffle, which he varies with "pigeon wings," and Heaven knows what not, always making the greatest noise of which he is capable. Noise and endurance, I was given to understand, are the two requisites to good dancing; but men and women of course wear moccasins, and only on occasion have board floors to dance on. It was my luck to happen along at one of those "occasions," and to be further tortured by a half-breed company servant, whose great pride was a



AN EDMONTON FREIGHTER.

heavy pair of white man's boots, which he never wore except when threading the giddy maze.

Half-breeds—French and Cree—constitute the larger share of population at La Biche, if I may class as its population those scattered over the immediately surrounding country, and where the settlement consists of just three cabins besides the Hudson Bay Company's. But, after all, the French blood reveals itself chiefly in a few Christian names and in the more fanciful coloring and use of some articles of wear, for there is little French spoken, the children of mixed parentage almost invariably adopting the mother-tongue, Cree. There are not more than one hundred Crees who come into La Biche, which is the most northerly post where treaty money is given, and they are not thriving to any very great extent, nor increasing. The annuity of about five dollars a head is not sufficient to support and just enough to interrupt keen hunting; they plant a few potatoes, which grow here fairly well, but are making no progress towards self-support, as are those of the same nation more to the south.

After what I had seen the night before of the preliminaries to the annual feast-day, I did not expect on New-Year's to be able to make any preparations for our further progress. Long before we had turned out of our blankets the house was literally packed with Indians, and by noon-time the fiddle was going and the dancers had entire possession of the floor. I doubt if I ever saw, outside of some of the Chinese dens in San Francisco, so many crowded into the same space. I lacked the heart to talk business with Gairdner, who, I divined from some of his remarks, had not accomplished, in the way of making ready our dog brigade, all I had expected of him. I simply pitied him for the unpleasant and malodorous fulness of his home, and I pitied his half-breed wife and her daughters, who were kept cooking for and feeding half-starved Indians from early morn until late into the night. Heming took his pencil and scratch pad and I my camera, and we

went out to see the New-Year's-day arrivals and the dogs and the Indians.

In front of the fort's stockade were gossiping groups that grew with each fresh arrival, while scattered all about the enclosure, just where their drivers had left them, were the dog trains of the Indians who had come to fill Gairdner's

house and eat the Hudson Bay Company's meat. There was no stabling nor feasting for these dogs; in a 24° below zero atmosphere they stretched out in the snow and waited, without covering, and in many cases without food. The Indians with their blanket coats or ca-



ONE "MADE BEAVER" TOKEN, FORMERLY ISSUED BY THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY.

potes, and the dogs and sledges and "jumpers," made a picturesque whole against the unbroken background of snow, but, like all Indian pictures, its attractiveness faded away on the close inspection that discovered the dirt of the man, and the scraggy, half-starved condition of the beast. These people had never before seen a camera, and many of my plates show them scurrying away or turning their backs. It was only after the most elaborate descriptions to Gairdner, who instructed the interpreter, who explained to the Indians, that we induced one or two "types" to sit in our presence while Heming sketched them. They thought we were making "medicine" against them, but were won over by Heming drawing the moose and caribou, while they watched the animals they knew so well develop under his pencil.

When we returned to the house the dance was still on; it was always "on" during the first thirty-six hours of our stay at La Biche. Formerly the Hudson Bay Company officers merely "received" on New-Year's day; but as the Indians have a custom between sexes of kissing on meeting, and as it did not become an impartial officer to distinguish in this respect between old women and young, unattractive and attractive, the feast was substituted; so now the women are fed and danced instead of being kissed.

I hope that New-Year's night will not be recorded against me. Those Indians danced until four o'clock in the morning,

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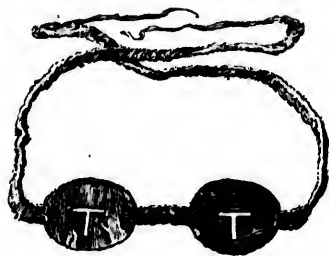
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LAC LA BICHE ON NEW-YEAR'S DAY.



and they danced to my utter demoralization. We sat around and watched the "gymnastics" and pretended we enjoyed them until about one o'clock; then we retired. We all three slept in Gairdner's office, a tiny apartment separated from the main room by a thin board partition, of which a good quarter section in the centre was removed to admit of the two rooms sharing a single stove. There was a piece of loosened sheet-iron tacked to the partition to protect it from the heat, and my head was against that partition, and our blankets on the same floor upon which those Indians sprinted and jumped and shuffled!

New-Year's past and the fiddle hung up, I entered upon the business of our getting under way for Fort McMurray,



NATIVE "SNOW-GLASSES."

the next Hudson Bay post to the north, and then indeed did the trouble begin. First of all, Gairdner earnestly assured me that I could not make the trip I contemplated, that I could not get into the Barren Grounds, and would risk my life if I did, and could not get Indians to accompany me if I would. Then, after finding me undismayed by the lugubrious prospect, he informed me that he had not been able to get matters ready, nor could he say how soon we could start. He had first engaged two men, but both backed out, one because he could not get four dogs together, and the other because he had no house to put his wife in during his absence. Finally he had secured the services of a half-breed called "Shot," who, he said, was the best man in the country, trustworthy and a good traveler, and had spoken to another half-breed, who was just then struggling to make up his mind. Added to this pleasing intelligence, the snow-shoes were being made by an Indian who lived fifteen miles

away, and from whom nothing had been heard. I thought we were at least sure of "Shot"; but the next day he came to us with a large story of his worth, the sacrifices he would make by going with us, and wound up by refusing to budge unless we doubled the wages which he and Gairdner had agreed upon.

For the remainder of this and the next day life was a burden to me. Gairdner was absolutely of no use, as he could have been by standing between us and the Indians in our business. I was obliged to take matters into my own hands, and deal with the wrangling Indians through an interpreter. I finally secured "Shot" on a compromise, intending to take no other man, but drive the second train of dogs ourselves. Then I had a time getting another four dogs and sledge. First the owners would not hire a train without their own engagement (this after I had spent two days trying to induce them to go with me!), then no one man who had a complete train could be found. At last I got two dogs from one Indian and one dog each from two different Indians. Meanwhile I was waiting for "Shot," who was to come prepared for the start as soon as the snow-shoes were finished, and being worried thin by the dog-owners' repeated visits and their clamors for a new deal; having hired the dogs and sledge, they wanted me to pay an additional fee for harness and wrapper, or, if not, to give them a little tea or tobacco or moccasins. I was in constant dread lest their fickleness would eventually deprive me of a train, and I cursed "Shot" roundly for his delay. Meanwhile, too, Heming and I were conditioning ourselves by some running every afternoon, and had settled to the conviction that the hardest part of our trip appeared to be the getting started.

At last on Friday, January 4th, the impatiently awaited "Shot" arrived, with his dogs and sledge in good condition, but the sledge of the second train broken so badly as to necessitate its repair before starting. "Shot" had also brought with him a young Cree Indian called John, whom he recommended as a good runner, and advised me to engage; and afterwards, when Heming fell ill, and John and I pushed on into the country alone, I forgave "Shot" much of what I had harbored against him because of his bringing me that Cree. It was noon before the sledge

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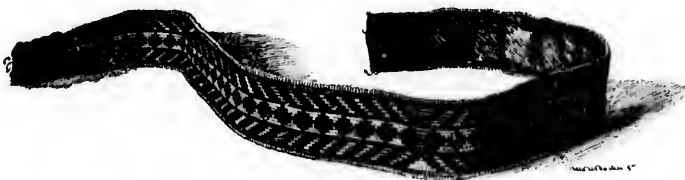
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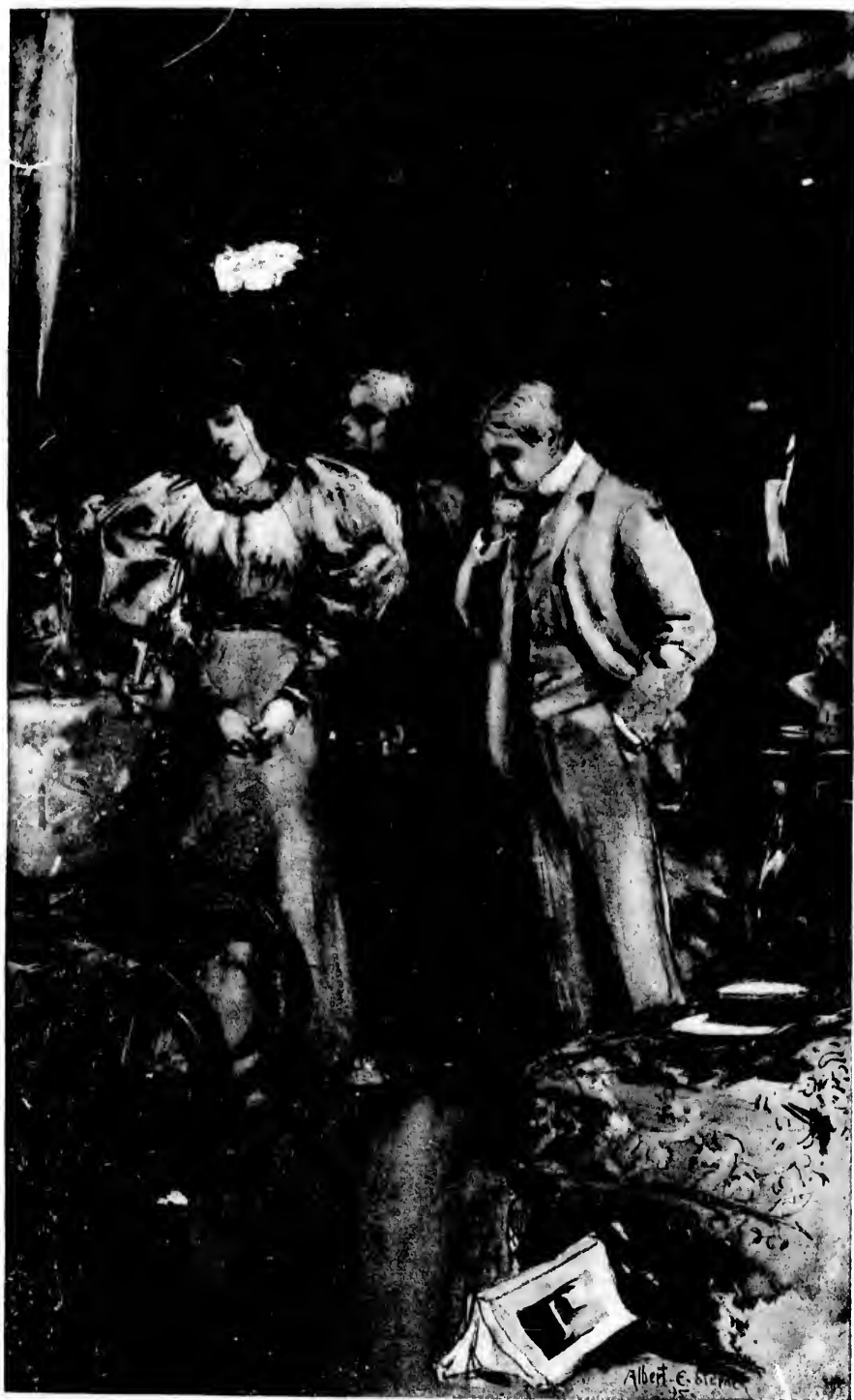
"IN A 24° BELOW ZERO ATMOSPHERE THEY WAITED."

had been mended and we were ready to begin packing up for the start. Our personal luggage consisted of a change of shirts and heavy underwear, three silk pocket-handkerchiefs, an extra pair of Irish frieze trousers, a heavy woollen sweater, stout gloves to wear inside the native-made mittens, two pairs of Hudson Bay Company four-point blankets, a rabbit-skin robe (of native manufacture, and very warm), blanket leggings, a caribou-skin capote lined with blanket, a knitted hood, a worsted tuque, "duffel" socks (native-made of a sort of blanket stuff, two to three pairs being worn at a time inside the moccasins), snow-glasses, several pairs of moccasins, hunting-knife, strong clasp-knife, a 45.90 Winchester, half-magazine, and 150 cartridges, pills, and mustang liniment; I had, besides, a compass, my camera (in a strong zinc box), note-books, and some iodoform, antiseptic lozenges, and sterilized gauze bandages, in case amputation because

of freezing became necessary. Our provisions included bacon, tea, flour, and a few pounds of potatoes Mrs. Gairdner was kind enough to boil and mash and freeze into a pan for us; our one luxury—or rather mine, for Heming does not smoke—was tobacco. In all we had just 357 pounds, which I was careful to determine, for I was sure "Shot" would be grumbling about the load, and swear we had 600 pounds on each sledge, and I wanted to be prepared to meet him, as I had said we should go light purposely to make good time. We took only one night's fish for the dogs (dogs being fed fish in this country in place of meat), because Gairdner told us we should find plenty at Hart Lake, which we would reach the next night. Finally by three o'clock the sledges were packed, "Shot" and John had bade tender farewells to every man, woman, and child about the post, Gairdner and Grierson had wished us the best of luck, and we began our journey.




A WOMAN'S PORCUPINE-QUILL BELT.



"WELL, PHILIPPA?"

See "A Previous Engagement."

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the way in which he employs his time, and are in consequence enabled frequently to save him from himself. They, moreover, possess peculiar facilities for making the most of the men intrusted to their charge. Without additional expense to the government, they can draw on a practically unlimited force of instructors. Through this agency they can re-enforce the steady pressure of that general educational drill given to the whole class with an attention to the guidance and development of the individual members belonging to it which it is utterly out of the power of any ordinary institution of learning to rival even remotely. But while they have accomplished much in the past, they have accomplished it in the face of great and unnecessary difficulties. These difficulties, furthermore, are constantly increasing, with the increasingly complex nature of the problems which warfare under the development of modern science is called upon to meet. They demand for their solution as never before the services of the highest order of trained intellect, and of intellect trained in a wide variety of ways. The very fact that the teaching force of the two national Academies has been enabled to do so much under the present wretched system is an additional reason for giving them the opportunity to do far more under a better system. We insist upon the best physically; with equal reason we ought to insist upon the best mentally.

Against any reform of the present system we must expect the inevitable declarations of what might, could, would, or should have happened if a higher standard had prevailed in the past. As this is a point about which one man knows just as much as another, and nobody knows anything at all, its consideration may be safely left to those who delight in the discussion of questions that can never be answered and of problems that can never be solved. There is, however, an obstacle in the way that is really formidable. Against any improvement in the existing state of things we are told that Congress stands as an insurmountable barrier. That it has so stood in the past is undeniable. The entrance to the Military Academy is prescribed by law; and though that to the Naval Academy is under the control of the Navy Department, it is impracticable to have any

marked distinction in the requirements for admission to the two arms of the service. But that this condition of affairs should continue to exist after the matter has once been brought fully to the attention of the country, and dispassionately considered by its representatives, I, for one, should hesitate and certainly hate to believe. There is not an educated Congressman who would not be found willing to concede that the national legislature is as utterly incompetent to pass upon the studies which should be pursued before entrance as it would be upon those that are pursued after entrance. There is but one body properly qualified to decide upon a question of this character. That body is made up of those in the two Academies who have had experience in the work of actual instruction in the theory of the profession, and of a chosen number of the graduates of highest ability who have had experience in its practice. To their hands, subject to the approval of the Navy Department, can the requirements for admission be safely intrusted, and to their hands alone. All the dangers feared from committing this power to such a body are utterly illusory. No persons like the members constituting it would have the interests of the Academies so completely at heart. They could be trusted to act neither unadvisedly nor hastily. The standard of admission would be raised, but it would be raised gradually. Notice of all changes would be given sufficiently long in advance to afford ample time for preparation for intending candidates. Instead of a cast-iron system, as now, we should have then an elastic one, accommodating itself to the needs of the service and to the advance of naval and military science. For at the present time as never before in our history does the country require that its naval officers should be of the highest type of able and educated men. They will be as never before its representatives to the outside world. Upon their tact, their bearing, their knowledge, and their cultivation will depend at times the favorable result of disputes on delicate and difficult questions of policy that has to be adopted in unexpected emergencies. It ought to be the aim of the nation to attract to the Naval Academy the very flower of its youth who are fitted by nature and inclination to enter the naval service.



II.—FROM LA BICHE TO FORT CHIPEWYAN.

WITH several Indians running before to escort us beyond the post in approved style, we left La Biche at a pretty brisk gait, and maintained for a good hour a pace which must have carried us six miles. But Heming and I were so delighted at being finally and really under way that no speed those Indians could have set would have been too stiff for us. As we ran we now and again delivered ourselves of congratulations that were expressive if brief, and somewhat disconnected in delivery. We had been delayed three days and a half at La Biche, fussing with Indians that had more time than energy, more promise than execution, and who broke contracts as rapidly as they made them. Gairdner had annoyed me a great deal, and no doubt we had worried him not a little, breaking in upon the even and lethargic tenor of his monotonous life with our "outside" (as the great world is called by the denizens of this lone land) hustling ways. But now that it is all past, and the trip successfully made, we are willing to forgive and be forgiven.

We did not expect to go far that night; our chief desire was to get started; and besides, we knew we should pass several Indian houses, where we must stop, that "Shot" and John might live up to the usual demands of the country courtesy, and shake hands with the occupants, and gossip about the white men they were guiding over the first stage of their long journey. Shaking hands always includes the further ceremony of filling up the pipes and a drink of tea, should the host happen to have any of that luxury, and so when we had left the last Indian lodge, and crossed the northeast end of the lake and got well into the woods, it was sunset,

and time to camp. The going down of the sun is the invariable signal for camping, for the twilight is of short duration, and the Indians will not run the risk of accident by chopping wood after dark. And they are quite right. A cut foot or leg in civilization is ordinarily little more than inconvenient, but in this trackless wilderness any wound that interrupts a man's travelling may lead to his death. And so as the sun begins to disappear below the horizon you grow watchful for a place that is most sheltered and best wooded and nearest the road you are following.

By the time we had gathered firewood it began to snow, and we ate our first meal in the open, with backs arched to windward, and capote hoods pulled up over our heads to keep "the beautiful" from going down our necks. That first night out was an interesting one to me; with recollections of bivouacs in the Rockies, I thought the fire insignificant and the timber small, but the dogs sitting on their haunches watching the thawing of the frozen fish that were to furnish them with supper, and the sledges drawn on the banked-up snow at the head of our blankets, made a novel and picturesque scene.

Every one was sleeping the sleep of the weary, if not of the just, and the dogs had eaten and curled themselves up in the snow for the night, when I finally threw off my meditative mood and rolled up in my blankets.

It snowed all night, and when we broke camp the next morning at six it was still snowing, and there was a cold head-wind that made us move lively to keep comfortable. The trail wound through brush

and small timber, and now and again across a small lake, but its greatest length lay over what is called "muskeg," which is Cree for swamp, and the most tiring, patience-testing travelling I ever encountered.

Imagine a landlocked lake swept by furious cross-winds, and its entire surface churned into choppy waves; suppose it suddenly congealed at its angriest moment; further, suppose a deep layer of miry earth covered by thick heavy moss moulded upon it, and stuck full of close-growing stout brush. That is the muskeg. Now fancy walking over a succession of uneven hummocks with brush constantly catching your snow-shoe and slapping your face, and you will have a vague idea of the difficulties of muskeg travel. Level footing is exceedingly scarce, the wind blows the snow "whither it listeth," and you cannot know whether you are about to step on top of one of those innumerable mounds or into one of the many gutters that cross-section the swamp. You know after you have taken the step. Nine times out of ten you land on the slanting side of the mound, and slip and trip and turn your ankle and use yourself up generally. It is exceedingly difficult going, and Heming and I, who relieved

one another breaking trail for the dogs, found it very fatiguing.

It was storming hard and getting colder, and I was ahead setting the pace, when, about three o'clock that afternoon, I came upon a log hut, and two trails that bore away in different directions. I wish I could have photographed the scene which slowly materialized from out of the darkness as I stood on the earthen floor within the cabin while my eyes grew accustomed to the changed conditions. On entering I could distinguish only the fire in one end, before which squatted a couple of Indians and a squaw, but gradually the shadows lifted, and I found myself for a few moments busily engaged shaking hands with Indians as fast as the new light revealed them. It was a very small cabin, barely ten feet square, I should say, with a parchment-covered hole in the wall for window, and a door which demanded a bowed head of every visitor. I do not know how many Indians were in that hut, but I recall wondering how they arranged for sleeping, as there seemed hardly space for them to sit, much less lie down. They were about to eat, and several rabbits, suspended full length from a deer thong, and minus only their skins, were twirling and roasting before

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THE INDIAN'S STOREHOUSE AND LARDER.

the fire, while others were being prepared for the cooking. I was not partial to rabbit, nor especially happy in the cabin's atmosphere, so when I had warmed a bit I went outside to wait for the dog brigade to come up.

Heming and John hove in sight shortly, but quite half an hour had passed when "Shot" and his dogs loomed up in the storm, that seemed increasing every minute. Then "Shot" and I had our first battle royal. He fancied the smell of the roasting rabbit and the warm cabin; he did not like the sleet driving in our faces, and he wanted to camp. I was

annoyed at the interruptions to our progress, disgusted with "Shot" for his vainglorious mouth-
ing at La Biche and his halting gait since leaving there, and determined that night to reach Hart Lake, which was only seven or eight miles farther on, and where we expected to get fish (of which we then had none) for our dogs. In language both pointed and picturesque I reminded "Shot" of my being the commander-in-chief of our little expedition, and made him understand we were out neither for pleasure nor for our health, that we had an objective point, and intended to get there without loss of time, and without camping in every cabin we discovered or being headed off by every severe storm we encountered. "Shot" spluttered a great deal at first, and then looked as if it would give him pleasure to bury his

hunting-knife in my flesh; but he sulked instead, and we moved away from the crowded little house and the roasting rabbits.

There had been a broken trail from this point to Hart Lake, but the same storm that was making our walking so arduous had almost obliterated it, and it was long after dark, and the thermometer 30° below zero, when we reached the cabin

of the Indian who Gairdner had said would sell us fish enough to last to the McMurray fishery. But, like all the things Gairdner told us, we found realization quite different from promise. The Indian was willing enough to sell, but his cache was fifteen miles away; he had just heard it had been broken into and all his fish stolen, so that he could not say whether or no he really had any; and, at all events, he could not make the journey in one day, and would not start the next (Sunday), because it was the occasion of the priest's yearly visit to this district. I was sorry to jeopard his soul by depriving it of the annual shriving, but I believed my dogs in more urgent need of fish than he of salvation, and I was sure three days' delay at Hart Lake would blight definitely whatever hopes of a future reward I might previously have enjoyed. Therefore I set about to wreck that Indian's peace of mind. Four skins—i. e., two dollars—quieted spiritual alarms, a silk handkerchief to the wife secured a promise to make the trip to the cache and back in one day, and the *coup d'état* was executed by enlisting "Shot's" sympathies through my assuring him that, fish or no fish, I should start Monday morning, and, if necessary, feed our bacon to the dogs, and complete the journey on tea and potatoes, of which latter, I believe, we had a few meals left. Thus it was that I got the Indian started off early Sunday morning for his cache, and saved two souls and eight dogs.

The beneficence of the La Biche priest extended farther that Sunday than he knew. Heming and I blessed his coming without stint, for it emptied of its usual occupants the filthy cabin in which we were obliged to spend the day and another night, and gave us an opportunity to sweep the floor and renew intimate relations with water.

When we took up our journey again Monday morning, with the insufficient supply of fish got from the Indian's despoiled cache, the mercury had dropped to 54° below zero, and there was no longer a broken trail. Our first ten miles lay across a lake, and both Heming and I, who were breaking road, and sinking up to our knees in the snow, were frequently startled by a rumbling as of distant thunder as the ice cracked under us. It was a curious sensation too, to have these explosions occurring at our feet, and vibra-



NATIVE-MADE GARTER.
From an old and lost design.

ting towards the shores in successive and receding detonations, like the rings which widen and follow upon one another when you have thrown a stone into a pond. On one occasion water followed the cracking, and we were obliged to run hard, until we stopped for dinner, to keep our feet from freezing.

The going was exceedingly difficult all day long, in deep snow, across lakes, through bunches of stunted spruce, and over the redoubtable muskeg, where the sledges required constant handling, and never by any chance remained right side up for more than a few moments at a time. Still, the weather remained clear, and when we camped, at six o'clock, the stars were shining brightly, and we had left Hart Lake thirty-eight miles behind us, Heming and I running the last nine miles in one hour and forty minutes.

I had been very much worried over Heming's condition the last two days; on the night we arrived at Hart Lake he seemed considerably worn, and the only consolation I had in the day's delay there was the hope it furnished that the rest would brace him up. But on this night he was completely used up, and I was very seriously alarmed by discovering symptoms of deranged kidneys. I did not then know the cause, and attributed it to strain brought on by hard running. In fact, Heming did not tell me, until I stopped off at Hamilton to see him on my way back to New York, that on the day's run to Hart Lake he had fallen over a log and struck on the small of his back. I only knew at that time that any weakness of the kidneys was not to be trifled with, and I felt it would be extremely hazardous to take him on; so I lay down that night to think rather than to sleep.

It was fearfully cold the following morning, with the going growing harder every hour, and I fell behind Heming to watch how he stood up under the effort. I could plainly see he was laboring with great difficulty, and concluded it would be suicidal for him to continue, getting farther from civilization and physicians every mile, so at ten o'clock I called a halt, and expressed my determination to send him home. Heming was loath to turn back, but appreciated his unfitness for the onward journey, and acquiesced in a decision which must have brought him keenest disappointment.

We had stepped aside for our confer-

ence, and I have little doubt "Shot" fancied us planning something for his discomfort, and was much relieved on learning he was to return. I decided on "Shot" instead of John, because he understood English enough to administer to Heming's wants in case of his collapse. Then, through "Shot's" interpretation, I had to win John's consent to go on with me, and I experienced a very disquieting half-hour indeed while John underwent the elaborate process of making up his mind. First he refused; then he demurred because he had never been in that part

of the country before, and was as dependent on "Shot" for guidance as we were ourselves; and again he objected because he could not speak nor understand a word of English, and I was as deficient in Cree. However, finally he consented if I would give him a few presents, the nature of which I have now forgotten; and after we had eaten, the two Indians set to work dividing the supplies and repacking the sledges. It was not a very elaborate task, and did not take long. We had eaten the last of the potatoes, and so when the bacon and the tea and the flour had been divided, the blankets separated, and Heming and I had indicated which was which of the two seamless sacks that contained our personal luggage, the sledges were packed and the dogs headed in opposite directions.

Then we went our separate ways, and I took up my journey to the great lone land, over a strange country, and without even the poor satisfaction of talking my mother-tongue.

My regret over Heming's falling ill may be better imagined than described. Foremost, of course, I deplored the loss of a companion on a trip which was to extend over 2600 miles; and of less but still considerable concern was the sudden deprivation of a helpmate, upon whose hardihood and experience I had confidently counted. Heming had had abundant snow-shoeing and some dog-sledging, and I set much value on a know-



"JOHN."

ledge that would, to some extent at least, facilitate our venturesome undertaking. And now here I was, just four days out from La Biche, never having had a web snow-shoe on my foot, nor even seen a dog-sledge, with six days of travel over an unknown country between me and Fort McMurray, the next nearest trading-post. However, unpleasant as the prospect was, I had thought it all over the night before as I lay in my blankets after our hard day's run, and realized the situation as completely as I had settled upon my course. But it was not a happy afternoon, that 8th of January, 1895, which saw me, after the separation, trudging onward in cold and in silence.

If I lamented Heming, most assuredly I did not mourn "Shot," notwithstanding his being the only man in the outfit who knew the country across which we were to journey. He had been a sore trial to me from the day of our departure—nay, even from the very hour of our introduction at La Biche—and I confess to honest relief in ridding myself of him, though I was at the time like a ship cast adrift without rudder. Before starting he had deliberately broken his contract, and followed it up by repeated attempts to squeeze more money out of me when he recognized my helplessness and saw my anxiety to get under way. He exasperated me to such a degree that, knowing an indulgence to my feelings would result in his refusing to go at all, I remember confiding to Heming the great hope that my legs would prove as stout as they had at other times, and enable me to set such a pace as should make "Shot's" tongue hang out before we reached McMurray.

Whether the pace was too hot or he too lazy I cannot say, but certainly when we were once started he kept me busy urging him to faster gait; his train was invariably so far behind as to delay us ten to fifteen minutes at every "spell" (rest), which meant a loss of from six to eight miles in a day's travel. It must have been laziness, because he is a half-breed of massive bone and great strength and over six feet in height. He evidently thought he had got hold of a "moon-yass," as a "tenderfoot" is called in this country, with whom he could play any game he chose; and when he discovered his mistake he grew sulky, developed a lame knee, subsequently a sore back, and delayed the

morning start by his reluctance to turn out when called and the length of time he consumed in packing the sledges. The only day of the four he was with me on which I got him to set off promptly and travel smartly was the last one, when the prospect of reaching a deserted cabin for the night's camp carried him on. I could have forgiven him the lagging behind, for the going was hard, and he had none of the incentive that added nervousness to my physical energy, but his avariciousness at La Biche and his sullenness on the road hardened my heart, and I cut out his work on a scale that, I fancy, made the parting between us one for mutual congratulation.

And so John and I set out on our journey, neither of us knowing where the morrow might find us, and I with a Cree vocabulary limited to "no," "yes," "hurry," and "how far is it?" I do not know how many miles we covered the afternoon Heming turned homeward, for I was too thoroughly absorbed in thoughts of what was coming to note the passing, but the camp of that night was, luckily, the best we made on the trip. It was sheltered from the howling wind, wood was plentiful, and with blankets, moccasins, and leggings hung on poles to dry before the blazing logs, might even have been called picturesque, unless that quality may be said to disappear when the mercury registers 40° below zero ten feet from the fire. We were not likely to find so favored a spot another night, and I made John know he should take advantage of the good fire and prepare "bannocks" to last us a few days.

The bannock is simply flour and water and grease thoroughly kneaded and well baked; the usual method of cooking is to shape the dough an inch deep to the inside of a frying-pan, and stand the latter before the camp-fire. The bannock is not beautiful to the eye nor tempting to the fastidious palate; moreover, it never rises superior to that "sadness" which is the characteristic of underdone bread the world over. But the bannock is much better suited to the needs of the tripper or *voyageur*, as the snow-shoe traveller is called, than the light yeast bread of the *grand pays*. The bread of civilization is filling, but lacks substance; the bannock has both filling and substance; and when one has nothing to eat but bread and tea and bacon, and is running five

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THE FIRST AND BEST CAMP OF THE TUMP.



miles an hour from sunrise to sunset day after day, substance is a desirable quality. While John made the bannocks, I attended to thawing fish for the dogs; and when we had both finished and lighted our pipes I undertook to hold my first conversation with him in the language of signs.

The warning most impressed upon me, by all those claiming any knowledge of the country into which I was going, had been against the unreliability of the Indians. I had been told of their tendency to desert under trying conditions, and the little there was to read on the subject emphasized the need of vigilance. That John would grow discouraged, and quietly steal away from camp some night, was a thought which possessed and worried me considerably. I was prepared to see his dismay as we plodded on in the hard going, and to hear his grumbling, even though I could not understand, but I did not propose, if I could prevent it, awakening one morning to find him and the dogs gone. So I engaged John's attention on this our first night together, and in my best pantomime I tried to make



GRIZZLY-CLAW NECKLACE.

him understand that if he staid with me to McMurray and was a "good" Indian, I should be "good" to him, but if he deserted me he had better cut my throat before he left camp, as otherwise I should follow his trail and kill him. John looked very wise and serious during my dramatic recital, and I guess he understood me. Whether he did or not, certainly his discouragement in the trying days we had subsequently never reached a mutinous point, and I fully believe he needed no intimidation to be a "good Indian." I wondered that night, and as the scene has come up before me many times since I have wondered again, what that Cree must have thought of this white man who was pushing into his country at a time when he himself usually remained in-

doors, had pressed him into a service for which he had no liking, and threatened to take his life if he forsook it.

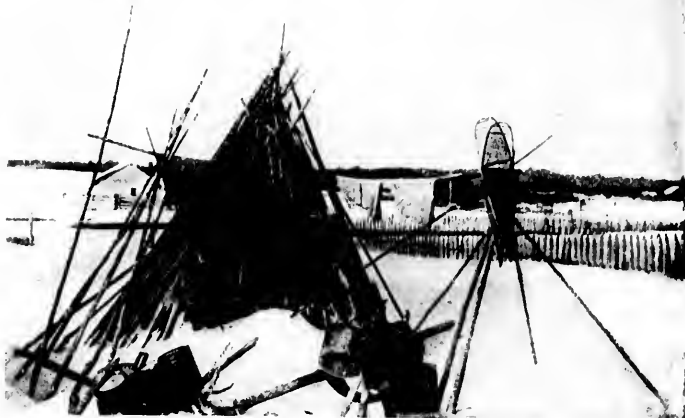
Despite our sheltered position and the big fire, I put in an uncomfortable night in this picturesque camp. It was, in fact, the first of many uncomfortable nights before I adjusted my blankets and robes properly. I had ample bedding, and of course could have got warm quickly enough had I used it all, but that was precisely what I did not want to do. I wished to use the smallest amount of covering possible, and yet be not too uncomfortable to preclude sleep. I did not lose sight of the fact that the cold I was then experiencing was as summer compared with that which I should be obliged to sustain in the Barren Grounds, whither I was going. And as I had trained before leaving New York for extreme physical exertion, so now I began fitting myself for excessive cold. Indeed, I am entirely convinced it was my very careful and thorough previous conditioning that enabled me to withstand the starving and freezing to which I was subjected on this trip, and yet come out of it in sound physical condition and without having had a day's sickness. My camping-out experience had been rather extensive, and was now valuable in suggesting ways of making most out of little. An old campaigner will, simply by his method of wrapping it about him, get as much if not more warmth out of a single blanket than the tyro will out of two. Nevertheless, with all my experience, for the first week I shivered and shook in the bedding I permitted myself, and the temptation to add one more blanket was almost irresistible.

Not that the atmosphere was colder than I had before experienced, for 40° below is by no means uncommon in the Rocky Mountains, where I have camped, but the wind made me so miserable. It blew more than half the time, and nothing could resist its searchings. It went straight through capotes, leggings, and blankets, and made sleep impossible for me several nights on the way to McMurray. The dogs, however, seemed unmindful of either wind or cold. At night, after they had eaten their fish, they would go a few yards from the fire, scratch away a little of the top snow, and then curl up, back to windward. In the morning when they were dragged to har-

ness they left the outline of their body in the snow, and a well-defined depression, which sometimes even showed the ground. Nothing but fur can insure warmth or even comfort in this chilling North. Farther along, and before making my bison or musk-ox hunt, I secured a caribou-skin capote with the fur on, but until I got one I was a shivering victim of the wind. The capote I had fetched

from Hamilton, Canada, was useless; having been made of unsmoked leather, the first snow-storm soaked and the fire shrunk it; then it was too heavy to run in, and the blanket lining was greatly inferior to fur for warmth. No garment can excel the caribou capotes made by the Indians for exposure in the excessive cold and piercing winds of this North country. They are very light, and do not therefore add to the burden of the *voyageur*, while being literally impervious to all winds, save those deadly blasts of the Barren Grounds.

The Indian tripper in winter first secures stout moccasins and new "duffel," and next looks to his caribou-skin capote. Anything may answer for trousers or head-covering, the former, indeed, being moose or caribou skin, blanket, or "store pants" got at the Hudson Bay Company post in trade, while the conventional hat is supplied by a colored handkerchief wound about the head, just above the forehead and ears, to keep the long hair in place. Formerly it was, and still is in the more remote sections, a moose or caribou thong bound by sinew and decorated with porcupine quill. But the foot-covering must be of the best. Moccasins are made of smoked moose-skin, because of its thickness (though the thinner caribou-skin is equally durable), and are really the pride of the Indian wardrobe. They are the most, and very frequently the



POLE LODGE IN WHICH MOOSE AND CARIBOU SKINS ARE SMOKED.

only, decorated piece of his apparel; in presentation they are the vehicle of regard from one Indian to another; they carry the first tidings of a more tender sentiment from the maiden to the young hunter, and are the surest indication not only of the degree of the woman's handicraft, but, if she be married, of the degree of her regard for the husband. An Indian's moccasins are a walking advertisement of his standing at home. Blessed is the civilized world inasmuch as its wives are not its boot-makers!

I was not long in reading aright the signs of the moccasins, and ever after, when I required any made at the posts, first sought acquaintance with the husband before ordering. No doubt many a pair of shoes I scanned did not represent the best work of the poor devil's wife, but I found them at least accurate in determining his importance within his own tepee. Moccasin decoration, in fact, practically all North-land Indian ornamentation, is done in beads, in porcupine quill, or in silk embroidery. Silk-work is of somewhat recent introduction, confined entirely to half-breeds, and although rather well executed, is the least effective. The French



MOCCASINS.

half-breeds are largely responsible for the bead embroidery, which is the vogue all over the northern part of this country. One sees moccasins, mittens, leggings, all in the beaded flower patterns, taken from nature, and therefore somewhat noteworthy, but not nearly so striking as the pure Indian designs of the more southerly tribes. The porcupine-quill work is truly Indian, and, at its best, exceedingly pretty,



ANCIENT KNIFE
WITH BEAVER-
TOOTH BLADE.

both in design and coloring, though only the most skilful can do it acceptably, for each tiny quill is woven in separately, and the weaver's ingenuity or lack of it is revealed in the design. The best specimens of this work are seen in the women's belts, though it is put on moccasins, shirts, skirts, gum-coats, as well as on the birch-bark baskets called ro-gans, and used for every purpose. "Duffel" is a thick blanket stuff, which, together with "strouds," a similar though more closely spun material, the Hudson

Bay Company introduced and christened. Duffel is used for socks, and strouds for leggings, and both are manufactured expressly for the trade in this country. The Indian gets his duffel by the yard, and when he has cut it into strips about six inches wide by eighteen inches long his socks are completed. Their adjustment is equally simple, for it is only to begin at the toes and wind the piece throughout its length about the foot. The half-breed takes his duffel home, where it is shaped and sewed into crude socks, and if his wife thinks well of him, and is clever, she will vary them in size (as two or three pairs are worn at a time inside the moccasin), and fancy-stitch them in colored yarn. I tried both styles of sock, and prefer the Indian's simpler kind; it is more quickly thawed out and dried at night; if one end wears or burns, you can rearrange it so that a good part covers the toes and heel—the most important to keep from freezing; and you can fit it more snugly, which is, I think, its greatest advantage, because, if you do not happen to have a wife to direct, or, having one, do not stand high in her estimation, your socks will be of the same size, and all too large. Consequently your feet will slip

about, which is most tiresome in long and hard walking, and the socks will freeze into wrinkles and knots that will cut your toes and instep, and very likely eventually cripple you when your snow-shoe strings have also become frozen.

The denial I practised in the matter of blankets proved doubly advantageous. It conditioned me so that very soon I slept soundly and comfortably, and it proved a blessing to John, to whom I gave of my surplus. He was very glad to get the additional blanket, and I never encountered an Indian throughout my trip who was not thankful for any extra covering, even a coat, that I let him have. This is apropos of the declaration made to the venturer into this country that the Indians scorn more than one blanket. I heard it on all sides. "What, two pairs of blankets? Why, the Indians," etc., etc. When these Indians sleep under one blanket it is because they have no second, nor do they keep warm "in the coldest nights." The contrary is all miserable boasting. My experience was that they could not stand any greater cold than I; when it was merely discomfoting they were more indifferent to it than a white man would be, for the very good reason that while the white man has always been well clothed and fed and protected, the red man has been half clothed and fed and never protected. Naturally the latter does not mind exposures that must seem somewhat trying on first experience to the former. For instance, in sitting about camp, the Indians, as a rule, wore the same coat in which they had been running, whereas I found a heavier one more comfortable. It was not that the Indians were warm, but they were used to discomfort. I wrapped up less than they when snow-shoeing, but more than they in camp. When it came to withstanding the fearful cold and withering storms of the Baren Grounds, my endurance was as great, and my suffering, judging from appearances, not so much as theirs. This is because this particular Indian has no heart, no nervous energy, no reserve force. Confronted by the unexpected or inexplicable, he gives no urgency to his efforts, he seeks no solution; he simply gives up. He has none of that do-or-die sentiment; he prefers to die. Dump an Indian and a bound white man into a snow bank, and the latter would probably freeze to death first, but in a struggle for existence under

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NOON-DAY TEA.



any conditions the white man would go farther and keep going longer than the red man.

As to the bedding question, when I was on my homeward journey in May I noted Indians sleeping under the same number



DOG WHIP.

of blankets they had used while I was making my way towards Great Slave Lake in January. What did surprise me at first, however, was the toughness of their feet. I marvelled how they could sleep with them sticking out from under the blankets, with no other protection from the cold than that furnished by the moccasin. I ceased to wonder once I had viewed the quarter-inch layer of epidermis on the heels and soles.

There is some comfort in the reflection that John and I had a good camp that first night we were alone, for

there was bitterness enough in store for us in the next four days. To begin with, it was impossible for me to wear snow-shoes in breaking trail for the dogs, although the snow was nearly knee deep and the going heavy, because I had never used a web snow shoe before, and consequently was not sufficiently expert to feel the McMurray trail under the foot and a half of snow—and to follow this trail by feeling it was our only means of guidance. Then our bacon was about out, and we had but one meal of fish for the dogs. Therefore I was not hilarious when we started off at four in the morning in a blinding snow-storm. "Shot" had told me something of the nature of the country over which the trail led, but the country was all alike to us in that storm. I know we went through woods, for several times I fell heavily against a tree, but nothing was visible except on closest inspection. My senses were all concentrated on feeling

that trail, and my energies directed to weathering the storm, whose fury was beginning to be the more perceptible by the dawning of day, when suddenly I dropped through space—I thought at the time about twenty feet, but I guess it was not more than ten—and the dogs and the sledge and John fell on top of me. When we had disentangled ourselves, I had a more puzzling situation to unravel in determining where we were "at."

I felt sure I had not lost the trail, but corroboration was out of the question, because the road made by our dogs and sledge rendered feeling the underlying old one that had guided me impossible. Going ahead a little distance, I found we were on a lake, but could discover no trail, and the storm made travelling by landmarks impossible even had I known any, which of course I did not. John's search for a trail proved no happier than mine, and then he wanted to camp; but I exhausted two-thirds of my Cree vocabulary in "no" and "hurry" upon him, and we made a wider circuit with no better success. This time he was determined to camp; and the sleet was cutting our faces and the dogs were howling and it was miserable. But we didn't camp. Again I made a cast, and this time for a find. I was sure of a piece of trail, but whence it came and whither it went I could not determine. The snow was either blown away or packed so hard it was simply impossible to follow a trail for any distance. We would travel a little way only to lose it and begin our searching anew; another find, followed closely by a cheek and yet another heart-breaking cast. And thus, how many miles I know not, we worked our way across that Jack Fish Lake in the teeth of a storm that whirled around us unceasingly, and it was one o'clock when we crawled up the bank and discovered a cabin which I knew must be the one where "Shot" had said I could get fish.

We got our dogs on the leeward side, and then staggered into the cabin, covered from head to foot by ice and numb with cold. The house was full of Indians, but there was no exclamation of surprise upon our appearance. Half-frozen men are of too common occurrence in this Northland to create comment. They made way for us at the fire, of which we did not immediately avail ourselves—for we both had frozen ears and noses—and

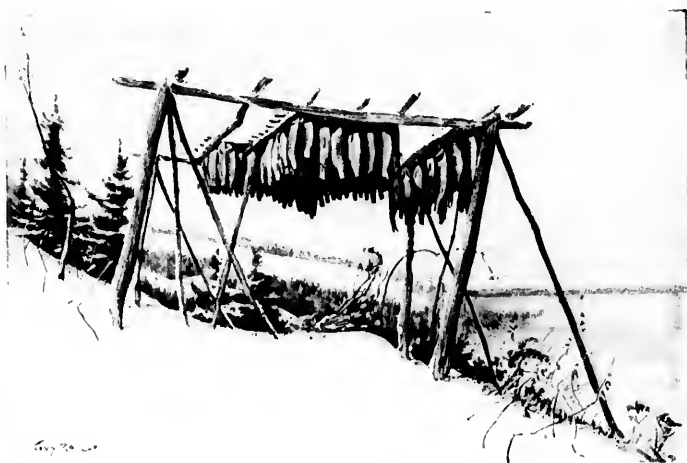
they pushed the teakettle nearer the glowing coals; but no one uttered a sound, though they eyed me with ill-concealed curiosity. By-and-by, when we had thawed out, John and I drank tea and ate a slice of bacon from our scanty stock, and then I signed him to get fish for the dogs; but much talking was followed only by sullen silence, and no fish were forthcoming. Fish we must have; and as I sat pondering over the situation, I discovered a fiddle hanging against the wall, and thought an excellent opportunity offered of trying the power of music to soothe the savage breast, so I handed the instrument to John, whom I had heard play at La Biche, and what with his fiddling and my distribution of tobacco, it was not very long before we had the Indians jabbering again, and two days' fish for the dogs.

The wind was still howling and the snow falling when we started on an hour later, against the protestations of the Indians, who wanted us and our tea and tobacco to remain overnight; but our supplies were too low to warrant their consumption in idleness, and we had put another eight or nine miles behind us before we made a wretched camp in the muskeg, with scarcely wood enough to make a fire, and not a level spot to throw down our blankets. It cleared up during the night, and when we broke camp the next morning at four the moon shone as serenely as though it had not yielded to a greater and fiercer power the night before. Before daybreak the trail ran into some rather open woods, through which the moon's soft light played with wondrously fantastic effect, and when the first streaks of yellow in the northeast heralded the rising of the sun, we had left the shadow of the trees and were travelling in the muskeg. I shall always remember that morning as giving me the most beautiful picture I ever beheld in nature's

album: the sun coming up on my right, the moon going down on my left—one bursting forth in all his golden splendor, while the other slowly withdrew her silvery light. And between and far below the two heavenly rivals plodded John and the dogs and I, footsore and hungry, but appreciative.

I was destined to be brought to earth very suddenly and somewhat ingloriously, for the sun had but just dispelled the gray gloom of early morning, and I was clipping along at a merry gait across the deadly muskeg, with a large lake in sight, and John and the dogs not far behind, when down I tumbled in a heap, with a sprained ankle. Sitting in the snow chafing my ankle was not going to bring us food nor get me to the Barren Grounds, so I wound moose-skin tightly about the injured part, and took my place again before the dogs. At first I could not stand without the aid of a stout stick, and we made headway so slowly that after a few miles I threw away my crutch, and in a determination to try the power of mind over matter, limped on.

I should not advise Christian scientists to put their faith to such a test; no convert was ever more open to conviction than I—spirit willing, mind receptive, but the flesh so mortally weak that every time I put down my left foot it gave way to the knee. And so, faith failing, I gritted my teeth and vowed to get on some way. After a while the pain grew duller, and my leg giving under me, I



DRYING FISH—THE STAPLE FOOD OF MAN AND DOG.

discovered the tight binding and the cold had frozen the flesh; as I could not navigate without the support of the moose-skin binding, and a frozen ankle, though less painful, held me up not so well as a twisted one, I was thereafter occupied quite as much in keeping that ankle alive in all its painful sensitiveness as I was in keeping it going at all. We held our way, however, and the lake I had sighted proved to be Big White Fish, where I traded some tobacco for fish for the dogs, but could get none to eke out the little bacon now left us.

Here I had my first view of the manner in which these fish are hung upon stagings—first to dry, subsequently to freeze, and ever to be beyond the reach of the always half-starved dogs. There are other stagings, combining larder and storehouse for the Indian, and more necessary than his lodge, where he puts his meat, fresh pelts, snow-shoes, and sledges. Snow-shoes and sledges do not sound palatable, but the caribou-skin lacings of the former and moose wrapper and lines of the latter make quite a succulent dish, as meals go in this land of feast or famine. Every Indian cabin or lodge has its stag-

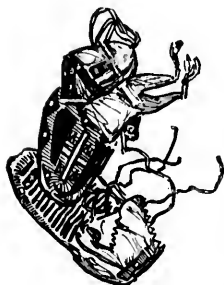
ging, and all things eatable are hung upon it for safety. And it is here the dogs do congregate to voice their hunger in mournful howling, and vent their frenzied disappointment in furious fighting. Indian dogs spend most of their time fighting; when it is not one another, it is against death by starvation.

If I failed of increasing our supplies at this settlement, I did get a map, which at least aimed to show me the way to plenty. It was a puzzling creation, that map, which one of the Indians drew in my note-book to give us some idea of the direction of the trail across the six lakes that lay between us and the next Indian camp on White Fish Lake. Once at White Fish Lake, and we had but fifteen miles to John MacDonald's, on Big Jack Fish Lake, the McMurray fishery, and home of one of the best known and hardest *voyageurs* in the country. But Big

Jack Fish Lake was two days' travel away, and meanwhile my ankle made life intolerable, and the map proved more maddening than the fifteen puzzle. We made only seven miles the afternoon of the day I sprained my ankle; we had covered twenty up to noon; but after my rest I could barely move along, and besides, we were continually falling foul of trails, which appeared coming from everywhere, and went nowhere. All this and the following day we travelled over muskeg, particularly severe on me now, with an ankle so tender, and really only one foot with which to feel the road. But, after all, the muskeg was kinder to us than the lakes, for when we reached these we invariably lost the trail, to find and as speedily lose it again, while it was absolutely impossible to judge from its direction where it eventually left the lake. Indians never by any chance travel straight. Throughout the (about) 900 miles of trail I followed from Edmonton to Fort Resolution, on Great Slave Lake, there is but the single exception of the Slave Lake portage; for the rest, it looks as though the original traveller had sat up all night at Edmonton with a sick friend and a barrel, and then started to walk home. At best its windings are hard to follow, but when one may advance only by feeling, its difficulties become tenfold, and yet it is remarkable how skilled one becomes in this method of procedure. I grew sufficiently expert after a time, and where there was good bottom to the trail, to follow it running, about a five-mile-per-hour gait, though there was literally no indication on the snow's surface of a trail beneath.

Added to the misery of bodily ailment, the map distracted me by its deceptions. The lengths of lines drawn by the Indian to represent the portages between the lakes gave no indication of the comparative distances. The first "line" was short, and we covered it in a couple of hours; the next one was about the same length, but we were half a day crossing the country between the two lakes it joined; the third line was fully four times as long as the longer of the other two, yet we were only half an hour going from end to end of it.

And every little while, when a lost or blind trail dismayed us, and we cast about to find our true course, we looked at each other, John and I, and pitied one another



MOCCASINS.



"SOUR GRAPES."

for living. We could not exchange ideas; we could not have the poor comfort of debating the situation; we could only make a few imperfect signs, which expressed little to the point, and seemed frivolous in the face of a situation so desperate. Once our leading dog, who is always called a foregoer, found the trail on the lake, and showed remarkable sagacity, which, by-the-way, we trusted to our sorrow later. This time, however, he came to our rescue when we were utterly lost; he ceased following the imaginary trail I was hobbling along, and after a few casts, settled to a steady gait in another direction. John also thought he had a trail, which he endeavored to persuade the dogs into following, but the foregoer held his way, and when we investigated we found he had really the only trail of the three. The snow was deeper on this part of our route, which made the walking yet harder; but by one way or another we finally crossed the six lakes shown on the Indian's map, and came to White Fish Lake. Here we managed to get just a meal of

fish for the dogs, but none for ourselves, to which, however, we had become accustomed. We rested two hours, while I bathed my feet, much to the wonderment of the natives, to whom it seemed an unaccountable waste of energy, and rubbed my ankle with some of the mustang liniment I had fetched along from La Biche. There were but fourteen miles between us and John MacDonald's cabin, on Big Jack Fish Lake, when we set out again at two o'clock; and the prospect of talking again, and having a roof over my head, nerved me to faster pace. I was destined to see neither MacDonald nor his house that night. Some Indians had recently travelled between the two lakes, so there was a faint trail, which we followed at so good a gait it was not dark when we came to where the road led out on to Big Jack Fish Lake. But by this time a fierce storm had set in, with snow which completely shut off our view twenty feet distant, and wind that swept away the last semblance of a trail. I tried to feel out the road, then John tried, and then we gave the

foregoer his head; and, sure enough, he went off at a rate which convinced us he must have found something. And so he had; but we were not seeking the road he found. We travelled about ten miles to get that knowledge.

There is a point which makes out from the north shore of the lake and divides it into two large bays. MacDonald's cabin is on the western bay. I supposed John knew it was. We had held an animated though not entirely successful conversation at White Fish, which I intended should express my wish that he learn the distance, etc. The Cree for "How far is it?" is "Wah-he-ó-che"; for "It is far," you drop only the "che," and say "Wah-he-ó." But I was not then so learned. So I had asked John, "Wah-he-ó-che—MacDonald's?" and John had replied—after some discussion with the other Indians—"Wah-he-ó." I supposed him correcting me, and as this particular Cree query was my *pièce de résistance*, "Wah-he-o-ché"—with an accent on the "ché"—again pierced the chilly air, and again he retorted, "Wah-he-ó." Then we wah-he-o-ché'd and wah-he-ó'd until each subsided in silence and disgust at the other's stupidity.

And so we travelled down the eastern bay of Big Jack Fish Lake. It got dark by the time we were well out on the lake; we could not have seen our way in broad daylight, because the snow was thickly falling and the wind savagely blowing as we blindly followed the tail of our sledge. By-and-by I decided we must be going wrong, for I thought the cabin could not be so far off as we had come, and I got John and the dogs turned about to go back and into the western bay. The storm was now squarely in our teeth, and the dogs would not face it. They kept turning and entangling themselves in the harness, while we were faint with hunger and benumbed with cold, and my ankle seemed bursting with pain.

I made the nearest approach I could in the storm to a bee-line for the point, and then followed it around. I had not the remotest idea where MacDonald's house was, but I knew I should have to find it in the morning to get my bearings; so after we had gone about as far down the western bay as we had into the eastern, we camped under a pine-tree, where wood was plentiful, and ate a piece of bacon each and drank a cup of tea, after

a hard day's tramp—which my pedometer registered as forty-four miles. Our dogs ate the last of their fish, John and I were on half-allowance of the poor rations we had, we were lost, and it did not seem as if my ankle would permit me to walk another step. The world was not very bright when we camped that night.

As we sat silently drinking our tea we heard something approaching, and instantly alert, with that protective and hunter's instinct which comes to the traveller of the wilds, listened intently, until we discovered the swishing, grating of a snow-shoe heel. It was Kipling, a famous Soto Indian runner, who had come to invite me to MacDonald's cabin, where, but a mile beyond, they had seen our camp-fire. James Spencer, the Hudson Bay Company's officer in charge of McMurray, had brought thus far on its journey the one winter packet that reaches the railroad from this isolated wilderness, and was returning the next morning early. Here was good news indeed, and good luck—the first of my trip. But John had stuck by me, and I was not going to leave him on the conclusion of so hard a day; therefore I sent my grateful thanks to Spencer, saying I would be on hand the following morning. And so the clouds rolled away, and the worry within and the storm without ceased as I lay down to sleep that night.

It was a very lively scene at MacDonald's next morning, and a most interesting one to me; for the packet was starting on its last stage, and as to carry the packet is one of the few honors in the country, the dogs were handsomer and more gayly harnessed than any I had seen. It was only seventy miles to McMurray, but the two days we consumed in getting there were most trying, and I shall never forget the ten-mile crossing of Swan Lake the first morning. We camped for dinner midway, on an island, but it seemed as though I should never reach it; and a mirage added confusion by placing it now near by and then far away, and all the time the hard ice made running particularly torturing to my ankle. The tea was made by the time I finally put my foot on that island. It was exceedingly hard going for men and dogs all the way to McMurray, for the trail led down Clear Water River, on which the supplies in early days were brought into the country, and the snow was deep. We

were all worn, and I was thankful indeed when the light of Spencer's cabin pierced the darkness and I knew I had put 240 miles of my long journey behind me.

How I relished a good wash and a satisfying meal I shall not attempt to say; few of my readers have gone without either or both, and could not appreciate my feelings. Nor could I adequately express my gratitude to Spencer and his wife for their unceasing kindness. I spent one day at McMurray, which is located at the junction of the Clear Water and Athabasca rivers, doctoring my ankle and awaiting fresh dogs and guides; for here John and his dogs, after a rest, turned back. If Spencer had been of Gairdner's sort I should have been delayed again, for none of the Indians took kindly to the trip on to Chipewyan, the next post. Those that had promised backed out, and finally Spencer turned over to me the train which had brought the packet from Chipewyan to McMurray. There were four good strong dogs; François, French half-breed, one of the best dog-drivers and runners in the land; and "Old" Jacob, a Soto Indian, to break trail, who as young Jacob was famous for strength and speed, and who even now could beat all but the very best on snow-shoes. Both could talk and understand enough

English to make some sort of conversation possible, and both knew the road, so that the clouds revealed only their silver lining as we started out from McMurray. I was not seeking trouble, but it came just the same. I had never worn moccasins until I left La Biche. I had never used the web snow-shoe until I left McMurray, and therefore the second day out my feet were so blistered and lacerated by the lacings that blood dyed my duffel, and walking was agony. Hitherto I had been counting my progress by days; now I reckoned by the fires, of which we made three daily, when we drank tea and my misery enjoyed a brief respite. It was cold, bitterly cold, and the wind swept up the Athabasca River, down which we travelled, apparently coming directly from the north pole. But neither wind nor painful travelling nor hunger, which we experienced the last two days, delayed us, and when we finally reached the shores of Lake Athabasca, and viewed the Hudson Bay Company's fortlike post four miles away, it was like a sight of the promised land. I had been twenty days on the road, and come about 580 miles from the railroad, so that, what with lacerated feet, twisted ankle, and fatigue, I was pretty well used up when I passed through the gateway of Fort Chipewyan.



FORT CHIPEWYAN.



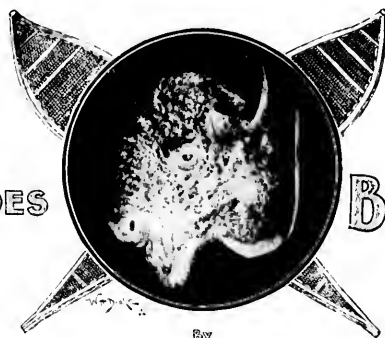
"WELL, WE GENERALLY DISCUSS MAN."

See page 229.

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ON SNOW SHOES TO THE BARREN GROUNDS



BY
CASPAR W. WHITNEY

III.—A WOOD-BISON HUNT.

CHYPEWYAN has many claims to distinction. Built substantially upon one of the numerous rocky points which break the one hundred and fifty miles of Athabasca Lake's north shore line, it is the most picturesquely situated and most populous oasis in this silent white country. It is headquarters of one of the four districts into which this vast fur-bearing land of one million square miles is divided by the Hudson Bay Company; the chief forwarding point for the merchandise which the company sends in for trade, and the fur the Indians send out as pay; a general distributing post-office of the four yearly mails which reach this land, where man is but a mere track upon the snow, and not above one hundred of the roughly approximated ten thousand read English writing. It is the most important North-land mission of the Roman Catholic Oblates Fathers, and it is practically the northern boundary of the Cree and the southern boundary of the Montagnaise Indian family, which in its various branches spreads toward the Arctic Ocean.

I am sure Dr. W. M. Mackay, the Hudson Bay Company officer in charge, and his right and left bowers, "Ned" Camsell and "Sam" Emerson, would consider that I had slighted Chipewyan if I failed to record the further eminence it enjoys in having two streets. I was never able, unaided, to discover more than the one which separates the post's dozen log cabins from the lake, but that may have been due to the deflection of my compass needle. At all events, after McMurray, with

its four cabins, it seemed metropolitan, though of its "census" of four hundred men, women, and children only a small percentage is in actual residence. This is equally true of all the posts. The real dwellers within the settlements are a comparative handful, comprising chiefly the mission people, the company servants, and a few "freemen," as those who have served their five years' enlistment and set up a little independency of labor are called. Those that live within the company's gates are chiefly half-breeds. In summer they catch and dry the fish which forms the chief article of food for men and dogs, or work on the company flat-boats; and in winter they spend the short days in "tripping," and the long nights in smoking and talking about their dogs, or in dancing and sleeping. They have no other diversions; no indoor games, no outdoor sports. Dancing and sleeping are the beginning and ending of their recreation, and I would not venture an opinion as to the more popular; certainly they have an abnormal capacity for either.

This applies to the men. Life is a more serious affair for the women. They too sleep and dance and smoke, but their sleeping comes as a well-earned respite after the day's toil; their dancing has the outward appearance of a sacrifice, to which they are silently resigned, and smoking is an accompaniment to work rather than a diversion in itself. The woman is the country drudge. Her work is never finished. She chops the firewood, dries the fish and meat, snares rab-

bits, and carries her catch into the post on her back; scrapes and tans the moose and caribou hides, from the latter of which she afterwards makes "babiche" by cutting it into strings an eighth of an inch wide; laces the snow-shoes, makes and embroiders with beads the mittens, moccasins, and leggings; yields the lion's share of the scanty larder to her husband when he is at home luxuriating in smoke and sleep, and, when he is away, gives her children her tiny *pret* (allowance) of fish and goes hungry without a murmur.

This is the woman of the post. She of the woods, the full-blooded squaw, and there are few Indians that ever take up a permanent abode in the settlement, does all this and more. In addition to chopping the firewood, she seeks and hauls it; not only dries, but catches the fish; goes after and quarters and brings in the game her master has killed; breaks camp, and pitches it again where the husband, who has gone on ahead with no load but his gun and no thought except for the hunt, and whose trail she has followed, indicates by sticking up brush in the snow. When there is plenty she makes her meal on that which her lord leaves, and when there is little she starves, along with her children and the dogs.

The Indian is the sybarite of the North-land, and the only genuine socialist on earth. He holds all the possessions of his country equally with his tribe, feasts and fasts and sorrows and rejoices in common, and roams where his legs carry and there is game for his gun. When there is abundance he smokes his pipe in happy indolence, and his wife does the work; when there is no meat for the kettle he shoulders his gun and goes out into the woods, leaving care and hunger at home with the squaw. But he by no means invariably escapes hunger. It is ever a feast or a famine with him, and it might always be a feast were he not so improvident and lazy. Clothing and food are at his very door. In the rivers and lakes there is fish in great quantity and variety; along their banks, fisher, otter, mink, beaver, and musk-rat; and in the forests, moose, caribou, bear, lynx, fox, wolf, wolverene, marten, ermine, and rabbits—to say nothing of the early spring and autumn migrations of ducks and geese, the packs of ptarmigan, which in their changing plumage of brown and

white are to be seen summer and winter, and the several other species of the grouse family that may be found the greater part of the year. There is no occasion for an Indian to starve in this country, if he keeps out of the Barren Grounds; but hunting demands skill, of which he has less than any other red man I ever knew, and a never-failing cache presupposes foresight, of which he has none—so that, in truth, he fasts more often than he feasts.

The dogs share equally the good luck or misfortune of their masters. The Indian is more regardful of his dogs than of his women, for dogs are less numerous than squaws, and necessary to his support. The driver lashes them mercilessly with his whip and beats them brutally with clubs, but he never fails to include their rations in his sledge-load, nor to divide his last fish for their benefit. It is not goodness of heart that stirs his consideration, but fear for his own safety and the loss of an indispensable draught animal. Without his dogs he would be compelled to pack on his back what he now packs in the sledge, to drag his game out of the woods, and carry his furs to the post, while the loss of dogs *en route* might mean for him delay, starvation—possibly death.

In the great civilized world the dog has been called man's best friend; in this limitless stretch of snow and desolation and need he may be declared man's only friend; in the *grand pays* he has earned the trust without the test; here in this lone land he is being continuously tried, and never found wanting. He has no pedigree, and he may be of any color, but his usual appearance is that of a fairly long-headed, sharp-nosed mongrel, well tucked up behind, with big feet, and a coat of hair equal to that of a cub. To call these dogs "huskies" is an error common to nearly every one who has had anything to say on the subject. The word "husky" is North-land slang for Eskimo, and is generally applied to that arctic denizen himself, as well as to everything belonging to him. Their dogs are properly called huskies, and thus it has come about that all dogs used to drag a sledge are ignorantly so called. The genuine husky is a distinct species, larger, more powerful, and faster, and is not easily to be had, since the Eskimos, like the Indians, are somewhat indifferent to

their breeding, and good dogs are highly prized. Moreover, there is no communication between the Eskimos and the more southern Indians, so that a genuine husky is a *rara avis* below the arctic coast.

The Indians say their dogs are descended from the wolf, and certainly appearances do not belie the assertion. Names are more plentiful than dogs, and the most commonly heard are Castor, Cabry, Soldat, Caesar, Cabrel, Coffee, Milord, the popular ones being always those of two syllables, with an R that may be rolled out to the whip's accompaniment. Nearly every post has a Bull and a Whiskey—only the name of that civilized stimulant can be found in all this land, though occasional hilarity is developed by some poor stuff made from sugar, and called beer. Whiskey was invariably the most forlorn-looking dog in the pack, while the laziest brutes I encountered were Bulls.

One would suppose that in a country literally dependent on dogs for winter transportation, quantity and at least some degree of quality would be kept up. And yet the facts are directly the reverse. Not only is quality wanting, but the quantity is limited. The Hudson Bay Company, strangely enough, seems to have made no effort to improve or even establish a breed, and at their more important posts rarely maintain more than one train, and never more than two. Throughout the length of my trip I saw just seven trains of dogs that could be called first class—Spencer's at McMurray; two belonging to the Hudson Bay Company at Chipewyan; McKinley's, the Hudson Bay Company officer at Fort Smith; Gaudet's, the company's officer at Resolution; the

Roman Catholic mission's train at the same post; and that of Beniah, the Indian leader with whom I went into the Barren Grounds. Spencer and McKinley probably have the two best trains in the country, which they have bred from separate bitches that had some Newfoundland blood in them, and were the only dogs I saw that would come to harness on call.

Beyond the "foregoer," upon whom the meanings of *ma-a-r-r-che* (start), *e-u-u* (right), *ja* (left), and *whoa* are impressed by a club, and the steer-dog—as the one at, say, the wheel, to make it comprehensible, is called—there is no training. The foregoer follows the trail and sets the pace. The steer-dog keeps the sledge upon a slanting track, and guides it through trees and rocks. He must be strong, and is the most important of the four in rough country. As for competent drivers, they are even scarcer than good dogs, but the few are exceedingly skilful; and of these, Spencer, McKinley, Gaudet, François and his brother William at Chipewyan, Michael, the interpreter at Resolution, and the Catholic "brother," whose

name I never knew, at Resolution, are easily the best. The difference between a good and a bad driver is that the former knows how and when to handle his sledge to ease the dogs, keeps them all up to their work, and does not "foree" (urge) them at improper times. The bad driver spends his energy in throwing clubs at the foregoer and lashing the steer-dog, chiefly because the latter is within easy reach. He permits the sledge to slide hither and thither, to the exceeding wear and tear of the steer-dog. Now and then he stops the train



WAR-BONNET.

and lashes the dogs all round, and at all times he is forcing them. Only trains made up of exceptional dogs last more than a couple of seasons, and once their usefulness is passed the poor brutes are turned loose to seek a living where those for whom food is provided are more frequently hungry than satisfied. Their vagrancy is usually short-lived—death by starvation or freezing comes speedily to their relief.

The farther north, the better the dogs and more gandy their harness and trappings. They are always savage and suspicious and noisy, but to the south, towards La Biche, they are miserable in body



HAND-WARMERS OF THE NORTH.

as well, and are hitched to the sledge with harness purely Indian, and utterly devoid of adornment. Strangely enough, the Indian, who likes to decorate his own person, as a rule utterly ignores that of his dog, though he may paint the moose-skin which covers the head of his sledge, or hang tufts of hair or yarn upon it, as he does sometimes on the toes of his snow-shoes. All harness is made of moose-skin, but at Chipewyan and north it is fashioned better, and there are, besides,

loin-cloths, called *tapis*, covered with bells and embroidery, and vivid pompous stuck into the collars, and floating ribbons of many contrasting colors. Add to this a driver in beaded moccasins, leggings, and mittens, with a *L'Assumption* sash about his waist, a caribou-skin capote on his back, and a fancifully ornamented and betasselled "Tommy Atkins" cap on his head, and the North-land express is complete and at its best. Indeed, there is no combination more sprightly than a dog brigade, with its brilliant and many-hued *tapis*, its nodding pompous and streaming ribbons, and its picturesquely costumed driver. There is no sensation more exhilarating than running with the dogs on snow-shoes and a good track, to the jingling of the bells—when storm obscures the pompous, and wind drowns the jingle, and there is nothing in the sledge to eat, the sensation is not so enlivening.

These dogs are certainly notable travellers, from the best fed down to the puniest of the Indian species, which are contemptuously called *giddés* by the half-breeds, and are not a great deal larger than a big fox. They draw a heavier load, at a faster pace, on less food, and for a greater length of time than one would believe without seeing. The usual number to a train is four, and tandem is the mode of hitching them to the sledge, which is about seven feet long by fourteen inches wide, and made of either two or three birch slats held together by cross-bars, and turned over at the head like a toboggan. These four dogs will haul four hundred pounds on a fair track from twenty-five to thirty-five miles a day. In the woods where the snow is deep and the trail must be broken the day's trip will be fifteen to twenty miles. On a good lake or river track, drawing a *cariole* (a passenger sledge), they will go forty to fifty miles a day, and keep it up several days, and this on two white-fish weighing about three pounds apiece, and given to each dog at night. I saw Gaudet's train bring into Resolution five hundred pounds of caribou meat, which remained after supplying two men and four dogs during a four-day trip on Great Slave Lake. Some great stories are told of the loads drawn by the Mackenzie River dogs, whose tails are docked short, to give a more workmanlike appearance, and keep the meek and lowly from advertising their shrinking nature and spoiling the appearance

of the train by sticking the offending tail between their legs. It is said that eight or nine hundred, and even a thousand, pounds are commonly hauled in the Mackenzie district by four dogs. But I am inclined to class these stories with those I heard concerning the wonderful strength of the old-time packers. When I was going in on snow-shoes marvellous tales were related for my benefit of men who had carried five and six hundred pounds, and of one particular giant who had loaded himself with seven hundred pounds, and had written his name on the wall with three hundred pounds' weight tied to his wrist. When I was coming out on the Hudson Bay Company's flat-boat I discovered no Indian or half-breed who packed more than two hundred pounds on his back, while the name-writing Hercules had left no successor. Snow-shoe running, packing, and canoeing are the three most resourceful fields of the Indian story-teller; and of the three, running affords him greatest scope for his peculiar imagination.

The Indian of the North-land is neither an ingenious nor a picturesque Munchausen. He is just a plain liar, who seems not even to count on the credulity of his hearer for acceptance of his tales. He lies by choice rather than from necessity, and should the necessity occur he makes a virtue of his lying. Nor is he abashed if discovered. Really I believe he views every plain statement as a lost opportunity. Every camp fire, every meeting at the post, invariably becomes an excuse for the discussion of dogs and the recital of astonishing feats of snow-shoe running. The fact that no one of the assemblage ever did or ever could perform the extraordinary feats recounted does not detract a particle from the quality of the story or its enjoyment by the listeners. It's a case of the man with the last story having the best of it. Still, with all his vainglorious talk, the Indian is an unhesitating admirer of real prowess, and good runners are indeed plentiful in this country, where shanks' mare is the only mount.

To be a good dog-driver and to run forty miles a day is to be a great man in this land of vast distances. There are instances where men have gone farther, but in most cases the going has been exceptional, or the "day" stretched



THE NORTH-LAND SHOEMAKER.

far into the night. In my effort to obtain authenticated information on big runs I found the "day" most elastic, extending, in fact, the full twenty-four hours, from midnight to midnight, and the "running" of the man to include riding on the sledge now and then when the going was extra good. The best day of actual running I was able to corroborate was sixty miles, done between 6 A.M. and 5.30 P.M. by Alexander Linkletter, an English-Cree half-breed now at Chipe-wyan, who made two fires *en route*. Another half-breed covered eighty miles between midnight and nine o'clock of the next night, and an Indian went seventy miles between 3 A.M. and 3 P.M., but these are notable chiefly because of the dogs' endurance, for both men rode most of the distance, and neither approaches the performance of Linkletter, who ran every foot of the way.

The condition of the going makes so great a difference in travelling that thirty miles on one occasion might easily be a more notable performance than fifty miles on another. Taking the average conditions of tripping, from twenty-five to thirty miles is considered a fair day, thirty-five miles a good day, and forty a big day's work. The *voyageur* considers he is travelling well if he makes two fires during



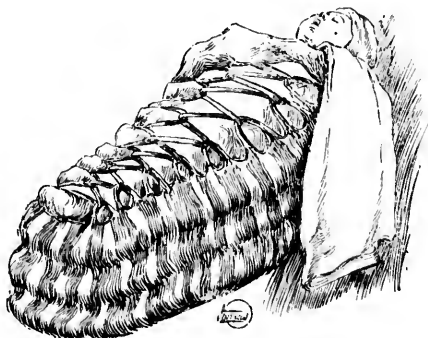
SQUAW LEGGING.

the day, at which he drinks tea, and sleeps thirty or thirty-five miles nearer his destination every night. Spring is popularly spoken of as the time when "the days are long and the dogs go well," and you travel longer and farther each day, but as a matter of fact the season has little to do with the length of time spent on the road if you are making a long journey and time is an object. Indeed, to me the days always seemed long enough, and the dogs to go well enough. In winter you start at three, make your first fire at seven, start again at eight, which is just about daybreak, have a second fire at eleven, and camp at three, which gives about an hour before dark to cut a supply of firewood. In spring it is daylight long before you start at six, and long after you camp at eight; in fact, in May I wrote in my note-book frequently at ten, and it was not really dark at midnight. In midsummer there is no night, and in midwinter the short days are of slight significance to the tripper, because the moon equalizes matters by shining full throughout the period in which the sun shines least.

I have said that Chipewyan is the practical dividing-point between two great Indian families, but the traveller who did not hear their speech, which is altogether dissimilar in intonation and word, would not appreciate it. There is no very noticeable outward distinction between the Cree and the Chipewyan Indian, except possibly the face of the latter is broader. Otherwise they have about the same physical characteristics—high cheek-bones, large mouth, African nose, dirty yellowish-ochre complexion, coarse straight black hair, and sparse mustache seen occasionally. They are never corpulent, and never clean. Ethically there is no choice between them: their capacity and prejudice for lying are equal, and one is as untrustworthy as the other. Generally

speaking, neither the men nor the women are good to look upon; but of course there are exceptions to every rule, and I think the exceptions in this case are more often Cree. The half-breeds are generally more agreeable to the eye; some of the women are even good-looking; and one of them, a daughter of Michael Manderville, the interpreter at Great Slave Lake, has excellent features, a sweet expression, and is quite the belle of the north country, though the wives of Spencer and of Chipewyan François press her very closely for the honor.

As to philological differences, they are too intricate to understand without long study, and too many for exploitation here. It will answer our purpose to know that the Cree nation is one of the largest of the Lemni-Lennappe family, itself the most widely distributed of the three great divisions—Floridean, Iroquois, and Lemni-Lennappe. The Cree is really a plains Indian, and as such superior to the few of the family in the North-land who are called Wood Cree. The Tené, or Montagnaise, is the great nation which spreads between the Rocky Mountains and Hudson Bay, and extends in its various tribes and dialects down to the arctic. Of these tribes the chief are Chipewyan, Yellow Knives, Dog-Ribs, Slaveys, Hare, Caribou - Eaters, whose language has mere dialectic differences. Then there are the Loucheux, on the Mackenzie River, which have a more distinct tongue, sharper features, almond-shaped eyes, and are the most intelligent and thrifty Indians in the country; and the Eskimo, that never hunt more than a hundred miles south of the arctic coast, have their own variation of the Eskimo



PAPPOOSE IN ITS MOSS BAG.

speech, and, notably enough, average of greater stature than is commonly believed of this people.

Missionaries have now reached all these tribes from the different Hudson Bay Company posts, and their labors have been rewarded by the outward acceptance of their doctrines by a large number of the Indians that come into the posts to trade. The French half-breeds, and certainly seventy-five per cent. of the converted Indians, have adopted the Roman Catholic faith: the remainder have been won over to the Protestants. The most tangible evidences of church influence thus far seen are in the very general disappearance of the medicine-man and the suppression of polygamy and incest. So far as I could learn, the Indians never had any defined worship. Their religion was and is one of fear. They are ever propitiating the bad spirits, the demons of their dreams, and the imaginary "enemy" of the woods. I have seen burned leggings, worn-out moccasins, and broken snow-shoes hung up as peace sacrifices to change bad luck in hunting or a head-wind in tripping, and I never failed to note the predominant avarice stronger than the superstition, as revealed by the worthless character of the offerings. They lean to an inferior species of "totemism," although no religious ceremony was ever attached to its acceptance. Any animal or bird dreamed of used to be, and is yet in a minor degree, taken as the dreamer's totem. The medicine-man has gone, but has left the old superstitions and the pronounced fatalism, which the missionaries have not succeeded in destroying.

They conform to the ceremonies of religion, but little of true Christianity has been developed. It has been a change of method rather than of heart. Formerly female babies were killed on birth; now they live to become beasts of burden. Parents used to be strangled when they grew too old to seek a living; now they are left to slowly starve to death. In the old times men openly exchanged wives for a shorter or longer period; now the number of virtuous girls is very small, and wise indeed is the son who knows his father in this vale of unconventionality. The dead used to be swung in trees or hung from four posts, where the

wind rocked them in their eternal sleep: now they are buried in shallow graves, and the wolverene guards them by day and feeds on them by night.

Priests have not yet taught the Indians the golden rule, nor implanted respect for virginity. Chastity is regarded as a virtue to be honored in the breach rather than in the observance, and fidelity seems by no



THE BELLE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY.

means essential to the happiness of wedded life.

These people have not ventured far into civilization. Take from the Indian his copper kettle, steel knife, and .30-bore muzzle-loading gun, and give him his birch-bark "rogan," moose-bone, beaver-tooth, and flint-stone knives and bow, and he is just about where he was when the Hudson Bay Company brought the trinkets of the great world to him. Agricultural knowledge is of no use to him, because his country is not susceptible of cultivation, except in a few rare and isolated spots. And there are no native industries of any description, no weaving of blankets, no making of jewelry or pottery, absolutely nothing beyond some indifferent beading and porcupine-quill

work, which is done by several other tribes, and by none so well as by the Navajos.

As for sentiment, they have none beyond that torporitic bliss caused by a full stomach. Yes, they have one other—fear. They are most abject cowards. In an earlier paper of this series I spoke of a gift of moccasins conveying indication of a tender sentiment; but that sentiment is relative. The men marry to have some one to make moccasins for them, and the women marry because, poor things, they have little choice in the matter, and that little probably suggests it is better to be the servant of one man than the drudge of a family. There are no playful displays of maternal affection. I think I saw just one instance of the kind on my trip; and, on the other hand, I saw one young mother take her crying and moss-bag enveloped baby out of the lodge and stand it up in the snow to weep itself into exhaustion! There are no gentle words to convey the tender solitudes of courtship, no terms of ordinary politeness; only in the Loucheux tongue can thanks be expressed. The exposure to which they are subjected in their wanderings, and the withering of the famines and gluttony of the feasts, combine to break down health and shorten life. And the greatest blessing they enjoy probably is that they die comparatively young, and go, wherever it may be, to a place which they make sure cannot be more barren of comfort or pleasure.

It must not be supposed that my researches at Chipewyan taught me all this, or that all I have said applies to the country immediately about that post. But while I am figuratively resting my ankle under Dr. Mackay's roof I have told something of the people and the country into which I am pushing. I rested only one day at Chipewyan, and with the exception of a most interesting visit to the Roman Catholic mission, in charge of Bishop Grouard (who is pursuing the only practical course of Indian civilization by beginning with the children), I spent my time getting my feet and ankle in condition for the onward journey, and in talking with the doctor, who is one of the real and prominent "old-timers." Two others are J. S. Camsell, the Hudson Bay Company officer at Fort Simpson, on the Mackenzie, one of the most popular factors and hardestest *voy-*

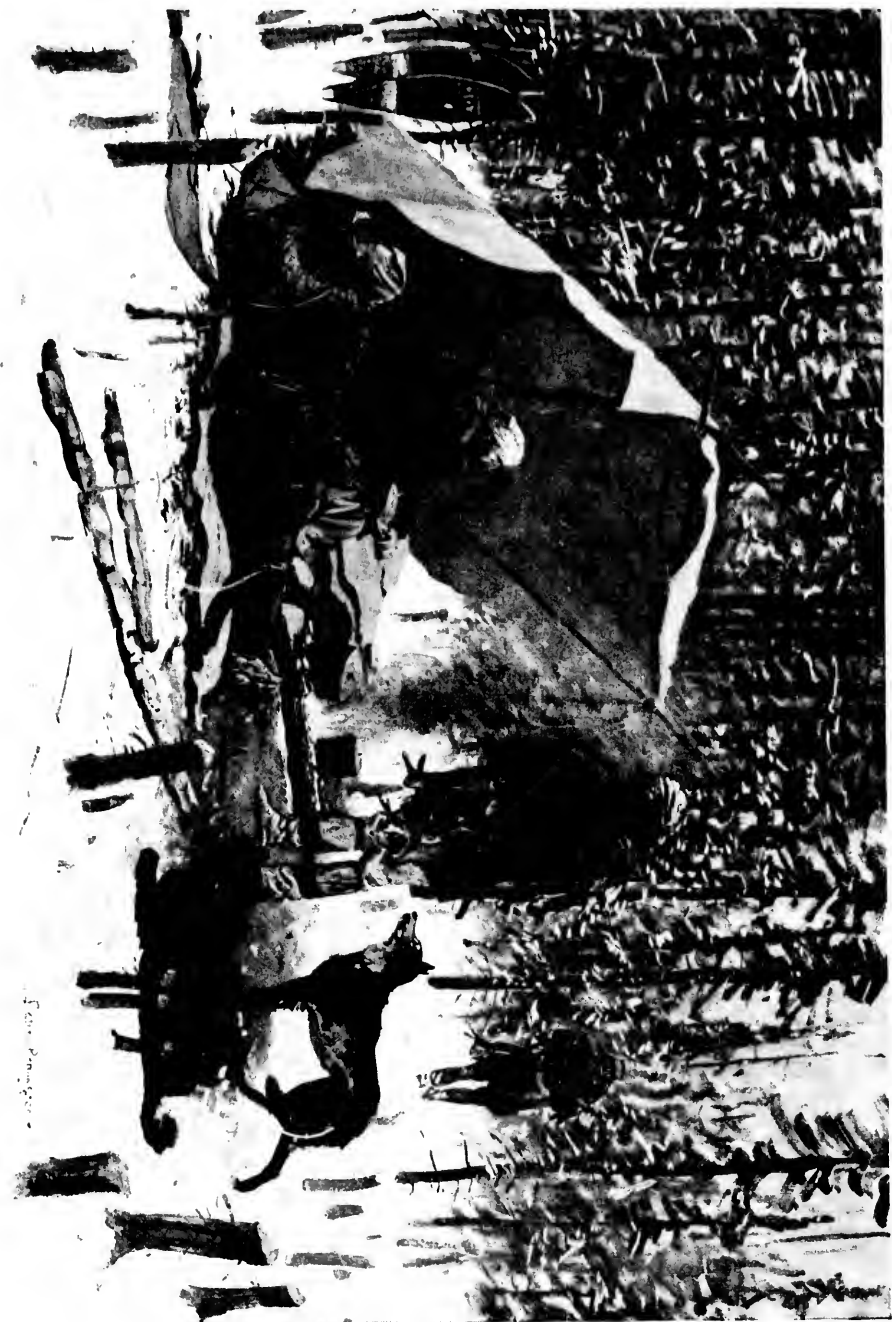
ageurs in the country, and C. P. Gaudet, in charge of Fort Good Hope, on the same river.

Nothing commanded my earnest attention more completely than this mission of the Oblates Fathers, with its bishop, three brothers, six nuns, forty school-children, and a saw-mill. Here, hundreds of miles from skilled labor, they have whipped out the planks for their church, invented a written language, somewhat after the Egyptian in character, taught it with slight modifications to both Chipewyan and Cree, printed and bound the Testaments and the Bible for distribution, and gone out into the woods to hunt their meat, and to suffer from cold, perhaps to starve, along with the Indians to whom they would preach the Word of God. I care not whether one's form of belief be for or against the doctrine preached by these men, one must be petty indeed who does not respect these workers, who, East and West, North and South, have gone far in advance of the pioneer, far beyond the plaudits of civilization, to carry their faith into the very heart of the wilderness.

Of Chipewyan itself there is little to say, other than it was from this point, then a post of the Northwest Company, that Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1789 took his departure for his voyage of discovery; and here, too, Sir John Franklin spent some time previous to embarking on the trip which resulted in the starvation of several of his party, and eventually in his own death.

I was given the same assurances here that I had received all along my trip, of not being able to get into the Barren Grounds and out again in winter, but Dr. Mackay was good enough to yield to my determination to make the attempt, and to aid me by advice, and, what was more to the point, to place two of the post's best trains of dogs at my disposal. One of these was for the luggage, and the other to carry me one day on my journey, and then turn back, in order that my ankle, still very sensitive, should have another day's rest. We left Chipewyan on January 24th, in greater style than I affected at any subsequent time, with Maurice, one of the celebrated Beaulieu family, running before the dogs, and Roderrick Fleet and William Pini, English and French half-breeds respectively, doing the driving. I cannot declare my first experience in a cariole to have been one

THE "TADBIT CAMP."



of unalloyed pleasure. It saved my ankle, and for that I was of course grateful; but despite all the furs it is miserably cold travelling; and, what is equally as trying, the cariole keeps upsetting, unless you are on a well-worn lake or river track, and you, bundled up in furs, are dragged along face downwards, like a bag of meal, until the driver sets you up again. William was very attentive, but not all his care made me regret when the first day was over and my riding at an end.

We camped that night at the junction of the Peace and Slave rivers, and when we started the next morning, long before daylight, the temperature was 35° below zero, and our route lay down the Slave River. I noted very little difference between the scenery of this and that of the Athabasca River—unless possibly the banks of the latter are somewhat higher and more heavily wooded. In fact, there is slight change in the scene anywhere in the country, except that caused by the gradual diminution of timber as you go north, until it dwarfs into the "land of little sticks," above Great Slave Lake, and disappears altogether at the Barren Grounds. It is a country where the watercourses are the highways—for canoes in summer and snow-shoes in winter. The land is without roads, and stray where you will, you may stand on unexplored soil. The river-banks are well timbered, but back of them stretches away, far beyond the Indians' ken, the trackless, uninhabitable muskeg.

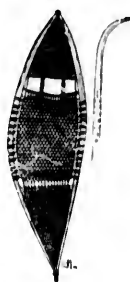
My joy at being out of the cariole was brief, for the pain of my ankle was intensified by the hard track on which we were running, and the ice was full of cracks and holes, which in darkness are always dangerous to the *voyageur*, and were especially so to me in my crippled condition. We had the coldest weather I experienced before reaching the Barrens, the mercury touching 50° below the second night, and beginning at 42° and going to 48° on the third day. The only relief I had to the monotony of travel was afforded me by Roderick and Maurice in setting fox-traps, and my own experiment with a pair of Norwegian snow-shoes (skis), which I had made at Chipewyan, and that I found inferior to the web shoe.

Although we were, indeed, going along at a pretty lively gait, and quite fast

enough for my physical condition, my mental half chafed at the pace, and was impatient to reach Fort Smith. My eyes had been on this post ever since I left the railroad. It seemed the Mecca of my trip, for here lived James McKinley, the only man who could really give me any information of the Barren Grounds, as he not only had been stationed at Great Slave Lake, but made a summer trip to that land of desolation with Warburton Pike. But the way was hard and the long stretches of river disheartening. It is an interesting fact that I always found I travelled easier where the river was tortuous, for, though knowing the distance to be none the less, the many bends gave heart to reach the point beyond, while when I came upon a long stretch the bare work of running stared me in the face, and the distance seemed twofold. We really made very good time, and arrived at Fort Smith on the morning of the 27th, having been three days and two hours doing the 118 miles.

Though prepared for a cordial reception at the post, since McKinley's big heart and helping hand are known from end to end of the North-land, the heartiness of my welcome and the solicitude for my condition quite overpowered me. To one coming from the pulsing city, where it is "every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost," it seems curious to have strangers that know you but in the passing take an interest in your movements and exhibit concern for your comfort.

I was soon sitting in McKinley's unpretentious cabin, with the water he had brought soothing my swollen feet, and the tea his wife had brewed warming me. When I was refreshed, McKinley made me lie down, and then we talked of my proposed hunt for musk-ox. He reiterated the assurances I had received ever since starting that I could not get into the Barrens in midwinter and get out again. He doubted whether I could induce Indians to make the attempt for love or money, but as I was bent on the effort, advised me to try to secure Beniah, a Dog-Rib leader, and one of the best hunters and most courageous Indians in the country. He said none of the Indians would be at Slave Lake at this time, and that the only sure way of getting into communication with them was by sending a runner to Resolution with a letter to Gaudet, the Hud-



CHYPEWYAN
TRIPPING-SHOE
—THREE FEET
LONG.

hard luck of getting only a musk-cow head, after a most trying experience, and they would be glad to have me join them. This accorded with my plans nicely, for I had intended making a bison-hunt, and it could now be accomplished without loss of time—an important consideration—while Beniah was being found and brought to Resolution. Consequently an "express" was despatched to Resolution, and pending the return of Munn, who was in the woods trapping, and would be back the following day, I rested while "Me" told me of the country and its people and its life, which he has learned so well in his twenty years' residence.

The wood-bison is the once familiar species of our own Western plains, grown heavier in his retirement from the old life, when the trail of his hunter never grew cold, and he rested neither by day nor night. He is the same animal with a more rounded stern, acquired by his life of comparative restfulness, and a heavier, darker robe to protect him from the colder climate of his adopted home. How long he has been in this country there are no means of knowing. The present generation of Indians, and their fathers before them, have always hunted him in a desultory way, but there are no traditions of an earlier bison, and the country in which he roams tells no tales. There are no well-beaten trails, such as those which on the plains last even to the present day, to remind us of the vast

son Bay Company officer in charge, asking him to send after Beniah, who would very likely be hunting in the woods six or eight days' journey from Slave Lake. Meanwhile he was organizing a wood-bison hunt with Henry Toke Munn, an Englishman, who had been in the country a year, and made

a summer and an autumn trip into the Barrens, with the

herds that have been sacrificed to man's greed.

The muskeg where he ranges in the North-land shows no trail, and if it did, it would remain undiscovered, for it is impassable to the hunter in summer, and in winter is covered by snow to the depth of several feet. Really little is known of the wood-bison, except that he is gradually going the way of the plains species, from the difficulties of maintaining an existence where climate, pasturage,

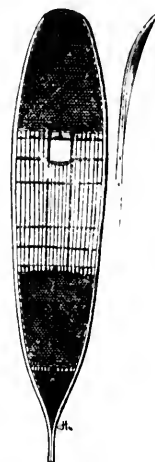
and man are all against him. Recently a law has been passed by the Canadian government prohibiting their killing, but it will be impossible to enforce it, since no mundane power could stop a starving Indian from shooting if he got the opportunity. A check can be put to sending out the hide, but that would not prevent killing for the meat. Moreover, my inquiry did not discover any wholesale slaughter of these animals.

Some thirty years ago a sudden and exceptional thaw in midwinter, followed by a severe storm and bitter cold, that covered the snow with ice which the bison could not break, caused the death of a very great many from starvation and freezing. Again, three years ago, another thaw and storm

gave the Indians an opportunity for that diabolical diversion of crusting, by which method some men reared in the civilized world hunt deer and moose to this day, and about fifty bison were then run down and killed. But these were unusual occasions. Bison are not being killed in large numbers nor shot frequently as individuals. They range over a country too large and too difficult to reach, and require more skilful hunting than the average



CREE HUNTING-SHOE—
SIX FEET LONG.



LOUCHEUX SHOE—
SIX FEET LONG.

Indian is capable of. When I was in the country last winter not even a bison track had been seen up to the time of our hunt, and the head I obtained through the kindness of Dr. Mackay was the last one shot, and that two years before. So the extermination of wood-bison through their hunting by Indians is not to be apprehended, while the remoteness of their country, the difficulties of access—to say nothing of the dangers of starvation and freezing once you get there—protect them from the white hunter.

How many wood-bison there are is not easily estimated. I made diligent inquiry from all sources of information, and their numbers as told off to me ranged from 150 to 300. Joseph Beaulieu, at Smith Landing, popularly called "Susie" by the natives that cannot master the English pronunciation, and another of the famous Beaulieu family, said he believed there must be a thousand; but then "Susie" has the common failing of the country, and, moreover, he delivered himself of this statement when he was persuading us to take a hunter of his recommendation, and whom we afterwards cursed with all the depth and breadth and warmth of English expletive.

The bison range in the country bounded by Peace, Slave, and Buffalo rivers, which has an area of a good many hundred miles. As they roam this territory from end to end, and are usually found in small herds, the one of fifty that was killed a few years ago being an exceptional congregation, and as the Indians never hunt more than a very small piece of this section in one winter, the difficulty of arriving at a close estimate of their total number may be understood.

Personally I am convinced that 150 comes very near representing their total. Munn and I in our hunt very thoroughly covered the larger portion of their more southerly range, and discovered the tracks of thirteen; Munn in a subsequent hunt in a more northerly part of their range saw the tracks of forty; neither of us heard of any signs between these two sections, or Peace River way; and I, while at Slave Lake preparing for my musk-ox hunt, set inquiry afoot for signs of them in the most northerly piece of their range, without getting enough encouragement to warrant delaying my start for the Barren Grounds for another attempt to bring out a bison head of my

own killing. So that we two were the first to practically cover, one way and another, their entire range in one winter, and yet we heard of only fifty-three!

To plan a hunt was one thing, but to get started quite another. Half a dozen Indians told us by the hour how much they knew of the bison country and how undoubted their prowess, but whose knowledge, on close questioning, we found little more than our own. So we spent two days separating fact from fiction before finally deciding Calomé and Bushy to be the only two of the lot worth considering. But Calomé wanted a rifle for himself and a sack of flour for his wife before he would even discuss wages, and Bushy was uncertain of the section which we had decided to hunt. Meanwhile "Susie" sent word that he had secured a good hunter, Jeremi, who knew the country well, and was certain to find bison. We decided on Jeremi for our guide, and Smith Landing, sixteen miles south of the post, as our starting point. It was 3.30 on the afternoon of February 1st when McKinley, Munn, and I got under way for the Landing, with two trains of dogs carrying our sleeping-ropes, twenty pounds of bacon, fifty pounds of flour, three pounds of tea, and six pounds of tobacco, to last five of us for the eight days we expected would complete the hunt, and it was 6.30 when we had gone the eighteen miles that brought us to "Susie's" cabin. We limited our own supplies to the last degree, because we knew the going would be heavy and the fish for the dogs more than a load, and we counted on the snares we had taken to replenish our stock from the rabbits that swarm the woods. Hunting in this country is a very different affair from hunting in any other. It is impossible to take a supply of good provisions, or even a good supply of the poor provision the land affords. We were particularly luxurious in having bacon and flour, for usually dried fish and dried caribou meat are all that may be had. It is out of the question to be well fed or comfortable; fish for the dogs must be carried, distances are great, travelling fatiguing, and hunting hard. Then there is the extreme difficulty of getting good hunters—the Indians are great braggarts but poor hunters—and the annoyance of making terms with them. They invariably want everything in sight while negotiating, and sub-



CUTTING A WAY THROUGH THE SMALL FIRS.

sequently discover either a starving wife, whom you feed, or moccasinless feet, which you cover. But "Susie" assured us in Cree, Chipewyan, French, and in the limited English at his command, of which he is very proud, if uncertain, that we should have no trouble of any sort with Jeremi, or Joseph, his aide-de-camp. And so we accepted Jeremi in confidence, for "Susie" is an important personage among his people, who trade with him, and always refer to him as a *bon-geois*, which, curiously enough, in this country is a complimentary title indicating superiority.

Jeremi was one of the most unique tatterdemalions I beheld on my trip. Munn and I instantly dubbed him the Ancient Warrior; not that his appearance was forbidding, or that he ever revealed any predilection for the war-path, except perhaps when Joseph helped himself too generously to the grease in the frying-pan, but he looked as though he might have just come off a "march through Georgia," and there was a weariness about every motion that suggested long and arduous campaigning. He was tall and gaunt, with an appetite for tea and grease I never saw equalled, and a costume which baffled description. Two thick locks of hair hung forward of his ears and down to his chin, a turban whose original color had long since been lost to view encircled his head, and crowning all was a very small cap he had got from some trader many years before, and which sat rakishly on one side or the other of his head, and consistently fell off every time he departed from the perpendicular. His preparations for sleeping always afforded me a great deal of quiet amusement. He would squat Indian fashion (and Indian fashion differs from tailor fashion only in that the feet are crossed behind and are sat on) before the fire, warming his back and stomach alternately; then he would heap up a pile of frozen rabbits for a pillow, roll up in his robe, and lie down to snore. Very high pillows, by-the-way, are common to all these Indians; they gather everything loose about camp and stow it away under their heads, until they are raised a couple of feet. It was always a wonder to me how they slept at all, though I found in the Barren Grounds, where there is no brush to soften your bed, and you lie on rock chiefly, and always on your side, that a moderately high pillow is desirable, as it relieves the shoul-

der from bearing the entire weight of your body.

It was rather late in the afternoon of February 2d when we left the Landing on a southwest course, which took us to and up Salt River, and finally to a treeless twelve-mile stretch, on the edge of which we made a wretched camp in the increasing cold and with insufficient firewood. There "Susie," who had also decided to make a try for bison, joined us that night. This made us, all told, a company of seven, which was not to Munn's liking, and certainly not to mine, for of all things I have ever shunned, none has been avoided more studiously than a large hunting party. However, there was no way of mending matters. The wind grew stronger, and the mercury fell to 40° below, which not only froze the noses, ears, and chins of all of us the next morning crossing the open country, but, what was more serious, put such a crust on the snow that hunting an animal so wary as the bison was next to impossible. For two days we journeyed on toward the section Jeremi "knew so well," going through a fine game country of swamps covered with coarse grass, and surrounded by willows, small patches of pine, spruce, and poplar, and plenty of moose signs everywhere. In fact, this part of the country is one of the best game districts in the North. On the morning of the third day, being at the edge of the bison country, Munn, "Susie," Jeremi, and I went on ahead looking for signs, "Mc" preferring to remain with the outfit to bring up trains, and pitch camp where we might indicate, as we did seven miles farther on. In a very cold wind we tramped for about twenty-five miles—stopping once to build a fire, that the Ancient Warrior might warm his feet, and again to eat a frozen biscuit we had each fetched—across small lakes, over marshes cut up by creeks, and along thickly wooded ridges, but the sight of not a solitary bison track rewarded our search.

"Susie" and Jeremi were both much disappointed, for they had confidently expected to find signs in this particular section; so the next morning, our provisions having run low, McKinley, "Susie," and his Indian turned back for the Landing, while Munn and I set Jeremi and Joseph to making snares, determined to lay in supplies here before going deeper into the bison country. Then, too,

we knew two sons of Jeremi's would be passing on their way to a cache of dried moose meat. So we bettered our camp to protect us from the wind, and while our two Indians caught rabbits, Munn and I chopped firewood, and smoked, and drank tea.

What truly astounding quantities of tea and tobacco one consumes, and what a craving for grease one acquires in this uncongenial clime! I found the strong black plug traded to the Indians a desirable stimulant in the Barren Grounds, where a pipe and a cup of tea constituted one's bill of fare for several days at a time, and tea to be much more bracing than coffee. Coffee is the alleged luxury of the North-land, and only to be had at an occasional officer's table; but grease, in point of fact, is the real luxury. Only eternal vigilance will save your cache, and nothing less persuasive than a shot-gun rescue it from the hands of its Indian discoverer. We staid in this camp two days, and in that time snared rabbits enough to last us and the dogs a week, and to fill me with revulsion at the very sight of one.

There is something peculiarly offensive in rabbit after continuous diet. I have lived at one time or another during my hunting experiences on one kind of game for periods of varying length, but nothing ever filled me with such loathing as rabbit. Indeed, it is commonly said by the Indians that they "starve on rabbit," and after my experience I can easily understand it; you may eat until you are surfeited, but after a couple of hours' hard travelling you feel as empty as though in the midst of a prolonged fast. There is neither nourishment nor strength in the meat, and yet the rabbit seems almost to be manna for the otherwise God-forsaken land. In countless numbers they skurry over the entire country, and are just the ordinary rabbit known everywhere, except that here they change to white in the winter, and on the lower Barren Grounds double in size, and become arctic hares. Every seventh year their numbers are decreased a good half by a mysterious and deadly disease, and then the Indians suffer, for no one can say how many depend on them for subsistence. If there is caribou or moose meat or fish at the lodge, it goes to the hunters, who must face the storms and withstand the hardships of travel; but the "squaw men," the old

men, and certainly the women and children, more than once during the year owe their very lives to the rabbit. So, although despised by me, he is revered in this home of snow and hunger.

We moved only fifteen miles the first day we broke our rabbit camp, keeping a sharp lookout all the way, and passing over a country filled with curious bowl-shaped depressions that ranged from ten to fifty feet in depth and proportionately wide, and at night the Ancient Warrior's sons turned up to gladden our hearts and relieve our stomachs with dried moose meat. Dried meat, by-the-way, caribou or moose, when at its best, is about as thick as sole-leather, and of the same consistency; when it is poor it somewhat resembles parchment in thickness and succulence. It is made by cutting the fresh meat into strips, which are hung in the sun to dry, and subsequently over the fire to smoke, and is the ordinary food on these expeditions, because dried it is so much easier carried about. It is not toothsome, but it is filling, and that is the main desideratum in this country. Fresh meat is the hunter's luxury.

The coming of these two boys gave me my first insight into the relations between Indian parents and children. They arrived, one with a badly frozen cheek, the other with frozen fingers, and both shivering with cold, yet Jeremi scarcely turned his head in greeting, made no sign to give them room by his own warm place at the fireside, nor showed paternal solicitude for their sufferings. They scraped away a little snow at the edge of our camp, and there rolled up in their blankets, while their dogs and ours, by the light of a glorious moon, mingled in an animated fight that lasted a good part of the night, and was waged vigorously around and over us. The dog is the one member of the Indian family that is no respecter of age or sex. But the boys pay the penalty of youth, as their sisters and mothers do of womanhood.

We were now where the sight of bison was an hourly expectation; we had come over one hundred miles into their range without a glimpse of a track, new or old, and Munn and I decided our quarry to be, as indeed he is, the rarest of the rare. We travelled all day along and up and down ridges, where men and dogs could scarcely drag the sledge for fallen timber and sharp ascents, and where the



Frederick Remington

JEREMI WAS TOO QUICK WITH HIS GUN.

snow was deep, and breaking trail excessively hard, especially with tripping-shoes on which you sunk to the knee, and with the toe of which you barked your shins as you raised your foot after every step to shake off the shovelful of accumulated snow. In this fashion we worked our way for about twenty miles, and yet saw no signs. But we did have a fine camp in the woods that night, with a roaring, warming fire, and such a glorious auroral exhibition as I had never before beheld, nor ever afterwards saw surpassed. Now there were dancing waves of changing red and violet expanding and narrowing and whirling across the sky in phantom dances; then great radiant streaks of golden-greenish pierced the

heavens like iridescent search-lights of incomparable power and brilliancy. It was all so startlingly brilliant and wonderfully beautiful. And I lay on my back, with the Indians on one side and the dogs all around, and stared at the magnificent spectacle, and forgot the rabbits.

The Indians have no definite idea touching the aurora; in their always apt nomenclature they call it the "lights that move quickly," and in general accept the exhibition as merely the sign of wind or fine weather. The Dog-Ribs say it is the spirits of their ancestors holding a dance; another tribe varies this only by substituting fighting for dancing; but there is really no attempt at solution. These

Indians are too thoroughly occupied in solving the problem of living. They do claim, however, that the aurora is at times audible, and some scientists bear them out. Personally I can add little certainty to the uncertain information on the question. Twice on my trip, at night, when there were auroral displays, I heard noises somewhat like the rustling or crackling of a silken banner standing out in the wind, but whether it was made by settling or cracking snow and ice, or by the aurora, I cannot affirm. There is little opportunity to test the matter in winter, for, what with storms and winds, an absolutely still night is as rare as a day in June.

The next, our ninth out from the Landing, was the memorable day of the hunt. It opened in hope—for we were in the heart of the bison country—and closed in despair, for in one short hour we had seen and chased and lost our game.

We broke camp at daylight, to reach on this day the lake about which we expected to find bison, and the country we penetrated had not before been hunted by the Indians. It was broken into numberless little gullies and ridges, none of which Jeremi missed in his wandering, and the snow was so deep, and dead timber and thickly grown small fir so formidable, we made haste very slowly. What with clearing a way for the sledge, disentangling the dogs, and keeping on our feet, we advanced but twelve miles all day. We were in an unexplored country, and the Ancient Warrior was lost. He invariably carried us to the top of the highest ridge that lay anywhere within striking distance of our course, and, once there, would send Joseph up a tree to scan the horizon, while he sank on his knees in what had the appearance of a supplication for light on the darkness of our way, but was in reality his habitual attitude when filling his pipe. From one of these ridges we saw Caribou Mountain near by, really not more pretentious than a foot-hill, but which in this flat country bears the distinction of great altitude.

So we travelled on, wearied by the very hard walking, and wondering if indeed there were any bison in the land. At one o'clock we crossed a lake, but not the lake, where we saw fresh moose and caribou tracks, which we could not of course afford to follow, at the risk of scaring

the big game we were after, much as we should have liked fresh meat. Just after crossing the lake the Ancient Warrior bore to the right of a sharp little ridge, and Munn and I gave the dogs a spell of a few moments, while we lighted our pipes, and joked about the old man having overlooked the ridge, and concluded he must have gone snow-blind. But even as we talked he turned to the left and began slowly plodding up the ridge; whereupon we agreed he was about to send Joseph aloft again, and was seeking high ground. Perhaps he, in fact, was—I never asked him—but Munn and I had hardly reached the foot of the ridge when Jeremi came hurrying back as excited as a phlegmatic Indian ever gets, and we suggested he had seen the "enemy," which these superstitious creatures are ever encountering, to their utter demoralization.

But the Ancient Warrior had the joke on us this time, for he fairly whispered, "Buffalo." Instantly Munn and I were tingling. At last the game we had tramped so far to get was at hand; heart-breaking trails, leaden snow-shoes, and rabbits were forgotten as the hunter's blood swept through our veins at the mention of bison. We four gathered closely in a little circle, and then in subdued tones Jeremi told Joseph, in Chipe-ryan, and Joseph, a few words at a time, translated to us in North-land French, that the ridge was literally covered with tracks, that they were fairly fresh, that we would leave the dogs where they were under cover, and take up the bison trail at once.

I do not become stirred easily, but when we got on top of the ridge and the tracks were before me, my heart quickened, and there seemed no obstacles I could not surmount to reach my quarry. There were the tracks, sure enough, like those of cattle, quite fresh—probably yesterday's. We moved slowly along the ridge, Joseph, Jeremi, Munn, and I, in Indian file, scanning the willow-surrounded swamps on either side, each stepping in the other's shoe-prints, but making quite a bit of noise, nevertheless, for the snow was hard, and the shoes crunched and cracked it to an alarming effect on the nerves of the stalking hunter. Fortunately a strong wind blew in our faces. In half a mile the tracks multiplied, and were very fresh—made that day—so we took off our snow-shoes and continued on as noiselessly as possible.

And now the ridge, hitherto thickly covered with poplar and pine, became a bare backbone which stretched away for about 125 yards between swamps, and ended in a sharp rise thickly grown with small spruce.

We had not advanced ten yards farther when we discovered, simultaneously, I fancy, for we all crouched and drew our rifles out of their coats together, a shaggy head about 115 yards in front of us. A second and careful look told me it was a bison cow about two years old, with forehead sprinkled with either gray or white hair on a background of light brown. She was standing under the spruce, and just over the rise of the ridge, so I could see only her forehead, eyes, and horns, which were about six inches long, and straight out from her head, with slight curve at tips; I could not see her muzzle. The wind was in our favor, and she had not scented us, though from her vantage on the knoll she had heard and evidently seen us before we sighted her.

Munn and I had not before hunted bison, but our hunting experience was sufficient to make action under such conditions intuitive. We knew for sure there was a herd over the ridge. We wanted a bull, and had no idea of firing on a heifer. We expected, of course, Jeremi would work around to the side and under the ridge, and up to where we could view and get a shot at the herd; or retreat and camp several miles away, to make another approach next morning. The heifer might scamper back to the cow, but she could not put the herd to flight, and meanwhile we should make our way along the ridge, perfectly certain the herd would not run until they scented or saw us, or we made undue disturbance. It was a splendid chance for a skilful stalk, just the situation a hunter loves most dearly. I did not consider the possibility of the Indians' shooting, for they had agreed at the Landing not to fire until Munn and I had done so, and "Susie" said they would keep their word, and I trusted them. I know more of these Indians now than I did then.

All this of course ran through my head in the few seconds I was taking my look at the heifer, and Jeremi's stealing off to the right and a little ahead rather corroborated my mental survey of the situation. Suddenly, however, up went

the guns of Jeremi and Joseph. There was no time for remonstrance, and Munn and I, in sheer desperation that luck might direct the bullets, threw up our guns also; those of the Indians exploded before we had ours fairly at shoulder, but we pulled trigger, chiefly because of that instinct which makes one's muscles at times work in sympathy with one's wishes.

I was so stunned by the sudden turn of affairs, so exasperated at the Indians, that I was sorely tempted to empty the magazine of my rifle into them. I knew I could not possibly have scored; I felt sure Munn had not, but hoped against hope that he might have got his gun up for a sight. I did not think the Indians had, for they can hardly hit a barn door a hundred yards off. If I thought at all of their scoring, it was that we might have meat, which we needed but even that, I am sure, I did not consider.

The one miserable thought that we had lost what had been a good chance of getting a bison head was uppermost, for this herd would run for days, and entirely beyond our reach. Simultaneously with the shooting the heifer disappeared, and we ran to the top of the knoll in hopes of a shot at the flying herd, but not a hoof was in sight, so rapid had been their flight, although the ridge opened to view five hundred yards away.

We discovered a few small drops of blood where the heifer had stood, counted the beds of eleven cows, and noted the snow beaten down into paths leading toward the end of ridge and muskeg to the right; and then began a mad race along the faint trail of blood, in hopes that the heifer might have been more badly wounded than the blood showed, and turned aside (as is their custom when hard hit) from the fleeing herd. But we had only a hard run in the deep snow as recompense.

And then we returned to our sledge and sat down in silence, and with the bitter realization that the bison-hunt was at an end. We did not say much, Munn and I; words could not do our feelings justice. There is hunters' luck, and the sportsman who has sought big game, and experienced its operations for and against him, can sound the depths of our disappointment. To have got near bison at all was remarkable, but to have succeeded after a long hard hunt in getting so near, and actually seeing them, only to have our chance for a kill spoiled by the stupidity

or viciousness of our Indians was too keen a grief to be soothed by mutual condolence or by cursing Jeremi.

We went on another day, and saw more tracks of the same herd, but none others, and then we turned our faces Fort-Smithwards. For three days we travelled by the compass, for we were lost, cutting our way through forests of small fir, grown so closely as to render progress almost impossible to a man, much less for a train of worn-out dogs. The going was very hard, and hunger, our provisions be-

ing gone, less easy to bear now following upon our disappointment. On the fourth day we came out on our trail and that night Munn and I reached McKinley's cabin, after covering forty-eight miles between 7 A.M. and 8 P.M. Before we slept we poured our tale of woe into "Mac's" sympathetic ears, and then we all decided the only chances of success in a bison-hunt to be—time enough to cover their entire range from north to south, and once on their tracks, binding the Indians hand and foot.

A MOTHER IN ISRAEL.

BY HJALMAR HJORTH BOYESEN.

I.

"**A** NOTHER child," murmured Judah Memlinger, "another sorrow."

"Shame on thee, Judah!" said Rachel, his wife, pressing the new-born babe to her breast. "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed be the name of the Lord!" her husband repeated, humbly, and with bowed head, as he stared with mournful eyes at the tiny intruder.

"The child is not well favored, I think," he remarked, at the end of a long pause.

"It is a male child. The Lord has done well by him," said Rachel, severely.

Baruch, the elder son, four years old, had stolen into the hushed sick-room in his father's wake, and stood near the door, biting his thumb with suppressed agitation.

"Come, Baruch, and see thy new brother," said his mother.

Baruch, with an acute sense of his unworthiness, sidled up to the bed. There lay a puny little yellow thing with black curly hair, and one small wrinkled fist clinched under an embryonic nose. Baruch stood long staring at him in silent wonder. Then, in a spirit of enterprise, he raised his hand and tentatively touched his cheek.

"Baruch," said the mother, warningly, "beware that thou dost not hurt thy new brother!"

Baruch withdrew his finger as if it had been burnt.

Judah Memlinger was by trade a furrier, and worked for a Jewish master who had the finest store in Odessa. He was neither a handsome nor a clever man; at least Gentile eyes would not have pro-

nounced him either. He wore the two long side curls of the orthodox Jew, and his black forked beard was rusty and weather-bleached at the ends. There was in his eyes something shy and alert, as of a hunted thing, and a peculiarly anxious and uneasy look was habitual to his features. Of stature he was small, crooked, and round-shouldered, and the wide-skirted black caftan slouched about his thin legs. The waxen pallor of his face told of late hours and sedentary labor in the close, over-heated workshop.

Everybody wondered why Nathan Rosenhain, a physician and a scholar, gave his daughter in marriage to so humble a man as Judah. It was, indeed, whispered that he did it as a punishment for permitting her heart to stray beyond the Ghetto. Afterward, it was said, Nathan had relented somewhat, and had allowed her to move her piano to her new home. For that piano was the apple of her eye. It had come all the way from Paris, and it had a most lovely tone, and was beautifully inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. The neighbors often paused under Rachel's windows and stood listening to her wonderful playing. Sometimes she poured forth a tempest of sound, with strange wailing, sighing, lamenting chords interspersed; and sometimes she lost herself in melodious musings, full of sorrowful resignation. Then, at the end of a year, a child arrived, and a change came over the spirit of Rachel's playing. A new tenderness awoke in her and drove away the fierce rebellion.

Four years after the birth of Baruch another son was born to Rachel, and she rejoiced again and thanked the Lord. She

called him David (though none of her kindred bore this name), after the great king of Israel, the music of whose harp has resounded through the ages in the hearts of numberless generations.

During the years while her children were small, Rachel devoted herself with unremitting zeal to their education. In a way she held herself responsible for their poverty and lowly station. It did not occur to her that if she had married another man, these children, Baruch and David, would never have come into the world. It was her fault, she thought, that they were born to contumely and deprivation, and she would, as far as it was in her power, atone to them for it. They were not to be journeymen mechanics, like their father. They were to be artists or lawyers or physicians, such as she had seen among the Jews in Moscow. They were to break the bondage of the close and filthy Ghetto and go out into the world, and become an honor to their people. It was with this in view that she dragged them in from their play and taught them to read French and German. She sat up late at night in order to refresh her own knowledge, so that she might impart it to them; nay, she began to study Latin by herself, in order that she might help to fit them for the university. It was of no use that her husband, being unable to sympathize with her ambition, tried to throw obstacles in her way, and even threatened to complain of her to the Rabbi. Obedient to her wishes as he was in most things, in this he remained sulkily obstinate.

If she had used his money for purchasing the dangerous books he could have pleaded his poverty, and perhaps persuaded her to desist. But she had obtained several pupils in music of late, and earned enough to be independent of him. Tall of stature, with a certain queenly unconsciousness of her own loveliness, she went her way, intent upon her task, and let the turbulent currents of life roll by her unheeded. Her bearing was simplicity itself, suggesting neither pride nor humility, but a beautiful self-respect and womanly dignity. To be a mother in Israel has from of old been a title to honor; and Rachel, in the midst of her poverty, felt an invisible crown of maternity upon her brow.

For eighteen years Rachel lived in peaceful obscurity, devoting herself to the

education of her sons. Her husband never directly censured her or expressed his disapproval of her teachings; but he summoned to his aid the Rabbi, who was less considerate, and denounced with all the maledictions of the Prophets those who, deluded by vain ambition, strayed beyond the fold of Israel.

It was a terrible disappointment to Rachel when her sons, one after the other, were refused admission to the gymnasium which was to fit them for the university. There was a rule, which was enforced or not, according to official caprice, limiting the number of Jewish pupils which might be accepted, and it pleased the authorities in this case to include David and Baruch among those who had to be debarred. It was of no use that she called upon the rector of the school and implored him to relax the rule in their favor. Equally unavailing were her appeals to the other officials, all of whom advised her to apprentice her sons to their father's trade, and not foolishly to aspire beyond her station. The Rabbi, too, enforced this advice with awful biblical quotations, and one day Judah actually summoned courage to carry off the elder boy with him to the shop. She had long foreseen that this world have to come, and though it grieved her deeply, she did not dare interfere. The long-skirted Jewish caftan was to her the badge of the servitude of her race, and it cut her to the quick to see Baruch arrayed in it like his father, wearing the odious side curls, and unconsciously acquiring the stoop and the walk of the Ghetto. But if she could not save Baruch from the misery of ignorance, toil, and dreary resignation which fell to the lot of the Jewish mechanic in Russia, she would concentrate all her energy and all her hopes upon David. She read until her eyes ached and her head swam, but she could not disguise to herself the fact that she made but slight progress. With Baruch she had made some little headway, but with David her success was far from encouraging. He wept over Cæsar and sulked over Nepos, and when it came to Cicero and Sallust, she was herself completely at sea, and could offer him no assistance. Only in arithmetic was he more than her match. He could make a calculation in his head with extraordinary rapidity, and he could run up a column of figures with a sort of in-

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ON SNOW-SHOES TO



THE BARREN GROUNDS.

BY
CASPAR W. WHITNEY.

IV.—TO THE TIMBER'S EDGE.

BEFORE we left the Landing for our bison-hunt, Munn and I had decided to make another attempt under Bushy's guidance in case we failed under Jeremi's. But by the time we were back at Fort Smith fifteen days had been consumed instead of the promised six, and my "express" had returned from Fort Resolution. The letter he brought me was not exactly cheering after our depressing hunt. Gaudet wrote that "the Indians fear entering the Barrens at this [winter] season of the year—that they take their lives in hand at all seasons, but especially now, with the danger of freezing added to that of starving; that he doubted gaining their consent to accompany me; . . . however, he had sent Beniah word to come to the post at once."

As I was already overdue at Resolution, a second bison-hunt, which I should have liked, was out of the question.

Fort Smith is the most inadequately provided post in the country, and has the smallest natural supply, for there are few fish in the river, and, as a rule, the Indians prefer "starving" on

rabbits the women snare to going back into the country a hundred miles or so, where moose and woodland caribou are fairly plentiful. Only "Me's" success in getting a moose kept us all from half-rations after the bison-hunt, and when I passed through on my way back to civilization I found his children crying of hunger. Munn's hard luck, too, will convey some idea of the uncertainty of result and extent of endeavor incidental to hunting. One year he spent there, making two trips to the Barrens for musk-ox, two after bison, and his skill and experience and untold hardships were rewarded by but a single musk-ox. Pike gave two years of his life to the country, made three trips to the Barrens before he secured the musk-oxen he desired, and had one unsuccessful bison-hunt.

Two days after our return to Fort Smith I started for Great Slave Lake. The distance from Fort Smith to Resolution is 194 miles down the Great Slave River, but portages reduce the possible route to 165 to 170 miles, which, as my

ankle had nearly mended, and my half-breed guides and dogs were good travellers, I expected to do in four days. But the contingencies of snow-shoe travel are many. We had hardly got under way before such cramps seized the calves of my legs that I could scarcely move. I supposed it merely muscular stiffness caused by my two days' inaction at Smith after the hard day's run which terminated the bison-hunt, and that it would wear off, so I set grimly to work to catch the dog-train, which was going along at a lively rate and disappearing down the river.

No effort of mine, however, could quicken my gait beyond a shuffling painful hobble, and I did not overtake the outfit until a stop was made for dinner, fifteen miles further on. I thought a rest and a little rubbing would relieve me, but when we started on again the cramps spread to both thighs, and I simply could not move. But for the pain I might have thought my legs paralyzed. I signalled Mererede, my guide, and when I had dragged myself up to the dogs I climbed on to the sledge, and told him to go ahead, thinking the spasm would pass off, and meanwhile we should not lose time by stopping. There was short respite in this direction, however, for the dogs could not haul me in the heavy going without "forcing," and as they must be saved at all hazards, I determined on another effort at walking, and failing, to camp and doctor my muscles. This I made Mererede understand after much difficulty, and then he went on and I tried to follow. I was in no better condition for travelling than before; a few steps and then a tumble, followed by a spell of crawling; another attempt at walking, another tumble, until finally I directed my entire energy to crawling on hands and knees, and thus I reached the camp Mererede had made several miles below.

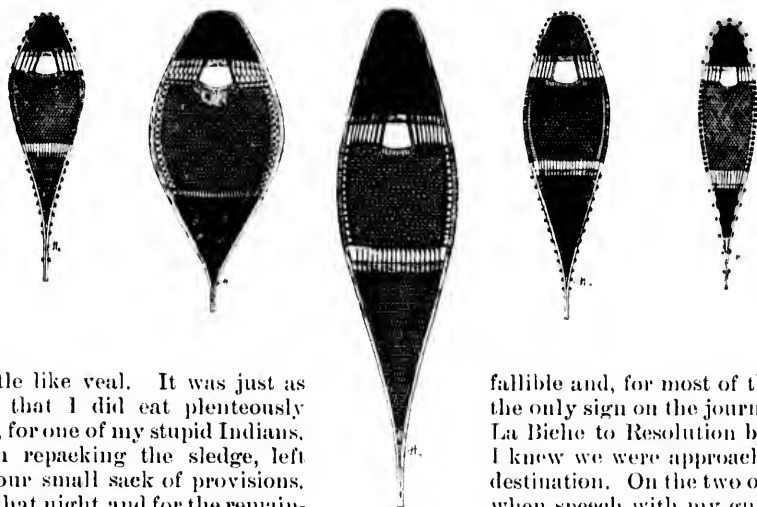
Vigorous and continuous application of mustard liniment put me in shape for travel the next morning. Exceedingly painful travel, but travel none the less, which was, after all, the main consideration. Walking was bearable, but running set every leg nerve and muscle vibrating, and I tried all possible ways of making those half-breeds know I wished them to walk. But they didn't or wouldn't understand, and there was nothing left for me but to grit my teeth and stay with them—which I did.

It was afterwards explained to me at Resolution why they had maintained such a pace despite my evident suffering. It seems I had made in the country some renown as a runner—a case of honor being thrust upon me—for I cannot see that I merited it, unless the Indians deemed perseverance worthy of such recognition. However, I gained the reputation nevertheless, and it travelled ahead of me from post to post. Now as the Indians and half-breeds are exceedingly jealous of their own reputation as runners, and probably did not fancy a white man even unwillingly sharing it, the result was that every pair of guides I secured set out to thoroughly test my qualifications for the name which had been given me. As I got fresh guides and dogs at each Hudson Bay post on my journey, it may be understood I was kept busy. Mererede and his companion were the first two that had found me *hors de combat*, so to say, and they proceeded to have a good time with me. Well, they had it. At first I would bring to my aid all the signs and Indian words, Cree and Chipewyan, I knew, in a serious and laborious effort to make them understand how painful it was for me to run. And they would look wise and solemn and nod assent, and then start out and go as hard as ever.

After one or two of these attempts at fruitless persuasion I developed a large and righteous anger, which was somewhat relieved by a cursing that exhausted a vocabulary of wide and highly colored range, and which the Indians did not understand—more's the pity, for I am sure the brilliant and contrasting effects would have appealed to their picturesque nature—and thereafter they had not the satisfaction of hearing a whimper, nor of running away from me.

Later one of them came near ending my misery once and for all time by felling a tree, which crashed into the snow not six inches from where I was stooping tying my mooseasin.

On the morning of the fourth day we came to the cabin of Carr and Duncan, the only two white trappers in the country. It was a joy to hear English again, and a comfort to get in-doors before a fire; and when I left they had braced me up mentally and physically by their hearty welcome and the heaping plates of lynx meat they set in front of me, and which is very tender and savory, and tastes



a little like veal. It was just as well that I did eat plenteously here, for one of my stupid Indians, when repacking the sledge, left out our small sack of provisions, and that night, and for the remainder of the trip, we shared some wretched dried fish with the dogs.

The last half of the journey was exceedingly trying, because the storms violently disputed our progress, and the dogs were fagged by the depth of snowfall. It was on one of these last hard days that, as I opened my note-book in the morning to write of the day before, I was reminded of a little dinner given me just on the eve of my departure from New York, at which five of my nearest friends had sat, and pledged my health and success, and promised to drink to it again on Washington's birthday. And as I wrote February 22d in my journal that morning, that delightful evening seemed so long ago; but with the storm howling about me I drank their healths in strongest tea, and felt sure they too had drunk mine.

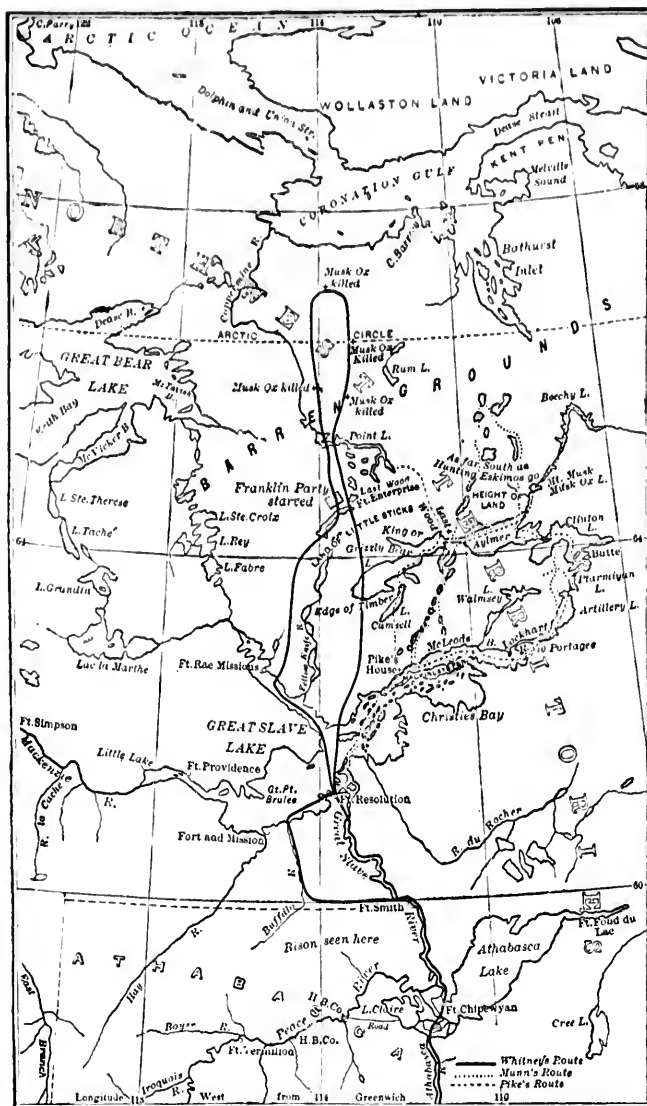
It was one o'clock of the fifth day when we came to the end of the (about) twenty-mile portage which connects Great Slave River with Great Slave Lake, and carries the *voyageur* over the last stage of his journey from Fort Smith to Resolution. The wind had subsided and the atmosphere cleared of flying snow as we toiled through the heavy going to the timber's edge, flanked on either side by closely growing and winter-bemantled pine; and when we finally reached the open, and the great frozen lake lay before us, the dogs were stopped for a spell, while the Indians got out their best mittens, relaced their moccasins, and lighted pipes.

These preparations were always an in-

fallible and, for most of the time, the only sign on the journey from La Biche to Resolution by which I knew we were approaching our destination. On the two occasions when speech with my guides was possible, the only information I could elicit in reply to my inquiries

concerning distance was that it was either a little or a big "piece" off. As a "little piece" meant anywhere from five miles to a day or a day and a half's travel, and a "big piece" from a day and a half to three or four or even more days, I was never able, until I learned to interpret the signs of changing costume, to form any idea of our relative location. When arriving at or departing from a post the Indians invariably clothe themselves in their most highly ornamented moccasins, mittens, and leggings, and whip the dogs into their fastest pace. *En route*, however, these gay trappings are exchanged for more sombre ones. On the morning of the trip's last day the decorated leggings are again put on, but the best moccasins are not brought forth unless the post is to be reached before noon, and the mittens not before the journey is within a few hours of its end, sometimes not until the last pipe—which is filled and lighted during a day's running about once every hour and a half—as was the case when we halted for our first look at Great Slave Lake, whose glistening surface stretched away to the west far beyond the range of sight.

It is always customary, too, to stop for a pipe when they come within sight of the journey's end—no matter if it is only a couple of miles away and everybody and the dogs are faint with hunger and worn with fatigue. They are true to the philosophy that deems anticipation better



MAP SHOWING MR. WHITNEY'S ROUTE.

than realization. And so we stood and looked at Resolution and its little line of cabins straggling along the lake's northern shore, six miles away, while Mererede arrayed himself in elaborately beaded moccasins, and I warmed with thankfulness too deep for words that the final stage of my 900 miles was completed, and the outfitting post for the Barren Grounds in view at last.

When we arrived at the fort, an hour

and a quarter later, Gaudet welcomed me with characteristic North-land heartiness, and there was a commotion among the natives; for the coming of the "white hunter" had been heralded, and they were curious to see what manner of man was this who had penetrated the stupendous North at its most forbidding season. But I was too happy in the accomplishment of my trip to recite details, and too worn to give heed to the whisperings and jostlings of the men, women, and children that gathered about and followed me to the door of Gaudet's cabin.

The boiling of the teakettle always follows swiftly upon the arrival of a *voyageur* in this desolate but hospitable land, and it was not many minutes before Gaudet's sister, who proved a ministering angel during my stay at Resolution, had poured a cup of tea and placed before me some caribou ribs, the first fresh meat I had seen since leaving La Biche. No-

where in my experience have I witnessed more disinterested hospitality than in this great lone land. From north to south—from Hudson Bay Company officer to the poorest Indian hunter, among the half-breeds at the post or the Indians in the woods, in the log cabins or in the caribou-skin tepees—the entrance of a guest is invariably the signal for stirring up the fire and putting on the teakettle: or, if there is no tea, which is more frequently the

case with the Indians, of putting a piece of meat on to boil; or, if there is none, of offering dried meat or fish, or the best of whatever there may be.

The successful hunter pays ample tribute to his skill. While the meat lasts his lodge is never cleared of the less for-

If one is inexperienced in roughing life, or lacks decision, and, let us say, heartlessness to say "no," this country is no place for him, for more persistent and skilled beggars are probably not to be found anywhere. I was annoyed a great deal at first for the reason that Pike had



"SPELLING" THE DOGS.

fortunate, and the squaw is never done cooking, and feeding the half-starved that squat about the fire in ever-changing but never-diminishing circles. I marvelled at this lavish hospitality while living with the Indians, for it was never at any time a giving out of plenty, and always meant subsequent want for the entertainers. I have seen every bit of meat put into the kettle and handed around, until the last scrap was eaten, and the host and myself go hungry for two days afterwards. When we were making our way towards the Barren Grounds I saw an Indian of our party, who I knew had not eaten meat for two days, bring forth a bone saved from the dog feed, handle it almost fondly before the fire, and then divide it among one or two of his fellows.

been improvident of his provisions, and I suppose it spread abroad in the land that white men were easy to "work." So when I came along they had new lessons to learn before we "understood one another." Personally I acknowledge I prefer the Indians to the half-breeds. Of course I met splendid exceptions, notably Gaudet and Spencer, Hudson Bay Company officers, and three of the company servants—Michael Manderville, the interpreter at Resolution, and François and William Pini, at Chipewyan, of whom I have already spoken; but, as a rule, the half-breeds are less tolerable than the Indians. And that is saying a great deal. It is a question of two evils. One would repent of either choice. Both in general are untrustworthy, avaricious, and

uncleanly, but the half-breed is nearer the white man in the viciousness of his hypocrisy. The white blood in his veins comes from lowest strains, and has given him the cunning of a higher intelligence without imparting the better attributes of the more civilized prototype. It is much easier for a civilized man to become savage than for a savage to become civilized.

How I slept that first night of my arrival at Resolution! The comfort of a full stomach, the satisfaction of being at the scene of battle, so to speak, were soothing beyond expression. At any time, no matter how long hence, I am sure if ever I sit back in my chair and reflect upon the period of utmost complacency in my past life, my two weeks at Resolution will be immediately recalled. My bed was the board floor; the substance of my daily fare, caribou meat, tea, and bread; my daily occupation, running from ten to fifteen miles to keep in condition; the atmosphere, arctic; not a bird note to break the silence of the woods, nor a bit of pretty scenery to relieve the monotony of the great desert of snow; but I was no longer jaded in body and mind; there was no hunger; I was in magnificent physical condition, and just at the door of the desolate waste which was to open for a successful venture or close upon me forever.

It was well I had not delayed my departure from Fort Smith, nor gone with Mumm for the second try at bison, for Gaudet told me that my non-appearance so long after the appointed day had convinced him I had yielded to persuasion, and given up my intention of making an attempt to get into the Barren Grounds until the later and usual time. He said that the runner he had sent after Beniah could not find him; that Beniah was somewhere in the woods hunting, and the heavy snowfalls had made following his tracks impossible; but the runner had seen some Indians who were likely to meet Beniah and tell him he was wanted at the fort. This was all satisfactory enough so far as it went, but it left me in doubt as to when I might expect to get off for musk-ox. The second day after my arrival, however, an Indian came in with a note from Beniah, written in the hieroglyphics which the priests of the Oblates Fathers invented when first they began their missionary work in this country.

Beniah said, first of all, he heard I was

a "great chief" (these Indians are cute diplomats); that no one had ever ventured into the Barren Grounds at that season; but he would come into the post to talk the matter over seriously so soon as he shot enough meat to make the trip of six days possible, which meant that we should see him in from eight to ten days.

Next day Mererede and his dogs started back for Fort Smith, carrying the only letter I was able to send out during my six months' absence, and which Mumm, who intended making his way to Edmonton on his return from the bison-hunt with Bushy, had promised me to carry.

And so I settled to active preparation to be in readiness on the arrival of Beniah, whom I was determined to induce to make the trip. There were dogs and an interpreter and a driver to engage, mooseasins and duffel and mittens and strouds to provide, and a heavy caribou-fur capote and winter caribou robe for sleeping in to secure. Nobody appeared to enter upon the task with much zest, and every one shook his head and warned me against the trip. All agreed that it was an impossible undertaking, and Gaudet used his utmost persuasion to induce me to delay my departure until the usual time of the musk-ox hunt.

The Indians time their hunting trips to the Barren Grounds (they never go there except after musk-ox) with the movement of the caribou—*i. e.*, the early summer, about the last of April or first part of May, when the cows begin their migration from the woods to the Arctic Ocean, where the calves are dropped in June; and in the early autumn, September and October.

Caribou are absolutely necessary to the penetration of the Barren Grounds, because of the impossibility of either obtaining a sufficient supply of provisions to last out the trip, or carrying them if such were to be had. Pike made one hunt in the best and easiest way by making a previous trip into the Barrens solely for the purpose of killing and caching caribou, which lessened the chances of starvation on his next attempt, when, in addition to the cached meat, the opportunity of adding to the supply was offered by the moving bands of caribou. Yet he had a very hard time of it. Mumm on his summer trip had the caribou and fish in the numberless lakes; on his autumn trip he attempted to better conditions by taking



BENIAH AND DRY GEESE, TWO FAMOUS DOG-RIB LEADERS.

From a photograph by Mr. Whitney.

along a supply of pounded dried meat, which was speedily exhausted, and caribou being scarce, he and his party and their dogs had a starving time of it indeed.

Midsummer is of course the season in which one may visit the Barrens with least danger, for at that time you travel by canoe, caribou are plentiful—if you are lucky enough to find them: they are very uncertain in their movements and changeable in their course of migration, which may one year be a hundred miles east or west of where it was the year before—the thermometer rarely gets below freezing-point (though you are persecuted beyond endurance by mosquitoes), and the winds have lost much of their fury. But in summer-time the musk-ox fur is not prime, and of course musk-ox is the only excuse for visiting the man-forsaken place. And so trips are confined to the spring and autumn, when the trials are more severe, but the reward greater. The Indians go in parties of from four to six—never less than four, because they could not carry sufficient wood to enable them to get far enough into the Barrens for reasonable hope of getting musk-ox; and rarely more than six, because by the time they have gone as far as six sledges of wood will permit, they have had all the

freezing and starving they can stand, even though no musk-ox have been forth-coming.

Many parties go into the Barrens and never see even a musk-ox track, and many more skirmish along the edge, fearful of a plunge into the interior, yet hoping for the sight of a stray ox. Wood must be carried, not for warmth nor necessarily to cook meat, but to boil tea: for man could not endure the fatigue and cold and starvation without the stimulus of hot tea once or twice a day. When the sledges are loaded with the requisite supply of wood and the sleeping-ropes, there is no room left for provisions. To take more sledges would mean more men, more dogs, more mouths to feed, with no added prospect of feeding them. Thus it is that no attempt is made to carry in provisions, and that a visit to the home of the musk-ox is always attended by great danger, and never without much suffering, be the season what it may. None but the younger and hardiest and most experienced Indians go into the Barrens, and to be a musk-ox hunter is their highest conception of courage and skill and endurance.

Bearing in mind these conditions, it may be imagined with what disfavor my proposed visit in early March was viewed.

No one would hire me dogs, asserting I should never get them back alive; and if Gaudet had not come to my rescue and let me have his own train, I fear I should have been obliged to delay my hunt until the usual time. I shall never forget the kindness of Gaudet and his sister—he helped me in my search for an interpreter and dog-driver, and in my studies of the country and people; she saw that my moccasins and duffel were properly worked, and herself made me a pair of slippers of unborn musk-ox hide, to be worn



Musk-ox Hunting-knife and Barren Ground Axe.

next the skin, fur side in; and both of them heaped curios upon me in such generous profusion that I grew afraid of expressing admiration for anything, lest they give it to me forthwith.

I did not propose to have any more cramps in my legs if training would provide against them. I knew such a condition in the Barrens would put an end to all hope of musk-ox, or of my getting out to tell how I didn't shoot one. So about every afternoon I took a twelve to fifteen mile run on Great Slave Lake, and, what with the good meat I was eating three times daily and this exercise, I was so "fit" when I started for the Barrens that no Indians ran me off my legs, as I was told they would on the trip across the lake. On one of the afternoons I experienced how suddenly a lake storm gathers, and with what force it bursts upon the luckless traveller. Had I not fortunately put my compass in my pocket that very morning, I should probably have been on that lake yet, for the snow whirled around me at such a pace and in such quantities as to darken the atmosphere, and the wind beat upon me with so great a force that, bent almost double, I could barely keep moving. I had great difficulty in reading the needle and following the direction it indicated; but when the prospect of a night on the lake seemed surest, the wind that was blowing off shore carried the evening tolling of the mission bell to me, and sweeter sound I never listened to!

Fort Resolution is one of the most important posts in the country. Though it has not so many claims to distinction as

Chipewyan, its natural resources for food are much greater; for near by is the most productive fishery in the country; the Dog-Rib and Yellow-Knife Indians generally keep it supplied with caribou meat in winter, and geese and ducks are fairly plentiful in spring. Furthermore, it is the only post that secures any quantity of the country luxury—grease; though the Indians never bring in marrow, which is a very palatable tidbit. The grease they do bring in is the fat from along the back and around the joints of the caribou, which is called hard grease, in contradistinction to the marrow, that is soft. Both of these are used in making pemmican, which is made of dried meat pounded into shreds and mixed with grease, and rolled into balls or made into square or round slabs.

Pemmican, however, is a rare article nowadays, and not to be found anywhere south of Resolution, and only there on occasion. This is chiefly because caribou are not so plentiful as they were formerly, and the Indians keep most of the grease for their own consumption. Nor do they make pemmican to any great extent, their substitute for it being the pounded meat, which is carried in little caribou-skin bags when travelling, and eaten with the grease—a pinch of pounded meat and a bite of grease. I must confess that a plate of pounded dried meat and several good-sized lumps of clear grease were about the most tempting morsels I had set before me at any time on my trip. One never gets enough of grease in the North-land; it is eaten as some in the civilized world consume sugar; in fact, I developed a craving for sweets that even grease did not satisfy, chiefly, I suspect, because the supply was so limited, and somewhat notable in my case for the reason that ordinarily I seldom if ever touch sweets. The absence of bread and vegetables, and the excessive cold, undoubtedly combine to excite the desire for both grease and sweets.

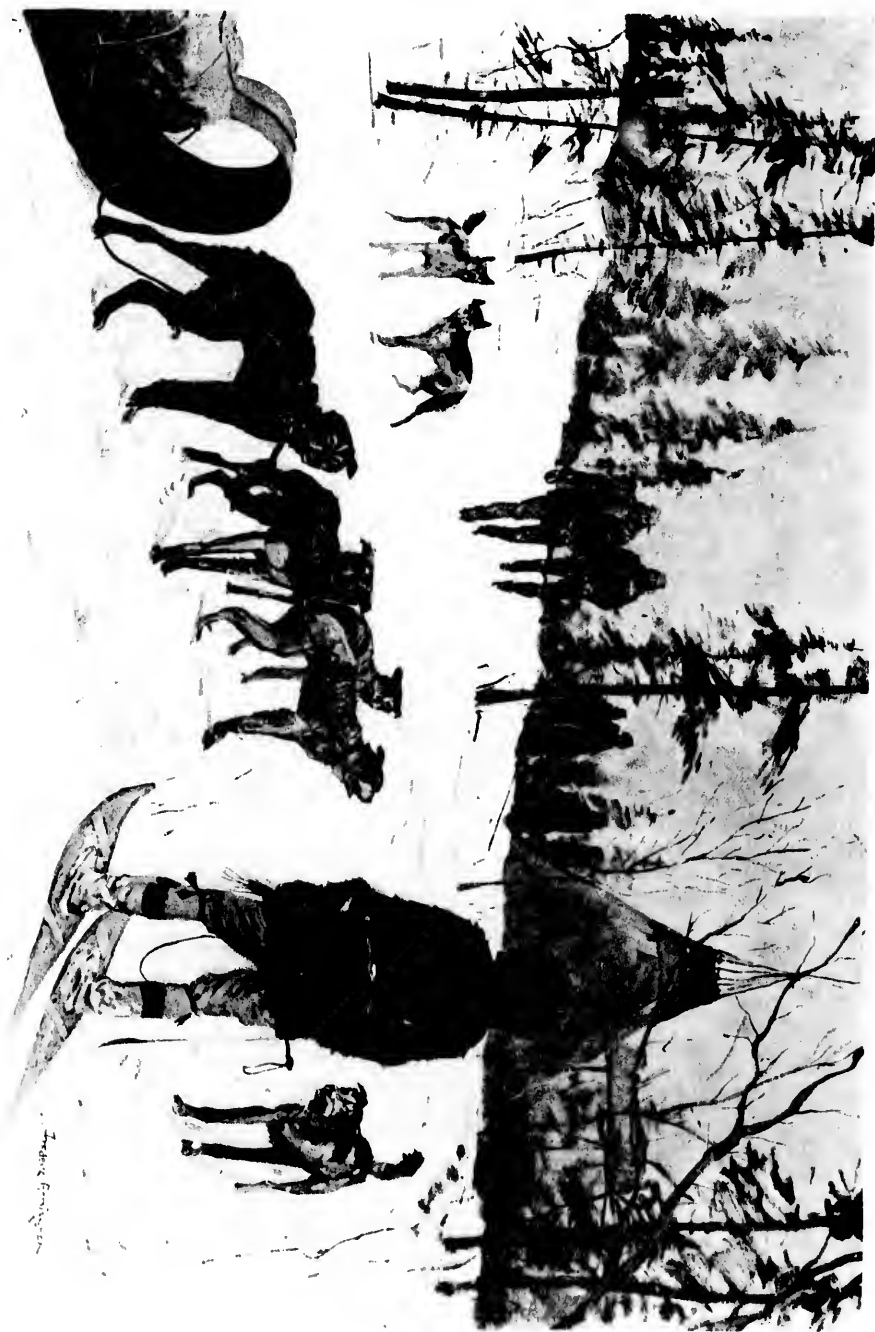
Resolution, next to Fort Simpson, is credited, I believe, with sending out the greatest number of fur packs; but however that may be, it certainly is the scene in summer of the largest congregation of Indians, when they come out of the woods, pitch their lodges on the lake shore, and settle down to trade their furs and worry Gaudet into giving them credit. Trading with an Indian is no trivial mat-

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ARRIVING AT BENJAMIN'S LODGE.



ter. There is first to get him to put a value on his fur, and then to convince him that there is enough stock on hand to pay him. There is of course no money in this country, a "made beaver" skin being the standard of value by which all trade is conducted—as, for example, a marten is worth from two to three beaver-skins, and a bear-pelt about twenty beaver-skins. On rough calculation the "made beaver" is equal to about fifty cents, though it fluctuates throughout the country.

When the Indian has finally agreed upon a price for his fur, he proceeds at once to the company "store," and then the intricate business of trading against his credit of "made beaver" skins begins. It is impossible to deal with more than one Indian at a time, and so they are taken into the "store" singly, and the door is bolted, and life immediately becomes a burden to the Hudson Bay Company's officer. If there is anything in the stock that has not been overhauled and priced before the Indian exhausts his credit, it is only because it is out of sight. But in a way he is a satisfactory sort of a customer. He is not exacting as to what he gets, so long as he gets something; he may really want beads or duffel, but if there is none of either he as readily takes a copper teakettle or a knife. It is quite unimportant that he may actually need neither.

He is particular on one point only, and that is, he never leaves the store so long as he has a "made beaver" to spend, and when he has used up his due he always makes an eloquent and vigorous appeal for gratuity or debt. As a matter of fact, these Indians are most considerately and generously treated by the company; they are paid a good price for their fur, and to the worthy, and many times the unworthy, are often given both debt and gratuity. There are no Indians I know of that are better treated, and few as well. Nor have I ever visited a country where trade competition operated less to the advantage of the natives. The few independent traders that have worked their way into this North country have done little, so far as I could see, beyond raising the price of certain kinds of fur above its fair marketable value, which in some lines has necessitated the introduction of an inferior quality of stuff for trade. So that the Indian has really been the loser.

Although several hundred Indians bring

their fur to Resolution, and the "census" of the post is returned as about 300, as at Chipewyan, the actual residence is far below that number, in fact, seven families, that comprise sixty souls. Great Slave Lake itself is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in the world, being 300 miles long, with an estimated area of from 11,200 to 15,000 square miles. Great Bear Lake is but a couple of thousand square miles smaller, and the size of both may be judged by comparing them with Lake Michigan, which has 20,000 square miles. Fancy Lake Michigan a solid sheet of white, its shores broken by deep bays, and sparsely covered with smallish pine, and everywhere silence and desolation and snow, and you have some idea of Great Slave Lake in winter.

With the first Sunday in March came the anxiously awaited Beniah, in a cariole, as befitting a hunter of his reputation, and with an attendant, also riding, as became the servant of so powerful a leader. He is really the best hunter in the country, and in North-land possessions—fur and dogs—reckons a deal more than any other individual. He is a "leader" in his tribe—Dog-Rib—in so far as being the head of a hunting party, and of bringing in the largest number of skins to the company. There is no other kind of "leaders" in any of the tribes—no councils and no election to such prominence by vote or heredity. Leadership is a survival of the fittest, and he who gains the distinction earns it.

Beniah is much respected by his people, and is altogether a very superior Indian; short in stature, probably five feet five inches, but sturdy. He can talk longer without exhausting a subject than any man I ever knew. In our subsequent powwow there was no contingency he did not foresee, especially if it was to operate adversely to him, and no point of an agreement that was not thoroughly threshed out; in fact, he showed a logical mind that sometimes became lost in metaphors, but pretty often had the right end of the solution. He is good-natured, except at such time as he considers his dignity affronted by those dependent on his bounty, and somewhat of a wag too, whose most mirth-provoking sally was a repeated and crescendo exclamation of *edo* (Dog-Rib for hot) when it was bitterest cold. The greatest tribute I can pay Beniah is to say that he kept his word with me, and

that is so rare a virtue among these Indians as to be praise enough. The only thing I treasure against him is his distressing rendition of a song which had few words and a tune that waited for longer and shorter periods of time over three treble notes. I could never decide whether it was a song of joy or lamentation, as he set it going on all occasions before we reached the Barrens; and then he subsided, for there no opportunity of rejoicing offered, and no chant, be it ever so dolorous, could have expressed the depth of our misery.

There was much mental measuring of one another, of drinking tea and smoking, on the day after Beniah's arrival at Resolution, but we did not come to the business of my venture until the evening. Then we all gathered in Gaudet's room and smoked some more, and talked for a long time about everything, as is usual at these powwows, except the one thing in which we were both most interested. Finally the interpreter told Beniah I wanted him to go with me to the Barren Grounds, and did not wish to wait until the usual time of hunting; and Beniah forthwith delivered himself of quite a speech, in which he said he was glad to welcome the first white man to his hunting country, especially one whom he heard was a "great chief"; recited the danger of the Barren Grounds; the impossibility

of getting Indians to make the attempt at such a season, even if he were willing; explained the absence of firewood, the chances of freezing or starving to death; and, in fact, told off the difficulties to a length for which I have no space here.

Now I had sized up the situation long before Beniah arrived at the post, and I had purposely delayed this meeting until I had looked him over a bit in the day, during the smoking and tea-drinking. My knowledge of the Indian character in general, and of this one in particular, had decided me upon a course of diplomacy to induce him to go with me, and I knew if I secured him that he would insist upon his hunters going, if only that misery likes company. I was determined to get into the Barren Grounds, no matter what its terrors. Therefore when I replied to Beniah—through the interpreter, of course—I treated all the dangers as a matter of course—I told him I had come to him because his skill and courage were household words in the great world, that my one ambition had been, if I reached the North, to hunt musk-ox with Beniah; that I had been travelling from my house, which was far, far away, by the "big water," for many suns, and that now, being here, I was sure so insignificant a matter as hunger or cold would not deter him from accompanying me. I made Beniah feel that my belief in his



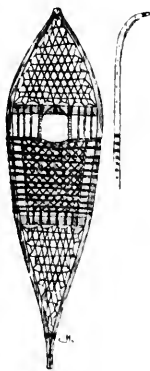
THE LAST WOOD—LAYING IN A SUPPLY FOR THE BARRENS.

From a photograph by Mr. Whitney.

courage was unbounded. I told him I knew the other "leaders" would of course shrink from exposure, but they were as "children" to him. I made him understand that I had no doubt of his willingness to go with me; that it was merely a question of beaver-skins between us, and I was prepared to pay him liberally. I placed him in such a position that by refusing to go with me he tacitly acknowledged that he was afraid, that he was no greater than the other leaders to whom I had referred as children when compared with him.

The result was that before the meeting closed it was midnight, but Beniah had promised me to go, provided he could make up his party, and we were to start next day for his lodge, which was in the woods about three days east of Fort Rae, and six days' travel north from Resolution.

The little post of Resolution was shaken to its foundation next day when it learned that we really intended starting, and there was a great shaking of heads, and many direful prophecies told for our benefit. But I felt sure Beniah would not turn tail, since he had given me his word; and as for myself, I had been having nothing but discouragement since first I set out. At noon my sledge was dragged into the post, and packed with my outfit, which consisted of a winter caribou-skin robe, lined with a pair of 4-point H.B.C. blankets, and made into a bag (which I subsequently ripped open: the popular supposition that a bag is best is faulty; you can sleep much warmer in the unsewed robes, because you can roll them about you more snugly), one heavy caribou-skin capote, one cloth capote, one



sweater, two pairs of mittens, one pair moose-skin gloves, one pair leggings, three silk handkerchiefs, eight pair moc-casins, eight pair duffel socks, one copper tea-kettle, one cup, my rifle and hunting-knife, compass, camera, thermometer, ten pounds of tea, twelve pounds of tobacco, ten pounds of flour, and ten balls of pemmican (provisions I intended to cache at the last wood, where, if we suc-

ceeded in getting back, I knew we should arrive in a starving condition), two bottles of my old friend mustang liniment, a pint of brandy I had carried from Hamilton, and the antiseptic lozenges and bandages, and iodoform, in case it became necessary to play surgeon for one of the party or myself.

We were ready to start at three, and I was waiting for my dog-driver and interpreter, when word came that he had backed out, and Gaudet renewed his efforts to dissuade me from the trip. But I had not come so far to be daunted by so inconsiderable a thing as deprivation of speech or driving my own dogs, and I motioned Beniah to move on. And now there was a hand-shaking that seemed to have no ending, for every one pressed upon me closely, and grasped my hand solemnly and in silence. It was rather a funereal leave-taking. There is a little portage of about a mile that leads out from Resolution to the west on to Great Slave Lake, and Gaudet ran along with me over this; and as he ran, told me the names of the dogs: Foro (the foregoer), Finnette, Blossie, and Blucher (the steer dog). And then we came to the lake, and halted for a last good-by. Kind-hearted Gaudet seemed much depressed; and as for me—well, at any rate, I was started, and if fate ruled that I never came back, my place would be filled, and the world roll on as usual; so, with a heart for any fate, I called out *ma-arche* to Foro, and the journey to the Barrens was begun in earnest.

I had no time for meditation, for my work was cut out from the start. Beniah and his Indian were riding in carioles, and swinging along at a clipping gait; and though my load was light, and my dogs better than theirs, I did not ride, because I wished to save them as much as possible. So Beniah sped on ahead, and I followed on behind, going easily, for my training had made me very fit. And I had learned enough, too, to keep on my snow-shoes, though the lake would have permitted going without. Running on ice without snow-shoes has the same effect on leg muscles as an unyielding



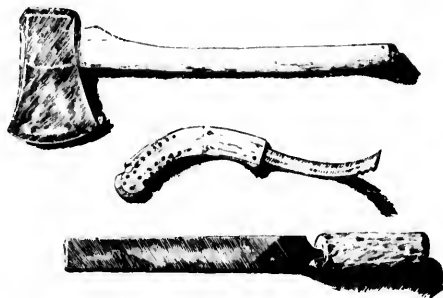
armory floor after a cinder track. After four hours we came that night to Stony Island, twenty-two miles from Resolution, where we camped, and whose only interest for me lay in the fact that here, seventy-five years before, Sir John Franklin had breakfasted on the trip which closed so disastrously for his party. We slept in a tiny cabin with thirteen others, men, women, and children, and I appreciated for the first time in what filth human beings will wallow.

Next morning several Indians joined us, and we put in a long hard day on the lake, out of sight of the shore most of the time, I running, and all the Indians in carioles. About 4.30 we came to a point where the Indians hauling meat to Resolution had made a cache, and here we halted, and a fire was lighted. I shall never forget my attempts to learn how much farther on we were going that night. I can see myself now sitting on the rocks, setting up miniature lodges in the snow with little twigs, and using my few Dog-Rib words, *con* (fire), *ethar* (far), supplemented with numerous gestures, to ascertain if the lodge fire was to be far away. My efforts created much amusement, but drew no information, and I realized how very much alone I was indeed. Nor shall I forget my amazement and my relief at seeing another fire lighted and camp made for the night not twenty yards from the first where we had eaten.

If there is one thing these Indians know how to do it is to build a roaring fire where wood is plentiful; first of all, pine brush is cut down and laid about three feet high in a semicircle, on top of which the sledges are lifted to keep them from the voracious dogs. The opening of the semicircle is piled high with wood, and when lighted throws out warmth enough to keep you comfortable so long as it lasts, even with the mercury at its lowest. About noon the next day we left the lake, striking north, and for three days, starting at six and going until eight and nine at night, we travelled across a rough country, broken up by ridges and filled with lakes—most of the ridges bare of all timber, and the only trees dwarfed. All this time I had been running and the Indians riding, and I was not sorry when on the night of the third day we reached Beniah's camp, which proved to be quite the biggest settlement I had seen, for these

Indians roam about in small parties of one or two lodges. Only a few consequential leaders like Beniah have a fixed habitation, and then it is only used in summer, when the fishing is going forward.

Here, while Beniah was explaining my mission and making up his party, I put in three very uncomfortable days. To say



THE INDIAN'S TOOL-KIT—AXE, CROOKED KNIFE (HOME-MADE), AND FILE.

that I was an object of curiosity would be putting it mildly; I was indeed a stranger in a strange land. The men examined over and again every article I possessed; the women stared me out of countenance; the mothers used me as a bugaboo to hush their crying babies; and the dogs crowded about me so threateningly that I never ventured outside the lodge without my whip. I was the first white man they had seen, and one and all made the most of their opportunity. I was on exhibition with a vengeance, only, unlike other freaks, I had no hours; the show opened when I arose in the morning, and was still on when I rolled up in my blankets at night. And I, on my part, made most careful scrutiny of the curious surroundings in which I found myself. We were camped on top of a ridge covered with small pines, where Beniah had made his last stand to keep up with the caribou that were just beginning to work out to the edge of the woods. There were three lodges, all full, and, so long as I remained, the occupants of the other two spent the greater part of their time in Beniah's.

In times of prosperity these Indian tepees are by no means unsightly. They are of caribou-skin stretched around and to within about three feet of the top of poles, which number according to the size of the

lodge. The sides of the circle are banked up with snow and pine brush, and, inside, the smallest brush makes a clean-looking and pleasantly smelling floor. The open fire occupies the centre; and above it, stretched from side to side of the lodge, are poles upon which the meat is placed to thaw, and from which the kettles are suspended.

Around this fire the men and women sit, tailor fashion, all day, jabbering incessantly in their guttural speech that is impossible to describe in writing, and at night they roll up in their blankets and stretch out with their feet at the very fire's edge. I used to wonder what on earth they found to talk about, for the clatter never came to a full stop, and when I lay down at times, trying in

slumber to escape the din, it seemed as though it must all be a hideous dream. But any such illusion was speedily dispelled by the yelping of a dog that had worked its way into the lodge, and was being clubbed until it worked its way out again.

Domestic economies are a dead letter

in the Indian household. There is no place for any particular thing, and nothing is ever in any particular place. The back part of the lodge, where it is too cold to sit even when the fire blazes highest, appears to be the general store-room. Everything not in immediate use is thrown there in indiscriminate confusion. If the squaw has finished stripping a caribou leg of its meat, she tosses the bone over her shoulder into the unknown behind her; if she has completed the lacing of a snow-shoe, it is served similarly; the Indian hurls his knife there when he is through with it, and the children do the same with the bones or intestines or bits of meat they may have filched from the feasting, in which they never share. And when there is a demand for any article, such an overhauling ensues as would put to shame a May-day house-cleaning. Children are not much in evidence in the Indian household. They rarely cry, for experience has taught them that such outward

expression of grief or alarm or hurt meets with much personal discomfort. If they are in the moss-bag age, which usually ends at two, they are put into a sort of hammock within the lodge and rocked at a terrifying pace, to the accompaniment of a crooning that would strike terror to the heart of any crying babe. If they are old enough to toddle, they are turned out of doors to tell their sorrows to the winds.

The Indian has no patience for the little solicitudes of life, nor for its frivolities. His amusements are few and simple. Outside of a something that resembles that ancient pastime of "button, button, who has the button?" and where the penalty is a piece of tobacco, there are no games to speak of. The dancing is exceedingly awkward and crude—a shuffling about in a circle, varied by hopping up and down, and the music confined to the monotony of the single-headed drum, or mayhap an occasional fiddle picked up at the post, which in that case squeaks through a medley of reels. Their dearest recreation is sleeping, since most of their time is spent in procuring food, and the balance in resting from the toil required to obtain it.

The day after my arrival Beniah took up seriously the question of getting volunteers for the musk-ox hunt. At least I judged so from the gathering of the men in our lodge, the long and earnest conference, and the displeased looks that were every now and again cast my way. It must be remembered that I knew practically nothing of the language, and was dependent on signs. My Dog-Rib vocabulary consisted of *curre*, stop; *ecla oulee*, what is it called? *ethar*, far; *con*, fire; *ega*, hurry; *bet*, meat; *oole*, none; *illa*, no; *eh*, yes; *too*, water; *ethen*, caribou; *ejeri*, musk-ox; *edzar*, cold; and *sla*, plenty—words that Gaudet told me at the last minute, when my interpreter backed out, and which I wrote down phonetically just as I was starting. I picked up a few others afterwards, but had really always to rely on signs, and I found the Indians not only dull of comprehension, although they ordinarily learn much quicker by the eye than by the ear, but disinclined to understand me. They seemed, with one or two exceptions, to wish to make it as difficult for me as possible.

Judging by appearances, Beniah was having a heated time of it persuading



NORTHWEST SOCK OF
DUFFEL.

them to go into the Barrens, as I supposed he would have, and the storm that had blown up, and the cold, which my thermometer registered as 46° below, did not tend to increase their liking for the venture. But I was convinced that Beniah would bring it about, because these Indians could not afford to deny him, and he would not, could not, go without them.

It was a lugubrious day that, for no meat was in the lodge, a hunter had been found frozen dead at his traps, some one had died in the adjoining lodge, and there was mourning in the air. My first intimation of the death was most dreadful feminine wailing, seconded by mournful howling of the dogs, which all together made such distressing bedlam as I hope never to hear again. The coffin was a rude slab box axe-hewn from the pine, bound together by babiche, and suspended from a single pole, by which it was borne as a litter on the shoulders of two Indians, one in front and one behind. Following were some half-dozen women, all chanting a most direful dirge; and as the little procession disappeared over the ridge the dogs sat on their haunches on top of the hill and whined a last requiem for the poor wretch, who would nevermore struggle for life in the white desert.

Next day I knew Beniah had succeeded in organizing a party, for the women began relacing snow-shoes and making mittens, and the men set to work shaving down pine poles into extra runners for the sledges. The Indian's tool-kit consists of an axe, a large file, and a "crooked knife," which has a blade made from a file, a bone handle, and in general appearance looks somewhat like a farrier's knife. It is an implement of general utility, carried by all, and exceedingly deft in the hands of some. The original of the dog-whip handle illustrated in an earlier paper, and really a very creditable piece of carving, was made with just such tools by William Flett, a Loucheux, and the



A HUDSON BAY COMPANY
FUR "PACK."

interpreter at Fort Smith. When they go after musk-ox they add a huge weapon with a blade nine inches long and one-eighth of an inch thick (and the best shaped point for skinning I ever used), which becomes at once hunting-knife and Barren Ground axe—for nothing larger for chopping is taken or required.

As the men toiled away at the pine slabs, shaving off about two inches for a length of seven feet with their crooked knives, and the women laced snow-shoes, I wondered if I had ever seen people do more work and accomplish less. If there is a roundabout way, these Indians seek it out; a straight line does not appeal to them in any form. They always begin at the wrong end, and choose the longest way. And as for pitching camp, a white man of any experience who could not do better would be well laughed at by his hunting companions. Between making up their mind as to the precise piece of ground on which to pitch it, and getting into one another's way while doing so, the length of time they take would make any man of roughing experience disgusted. Few fervently I used to wish for a command of their language to give a few instructions, and, incidentally, my opinion of them individually and collectively!

And all the time they keep up an incessant jabber, or stop work entirely in the heat of discussion. Between chatter-



OLD FLINTLOCK TRADED TO THE INDIANS, AND MOOSE-SKIN GUN-COAT.

ing and, in the lodge, catching vermin, with which the women and children especially are literally alive, the wonder is they ever accomplish anything.

How gratified I was when on the third day we finally left the women, some of the vermin, and the lodges, and started on our way to the Barren Grounds, I shall not attempt to say. It seemed to me that the starving and freezing that lay before me were little less to be dreaded than the filth and monotony I was leaving behind. Not that I left all the filth or vermin behind, for my seven Indians took along a generous share, but, at any rate, I was out in the open, instead of being sandwiched between women and children that made me crawl only to look at them.

There was a very solemn leave-taking on the day we left Beniah's lodge. Every man embraced and kissed every woman, the men shook hands, and the children sat down in the snow and stared, and as we moved off the dogs left behind sent up their wolfish chorus.

Beniah and I had held a sign-talk that morning, and I made out that there was no meat in the lodge, which was no news, as we had eaten but tea and grease for two days; that in one "sleep," *i. e.*, by to-morrow morning, we should be where there were caribou; stop there one sleep, and then go on for *ejeri*; meanwhile his *con*, fire—*i. e.*, house—would be moved to

the *toocho*, big water, *i. e.*, Great Slave Lake, because here where we were it was *bet-oole*, no meat. I understood from this that his wife would go to the lakes, around which the Indians always settle when the deer fail, and where she would await our return, subsisting on what fish could be caught under the ice or what rabbits might be snared in the woods.

The one "sleep" did not bring us up to the caribou, but it took us north to the lodge of another Indian, who had been more fortunate than we. Here for one day we feasted and the Indians slept, and when we started on again the next morning Beniah signed me that we were now off for musk-ox. Another day of travel in a fearful wind, the mercury at 47° below, over rocky ridges and through pine that was growing smaller and more scattering as we advanced, and at night we camped on the shore of King Lake.

The next morning we lingered for a couple of hours, while the Indians cut and trimmed lodge-poles that we must carry with us. And as I climbed to the top of a rocky ridge, and viewed the desert of treeless snow extending far into the horizon before me, I knew we had come to the edge of the timber, and that the Barren Grounds, in all their desolation, lay before me. And I thought, as I stood and gazed into the cheerless waste, that if death marked my venture, it would not be a hard country to leave.



CUTTING LODGE-POLES ON THE EDGE OF THE TIMBER.

From a photograph by Mr. Whitney.

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V.—MUSK-OX AND DESOLATION.

WE left all hopes of a warming fire on the south side of King Lake, when we lashed the newly cut lodge-poles to our sledges and took up our northward way through the outlying relics of timber-land, which the Indians aptly call the "Land of Little Sticks." There is no abrupt ending of the timber-line. For a day or two before reaching King Lake the trees are growing smaller and more scarce; as you draw nearer they stretch away like irregular lines of skirmishers deployed along the frontier to intercept further encroachment by the Barren Grounds. And now you pass beyond these sentries and travel along a ridge which makes out into the white desert—a long wooded peninsula—or mayhap you cross a lake to find a wooded island on the other side. Gradually—imperceptibly almost—the peninsulas grow shorter and the islands smaller, until finally you stand on the shore of King Lake and look north into desolation.

Probably the roughest country in all the North-land is that going down to the Barrens. Nature appears to have made an effort to stay the footsteps of the wanderer while yet there is opportunity to turn from the trials that await in be-

yond. Isolated hills, sharp little ridges, and narrow shallow valleys, running hither and thither, all rock-covered, and every now and again a lake, go to make up a rugged and confused whole. One could well fancy some Titan ploughman had cross-sectioned the land into huge ridge and furrow, stopping here and there to raise a mound, and sowing all with rocks of every shape and size. It looks forbidding, and it is a great deal more so than it appears.

'Twas over such going I had my first real experience in dog-driving, for up till now there had been little handling of the sledge, and therein lie all the difficulties of the art. If you can imagine a canoe pitching in short choppy waves, you will gain some idea of the action of a lightly loaded sledge being dragged over this ridge and furrow and rock. Without guidance the sledge would soon pound itself to pieces, so you humor and coax it through the furrows, ease it around or lift it over the rocks, pull with the dogs in climbing the ridge, and pull against them in going down. And all the time, because of your enforced running alongside the head of the sledge, in order to handle it by the "tail-line," you are tripping

over rocks you cannot see, being jammed in between others you cannot escape, or blocking the progress of the sledge with an arm or a leg, or, often as not, with your head.

The Indians left me to work out my own salvation, and my dogs added difficulties to those nature had already liberally provided. The most exciting, and withal discomforting, moments I had were in going down hill. Whether in contempt for my inexperience, or misunderstanding my commands, whenever we began a descent and I called w-h-o-a, Foro, the foregoer, invariably broke into a run, starting up the other dogs, and dragging after them me, hanging to the tail-line, of which I did not let go, because I thought it just as well the dogs learned early in the game that they could not "shake" me. And so sometimes I went down hill head-first, at other times feet-first; but the speed of the dogs never lessened until the bottom had been reached, except when I brought up against a rock, stopping them short, and nearly dislocating my arms thereby.

By-and-by I grew skilful enough to stay on my feet once in a while, and on such occasions a rush after the dogs at top speed would take me up to the foregoer about half-way down the hill, where I fell on him as though he were a football rolling back of the line from a blocked kick and I was after a touch-down. And then we were rather a mixed-up lot, I and the dogs and the sledge—until I had given Foro a few samples of my English pronunciation.

Poor old Foro! how miserable he made my life for a while! After I had dropped on him half a dozen times in the middle of a wild gallop down hill he began to understand my w-h-o-a, and then we got on better.

And what a lesson, too, in snow-shoeing was this dog-driving! It was reasonable, I suppose, for me to believe myself somewhat skilled on snow-shoes by the time I had reached Great Slave Lake. But when I started from Beniah's lodge I discovered there was much to learn. No man may consider himself an expert on snow-shoes until he has driven dogs and handled a sledge over such country as that approaching the "Land of Little Sticks"—even the heart-breaking and shoe-tripping muskeg is not a circumstance to it.

Within the borders of the Land of Little Sticks the general character of the country becomes more rolling. The rocks are always in evidence, but the furrows have broadened to valleys, and the ridges lost their sharpness and gained in height. Still, the little sharp ridges and furrows never disappear entirely. One day you may see them only here and there; on another probably every elevation will reveal them. To a larger or smaller extent they are scattered through all that part of the Barrens I travelled over, and are the most likely musk-ox grounds, because of the moss and lichens that cling to the rocks, and are the easier gathered. The "little sticks" are pine or juniper, from three to eight feet high, that in small patches are scattered—I do not know how many miles apart, but I can give an idea by saying that during the day of thirty-five to forty miles' travel on the course we pursued we came upon probably a couple of these clumps each day of the two and a half we spent crossing the Land of Little Sticks. Each night we camped where the bushes grew into smallish trees and covered probably half an acre. But between these patches nothing inflammable showed above the snow—not even a twig.

As we worked our way due north, travelling by the sun when it shone, as Indians always do, and by my compass when it stormed, as it mostly did, we climbed to the top of the highest elevations that lay in our course or near it, and while we smoked a pipe, viewed the forlorn panorama which, when the storm permitted, unrolled before us so repeatedly and monotonously. There it was, always the same, unchangeable and unchanged—glittering snow, ridge-encircled lakes, rocky mounds and basins, and far away in the distance a small black speck, perhaps—a wood oasis in the desert of snow.

From the hour of leaving our lucky friend in the woods, two days before, we had eaten no meat. We had kept a sharp though unsuccessful lookout for caribou. Beniah had produced some grease from a little bag he carried, and another Indian had found a piece of frozen caribou intestine in the depths of his sledge, and these, with a few hitherto undiscovered bones, remains of dog-feed, stayed our eight stomachs for the first day's travel in the Land of Little Sticks. We had taken along no supply of dried meat or grease, because caribou signs at the edge of timber con-



A PIPE IN THE LAND OF LITTLE STICKS.

From a photograph by Mr. Whitney.

vinced the Indians that the cows had begun their migration to the North, and we should be able to kill enough for the dogs and ourselves. But all signs fail in the Barren Grounds. The caribou may have been moving, but they were not moving our way.

Throughout that second day scouts were sent to the east and west searching for caribou, and on top of every hill in our path we halted and hungrily scanned the uncompromising wilderness for a sight of meat. The usual chatter of the Indians had ceased. In silence, and against a strong head-wind, we plodded all day long, and when in the gloaming we set up our lodge in one of the little patches of pine, there was nothing left us for the evening meal but tea and a pipe.

As we squatted around the fire awaiting the melting of the snow in the tea-kettle, the Indians appeared to be holding a consultation, and shortly one of them left the circle and went to my sledge. So soon as he began unlacing the wrapper I had a fairly clear idea what he was after, and as quickly realized that I was in for a "scrap." I watched the Indian, however, without dissent, and all the other Indians watched me, until he had uncovered and begun opening the bag in which were the dozen balls of pemmican I had brought from Fort Resolution. And then I said, "*Illu*" (no). The Indian hesitated in his foraging, and looked first at me, probably to discover if I was serious, and then to the others, for encouragement, I suppose. Evidently he got it; at least there was a chorus of guttural, and he set to work at the bag again. And now I rose on my knees and called

him by name—Seeyah—and when he paused and looked at me, I added, rather louder and more earnestly, "*Illu, illu.*" That would have been the end of the piratical episode, I think, had Seeyah been the captain of the crew; but while he stood undecided, with his hand in the bag, the others maintained an animated council of war, in whose utterances I seemed to recognize appeals of urgency to him and of defiance to me, and so Seeyah renewed the attack.

I perfectly realized the unpleasantness of my position, but I felt the situation bore most importantly on the relations between the Indians and me for the balance of the trip. It was a crisis I would have cheerfully averted, but being thrust upon me, I believed the success of my venture, to say nothing of my peace of mind, depended on how I survived it. It was not only that the Indians should at this period of their hunger consume those few balls of pemmican, but it was that their disregard of my commands might in the future lead to greater recklessness in provisions; and recklessness of provisions was just as apt as not to end in our starvation, or, what concerned me more, failure of my trip. I had fetched the pemmican to have at a time and cache at a place when, as near as I could estimate, we should be in direst need. To eat it now, with the journey barely begun, was to rob us of our last resource. I felt if I could go without meat for two days and resist the temptation of eating, they, whose very existence is divided into alternate periods of feasting and fasting, could also, and must, if my determination was to carry weight.

I was not a little exasperated, too, that the Indians should treat my wishes with contempt, and so when Seeyah renewed his explorations for pemmican I confess



INDIAN LEGGING.

I was in fit humor to leave no doubt in their minds as to whom the disposition of that pemmican actually belonged. Jumping to my feet, I grabbed the Indian by the shoulder and jerked him away from my sledge. Instantly all the Indians were on their feet, jabbering and gesticulating at a great rate; and while the storm of their displeasure raged, I backed up against my sledge and awaited its abatement, shouting *illa* every now and again, and keeping a sharp look-

out for any sudden movement on their part. As I write now, and in my mind's eye see those Indians grouped about the teakettle, all talking at once, and casting lowering looks at me, back against my sledge, shouting *illa* whenever I thought they could hear me above their own din, the situation seems very ludicrous. But the humor of it did not appeal to me so much at that time.

Finally, when there came a lull in the vocal bombardment, I stepped forward and entered upon the most elaborate and important speech I had yet attempted in the sign language. I held their attention for probably thirty minutes, and there was no interruption save when the dogs broke into the lodge and scrambled and fought all over us, until whipped out again. I expressed to them that I had brought the pemmican not for myself, but for us all; that we had only begun our journey; that there might come a time when it would save us from death; that I intended leaving it at the last wood; that they could not get it now without fighting for it, and if we fought I should surely be killed, as we were in quarters too confined to use any weapon but a knife, and they were seven against me, and then the "Big Master" (the Hudson Bay Company's commissioner, Mr. Chipman, who I hope will forgive my liking him to an

implacable Nemesis in my hour of need) would take all their skins away, and kill them and their women and children. I do not believe at any time they really had an idea of serious personal conflict, but, at all events, I made them understand they could not get the pemmican that night without putting me out of the way, and they left off muttering, drank their tea in sullen silence, glaring at me over the top of their cups. Before pipes had been lighted two of the scouts came in, each with a caribou head on his back and bearing the good news that three had been killed. So peace reigned again in the lodge, and the late unpleasantness was forgotten, while we feasted on the ears and eyes and tongues of those two heads.

But these two heads among eight men furnished, of course, only a mouthful apiece, and the real feast, and, I may add, our last, began the next morning, when we came to where the three carcasses of the caribou lay. It happened that there were a few scattering little sticks near by, and half of us gathered firewood, while the others guarded the caribou from the rapacious dogs. To hold the dogs in check is to turn the sledges upside down and sit on them. But all the while the dogs jump and tug and howl, and now and again one slips his simple harness, and then nothing short of a blow that knocks him nearly senseless drives him from the caribou. It is cruel treatment, but the necessity is extreme. Sometimes, even with the sledge turned over, the starving, straining dogs get started towards the coveted prize, and then every man sets upon them with whipstock and lash, for once those four dogs got to the carcass, there would be no hope of rescuing any of the meat. Sometimes, frenzied by their unsuccessful efforts to get the meat, they turn on one another, and then ensues a dog-fight of such fury as can never be witnessed anywhere beyond the Barren Grounds, with its maddening conditions.

Even though by some transcendent and providential means I should be given plenty to eat not anything could induce me to again visit the Barrens and witness the sufferings of those poor dumb brutes. Only for one period (I think, though not absolutely certain, because I was too cold and miserable to write in my note-book every day, and must depend largely on memory) of three days on the trip did

they go entirely without meat. At all others they had a little, just a mouthful, except twice, when we camped by a good killing of musk-ox, and then they fared sumptuously. But they were half famished practically all the time, and my conscience smote me sorely as I noted their glaring eyes and tucked-up stomachs, and realized that my thirst for adventure was the cause of it all. We were fortunate enough to kill caribou and musk-oxen at intervals which enabled us to give the dogs just a bite sometimes every day, and at least every other day, with the exception of that three-day period.

When we killed caribou the dogs were fed on the spot, and the little meat remaining was divided among the sledges, to be carried for them against the days we were not so lucky. We never were lucky

enough to kill before this little supply was exhausted. Had we been, we, the seven Indians and I, would have eaten meat. As it was, we ate the intestines and fat, and the dogs ate the meat, because there was not nourishment enough in the intestines for the dogs. Before we left Resolution, Beniah and I had a thorough understanding on this point. Many of the Indian expeditions to the Barrens are crippled by loss of dogs from starvation, and I knew the loss of our dogs meant failure; so we decided if there was any starving the greater part of it should fall on us, realizing of course that if the worst came we could eat the dogs. Beniah held to his agreement, and enforced compliance from the others, and to his wisdom in this direction, in fact, is due much of our success in getting out of the Barrens.



FEEDING THE DOGS.

When it is remembered that the ordinary meal for a dog-train—*i. e.*, four dogs, that are travelling thirty or more miles a day—consists of a caribou hind and fore quarter, that we had twenty-eight dogs, and that we never got more than a caribou or two at intervals of several days, the reader may understand why the dogs were like wild animals, and why we ate the intestines and grease and saved them the meat.

When we killed musk-ox we first cut off meat for a day or two's dog-feeding, and then turned the dogs loose on the carcasses, over which they worried and snarled and fought the livelong night. When there were no carcasses, they were fed out of hand from the slender supply on the sledge, and then they fought us, and worried the weaker among themselves into dividing the frozen chunks that were tossed to them.

This dog-feeding was a trying experience. All the trains were fed at the same time—when we camped at night—and such a scene cannot be duplicated anywhere on earth. As we emerged from the lodge with the tiny feed rolled up in the skirt of our capote, there was a rush by the dogs that pretty nearly carried us off our feet, and frequently knocked down the lodge. We always tried, but never with success, to steal a march on the dogs and get away from the lodge before the rush, but the moment one of us showed his head they gathered for the assault, and there was nothing to do but to scramble out as best we could, otherwise they would have poured into the lodge and torn it and our clothes to pieces in their crazy hunger. So we would bolt out in a body, heads down, and hugging the meat to our breasts with one hand, use the whip vigorously with the other, while the dogs jumped into us and on top of us in their frantic endeavors to tear away the little scrap of meat we held. Gradually we would separate, and each man attempt to gather his train by lashing those that did not belong to him, and calling by name those that did.

When, after much fighting, each had gathered his own, the actual process of feeding began, and this again demanded much activity and some strategy to insure every dog of your train getting its portion. I never had time to notice how the Indians did it, but my method was to run each dog in turn a few yards from the other three, quickly toss his meat to

him before the others caught up, and then stand guard over him while he ate it.

The eating did not occupy much time—there was only a growl, a grab, and a gulp, and the meat was gone.

It was necessary to be expeditions, for the dogs that had swallowed their meat ran from group to group seeking those that had not, and woe betide the poor beast that attempted to masticate his morsel! Two of my train, Flossie and Finnette, were very timid, and gave me no end of bother. It was only necessary for another dog to start toward them, and they would drop their meat and run off. I found it necessary to hold them by the scuff of the neck while they ate, and I laid my whipstock over the heads of the dogs that fought around me.

Feeding animals in the Zoo isn't a circumstance to feeding dogs in the Barrens.

As I have said, our three-caribou feast of that morning—our third in the "Land of Little Sticks"—was the last. I like to dwell on it even now. First the legs of the caribou were cut off, stripped of their sinews and flesh, and the bones cracked open for the marrow; then the heart and kidneys and two unborn calves; then the tongues and the eyes and the ears; and all the while ribs were roasting, stuck upon sticks about the fire, and a kettle full of what was left from the dog-feed hung suspended from a tripod over all. I confined myself to the marrow and ribs, and simply marvelled at the quantity those Indians ate. When we started on again there was not left a great deal of the three caribou to load on to the sledges, but the Indians were in good humor.

About noon of that day, from the top of a ridge, we saw, far in the distance, a black patch, so much larger than those we had passed it seemed almost as though we had got turned about and were travelling toward the timber's edge. But my compass told me the direction was north, and Beniah made me understand by signs that this was the "last wood." It loomed up almost like a forest; but when we reached it, late in the afternoon, it proved to be not more extensive than about five acres. But all things go by comparison, and those five acres of scattering small pine were as gratifying to us as though they had made a Maine forest. Most of the trees averaged from one to two inches in diameter, though there were some twice as large, and I noticed a very few that

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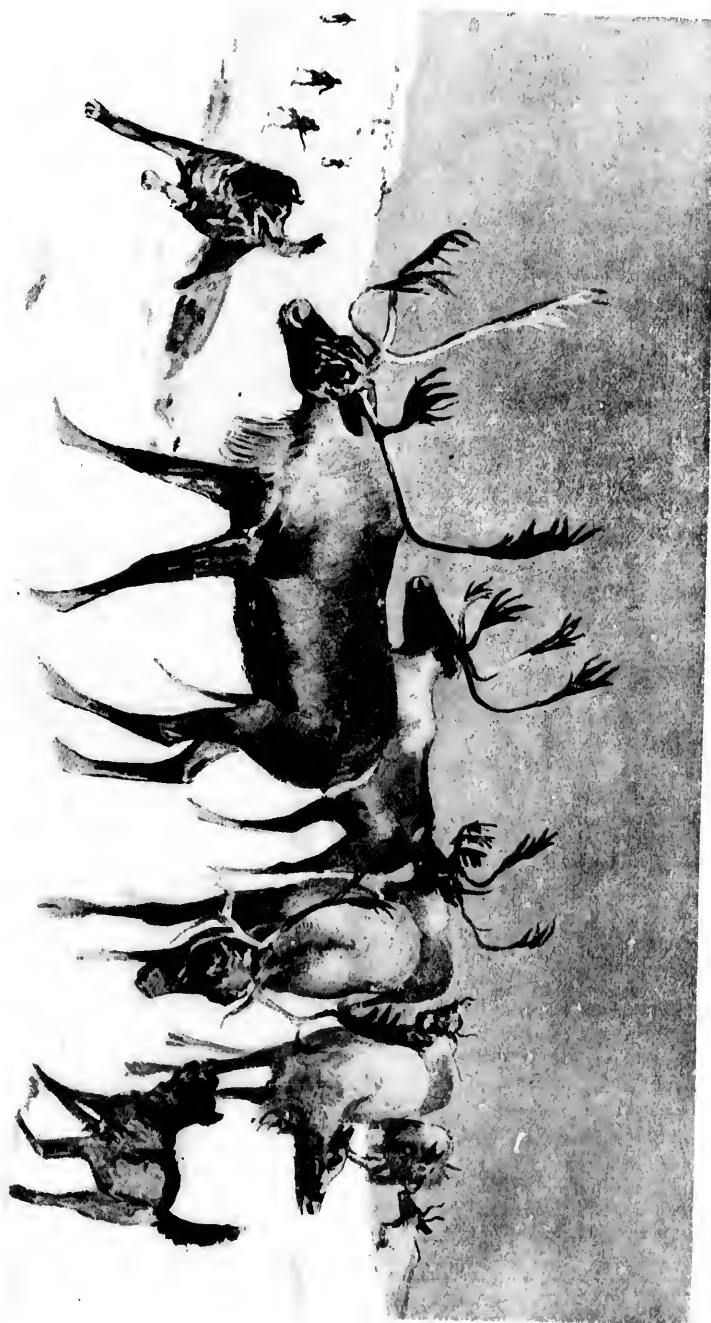
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BARREN GROUNDS CARIBOU.

Remington



might have been five or six inches. At any rate, it all blazed warmly, and it was pleasant after our experience in the "Land of Little Sticks" to feel the heat of a fire once more. How deeply I was to appreciate that fire a few weeks later!

Beniah signed me next morning that we should camp here one "sleep," to chop wood to take along with us, and to kill caribou to cache here for our return. But in fact we remained at the "last wood" two "sleeps," because the caribou were not

to be had easily, and the stormy weather developed into a blizzard that delayed travel. The first day served to give me an object-lesson as to the deception of distances on the Barrens.

All the Indians had hunted unsuccessfully in the morning and returned to wood-chopping in the afternoon, and I determined to venture after caribou, as I knew, with this patch of timber visible from any ridge within five miles or so, I could not lose

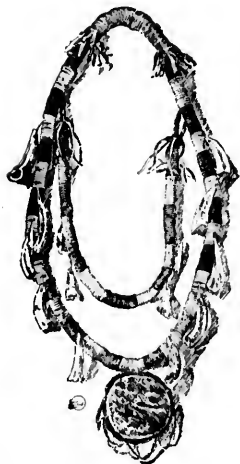
myself. I had gone, I suppose, about six miles when, by the aid of my field-glasses, I counted five caribou a couple of miles away, at the edge of a lake, and noted that a very strong wind was blowing, and, to my good fortune, from them to me. It is difficult to approach game in this country, notwithstanding its vales and mounds, because the caribou are almost invariably viewed first on a lake or at its edge, to which the undulations descend in continuous long sweeps. But I made a careful stalk, crawling from rock to rock and from snow-drift to snow-drift, and finally reached a point beyond which there was no hope of undiscovered approach. I judged I was about three hundred yards from my quarry, and as they were quietly grazing broadside to me, confidently counted on taking at least a couple of tongues into camp.

I raised my sight to 300 yards; a quick, steady aim, and I pulled trigger for the

first time on Barren Ground caribou. But no caribou fell, nor was there any little puff of snow to tell me I had shot over or under. Three times in rapid succession, but with careful sighting, I fired at the same animal with the same results, and before I could reload my half-magazine the caribou were off around a point. That I was disgusted is hardly necessary to say; that I was bitterly disappointed those sportsmen who have lost their supper by poor marksmanship will know. But my wonder at not having scored on such a big target—for all five were bunched—was greater than my disgust or disappointment. I walked over to see if I had drawn blood, and reaching the place where the caribou had been standing in what seemed an incredibly short 300 yards, I paced back, and, to my amazement, found the distance measured just 105 yards! I had, of course, shot far over them. But I was thankful to have made this discovery before reaching musk-ox, even though it had cost us much needed meat, and I vowed on the spot to at once begin schooling my eye to the illusions of the white desert.

I followed the caribou for a while, in hopes of getting another chance, but they had gone too far; and then, as I headed for camp, I began my first lessons in Barren Ground distance-gauging, by guessing the yards to a stone and then pacing them off. I was not only astonished at the discrepancy between my guess and the actual distance, but oftentimes by the size of the rock when I reached it. A stone which looked as large as a cabin at four or five hundred yards would turn out to be about as big as a bushel basket. Later, on the one or two very clear cold days we had, the illusion was reversed. Of course the difficulties of determining distances on the Barrens are exactly similar to those that obtain on the ocean, where there is nothing by which to gauge the range of one's vision, nor any object on either side for a comparative focus. I found much difficulty in overcoming the tendency to exaggerate distance, though the Indians apparently were not so troubled.

When I returned to camp that night the Indians had finished chopping the supply of wood we were to take, and likewise during the day finished the remnants of the feast left from the day before, so that again we were without meat. We were to have left the "last wood" the



MEDICINE-MAN'S NECKLACE.

next morning, but the thermometer registered 58° below, and a blizzard of such severity raged that the Indians would not face it; so we lay in our robes until about three o'clock, when the fury of the storm lessened, and everybody turned out to hunt. When we assembled again, four hours later, there was a yearling for the dogs, an unborn calf for us, and a cow that had not been brought in.

The temptation to linger here, where at least there was a fire to warm our empty stomachs, was considerable; but the morning of the third day broke clear, though with such a biting wind as almost took our breath away, and we realized that the caribou were leaving us, and there was no time to lose. So now we began our last preparations for the plunge into the Barren Grounds proper. We calculated on getting back to this point in about twenty days, and were taking that many nights' supply of wood, intending to push due north for from ten to twelve days. The wood we took from the largest trees to be found in that patch, and was cut into blocks just the width of a sledge—i. e., about fourteen inches—and then split into quarters, because we were to take no axe. Every sledge was shod with extra runners to protect it from the rocks, and when loaded with the wood, there was hardly room for our sleeping-robes and moccasins and duffel. Then we cached the caribou cow that had been killed the day before, along with my rebellion-inciting balls of pemmican, the ten pounds of flour, half of my remaining supply of tobacco, tea, and cartridges, and every article that was not absolutely necessary to our continued progress. I wrote also and left in the cache a brief account of our journey up to that time, and of the course we intended to pursue.

Not far to the westward the Franklin party, seventy-five years before, had raised a monument to their memory in the name of Fort Enterprise, and though I had neither time nor tools, not even the wish, to raise a fool's sign-board in warning to others, I thought it as well to leave some remarks at the threshold of that great wil-



Caribou-Enter.

Yellow Knife.

Caribou-Enter.

TYPES OF NORTH-LAND INDIANS.

From a photograph by Mr. Whitney.

derness, where those that enter may leave hope behind, but will stand a better chance of getting out if they take it along with them.

When we left the last wood, toiling over the succession of rocky ridges that lay to the north, a curiously depressing sensation possessed me as I viewed the "last wood" grow smaller and smaller. Piece by piece its size diminished as the intervening elevations shut off the outlying patches. It seemed like bidding farewell to the last tie that connected us with the living world—and then at the next ridge it was gone, and not a green thing relieved the awful ghastliness of the whiteness that encircled us for miles and miles. Wherever I looked—north, south, east, west—nothing showed but that terrible stretch of silent grinning white. And the sun shone down on this desolate scene and on me as placidly as it shone upon the most blessed of God's world, if with less warmth!

There was no halting once we had climbed the long reach of ridges that led north from our camp and passed out of sight of the "last wood." It was absolutely necessary for us to make good time if our wood was to carry us as far north as I wished to penetrate, and I was much pleased with Beniah for the pace he set. In fact, I never ceased to be thank-

ful that I had secured him, for not only did we maintain a good gait in the face of the hardest going, but we kept travelling in such storms as would have stopped any other leader. Beniah was a plucky Indian, the pluckiest in the country. That was why I made such an effort to get him.

We must have gone close to forty miles the first day, and at noon of the second came to a big lake the Indians called, as near as I can write it, *Ecka-tua* (which means fat water—lake), and I was able for the first time since leaving Beniah's lodge to about locate myself on the map. *Ecka-tua* on the map, as I knew, is Point Lake, the source of Coppermine River; and as I also knew it was 334 miles from Fort Enterprise to the mouth of the Coppermine by canoe, via *Ecka-tua*, I was sure we would get very close to the Arctic Ocean, travelling due north, at the rate we had been going. I had no sextant, and relied for determination of location upon the deflection of my compass needle (which at this point was 35° east of north), and upon the number of miles we made each day. The number of degrees of deflection I read at night, when it did not storm, by the north star, and the number of miles per day is easily reckoned by every man who has had any walking experience. Besides, I had a pedometer.

Ecka-tua was full four miles wide at our point of crossing. We had no meat to eat and no wood to spare for mid-day tea, so we pushed on, running, which was rather trying on fare limited to an occasional pipe and a mouthful of very dry snow. We were keeping, of course, a sharp lookout for caribou all this time, and besides having scouts out on either side, we halted on the top of every ridge that was high enough to furnish a view, where I scanned the country on all sides through my glasses, and we all smoked another pipe and tried to suck some moisture from the snow. There is a difference in eating snow and sucking the moisture from it; neither is satisfactory, but the former is harmful to the traveller, and pretty certain to be followed by increased thirst and cramps.

Late in the afternoon, from the top of a ridge, we viewed a small herd of eight caribou on a lake below us, and I witnessed the first practical demonstration of the reason why the Indians are such un-

successful hunters. On the discovery of the caribou the dogs had been driven back just under the brow of the hill, where they were left in charge of half our number, and the rest of us prepared for the attempt to get some meat. The wind was blowing from east to west, and I was surprised to see two of the Indians going off to the east side of the caribou. I circled well to the west, though not too far away to keep Beniah, who was on my right, in sight. I had worked my way down to the lake, and was making a good stalk, with every chance of getting within nice range, when the shouting of the Indians and yelping of the dogs attracted my attention, and, lo and behold! coming down the hill straight for the caribou, and in plain view, were the dogs and the Indians, some riding on the sledges, some running, but all yelling and bearing down on the caribou. Was ever a greater shock visited upon the nerves of a still-hunter! It simply petrified me. I stopped and stared and rubbed my eyes to make sure that those running, shouting Indians were actually the ones I had left a few moments before trembling in anticipation of meat to eat. Of course the caribou started to run. They circled around the lake for a time (showing when they trotted such knee and hock action as would put the hackney to shame), all the Indians and the dogs chasing them meanwhile, and finally turned off over the ridge, where an Indian who had lingered behind was lucky enough to kill one.

I was so disgusted at the display that I sat down and pondered why God in His wisdom had made these men, whose very existence depends on their hunting, so wanting in skill and judgment. Had it been less serious I should have been amused by the spectacle of a snow-shoed Indian chasing the fleetest quadruped on earth. As it was, I could not suppress a smile—in irony, perhaps.

And this is the North-land Indian's method of hunting caribou. Sometimes when hunting singly or in pairs they make the nearest approach they know to a stalk; but the usual method, invariable when they are in a body, is to rush on to the caribou, and trust for success to their own numbers and the confusion of the animals. If it were not that the Barren Ground caribou or reindeer is a stupid sort of creature, the Indians would score no often-er than they do on moose or the woodland

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CARIBOU IN SIGHT.



caribou. But the reindeer appears to profit no more by experience than the Indians themselves. In following a leader they are very much like sheep, and I saw many of them killed by Indians who ran to a point where a herd was passing, and which continued to very nearly hold its course despite the proximity of the enemy. Caribou run in single or double file, and very rarely bunched. It is in summer-time, however, that the Barren Ground caribou falls a victim to the rapacity of the Indians.

They are then moving in vast herds of countless numbers, are easily approached, or turned in desired directions by tufts of moss or rock set up in lines, along which the Indians lie in ambush, or driven into lakes, where they are slaughtered by the hundreds. The waste in summer of these food-providing animals of the North on the lakes is almost incredible. Hundreds are shot down merely for their tongues, and calves are killed for no other reason than to gratify the North-land Indian's love of destruction. In winter the caribou's eyesight is keener; they are separated into small herds, and infinitely more difficult of approach. If, therefore, the Indians starve because of unskilled hunting, it is only just retribution for their improvidence and rapacity. It was a bit hard on me that I happened at this particular time to be an innocent sufferer in the result.

After this experience of caribou-hunting I joined no more "chasing" parties; I was having every day all the running I could well attend to, and so thereafter when we sighted reindeer I devoted myself to stalking those that had been cut off from the main body. But never in all my life have I seen such wretched marksmanship as those Indians displayed. They not only miserably bungled their approach to the caribou, but their indiscriminate firing and the commotion they and the dogs created made it about impossible for me to get within range.

Not the least trying of Barren Ground hunting, too, is the bewildering glare that assails your eyes when you have put up your glasses, as you must so soon as you start in pursuit of game. Even the darkest of smoked goggles, and, what are still better, those of native manufacture, that are made of bone, with only a T-shaped aperture before the eye, cannot insure you against snow-blindness. There

were very few bright days during our wanderings in the Barrens, nevertheless every man in the party but myself was more or less severely snow-blind, one or two so badly as to necessitate their holding on to a sledge-line for guidance.

As I had in times past been very badly snow-blinded, I took extraordinary precautions in the Barrens; for the thought of getting up with musk-oxen and being unable to sight my rifle was unendurable. So I drew the handkerchief that was wound about my head in lieu of a hat down to the tops of my goggles. This kept the sun from shining down in my eyes, while little pieces of black silk fitted to the wire screening at the sides shut out all light from that direction. I always walked behind my sledge, and kept my eyes on the tail of its moose-skin wrapper. While my eyes pained me incessantly, as much from the smoke of the tiny fire in the lodge as from the glare of the sun, I was never snow-blind.

Referring again, before I go on with my trip, to the handkerchief I wound about my head after the Indian fashion, I may say it served me better than all the other head-gear I possessed. I had set much store by a worsted hood knitted for me in Canada, with a neck-piece that fitted about the chin, and a draw-string by which I could close it up to my eyes. But I found it more harmful than beneficial, for the reason that the freezing of my breath transformed its entire front into a sheet of ice, which it was impossible to thaw by our wretched fire, and served only to freeze my face more quickly than exposure. For the same reason I carried a small pair of scissors to keep my beard and mustache clipped short. So the worsted hood was discarded, and the handkerchief held my hair, which reached nearly to my shoulders, in place over my ears, and permitted me to draw the hood of my fur capote forward and bind it snugly in place. Of course my cheeks and nose and chin froze, but they would have done so anyway, and I could thaw them out by rubbing with snow—a limbering process to which the worsted hood was not susceptible. To be sure, the method was rather hard on my face, which by the time I returned to Beniah's lodge was as blackened and cut up as an alligator-skin; and it was hard on my fingers too, which froze with about every

treatment of this sort, but that was no more than I expected. So long as my feet did not freeze to stop my progress, I suffered all else without a murmur. I was as careful of my feet as of my eyes. There was not much danger of their freezing during the almost continuous running of the daytime, and at night when we camped my first act was to put on my unborn musk-ox skin slippers and a pair of fresh duffel, which I carried inside my shirt, next my skin; then I would put on two more pair of duffel and a pair of moccasins, taken from my sledge. Those I took off I put inside my sweater and slept on them. In the morning I again put my musk-ox-skin slippers and one pair of duffel inside my shirt, where I carried them all day.

But then these are details—and probably uninteresting ones—and I must get on to my first musk-ox hunt.

Two days more of hard running, in a wind that seemed to come direct from the north pole, brought us—we did not know where, but certainly once again to the verge of starvation. Meat there was none, and the little pieces of intestines and grease were not calculated to keep one up to such vigorous work. There had been no change in the country; indeed, the entire stretch of Barren Ground, so far as I saw, repeats over and again its few characteristics. Probably as you go north it becomes a little more rolling, if I may use such a word, where its face is broken by ridges of rock, round-backed and conical hills, small lakes, long, slow-rising and moderate elevations, all entirely unconnected and separated from one another, and yet the view from an especially prominent elevation always reveals the general prairie (rolling) contour of the whole benighted country. And everywhere silence; no sign of life, no vegetation, save the black moss that is used for fuel in summer by the Indians, and the gray moss and lichens upon which the musk-ox and caribou feed.

It was about three o'clock when we dragged ourselves wearily to the top of one of the many rocky ridges we had been going up and down all day, almost dreading to make the usual survey for the game we had looked for so often and in vain during the last two days. One quick, eager glance, that turned to despair as neither musk-ox nor caribou was to be seen in any direction, and we sat down to

draw consolation and nourishment from our pipes.

Suddenly keen-eyed Beniah jumped to his feet, and then on top of a rock, where he stood excitedly pointing to the northwest, and tremulously repeating *ethen, ethen*, as though to convince himself that his eyes were not playing him false. We were all standing in a second, staring into the horizon where Beniah pointed; but I could not discover anything, except what seemed to be a vapor coming up out of the rocks four miles away, and that I did not at once recognize as the mist which arises from a herd of animals when the mercury is ranging between 60° and 70° below zero, and may be seen five miles away on a clear day. A long look through my field-glasses told me the "rocks" were animals of some sort, but not caribou; and as I handed the glasses to Beniah I said, "*Ethen, illa*," and motioned him to look. I think he was nearly as much exercised by the power of the glasses as by the prospect of game: at all events, so soon as he got them ranged on the vapor he set up a yell that I interpreted to mean *ejeri*, and made a rush for his sledge.

Instantly there was excitement enough on top of that ridge to put life into eight hungry men. I never beheld such agitation. The Indians for a minute huddled together, chattering and grinning and gesticulating, and then each man rushed to his sledge and began slipping his dogs from the harness. I knew then we had sighted musk-ox. Of course I had suited my action to the Indians, and began unhitching my dogs also, but my harness came from the fort and had buckles, which in the bitter cold were unyielding, and by the time I had got all my dogs loose, put on my lighter capote—for I saw we were in for a long run—and strapped on my cartridge-belt, all the Indians and all the dogs had several hundred yards start, and were going along at a rattling pace. I saw at once that it was every man for himself on this expedition, and if I got a musk-ox I should have to work for him. And then I settled grimly to the business of running. Within about two miles I had caught up with the Indians, who had stretched out into a long column, with Seco and Echeena leading by half a mile. In another mile I had worked my way through the stragglers, and was hard on the heels of Echeena, but Seco was still



Fredric Koenig

MUSK-OX AT BAY.

about two hundred yards ahead, and going as though he could keep it up indefinitely. On my attempt to pass him Echeena let out a link, and I had all I could do to keep at his heels, but in our race for second place we cut down Seco's lead by a hundred yards.

All this time we had been running over a succession of sharp ridges, completely covered with all shapes and sizes of rocks, and set in snow that was soft and about a foot and a half deep. With tripping shoes we of course sunk in the snow at every step to within six inches of our knees, while our shoes jammed in the rocks that lay close together, or caught on those we attempted to clear in our stride. It was a species of hurdle-racing, with the softest of take-off and landing sides, and obstacles that were not to be knocked over. It was going that would test the bottom of the well-fed, best-conditioned athlete; how it wore on a half-starved man may be imagined.

It seemed as though we should never view the musk-oxen. Ridge after ridge we toiled over, and still that little cloud of vapor appeared as far off as when first sighted. Our positions remained unchanged—Seco leading with three dogs, Echeena and I a hundred yards behind, and half a mile back of us the remainder of the Indians and dogs. At such times as the deadly fatigue of running permitted coherent thought I wondered why Seco maintained such a pace, for I supposed when the musk-oxen were located he would of course delay his attack until all the Indians and dogs had come up; but I had seen enough of the Indians not to take any chances; and so I kept on, each step seeming the last I could possibly make.

As we were working our way up a rather higher and broader ridge I heard the dogs bark, and rushing past Echeena, reached the top in time to see a herd of about twenty-five to thirty musk-oxen, just startled into moving along another ridge about a quarter-mile beyond by Seco, who with his three dogs was racing after them not fifty yards ahead of me. Disgust, disappointment, and physical distress momentarily stupefied me. Then sight of the musk-oxen, thought of what I had endured to reach them, fired me to renewed action. I anathematized Seco and all the North-land Indians for their fool methods of hunting, and increased

my pace. The musk-oxen were now in full run to the north along the top of the ridge, galloping like cattle, with heads carried well out, though not lowered, and going at a pace and with an ease over the rocks that surprised me. Their big bodies, with the long hair hanging down to emphasize the shortness of legs, gave a curious appearance to the flying herd.

The wind was blowing a gale from the south, and we had hardly reached the top of the ridge on which the musk-oxen had been running when they disappeared over the northern end of it. By the time I reached the end of the ridge the main herd was a mile away to the north, and still going, but four had separated from the band, and were running through some hollows that bore almost due east. I instantly determined to follow these four—because I saw I could get to the leeward of them, and I felt they would eventually head north to rejoin the herd. A caribou always circles up wind, but musk-oxen travel in any direction that necessity demands. Seco, with his dogs, was just ahead of me, keeping after the main band, and Echeena I had lost sight of. I knew that separation from the Indians might cost me my life, but musk-ox was the first and life the secondary consideration at that moment. And I started off at my fastest gait to the northeast, keeping a ridge between the musk-oxen and me, and knowing if they crossed ahead to the north I should come on their tracks.

I do not know how far I ran, or how long I ran; I only remember that after a time the rocks and the snow whirled around me at such a pace I could not distinguish where one began and the other ended; the great, dull, dead white surface before me appeared to rise and fall, and when I tripped over a rock I seemed to tumble a hundred feet, and take a hundred years to regain my feet. Sometimes I had to pull myself up on to my feet by the aid of the very rock which perhaps had laid me low. Once I lost my snow-shoe, and though it was really not a yard away, I started in a run after it—it seemed so far off. Everything looked as though I was peering through the wrong end of my field-glasses. As I ran, my eyes pained me exquisitely, and I remember the horrible possibility occurred to me of my right eye (which is, in fact, much weaker than my left) going snow-blind by the time I got within shot of the musk-oxen.

And as I reached the bottom of each ridge it seemed to me I could not struggle to the top, even though a thousand musk-oxen awaited my coming. I was in a dripping perspiration, and had dropped my capote and cartridge-belt, after thrusting half a dozen cartridges into my trousers pockets, and my nine-pound 45.90 weighed thirty. I hardly knew whether I was going up ridges or down ridges. Everything waltzed about me. I ran on and on in a sort of stupor, until, as I got to the top of a little ridge, I saw two musk-oxen about a hundred yards ahead of and running easily though directly from me. And then the blood surged through my veins, the mist cleared from my eyes, and the rocks stopped whirling about me, for there, within range, was my quarry. I swung my rifle into position and dropped on my knee for surer aim. Heavens! my hand shook so the front sight travelled all over the horizon, and my heart thumped against my side as though it would burst.

For a moment I rested to get my breath—and the musk-oxen were still going from me—and then—another attempt—the fore sight for an instant held true—another second's breathing—a quick aim—and I pressed the trigger. What a feeling of exultation as I saw my quarry stagger and then drop! I was dizzy with delight. I gave vent to a yell, which, together with the report of my rifle, sent the other musk-ox into a wild gallop. It turned sharply to the left and went over a ridge, with me following on a run, all the while endeavoring to throw another cartridge into my rifle barrel. But the excessive cold, aided by my excitement, handicapped the mechanism, and the shell jammed.

By the time I had sent the cartridge home, running meanwhile, I got over the ridge, and was just drawing a bead on the galloping musk-ox, when two shots in quick succession turned it staggering, and as it dropped I sent a bullet where it would do the most good—just as Echeena and one dog came running down from a ridge opposite. So that I and Echeena had the honor of scoring the first and second musk-ox. Then I went back over the ridge to look at the one I had brought down. It was a cow. The sex was a disappointment, to be sure, and I should not take this head that had cost me so much to secure; but nothing could dull the joy of having, after a tramp of (about)

twelve hundred miles, killed the most inaccessible beast in the whole wide world.

After I had made sure the musk-cow was really dead, I started again and to the north, hoping I might get on the track of the other two or some other stragglers from the main herd. Probably I went several miles farther, buoyed up by the excitement of my success, but saw the tracks of no living thing.

The sun was setting as I turned around to go back to my musk-cow, where I supposed the Indians would bring up sledges and camp, and I had walked some time when I realized that, other than going south, I had not the remotest idea in what precise direction I was travelling, or just where that musk-cow lay. I could not afford to waste any time or lose myself, for I had no capote, and the wind I was now facing had frozen my perspiration-soaked shirts as stiff and hard as boards. So I turned about and puzzled out my always half and sometimes wholly obliterated snow-shoe tracks back to my fallen quarry, where I arrived about nine o'clock, to find, sure enough, the lodge pitched and the Indians feasting on raw and half-frozen musk-ox fat.

Gnawing a piece of this fat, and hardly able to crawl with the cold and fatigue, I followed back my tracks from here until I found my capote and belt. It was nearly midnight before Seco, badly frozen, turned up to report the killing of two musk-oxen, and we had tea (for the little fire is never kindled until all are in, because the tea would freeze in a very few minutes after making). Several of the men were snow-blind, and what with their groans, the fighting of the dogs over the frozen musk-cow, my ice-coated shirts, to thaw which there was not warmth enough in my body, and a 67° below zero temperature, the night of our first musk-ox killing was memorable.

I had now killed this most inaccessible of all game, and therefore attained the prime object of my trip to the Barren Grounds.

We continued north another week, having other hunting adventures; and when we finally turned southward, had penetrated two days beyond the arctic circle. We made our way back on snowshoes to Great Slave Lake, where I left the party, and by canoe pushed on to the frontier, reaching Edmonton June 12th.

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