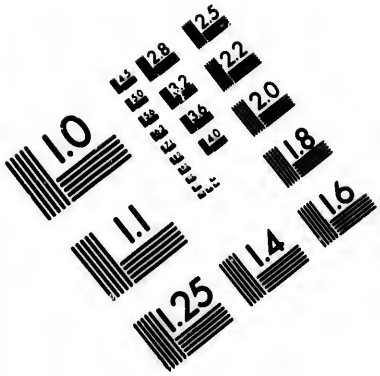
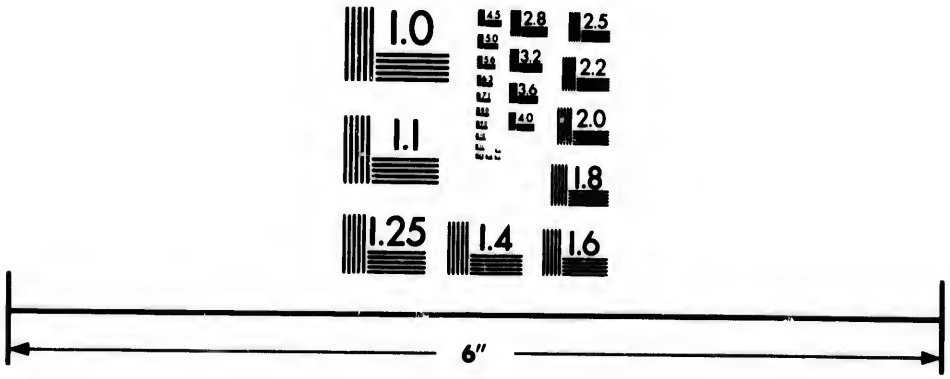
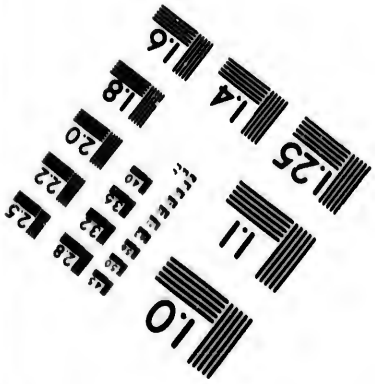
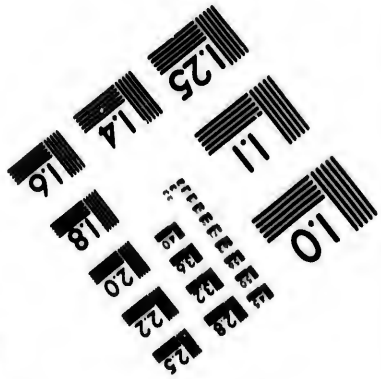




# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)




Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

Technical and Bibliographic Notes/Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

- ☐ Coloured covers/ Couverture de couleur
- ☐ Covers damaged/ Couverture endommagée
- ☐ Covers restored and/or laminated/ Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- ☐ Cover title missing/ Le titre de couverture manque
- ☐ Coloured maps/ Cartes géographiques en couleur
- ☐ Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/ Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- ☐ Coloured plates and/or illustrations/ Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- ☐ Bound with other material/ Relié avec d'autres documents
- ☐ Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin/ La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distortion le long de la marge intérieure
- ☐ Blank leaves added during restoration may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming/ Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- ☐ Additional comments:/ Commentaires supplémentaires:

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- ☐ Coloured pages/ Pages de couleur
- ☐ Pages damaged/ Pages endommagées
- ☐ Pages restored and/or laminated/ Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- ☒ Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/ Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- ☐ Pages detached/ Pages détachées
- ☒ Showthrough/ Transparence
- ☐ Quality of print varies/ Qualité inégale de l'impression
- ☐ Includes supplementary material/ Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- ☐ Only edition available/ Seule édition disponible
- ☐ Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image/ Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below/
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

| 10X | 12X | 14X | 16X | 18X | 20X | 22X | 24X | 26X | 28X | 30X | 32X |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | |

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

National Library of Canada

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol → (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ▽ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:

L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

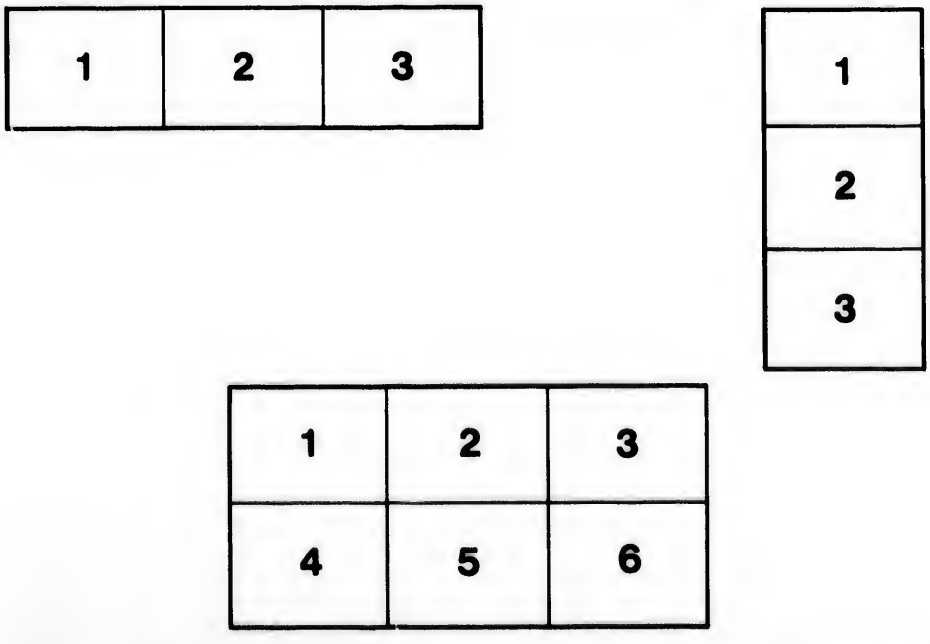
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole → signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ▽ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.



NO

# ROUGHING IT

IN THE

# NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES OF CANADA

## TWENTY YEARS AGO.

BY

B. P. W.

"He sucks intelligence from every clime."—COWPER.

---

London:
WORRALL AND ROBEY,
137, FENCHURCH STREET, E.C.

1896.

# PREFACE.

I FEEL I owe some apology for writing on a subject already treated in so able a manner by Captain Butler and others. Let me here say that the reasons which have led me to publish my experiences in a comparatively unknown country, are, that the impressions of individuals differ, that what seems of the greatest importance to one may have altogether escaped another, and that every fresh work, however superficial and imperfect, on this wonderful country ought to throw a new light on those points looked for by a traveller, a sportsman, or an emigrant. Further, unless I am mistaken, the other books on this subject have been written by persons provided with all the latest conveniences for comfort. I went with none of these, and I trust the experience of one who has "roughed it," in the broadest sense of the expression, may not be without interest.

The above was written in 1876 to accompany a manuscript I have just come across among some old papers. Its antiquity is my excuse for publishing it, and I hope it may prove interesting, if only to show to those who know the country now, what it was like then.

B. P. W.

LONDON, 1896.

# CONTENTS.

# PART I.

## *HOW I GOT THERE.*

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### A Chance Meeting.

I HAD just arrived in New York. Had anybody asked me point blank what I had come for, I should not for the life of me have known what to reply. It is true, I knew there was an Exhibition somewhere to celebrate the anniversary of something. I had seen it in the papers, and I had an indistinct idea that I should probably go there. I had had a most agreeable passage across in a Cunard steamer, on which the American girls were as numerous as they were amiable and "*sans gêne*." I had parted from them all on our arrival with sincere regret, and though still in company of one of the passengers, a Frenchman, I felt dull and little inclined to appreciate the beauties, the comforts, and the grandeur of New York. It was fearfully hot, and with true insular prejudice, I was roundly abusing everything, comparing it unfavourably to London in bad French to my companion, who quite agreed with me, only he patriotically substituted Paris for London. I say I hadn't the least idea what I had come for. I had got tired of wandering over Europe, so I had taken a passage and there I was. I was alone; I always prefer travelling so, for then I am not obliged to make any plans, an awful nuisance always, and I can change my mind as often as I like without anybody objecting. But now I was rather regretting my misanthropy, for I didn't know what to do with myself. "I suppose I shall go to Niagara, to the Exhibition, and to Saratoga," I said to my friend, "and I expect by that time we shall both be

sick of the place and want to go home—you to your native and beloved boulevards, and I to revel in the exhilarating effects of the early fogs. I shall be in Paris in January. I give you *rendez-vous* at Bignon's on the 1st, and while discussing one of his charmingly little dishes we can tell each other our adventures." And so we parted—he on a courting expedition, tempted by the dollars of some pretty American, and I to wonder what I should do. On arriving we had gone to the Fifth Avenue Hotel; everybody has heard of it, and we thought we ought to go there. One day was enough to convince us of the big mistake we had made. The food was none too good, the attendance careless, the servants impudent (or was it merely their manner?), and there was always a crowd of noisy people wherever you went. We moved to the "Windsor," where we had every comfort we could wish for. I don't propose to occupy myself with American cities or American life, it is out of my province just now, and I only mention my change of hotel because it was through that change that I went to the North-West Territories and that this book was written. My friend and I wandered about, and knowing nobody voted it excessively stupid. The theatres were uninteresting and unattractive, but we were delighted with our dinner at "Delmonico's," without which no visit to the States is supposed to be complete. Broadway disappointed us. Its vulgar and grotesque advertisements, its cheap-jack-looking shops, and its bad pavement, did not appear to be the right thing for a street with such a reputation for "elegance"—I use the word advisedly, it is a favourite one in America. However, my friend had gone, and I was beginning to think in a lazy sort of way that it was time I went to Philadelphia. But that night a young fellow sat by me at dinner whose face I seemed to know. "By jove! of course it is. Why, Barstow, who would have thought of seeing you here! What have you been doing with yourself since I lost sight of you when I left Rugby?" He told me how he had started fur-trading in the North-West, how he spent most of his time up there visiting his different posts, giving me a description of the country, of the Indians, and the sort of life he led there. All of which

I listened to with growing interest and ended by getting quite enthusiastic about a wild, roving existence. He finally proposed, in a laughing way, that I should go up with him and see the country for myself, especially as, in spite of the three years he had spent there he had never been out after the buffalo, and he intended to do so this time. The proposal came rather suddenly, but I accepted it at once in the impulsive manner in which I unfortunately do everything. The idea of buffalo-hunting decided me. "But," said he, "I start to-morrow morning by way of Montreal, where I have business, and, perhaps—" "Oh, all right!" I broke in, "I shall be ready, my packing won't take ten minutes." And so it was arranged. When I went to bed I was not without some misgivings as to what would be the upshot of so hurried an undertaking. I was to get back in November, but I couldn't be certain of it. What if my friend, whom I had only known as a boy, should have characteristics antipathetic to mine, and we didn't get on? I should be utterly in his power, and it might be unpleasant. What if his invitation was never really meant, and he only consented because he couldn't help it? I pondered a while, but eventually visions of buffalo and moose arose, and I determined to go and take my chance. I had to break the news gently to my belongings, and leave them in ignorance as to where I was really going, for they would have been worried to death had they suspected the risks I was going to run, which, though small enough, people at home are wont to take exaggerated views of. I went off the next morning, with what results those who are patient enough to read on will learn.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### I START.

I SHALL only touch very briefly on that part of our journey which took us through the States. As I have already mentioned, our first step was to Montreal.

I was very pleased with the journey. The "drawing-room cars" struck me as a singularly happy idea. Sitting in an armchair, swinging in front of a low broad window, is such an improvement on the hot, stuffy little carriages which are considered first-class in Europe, from which those occupying corner seats alone can see anything. The Hudson River, Lake Champlain, the St. Lawrence! Are not their beauties written about, gloated over, and dwelt on in styles humorous, serious, and profane in the guide books, with which the merciless book-pedlars, who travel with the train, drive you almost to distraction? Montreal! I never saw such a bad, dirty hotel with such a deceptive appearance of excellence, nor such a dull town with so much to make you expect the reverse. The streets are pretentious, the river grand, and the churches rich and handsome, yet there is an indescribable dirtiness and stagnation over all, and you wonder why it should be so. Perhaps it being summer everybody was away, and the place was as London in September: if so, I take back all I have said, while condoling with myself for having been there at the wrong time. I was glad to start for Niagara: on my way thither I had my first experience in Pullman Cars, and, far from looking upon them as a comfort, I regarded them as a horror (I have learnt to appreciate them since). The carriages are much the same as other ones, but at the approach of evening a black imp appears who goes through a sort of pantomime performance with everything and everybody. He pulls boards out and pushes others in, he produces mattresses, pillows, and a variety of things from the most improbable places like a conjuror, and after a time you see gradually forming themselves, two rows of beds complete, one on each side of the carriage and screened by curtains. The light seems to grow dim, the atmosphere thick, and you expect to hear the slow music of theatrical incantation. The beds have sheets, blankets, and pillow-cases. Hollow mockery! The difficulty of undressing in a sitting position makes the ordinary ship's bunk a bed of roses; the atmosphere is stifling—open your window, and you run the risk of losing your hair, even if some irascible gentleman in the next compartment doesn't

threaten to shoot you unless you shut "that darned window." Further, people are continually passing and prodding the curtains which separate you from the outer world, and American travellers, young or old, are nearly always noisy and generally travel with a large nursery of healthy children, who, in spite of the piece of cake they always have to their lips, manage to use their lungs with wonderful vigour. The exertion of dressing in the morning, the miserable wash, and the dirty feeling which follows, are not calculated to make a man in love with Mr. Pullman on his first introduction. Niagara! I will not weary you with attempting to describe what I know I cannot. So many geniuses have put forth their whole strength to make a word-painting worthy of so grand a sight, that it would be little short of impudence for me to touch it. Suffice it to say that I was duly impressed, but—(why is it that a "but" forces itself into everything that gives us pleasure)—not a little of my admiration for one of Nature's most stupendous works was marred by the irritating way in which every view is fenced in. I suppose we shall have the Andes surrounded with an enclosure next, with admittance through a turnstile on payment of a shilling. When you see the numerous contrivances which an ingenious people have constructed to enhance forsooth the sight, you begin to think that perhaps the whole thing, Falls and all, is a gigantic artificial display got up by an enterprising Barnum for the purpose of accumulating the mighty dollar. The chief charm in the grandeur of Nature is its loneliness, where Nature and Nature alone is the artist. Here, elevators, towers, Prospect Point, and the Suspension Bridge catch the eye and utterly spoil the effect. As I have escaped the Scylla of trying to describe Niagara, let me hasten to conclude this chapter and so avoid the Charybdis of speaking of its migratory inhabitants whose importunities and frantic efforts to sell Indian curiosities and feather fans are among the curiosities of the place.

---

## CHAPTER III.

### Chicago.—St. Paul.

AND now Chicago comes into the kaleidoscope. What a wonderful place it is! Yesterday, destroyed by one of the largest fires ever known, and, to-day, rising out of its ashes like a phœnix while vainly trying to hide her gaping wounds. But how bravely and merrily they go to work with their indomitable "go-aheadness." How proud its people are of its broad streets, its huge hotels, its palatial liquor-saloons, and its gigantic stores. They adore the very mud; and with what vehemence do they reiterate its praise and compel you to admire. Their earnestness, while raising a smile on the face of one of a less demonstrative nation, makes you wonder at their pluck and energy. Their boastful confidence almost reaches the sublime in its genuineness. No American city is superior, they won't admit it for a moment, in spite of its burnt-up aspect. They build and build, and still keep to their wooden pavements, and, like the towns round the base of Vesuvius, seem to enjoy the risk of destruction. The hotel! huge, dull, and gloomy, built round a large hall decorated with crude and unnatural-looking frescoes, and thronged nightly by a collection of unpleasant-looking people, who there do their "loafing" and "chinning"; the scene also, during political movements, of the wildest confusion and uproar. You will see written everywhere: "This hotel is entirely fireproof," and that, think they all, is its chief merit. So fond are they of making fun of everything that, shortly after the fire at St. John's, there appeared a paragraph in the paper to the effect that Chicago went to bed every night with an uneasy sort of presentiment that they would wake up some morning to find that some town had wrested their hardly-earned fame from them by indulging in a bigger fire than theirs. Michigan Avenue, I had been told, was the Park Lane of Chicago, but I found it a most depressing place. Snobbish villa residences were grouped

at intervals into half-a-dozen houses, as if for mutual protection against the villainous spaces of waste and dirt between. A bare, melancholy strip of grass with a few infirm trees in it for a foreground, and beyond, the dull waters of the lake. The only thing like it in England would be a few villas run up on the banks of a sluggish provincial river, inhabited by needy gentlefolk and individuals in the grocery line, imbued with an exaggerated notion of the future greatness of Slowcombe-on-the-Sewer, and the consequent rise in the value of their houses. Poor Chicago! It tries so hard to be grand and sedate like a town of established and world-wide reputation, and it is so wildly childish, changeable, and spasmodically successful. I was particularly struck (pardon the digression) by the difference between our men and theirs. There, all work, and the nobility of toil is their guiding star; none have time to acquire that repose and refinement of manner which owes much to prolonged and cultivated idleness, that graceful indolence which sits so well on your English gentleman. There trade, whether in a shop or in larger undertakings, is worshipped. With us, all business, all toiling for wealth, is studiously concealed, is part of life, but has no connection with our real happiness and pleasure. With them, it tinges every thought and action, and is the motive power, the *raison d'être* of, not only all that is serious, but also of all that makes life worth having. The idle traveller, the dilettante, has no existence there; bar-keeper and mine-owner, sheep-drover and millionaire, are all one; there is no distinction; work touches them all alike, and they may change places to-morrow. The idle man is looked upon with positive suspicion, and, when in the south, rather than appear to have no visible means of support, I adopted a fictitious profession. I hope you have skipped the above. After leaving Chicago our way turned northward and St. Paul, Minnesota, was our next resting-place. The scenery as we advanced grew wilder and wilder; forest on forest, high fertile bluffs, and vast prairies glided by, till the Mississippi, which, in my supreme ignorance, I never knew existed up there, was stretched before us. We were now some 3,000 miles from its mouth, yet it was as broad as the

Thames at Greenwich. St. Paul, a place I had never heard of before, is a clean, flourishing town, peopled by a somewhat rough but industrious race, struggling for affluence on small or no beginnings. Being in the vicinity of the Minnehaha Fall, whose poetical name is so well-known, of course I went to see it. It is unfortunately all name; it is pretty, as every cascade of clear water must be, but there is nothing to warrant the wide reputation it enjoys. Two days saw us on our way again, and I invite you to accompany me in the next chapter.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### Red Lake River.—Red River.

THE scene is changed. We are gliding along down the Red Lake River in a small steamer, a great relief after so much railway jolting. After leaving St. Paul we had a very tedious journey of thirty hours. A sleeping car was provided for part of the way, but as we had to change at 4 a.m. the advantages of it were very doubtful. The aspect of the country as we went on grew still wilder and more uninhabited, the marks of civilization fewer, and the meals at the stations more and more unpalatable, but whiskey, several bottles of which we now bought, was our great mainstay. The country was a series of endless woods and lakes, on the shores of which water-fowl of every kind were visible with tantalizing clearness. On reaching the open prairie the view from the end of the train is accurately described when I say "draw a semi-circle on a piece of paper and you have the horizon and surrounding country, add two mathematically straight lines to meet the top of the semi-circle and you have the car tracks, and there you are." I observed, while gazing thoughtfully into space, a herd of buffalo feeding on their native grasses, and was quite excited in a moment. I was not

the least disappointed to find afterwards that they were bullocks. I chose to call them buffalo and I mean to keep to my original impression, though nothing would induce me to deceive the patient reader. We reached a place late in the night called Fisher's Landing, the terminus of the railway (it goes much further now), and I don't envy Fisher nor can I compliment him on the choice of his landing-place. I managed to get a beautiful sleep, of which I was terribly in want, on the steamer that was to take us on. I had a cabin to myself, a boon of the greatest value when the appearance of the bulk of the travellers was considered. We were delayed in starting by the discovery of the body of an Icelander who was drowned some days before. His *fiancée*, poor girl, was landed and left to take the necessary steps for having him buried. Fisher's Landing is, I hear, celebrated for the remarkable size and voracity of its mosquitos, and the inferior quality of its whiskey: so that, for a man to live pleasantly in that "city" (the smallest settlement bears that grand name in these parts), he must be provided by nature with a skin like that of the rhinoceros, inside as well as out. On retiring to rest, it was not long before I heard the sweet melodious strains of the ever-wakeful mosquitos, and the appearance of one of my hands next morning called for the following remarkable and unique impromptu:—

> "For breakfast and luncheon, for dinner and tea,
> That industrious insect has feasted on me."

Our breakfast at the barbarous hour of seven was not as good as some I have tasted, but its shortcomings were well compensated for by the view which awaited us on deck. The Red Lake River is a tortuous, sluggish, tawny-coloured stream, luxuriantly wooded on both sides. The gorgeous tints of autumn, one of America's monopolies, were just beginning to appear. The trees were festooned with brilliant creepers of deep crimson, the foliage had taken every shade from the palest light yellow to the deepest red orange, which a glorious and inimitable Nature had blended into a poetry of colour quite beyond description. In perfect harmony too was

the rich hue of the water, the winding course which brought picture after picture before our delighted gaze: and the countless variety of birds, the bright plumaged kingfisher, the slowly wheeling hawk, and the majestic eagle, lent an additional charm to a scene already magnificent. Ducks sprang up suddenly as if from our very bows every moment, and I would have given much to have stopped and had a pot at them, so true is it, that an Englishman is never happy unless he is either killing or going to kill something. We were to reach Pembina the next day, where we crossed the boundary between Canada and the United States, and where we expected the usual visit of the Custom House Officers to be made with that peculiar ruthlessness which characterizes those gentlemen all over the world. I wonder why a single one of the poor half-starved creatures who hug their misery in London ever stay there a day when this country is open to them, where the very air is pleasure and health. Life costs nothing, build yourself a ranch, clear a little land, shoot your food and live like a king, lord of all you survey, with the forest and the prairie instead of poverty and degradation as companions. And now we are in Red River: it is very like the other only it is wider and not so thickly wooded. Boat life is always more or less stagnation. The crew were a set of scoundrelly-looking half-breeds; the passengers all of the rough, dirty-handed, try-to-make-their-fortune species, and the solitary woman looked crushed under the responsibility of representing the whole of her sex. A most exciting episode occurred to me one day while in search of cleanliness under difficulties. We were not provided with washing materials in our cabins, but there was a general washroom where the basins were covered with a thick coating of filth, and there was an equally offensive common towel. I accidentally heard of the existence of a tub (for dish-washing purposes I suppose), and I resolved to possess myself of this treasure by fair means or foul. The guardian of this, to me, Golden Fleece (how much finer than gold is a cold tub, and an early wash than silver), was a woman, but a woman from Iceland of forbidding appearance, dressed in a red and yellow bed-gown, whom it would have been idle to

attempt to woo, so, unlike Jason, I was obliged to work single-handed. I commenced by getting into an ulster and reconnoitring. I could see the treasure but the guard was vigilant, and refused to listen to my modest request for the loan of it. I had recourse to a "ruse," I made as if I would seek rest for my baffled spirit by gazing over the stern. In a short time the virago was called away by one of her miscellaneous duties; now was my opportunity. I felt like Wolfe before Quebec, like Nelson at Trafalgar, all in one: I made a bold dash, secured the tub, and like a good general retreated to my cabin and barricaded my door. So far so good, half my task was over. The tub was there but I had still to get the water. I could not face the violent woman again until I had accomplished my purpose. I made a back movement and got on the balcony, and after much manœuvring, secured a bucket unobserved. I then lowered myself twice into a barge we were towing, from where I got sufficient water to give myself a delightful wash. Towels, of course I had to do without, but a shirt and a handkerchief or two proved ample, and I appeared at breakfast clean, triumphant, and hungry. The tub I placed carelessly on the balcony, but so furious was she at the way in which I had outwitted her that I never dared to brave her wrath again. I thought the mosquitos had left us finding it rather cold, and thinking it high time to go back and get their overcoats and snow-shoes: but they soon returned provided with them, and spent, I am sure, an agreeable Indian summer with us. A tall Yankee gentleman told me some astonishing "facts" about mosquitos; he kept taking shots at my boots with tobacco juice during his conversation, but otherwise he was very entertaining. He led me to understand, that some years ago the great amusement of the passengers was mosquito shooting. "They used revolvers," he said, with a face as grave as a judge, "and bet heavily on each shot: mosquitos-on-toast used to be as reg'ler on the table as the dirty cloth, and mighty fine eating they aire; but they had to put a stop to it, for the boys got quarrelling and plugged each other, which the boss objected to, as their fares waren't paid." I won't vouch for the truth of this account,

but the man seemed so truthful and earnest that I had to look as if I believed it. We passed Pembina safely enough, but not without absorbing a fearful amount of raw spirits, which are pressed upon you in such a manner that refusal gives the deadliest offence: and so on to Winnipeg, a place of such importance, that I must give it a chapter to itself.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### Winnipeg.

I AM as glad as you are, reader, that we have at last got clear of the United States, and that I can now begin to give the experiences in which I am anxious you should become interested. Winnipeg! I confess that my notions of it, before I came, were very vague. In the days when geography was a novel and unpleasant study to me, the name got fixed in my mind in connection with some large lake; it suggested a sort of mixture of peg-tops and whipping-tops, both of which were then of more importance to me than anything else, except barley-sugar. So the name stuck, but I found the town was no nearer the lake of the same name than it is near anything else. Don't despise Winnipeg because you never heard of it, perhaps, until Lord Dufferin paid it a formal visit. It is a great place in its way. It is far from any railway, and yet it flourishes in spite of this drawback, as well as of the frost and grasshoppers, the combined attacks of which threatened, for three consecutive years, not only to ruin the town, but the whole province of Manitoba. It is a capital, and, though the houses are all what they call "frame" ones, the post-office is of real brick, and the post-master is in keeping, for he too is a "brick." It has a skating-rink, and is not that enough to make a town important? It has even an assembly-room, where they have balls, real *bonâ fide* dancing and music, and the youth and beauty go there

and enjoy themselves, and I know they are splendid. For I once timidly ventured to ask who went there, and I brought down the vials of wrath on my head for my pains. And if you don't believe me, ask a prosperous young wine-merchant if he did not despise me ever after, for even suggesting that the girls could not be all duchesses and marchionesses. It has a broad street running down its centre like a back-bone, and, if there are lots of ruts in it and it is never cleaned, there is always lots of life going on. If, when it rains, the black mud is the most tenacious ever seen, do not its inhabitants wear thick boots, and is it not exactly like that soil which Virgil has said is the best? The one street is full of carts loading with every description of merchandise. You will see half-breeds in very fancy attire, and even Indians sitting in the sun, who look picturesque enough, smoking clay pipes upside down, their heads covered with superannuated and tattered top hats, and looking as grave as if the affairs of the whole nation were occupying their minds. But the noble savage bears no resemblance to the one described by Fennimore Cooper, unless those I saw were Irishmen dressed up as a speculation like the ones who threw Mark Twain down Niagara for addressing them in the flowery language of their native land. The stores are hung with the skins of wild beasts, and there is much bead-work with which to coax the furs from the wily Indians. Winnipeg possesses a virtue, if I may call it such, which perhaps no other town enjoys to such an extent; no matter what a man sells or what his business is, somewhere or other on his premises he keeps a varied assortment of liquors, which is pressed on you, forced down your throat, as it were, with an all-too-lavish hand. In fact, it is the paradise of the inebriate. Fort Garry was the original name given to it by the Hudson's Bay Company, who, long ago, enjoyed an almost unlimited sovereignty to the North Pole, and many are the stories told of their high-handed tyranny. Now their monopoly is broken, and free trade is universal. I was lodged in a little frame building rejoicing in the incongruous name of the "Bungalow," built without a staircase, a common oversight I believe with amateur architects. But the ingenuity of the owner devised a

most mysterious-looking ladder for reaching the loft, where there was a bed in an obscure corner on the floor, the natural haunt of the blood-seeking mosquito. The ladder, when not in use, clung to the ceiling and was pulled down with a gruesome rattle of pulley and rope. If I have hitherto said little of my travelling companion, to whose kindness I owe the interesting expedition I made, it is because I have been fearful of doing him an injustice. There was much in him which I was utterly unable to understand, and if, after having been incessantly with him for months, I learnt some of his less pleasing traits, I also discovered what was good in him. I myself am not the most amiable of people, and many were the little unpleasantnesses we were destined to experience. But I hope I shall escape the charge of churlishness when I say that he was always most anxious to secure my comfort, that I shall always look back upon our acquaintance with pleasure, and that I am not ungrateful for the forbearance he showed for my not infrequent fits of ill-humour. The preparations, which it was necessary for us to make, seemed to me to take a fearful time to complete, and three weeks was a long time to do so little. I provided myself with a quantity of the thickest under-clothes I could get, so as to be prepared for the worst, a pair of black blankets, a buffalo robe, without which no one thinks of moving; a dozen pairs of moccasins, which I began to accustom myself to wearing at once; and my ulster was replaced by an article called a "capote," a sort of frock-coat of thick, hairy cloth, with a hood to it, the use of which I afterwards learnt and appreciated. I was quite ready, all but a "buffalo-runner," as a horse is called with a sufficient turn of speed to catch buffalo on. Draught horses are of any kind, the only essential being that they should be fat, a queer quality to possess if wanted for work, but I found that horses were fattened up for working, on the principle that if they were well filled at starting, it would take longer for them to waste away on the miserable food they got on the prairies. My swift steed took a tremendous lot of finding, as you shall presently hear. Barstow had the misfortune of never being able to do anything quickly or even expeditiously;

he dressed, ate, smoked, and drank with the same exasperating slowness, so that his indolence had become quite a standing joke against him. The amount of pushing and hurrying which was required to get him to do anything was always accompanied by roars of laughter, which he always bore with unvarying good humour and resignation. One man suggested that he was not lazy, but was born tired and so could not help himself, which, no doubt, was the truth. While the preparations were slowly progressing, I found myself completely out of my element, and, but for the discovery of a *rara avis*, in these parts, a man of leisure, I should have been driven well nigh to despair. It was in vain that I spent two or three days sitting on a counter, kicking my heels together and trying to get interested in boots, calicoes, buffalo-robes, moccasins, tea, gunpowder, etc. The above mentioned gentleman who, *en parenthèse*, always saluted me with "Have a horn?" Manitoban for "take a drink," came to my rescue, and organised two shooting expeditions. The first meant ducks in some swamps in the neighbourhood. I stood up to my waist in water in the broiling sun all day, and had tolerably good sport. There were lots of mallard, teal, plover, and snipe, but my shooting was bad, principally because I have never discovered the secret of doing two things at once. The perpetual war I had to carry on with the mosquitos, who settled on me in a thick cloud, gave me little time for anything else. If you know what it is to have about fifty mosquitos doggedly sitting on your neck, with their tails up, their heads down, and their probosces buried deep into your itching flesh, with thousands waiting for their turn, you will understand my feelings. They drove me into a perfect fever at last and I had to give up shooting. Next morning my face looked like a plum pudding, so thickly was it covered with the scars and blotches which I received in the ignoble fight. The second day I bagged a few brace of prairie chickens, but very soon the mosquitos again made it too hot for me. I was dragged off to church on one of the Sundays; it was a plain, ugly building, in which every man and woman looked like a gossip. The officiating priest was a ranting Boanerges, whose shouts were most appalling,

especially as he always seemed to raise his voice in quite the wrong places. His original additions to the oft-repeated tale of Naaman were very startling, and that general's attendant must have been seriously alarmed, if, when prepared for the celebrated bath, he shouted at him in the way we were asked to believe. When deafened and disheartened I came at last away, I could not help thinking of the American, who, on being asked if he were going to attend divine service, replied: "Wall, I guess not, I ain't been in a church for twenty years, and I never enjied better health." There was a display every night of Aurora Borealis, but it is so common there that it attracts no more attention than the setting sun. The ones I saw appeared like a large semi-circle of light towards the north, with brilliant scintillating streaks of silver, stretching at irregular intervals from the circumference to the diameter at the horizon. If particularly brilliant, it threw a weak reflection to the eastward, and the whole illumination kept "blinking" (I can't describe it by any other word). The question of getting a horse was still undecided. Lots of people had the very animal, only they didn't know where he was. They are accustomed in this oddly honest country to let their horses go where they please to find a living; so that, if they are suddenly wanted, they cannot be got under two or three days. They are vaguely somewhere in the province, and a regular search party has to be organised. At last, for the sum of thirty-five pounds, I got an animal, a rough, sturdy, cobby-looking brute, who was warranted to catch buffalo, though he certainly did not look like a Derby winner. I got an Indian saddle and thought I would try him. The saddle, which was in the shape of the lower portion of an old-fashioned cradle and covered with beads and trappings, broke down before I had gone very far, so I had to go back and buy an English one, which was about the worst I ever saw, I then tried to get my steed to gallop, but even the liberal application of a heavy cutting-whip could get no more than a moderate canter out of him. I began to think that if he really could catch buffalo, a cow would suit the purpose equally well, besides having the additional advantage of supplying us with milk. And now, hoping your patience is not quite exhausted, let

us at last start on our formidable journey. If I have kept you waiting all this time it was Barstow's fault, I was ready just as soon as you were.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### A False and a Real Start.

OUR preparations were all made early one morning. We had a good supply of canned provisions, lots of tea and sugar, ham and bacon, and, tell it not in Gath, about twelve gallons of different kinds of liquor, mostly in the brandy and whiskey line. These were all stowed away in a cart together with some rude kitchen utensils, tin cups and plates. Our tent, a most intractable concern, was in another, out of which could be seen sticking a frying-pan, the handle of a spade, and portion of an axe. This precious conveyance was dragged by a lean, unhappy-looking mare, and piloted by a New Brunswick youth, our "chef de cuisine," who was as full of odd sayings and good humour as his little bow-legged person would hold. We had only the most essential materials for camping and nothing more except a portmanteau I insisted upon taking with me and which afterwards escaped being left in the wilderness only by a lucky accident. I had as yet only the vaguest idea of where we were going and how far off it was. Let me here hasten to say that, as statistics and such like matters are quite beyond my modest powers, I cannot vouch for the accuracy of distances, latitudes and longitudes, names of trees, etc., and I can only hope that I shall be able to interest you with what I saw and did without bothering about scientific information. From questions asked, I gleaned that a place called Duck Lake was our destination, where Barstow had a somewhat extensive establishment well supplied with those things likely to command the readiest sale among the Indians and half-breeds who lived in or were

in the habit of visiting the neighbourhood. That those things were exchanged for skins of every description at a fixed tariff, and that he employed men to go out in the winter, the only time when the furs are really valuable and worth buying, who, taking as many goods as possible on dog-sleighs, returned in the spring with the equivalent in furs purchased from the Indians at their trapping-grounds. I learnt that the distance was some six hundred miles, and that we should not take more than a fortnight going there, though I may mention that we did, it being nearly a month before we really reached the Duck Lake. As I said we were all ready: our three carts were packed and there was a waggon in which Barstow and I were to ride. Oh! that waggon, it was yellow I remember, and whenever I think of it visions of the Inquisition cross my mind. We had seven horses, four of which were to be driven in front of us till the breaking down of those in the shafts should oblige us to use them. Besides ourselves and the cook, we had two half-breeds to drive the carts and make themselves generally useful. Ten o'clock was the very latest hour for starting, but we had counted without Barstow and his genius for delaying—he ought to have been a lawyer. In spite of the pushings and hurryings of his friends and mild expostulations from me, he wouldn't move, and the more anxious we were to get off the more decided he was to wait a bit longer. The end of it was, he was bundled into the waggon at the Club door late in the evening, while he was in the middle of a most leisurely meal, and so we got off after almost giving it up, and started at last for the North-West. I found before we had gone far into the exceedingly dark night, that it was not a start at all, but the only way in which he could be got off. We only went five miles, and passed the night with one of his half-breed friends. My private opinion is that my excellent companion while in early youth was taught, like the rest of us, a few of the most prominent proverbs, and, that having a very vague notion of their meaning, he got them a little mixed and that they have remained in his mind in that mixed form ever since. Thus the one "procrastination" he reads "is the soul of business," instead of "the

thief of time": another he has retained in this form, "never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow." This unfortunate mixture is, I am convinced, responsible for his repugnance to do anything briskly. We soon did the short five miles, and our host kindly put a room at our disposal. On an occasion like this it was only natural that we should bring out one of our kegs and consume a quantity of its contents, while much conversation on local topics was carried on. I soon got very tired of local topics, and the illness of Billy So-and-so did not interest me any more than the fact that Johnny What's-his-name had got drunk and had been locked up for making too much noise, so I went to sleep. In the meanwhile I had not the least idea where the rest of our party had gone to, nor where my valuable horse had passed the night, though I feel sure the whole expedition, with the exception of the "Boss," considered themselves very much imposed upon by our false start. However, the next morning we got off and made our first day's march. I rode in preference to driving, as the road was fearfully full of ruts. The soil was black and rich, but when baked by the sun it gets like very uneven asphalt, and as hard as iron, into which are cut two deep furrows, the work of many carts, and you must keep in them. We kept up a pretty even pace all day, and got over something like thirty miles when the setting sun warned us it was time to camp. We picked out a place near some woods, where a party of "freighters" with goods for the North had already made themselves snug, and I was then initiated into the mysteries of sleeping in the open. Our tent, as I had all along anticipated, gave us no end of trouble, and for a long time obstinately refused to stand up. We had either brought the wrong canvas or the wrong poles for they didn't seem to fit each other whatever we did. Barstow, with his usual indifference, suggested that the darned old thing wasn't any good anyhow, and that we should spread our blankets on the ground without the tent as the other party had done. Tents are decided luxuries, which few but surveying parties or Hudson Bay chiefs ever indulge in. But I implored him with tears in my eyes to temper the wind for the shorn lamb, and to

think of my poor mother. He was softened, and by the noble exertions of our invaluable half-breed, Napoleon, we were at last successful, the tent stood up, but not in a very determined manner. In fact it looked as if very little would bring it about our ears with a rattle. We enjoyed our supper with that relish which a thirty mile ride is sure to give, though perhaps you would not think fried ham and bread washed down with milkless tea much of a feast. After spending an hour over the camp fire with our well-earned pipes, we were all ready to turn in, and I entered the place prepared for me with no little uneasiness. It was the first time I had ever slept in the open air and I felt no confidence whatever in our rickety tent. My rest was hardly deserving of that name, consisting principally of a succession of short dozes and long intervals of shivering. The wind got up in the night and shook our frail covering to its very foundation, and as it was quite open on one side, I at last got so miserably cold that I got up and impatiently waited for the dawn. I found myself very stiff after my ride and the soles of my feet were so sore from wearing moccasins that I could hardly walk. Altogether my first experience of camping out was not encouraging, but I hardened by degrees and then was able to enjoy it. When we started again the wind was blowing terrifically over a bare and desolate plain, and I was soon weeping bitterly as I faced the blast, and well nigh frozen as well. Things looked very bad when towards one o'clock we reached a small place with two or three houses and a broken down church, called High Bluffs. The wind had made us all hungry, but it was hopeless to attempt to make a fire in the open, and nobody appeared to take the slightest notice of us. We took refuge in a sort of general store, where everything could be bought, from a pair of boots to an ox cart, but what was more important to us, there was a stove which we were allowed to use and on which we soon set to work frying ham. We managed to buy some bread and casting my hungry glance about I spied some eggs. These I bought at a most wicked price I remember, but they vastly improved our meal which just then was everything to us. We remained just long enough to give

our horses a rest and to get a little of the ragged-looking grass into them, when we started off again in the very teeth of that cutting wind. We were to reach a large place with an hotel in it in the afternoon, a place of such importance that an irregular stagecoach plies between it and Winnipeg. But as I should be wanting in respect if I passed it over lightly, a thing its inhabitants would never forgive, I will postpone my experiences in it to the next chapter; more especially as it would be the last place where I should sleep in a bed for a long time to come.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### Portage la Prairie.

PORT LA PRAIRIE, or the Portage as it is generally called, was reached that afternoon. I have been unable to discover the origin of the name, unless it be that when you get there from the north, you may be said to have carried, *i.e.*, got over the Prairie, but I am afraid the notion is too far fetched to be reliable. The country had been growing flatter and barer as we advanced and I began to get an idea of the boundlessness of the great plains. On our road we met a great many Sioux Indians whose numbers had lately been greatly increased by fugitives from the States flying from the scene of the massacre of General Custer and his forces. Their lodges or wigwams (corruption of the Cree name) are made of deer-skins, and are so like the pictures of them, with which everybody is familiar, that I had no difficulty in recognizing them, in fact they seemed like old friends. Most of them were very small and twenty people at least huddle into each. Their size is calculated by the number of skins composing them, and they speak of a lodge of eight, ten, or more skins, just as the value of an article is estimated according to the number of rat-skins it is worth. The Sioux are tall, fine looking men, but appear

prematurely old ; the women, as well as the men, paint themselves generally round the eyes (which, by the way, shows an instinctive knowledge of the usages of civilization) and down the parting of their hair, green, red, and black being their favorite colours, though red is the most common, so much so that all paint for purposes of personal adornment is called vermilion. Their hair is long and unkempt, and they all wear a wisp on each side tightly bound together by a succession of little brass rings. Those we saw seemed friendly enough, and one and all begged for a bit of tobacco or anything which we might be disposed to give. After sending our horses to graze, without so much as hobbling them, the want of which precaution on one occasion very nearly left us to our fate when a hundred miles at least from any habitation, we adjourned to the hotel. Our property and carts we left out in the open somewhere without taking much care of it, so it was not surprising to find that a good many things had been stolen. The hotel was of the most primitive kind, but it was a real godsend to get out of the cutting wind, though I believe if Barstow had been alone he would have slept outside just for the fun of it. We were here delayed a couple of days getting the springs of the torture-box mended. It was our peculiar misfortune to have everything done in a haphazard sort of way, and most of our vehicles were hopelessly disabled before we reached our destination. However, I was afterwards told that Barstow's recklessness was well-known and that I ought to consider myself fortunate in having got there at all, it being the general impression that it was never more than two to one against his dying on the plains every time he went this journey. Our supper the first night consisted of those everlasting ham and eggs, so well known and so little appreciated at English village inns, placed before us by a dirty half-breed girl with untidy hair and a most unsavoury appearance. The wind blew very unpleasantly all night and we congratulated ourselves on not being in our draughty tent. We found our host presiding at the bar ; he was very genial and anxious to make us comfortable, his company being a motley crowd of rough fellows, Dutch, Scotch, and half-breeds. There was a

certain Welshman too, whose presence I could not account for. He said he was a Cambridge man, but the country seemed to have done much to bring him down to its level. His face and hands were innocent of soap, a razor and his chin had not met for years, and his beard had grown out of all control. His six-ft. four-in. body was clothed in a shocking bad pair of trousers and a dirty velveteen coat, he didn't appear to wear any linen. He told me he practised law of all things in the world; but I should have thought the scanty population were more in the habit of administering their own law as being cheaper and more suited to their incomes. He said also that he had been there five years, and all I can say is that I pity him. No doubt he was one of the many "ne'er-do-wells" who disappear from home when home is no longer tenable, and who end their existence in some remote corner of the world forgotten by all their friends. As we were still in the province of Manitoba, there was plenty of whiskey to be had, but being near the frontier it was of most inferior quality, and I am afraid that most of our suite drank more of it than was good for them during our stay. When we did get ready to start once more it was impossible to do so as our horses had strayed away: though losing one's horses is the commonest thing, these extraordinary people never think of making any effort to prevent it occurring again. Our progress now became very slow as we found ourselves more heavily weighted than we ought to be, a state of affairs which could not be altered until we caught up some carts in front of us which were to take up what we did not absolutely require. Our road still remained flat and uninteresting; in fact all the first day produced nothing to remember but a curious phenomenon like a mirage, I suppose: it looked like a row of trees upside down and suspended in mid air. My buffalo-robe came in very usefully; we used it as a table-cloth by day and as a mattress at night. Our water got very bad, being little better than ditch-water with a very offensive smell; but still I soon found out that one had to be glad to get anything. I gradually began to get used to sleeping in the open, and if you had seen me sitting by the fire, with a candle stuck on a whiskey-keg, leisurely taking

notes, you would have thought I had been at it all my life. One day we got a shot at some prairie chickens, a brace of which made a charming change to the ham which we had hitherto been living on. We camped that evening close to Governor Morris who was returning from making treaties with the Indians. He had no end of luxuries, a beautiful tent, a bedstead, camp stools, candlesticks, etc., and looked as comfortable as possible. When we returned from visiting the Governor we found bread-making going on with great vigour. The weather had got fine, the awful wind had gone down, and there was every prospect of a good night's rest. We were now fairly on our journey, and I shall not weary you with a detailed account of it, confining myself to merely mentioning the few things of interest I saw.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

A MISERABLE PROSPECT.—THE HOSPITABLE SCOTCHMAN.—THE SOLITARY SIOUX.—SHOAL LAKE.

ON the fifth day we camped near a pool of water, a quite unnecessary precaution, for everything was water. It had been raining for two days and misery was no word for our deplorable condition. Everything soon got soaking wet, our tent was wet inside as well as out, our clothes were soaking and nothing would dry them, our provisions were damp and the bread was clammy, and each of us sat in a pool of mire, looking the picture of despair. Why was I persuaded not to bring any boots? My moccasins were reduced to a muddy pulp, and seemed expressly designed for keeping my feet icy cold. It was, I believe, those wretched moccasins that were answerable for the agony of ague and fever which I afterwards had to go through. It was no use trying to travel while it poured so incessantly, and when we did start the moment the rain stopped, I was so ill that for two days I lay huddled up in wet clothes in the bottom of a cart too miserable to move and wondering how it

would all end. However, I got better at last, and when we reached the establishment of a Scotch emigrant, where I got my clothes thoroughly dried, I soon got all right. I believe that excellent man saved my life. He and his daughter, a perfect type of a lassie with the right coloured auburn hair, did all they could to make us comfortable. They gave us an excellent supper, some milk for our tea, and a corner near the fire to sleep—little enough, perhaps you think—but to us in our wretched, bedraggled condition it was little short of a priceless boon. The rain had stopped before we left this good Samaritan, and that was everything. Towards noon that day, while crossing a small creek, we had an accident which might have seriously retarded us. The only bridge across was made by a few logs, over which was a little brushwood to fill up the cracks. The wheel of the first cart fell in and tilted all the loose things into the water, among which was of course our bread; fortunately the horse was not hurt. When I saw him floundering and struggling, I felt sure he would kill himself, or anyhow break his leg. Horses for prairie work must be specially gifted, for he got himself and the cart out somehow without so much as a scratch. At noon we stopped for our meal, near where a Romish priest was camped, also on his way north; but as it was Friday he couldn't be persuaded to join us in our meal, a fortunate thing on the whole, for there was barely enough for us as it was. Our road, that afternoon, took us through quite a hilly country, at least it seemed so, after the dismal plain we had been crossing, and an avenue of poplars with brilliant white bark and golden leaves came upon us as a pleasant and unexpected surprise. We were obliged to travel on after sunset in search of water, when we suddenly came upon a fire, at which we saw crouching a Sioux Indian. The fire lit up his face in such a weird way that he quite startled me. He proved to be a perfect gentleman, however, as I hope to show you. As soon as our cook saw him, he began to abuse him for a thieving, skulking Sioux, by whom it would be unsafe to camp. The old gentleman got up, and to our surprise addressed us in perfect English, without making so much as a sign that he had heard what had been said. He shook us

warmly by the hand, and ordered his servant, whom we had not seen, to collect some wood for us. He then expressed his regret that he was compelled to push on that night, and with a courteous farewell left us. We were so astonished at the behaviour of this curious old fellow that we never thought of asking him where he learnt English until after he had gone. The weather continued fine and comparatively warm, and, while sitting in the genial glow of the fire smoking a well-earned pipe and preparing a whiskey punch, I at length began to understand the charm of open-air life. As the smoke curled up and the fire began to sink, I forgot all the misery of the last few days. But next day it got cold again, the wind was strong and icy and I was chilled to the bone, when we stopped for our mid-day meal on the banks of a ditch enclosed by trees and long grass. As soon as our fire was lighted and we were sheltered from the wind, the temperature changed with all the suddenness of magic. We felt too hot. The marshy land and endless pools we passed were full of all kinds of water-fowl, and without delaying ourselves much we secured enough birds to keep us in food for some time. The mallards, one of the most succulent birds I ever ate, were particularly plentiful. Our method of cooking them was, as may be imagined, most primitive; either we boiled them in a pot, which gave us both soup and meat, or we roasted them on the end of a stick before the blazing fire, our fingers supplying knives and forks. On the evening of the next day we camped somewhere near Shoal Lake, but it was so dark that it was impossible to say where we were. The lake is the boundary line between Manitoba and the North-West Territories, and, as such, has a Government establishment on its shores, with a force of mounted police to prevent the introduction of contraband spirits. No wines or spirits are allowed in the North-West except with a "permit" from the Governor. Our twelve gallons had been duly inscribed as for medicinal purposes at the rate of two gallons per person, and I am afraid that some of the people for whom we were supposed to be bringing it never so much as saw the bottles, much less tasted their contents. It has been found that nothing keeps the

Indians docile and friendly like depriving them of all chance of getting spirits, and it is for this excellent reason that the whole country is put under surveillance in this matter. One of the principal reasons why the Indians are so troublesome in the States, is that no restraint is put upon them in the question of spirits. Indians get drunk with singular willingness, and when they are drunk they will do anything. Our camp, when we first made it, seemed quite a model, a sort of picture camp. Our tent was pitched in a little glade surrounded by trees and looking on to the fire, while on the opposite side our carts were grouped in a semi-circle. It proved, however, quite the reverse; the wind got up and whistled through the tent in the most unpleasant manner, and once more we discovered that appearances are sometimes deceptive. We also here met with a sad misfortune. There was a certain pretty little two-gallon keg of rum, upon which much had been built in the way of comfort. We thought we would like to see it, when to our amazement and annoyance it was nowhere to be found. It was a matter of too much importance to be dismissed lightly, and every cart was overhauled in our search for the lost darling, but it was all in vain, he had vanished. My suspicions pointed to a black savage, who only went a little further with us, and who had shown an inordinate affection for spirits. My impression was that he concealed it on the road, and that he intended picking it up and getting drunk at his leisure on his way back. However, it could not be brought home to him, and we had to bid farewell to the rum punches we had counted on for the winter mornings. Many a time when I was half frozen afterwards I thought bitterly of the loss of that little keg. The lake is a good size, and when I saw it in the morning it was covered with waves and foam. Our "permits" were examined while we had drinks round with the officers on duty, a thing they could thoroughly appreciate. According to the regulation, when a contraband cask is discovered its contents have to be poured on the ground, and the story goes that they always pour it away on the same spot where they have a bucket buried and ready to receive the precious fluid, and which they afterwards make merry with.

## CHAPTER IX.

### From Fort Ellice to Touchwood Hills.

THE next place with a name to it we stopped at was Fort Ellice, but before I describe it I should like to speak a little of our journey to it. We had now got far beyond even isolated shanties and consequently began to see more game, we also saw a fox or two, but they were too far off to get even a shot at them. The whole prairie is perforated with the holes of all sorts of burrowing animals, but the little fellows who destroy the roads most are the gophers: they are half rat and half squirrel, and of a light yellow colour; wherever you look you can see a quantity of them sitting up on their hind legs and staring at you in the most impudent manner, but they are so quick that up go their tails and they are out of sight before you can pull the trigger. When we were some miles from Shoal Lake we saw a prairie fire, a whirlwind of flames and smoke, but, fortunately, too far off to give us any cause for alarm; they appear to be very common occurrences and can always be traced to the carelessness of campers. We afterwards passed large tracts of land in which everything was burnt black. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and, though one would feel inclined to doubt the advantage of a devastating fire, I am told that they are of great service in killing and drying wood which would otherwise be too green for use. We were fortunate in reaching a very pleasant spot (Bird Tail Creek by name) for camping the night before we rested at the Fort. I had shot a long legged bird, of the bittern kind, that day, and, though they all said he was not worth plucking, I noticed that when he was cooked all our party wanted a taste of it, and pronounced it excellent. Fort Ellice was the best place we had been in since we left Winnipeg. Mr. Macdonald, the head of it, treated us with a hospitality I shall never forget, he gave us two beds, and I don't think I ever knew before what a luxury a bed is. The Fort is beautifully situated on a hill looking over a well-wooded valley, though the frequent frosts had already stripped off most of the leaves. Immediately

beneath the Assiniboine River wound in and out among the bare trees. The bridge we used to cross was a broken-down affair, the supports of which were twisted and cracked, and it looked ready to fall. It has to be rebuilt pretty often I heard, as the tremendous rush of ice, which comes floating down in the spring, strains and damages it however strongly built. I here tasted, for the first time, some fresh buffalo meat, but I didn't like it much, though before very long I learnt to prefer it to the inferior ox beef, which alone is to be obtained in the North-West. Oxen are too useful for dragging carts to be eaten, and when these thrifty people make up their minds to eat an ox it is because he can no longer haul a cart. The Fort consists of a collection of wooden buildings enclosing a square courtyard, and supplied on the outer side with stockades, formerly as a protection against attacks from the Indians, but now quite unnecessary. These Hudson Bay forts are established all over the country, in such places as are most suitable for trade, and form the only civilization. They always keep a good supply of provisions and general commodities, which they sell to anybody who happens to want anything and can pay for it either in furs or money. While we stayed we sent our carts on ahead of us to camp at a place called Qu'Appelle River and joined them in the middle of the next day. We then got rid of one of our carts and the heavier part of our freight, and we also sent back the individual whom I shall always suspect of having stolen the rum. Broken Arm River was our next camp, and the only break in the monotony of our march was our meeting with some Sauteux Indians with a camp of three lodges. They begged for tea, sugar, tobacco, or anything they could get, and one old hag, seeing me in a hooded ulster, took me for a priest, or pretended to do so, only to assure me, through our interpreter, that priests were always charitable, and that I ought to give her something. Next day we didn't start until very late as our horses got hopelessly lost, and the only wonder is that it did not happen oftener. I believe we should be looking for them now had not a lonely Indian not only found them but found us also. His name, which he gave with extreme reluctance, was

"Little Mosquito." It is considered highly unlucky to mention your own name among Indians; still he seemed surprised we did not know it already, seeing that it had been affixed to a petition to the Queen, of whom every Indian and half-breed I ever met spoke with great reverence. The only reward this queer fellow could be persuaded to accept was his breakfast and a little tea and tobacco. I offered him my plug, as his pipe was empty, to cut himself a pipeful, instead of which he quietly slipped it into his pouch. From which I learnt that it is unwise to let an Indian get anything into his hand which you don't want him to keep. The weather now took a most favourable turn, and became delightfully warm, so that we were able to journey without interruption, except when we came across a train of carts, which, like ships at sea, are looked upon as events. We always stopped and exchanged news, and asked and answered the many questions, which nothing but living in America can give you a talent for. Of course on these occasions our whiskey-keg was produced for drinks round, it being the height of incivility not to offer a drink when you have got one. The carts, drawn by oxen, travel very slowly and in great numbers. I have seen as many as 130 of them in one train, crawling leisurely to some distant part, the people who look after them doing the freighting by contract, at so much per ton, and passing all their lives in going backwards and forwards. The Indian summer, the pleasures of which we were enjoying, may truly be said to be the best season of the whole year. In these countries, where mosquitos and other insects of the kind make summer a torture, the mere fact of having a bright warm sun, without those awful plagues, is a delightful feeling. Unfortunately it does not last long, and after ten days of it, towards the middle of October, winter sets in with startling suddenness. On the fifth day from Ellice we camped in a charming spot, full of open meadows and woodland glades, and studded with fairy lakes of surpassing beauty. We left our party to get supper ready, and started for a long narrow lake where we hoped to find some ducks. We found lots of them, but they were so wild that we could only get a brace, both very long shots: of course they fell

in the middle of the lake, and we had no dog. Barstow at last volunteered to retrieve them, an honour I did not feel the least inclination to share with him ; he got them, though it must have been a fearfully cold bath, for there was ice on the water. Evening was now closing and the beautiful sunset and calm stillness of all around us combined to make the scene one of the most beautiful pictures I ever saw. At one point we found an echo so distinct that it repeated a whole sentence with wonderful clearness. Just as darkness came on, a large bird flapped past us like an evil spirit ; we both blazed at him and down he came with a heavy thud, but before we could secure him we had to knock him over the head with the butt end of a gun. He proved to be a huge horned owl, his wings measured five feet from tip to tip, and his eyes blazed with magnificent light when we brought him near the fire. I regretted very much that I had then no knowledge of the art of stuffing, for he was a splendid bird and well worth keeping. Another day's march brought us to Touchwood Hills, but we were too late to get quite up to the Fort, and had to camp in a sort of North-Western Hampstead Heath. There were crowds of men, children, horses, dogs, oxen, and Indians everywhere, and as soon as we arrived we were surrounded and gazed at as if such a party had never been seen before. We took the precaution to bring into the tent everything we had of value, and especially the liquor : for a man in these parts may be the soul of truth, and a model of honesty, but nothing will prevent him from stealing whiskey if he can. So great is the universal craving for spirits that horses have been sold for a tumbler of brandy, and even the Mounted Police, when they heard of our loss at Shoal Lake, got into a tremendous state of excitement and were for saddling their horses and organizing a search expedition at once. We bought a few necessaries at the Fort next morning, and I was fortunate enough to find some tissue-paper for cigarettes. I happen to be an inveterate consumer of smoke in that form, and having come to the end of the leaves of our cook's pictorial bible, which he nobly offered to me, I was at my wit's end, until this lucky find relieved me of all further anxiety.

## CHAPTER X.

### From Touchwood Hills to Duck Lake.

FOUR days more brought us to Duck Lake. I don't know whether it is that the end of a tiring journey always seems the longest part of it, or whether the last four days were really worse than the rest, but to me they seemed crammed full of discomfort and misery. As soon as we left Touchwood Hills it settled down to determined and penetrating rain. My clothes very soon got thoroughly wet and they never got dry until we reached our destination. The only way to restore circulation to our frozen blood was to get out of our waggon and run or rather shamble in the slushy mud, which only seemed to have the effect of reducing our moccasins to a hopeless state of pulp. We made the acquaintance of some more Indians, but the more I see of them the less I like them, though I am willing to admit that the state of the weather had made me much more ready to find fault than to admire. They are an idle, good-for-nothing race, who have just enough sense to know that the Government will never wilfully let them starve, so they do as little as possible for themselves and expect all white people to give them food and drink, not only as a pleasure but as a duty. They have no excuse for poverty; they get well paid for furs, and any ordinarily industrious Indian of moderately provident habits (of which one or two have been known to exist), can live and live well by selling furs, all of which are taken at a uniform price quite irrespective of their quality. I went prepared to see a good deal of unfairness on the part of the traders in their dealings with the untutored savage. But I am bound to confess that if there is any fault it lies with the Indians. Their immense capacity for absorbing tea is astonishing, and only finds a parallel in what one sometimes sees takes place when charity-children are offered an annual feast. They are however charmingly impartial, and take everything they can get with great eagerness and thrust all

into a dirty receptacle they carry in their bosoms. We had to cross a large plain of over forty miles in length in one day on account of the absence of both wood and water throughout the desolate waste. Of course we made a late start, but got well across before stopping for a little while at what was once a lake, then a foul ditch, the waters of which our horses would scarcely drink. Under the circumstances there was nothing for it but to push on, and tired and hungry as were our horses and ourselves on we went. It began to get dark and though there was plenty of wood not a drop of water could we find. At last it became impossible for us to see our way, and after having been nine hours on the move, and without drink for fourteen, we had to give it up and stop. It is an awful thing to be without water, when a more than ordinary thirst has been produced by hard travelling. We had some sherry, and after having made a hurried camp, we tried to slake our raging thirst with that. The look of angry disgust which we each gave, after tasting the first mouthful, would have been comic, had it not been so dreadfully real and painful. Barstow who, to give him his due, bore it all with admirable indifference, thought that, as we were thoroughly wretched for the want of water, it would be a grand opportunity to make ourselves more miserable still if such a thing were possible. He therefore cheerfully proposed sleeping without the tent that night. I felt too tired and ill to make anything but the most feeble protest. We placed our damp wraps near the fire and tried to allay our thirst by trying to sleep. Needless to say no sleep could I get, and as soon as dawn began to appear, I dragged my chilled body out of my blankets and hastened to make a fire. We started off as soon as we could without even waiting for breakfast which without tea would have been a bitter mockery. In about two hours our eyes were gladdened by the sight of a pool of good clear water. The caravan halted, and you may imagine that we lost no time in getting a pot boiling. Tea never tasted so delicious to me, and if I live to a hundred, I shall never forget the sigh of contentment which escaped from me as I was lighting my pipe and leisurely sipping my fourth cup. The next day

we got rain again, and though things got pretty bad when we were housed under our tent, poor as was its shelter, we managed to be fairly cheerful, as we were no longer without water, and more, had managed to shoot some prairie chickens with which to make a good supper. The following night we reached the banks of the South Saskatchewan, and camped in a hut known as Gabriel's Ferry, the name of the gentleman who assists travellers over that big stream. His name seems to have been given to him with more regard to the Romish Calendar than to any fitness for it of his. He is a hard-drinking old half-breed whose only sorrow is the scarcity of alcohol in his neighbourhood. His family, as far as I could make out, consisted of some twelve people of both sexes who managed to live in a single-roomed hovel scarcely fit for a pig. However, he made us as comfortable as the dirt would allow, and filled our empty stomachs with buffalo meat fresh from the prairie. In exchange for which he good-naturedly finished the contents of our whiskey keg. The next morning our journey was considerably delayed principally occasioned by the uncertainty of the boat's whereabouts. When it was found it looked like a large box, very imperfectly constructed. Of course it was full of water, and to me it seemed the very last thing in which anybody would venture to cross a broad and rapid river. Still there was nothing else, so after baling the concern out, we put our carts, ourselves, and our two most valuable horses into it, and started on our perilous journey. I was certain we would sink or that the current would carry us out of the control of the two wretched oars which were used for guiding us. I therefore placed myself in the most convenient place, if things came to the worst, for jumping off. To my surprise we got safely across after a good wetting, which was nothing new. The other horses were driven in and swam across easily enough with the exception of one poor fiddle-headed, spindle-shanked mare who had shown signs of flagging strength all the way. She was very nearly drowned, but somehow by a desperate effort she managed to get her legs and take one turn more in the shafts before retiring to grass. And so the journey

ended, for we reached Duck Lake that night. We were received with open arms at Barstow's establishment, a description of which I shall reserve for another chapter. Speaking for myself I rarely remember an occasion when I felt such relief at the end of a journey. I slept in a bed, after beds and I had been long, too long, strangers, and that alone was unspeakable bliss. I had gone through much more than I believed I could have endured, and though to many my trials may appear trivial, I must beg them to remember that it was the first time I had ever known what it was to sleep out of a comfortable bed or to pass a day without plenty of food and drink. My experience was worth something to me and I learnt that hardship is a capital cure for those who are *blasé* and suffer from boredom.

——

## CHAPTER XI.

### Duck Lake.

AS this spot was head-quarters during my winter in the bleak North-West, it becomes my duty not only to reserve this chapter exclusively for its description, but to invoke all the muses to assist me in doing justice to so important a subject. I spent my first night in a small room, littered with all sorts of things from cartridges to dirty linen. I slept on the floor with a blanket and an ulster for covering, while my coat and waistcoat did duty for a pillow. When I say that, in spite of this unpromising look-out, I was supremely comfortable and that no monarch could have slept better, you will admit that I must have made the acquaintance of some pretty indifferent resting-places. We took care to reward ourselves for all our early risings, and our first breakfast, a really *recherché* meal, was partaken of at the fashionable hour of 11 a.m., or what we supposed to be such, for time is not valuable at Duck Lake, and the clock being an invalid was rarely asked to go. We had coffee, rolls, roast snipe, and dried apples, which we

considered very elaborate eating. If the plates had not been of iron, if the cups had had handles, had there been such a thing as a table-cloth and a complete set of cutlery we might have imagined ourselves in civilization. It was indeed an enjoyable meal, and what made it all the more delightful was that I had actually found a tub and once more renewed my acquaintance with its uses. No one knows the real bliss of a tub and clean linen till he has been three weeks or so without either. I spent my first day in a comfortable room near a warm stove; and it was a real luxury to have a table to write on. So much so, that I settled down with great zest to the furbishing up of hasty notes jotted down by the uncertain light of many a camp fire, while Barstow went off and inspected generally. Duck Lake itself is a large piece of water several miles in circumference, the shores of which are within a few hundred yards of the buildings. In the proper season, as the name implies, it is a favourite resort for ducks of every description, but when I was there, it was frozen to the bottom and could only be distinguished from the land by the thin fringe of reeds which surrounds it. As for the rest of the neighbouring country, there is nothing very remarkable about it—it is pretty flat, and here and there at irregular intervals there are clumps of trees, some of them extensive enough to be called woods but scarcely enough to be considered forests. The growth of timber is small but it makes excellent firewood and is easily cut. My host's establishment was larger than any other I saw organized for the furtherance of private enterprise. His main building, though of course constructed entirely of wood, as all habitations in the wilderness must be, was solidly put together. It consisted of a good sized kitchen, a sort of general room combining the functions of sitting and dining-room furnished with a long deal table, a stove, a few chairs and some ancient and dog-eared novels, two bed-rooms, and an office. Attached to this was the store in which were a lot of pigeon-holes and a high counter. The latter is a necessity, for nothing short of a palisade is sufficient to keep the Indians, who are the principal customers, from invading the privacy of the shop and wandering at their own

sweet will among the heterogeneous merchandise which always lay in untidy heaps on the floor. It is painful to have to state that, though Indian men rarely steal, their women just as rarely neglect an opportunity to annex whatever they can get hold of. This store was a wonderful place, and it was to its existence that we owed the few visitors who arrived from time to time from the distant settlements. They were in search of some commodity, and it would have been difficult to want something not to be found in our collection. There was everything from tea, coffee, and looking-glasses to calico, cutlery and cartridges, from hams, hosiery and horse-cloths to blankets, biscuits and boots. Opposite was another large building used exclusively for the storing and packing of furs. Besides these, there was a carpenter's shop, stables, and, I was going to say kennels; but, though there are always plenty of dogs around a Canadian settlement, they are not treated to the luxury of kennels or even food. They have to live on what they can pick up, and a pretty poor livelihood it is. The poor brutes always have a wistful, hungry expression in their eyes, but when they are wanted for sleighs, then they live in clover. It is hard work, but there is plenty of food at night. Of course in order to keep so large a place going a large staff of employés was required, but with the exception of the manager (by the way an excellent fellow, who had the pluck to exile himself to avoid an unwelcome marriage), the carpenter and the cook, they were all half-breeds, of whom I shall have the pleasure of telling you more later. Fur-trading and store-keeping are the principal businesses, and are worked together. Both admit of infinite leisure, but they did not think it necessary to use it in embellishing their surroundings. There was no attempt at even the rudiments of a garden, perhaps because no women ornamented the spot with their presence. Nor was any effort made at the most elementary forms of tidiness, and in this particular reminded me much of the Australian sheep-farms, where all the rubbish which accumulates round a house is allowed to remain where it was thrown. Of course, the fair sex being unrepresented, we indulged ourselves in a general

disregard for our personal appearance, nor was the use of the razor encouraged. This relapse into semi-barbarism (no joke intended) was not without its charm, and I welcomed it as a pleasant change after the tyranny of boots and the rigours of stiff linen collars and top-hats. Round Barstow's establishment a few houses had sprung up belonging to half-breeds, who had become sufficiently civilized to throw off the nomadic and savage instincts of their immediate progenitors, and try trading and farming. As far as I could see, farming was but indifferently successful, and only practised in a desultory fashion. I am sure, however, that now agriculture has been found to pay, for there is no doubt of the richness of the land, could you insure yourself against the inclemency of the long winters. Barstow had a place where he was growing something, but only in a half-hearted sort of way, and there were no signs of his really meaning business. The people among whom I found myself were mostly a French-speaking and Roman Catholic community, and I had the privilege of often meeting the priest who looked after their spiritual welfare. He was such a character, and so marked a feature in the surrounding country, that in a subsequent chapter I must endeavour to give you a sketch of him. Fort Carlton (fourteen miles off) was the nearest Hudson Bay post, and it was not long before we paid its chief a visit. It is an imposing-looking place, prettily situated and constructed on the same principle as the other forts I had seen. We were very hospitably and cordially received, and invited to spend two or three days, as is the custom where visitors are rare. Unfortunately there was nothing to do but smoke and drink whiskey, and though both excellent things in their way, they are bound to pall in time. This chief was dreadfully impressed with his own importance, which is not to be wondered at when one remembers that it is not so long since these gentlemen ruled this vast country in a most despotic fashion, and, in their rough way, lived much like the satraps of a Persian king. He once had the misfortune to entertain an earl on his travels, as we were not long in discovering, and the event coloured the whole of his life, nor was it a pleasant colour either.

As an example of what healthy competition can do even out in the wilds, it may be mentioned that, owing to the existence of Barstow's store, commodities were cheaper by at least ten per cent. at Fort Carlton than they were two hundred miles further south, where the expenses of freight from Winnipeg were naturally much smaller; but, there being no rival store to undersell them, the Hudson Bay people could afford to keep up the prices. As may be imagined, after a week or so of loafing about I began to find life at the Lake rather monotonous and to long for something to do. Barstow during this time did little else but sleep, and talk in an indefinite and unsatisfactory way of soon starting off after the buffalo, which had been my only object in undertaking this dreadful long journey. It was satisfactory to learn from incoming hunters that *les animaux*, as they called the buffalo, were plentiful, and that they were nearer our neighbourhood than they had been for years. Everybody who could spare the time and afford the necessary carts, horses, rifles, and ammunition, was out on the plains, securing fresh meat, to be brought home and stored in ice, so as to have provisions enough to last out the long, long winter which was just beginning to show her bleak face. We had already had a slight fall of snow, and any amount more was to be expected very soon. Still Barstow delayed, not that he feared bad weather or the cold; for, to do him justice, I never met a man with such powers of endurance, or who was able to take any kind of hardship so cheerfully. No, it was simply a hopeless habit of procrastination, which he could not overcome. I know he often honestly tried to do so, just to please me, but he always failed.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

### Fur-Trading.

FUR-TRADING and its accessories is not a very intricate business, and though the days have gone by when large fortunes were speedily made, there is still a

fair amount to be picked up if you are astute and lucky. The Hudson Bay Company was once a very prosperous one: they used, no doubt, to get their furs for the proverbial string of glass beads, but *nous avons changé tout cela*. The Company no longer wields a monopoly, and furs no longer support them, they have turned to the land which remained in their hands, and, seeing the popularity of the country for emigration purposes, in that there is much wealth. To be a good trader you must have the paradoxical qualities of firmness and good nature. You must treat the Indian with consideration and respect, and at the same time you must drive hard bargains, always under the cover of an apparently natural carelessness and indifference to any money-gaining consideration. In short, if you outwit the Indian, you make money, and, though it is easy to outwit him in most things, once furs are mentioned you will find you have met your match. As the traders pay for furs with goods or provisions, they are able to make a sort of double profit. They gather in about fifty per cent. on the goods and then they have the additional gain on the reselling of the furs. The Indians and half-breeds trap the animals and dress the skins, which the trader receives at a regular fixed tariff paid in goods. The Indians do not know the meaning or value of money and would never consent to accept it. Money has no value with them: all they want they can get with furs, therefore furs is money. This reads like a lame exposition of the opening chapters of some elementary work on political economy: but I beg your indulgence on the plea that, though theoretically the early notions of barter and commerce are familiar to all, a practical illustration of them in the nineteenth century comes upon one in the form of a novelty. These untutored savages, like dear old Methuselah, don't understand the use of money, and that ignorance I am sure saved them no end of worry and bother besides narrowing for them the avenues of crime. A musk-rat is the cheapest fur, costing, if I remember right, sixpence, and this is the basis of their money table. An article, be it a pound of tea or a gown for their third wife, does not cost so much money but so many rats. Even the value of furs is

calculated in rats: thus, a beaver let us say is worth ten rats, an otter twelve, and so on. Although the profits on this kind of transaction are naturally large, there is a corresponding amount of risk. It is a recognised custom, enforced I believe by Government, that every fur that an Indian offers shall be bought at the fixed price, quite irrespective of the condition that it may be in. So that, often a trader has to buy a skin at the full price of the best of its kind, when it is absolutely worthless. I remember on one occasion seeing Barstow, after a long and fruitless effort to convince an Indian that a skin was worth nothing, take it, give him his tea, sugar, and what not, and then before his very eyes thrust it into the stove, in the hope that while he smelt the unpleasant odour of burning hair, this argument would appeal to him. The noble red-man merely smiled a sort of enigmatical smile, and, by his expression, I felt sure he went away with the feeling that at last he had found the true method of getting rid of old and mangy skins. Then the trader has to send his furs wholesale to wherever he fancies he will get good prices. But the fur market like all others varies and fluctuates, and he may find himself compelled to sell at prices which admit of little or no profit. He always has to pay $5 for a buffalo robe, yet in Montreal, where most of them are sent to, they often do not fetch more than $3·75. Again, the Indians, who are naturally lazy, do not come and offer skins in sufficient numbers at the post itself; so the trader is put to considerable expense equipping dog-sleigh expeditions to the various places which the Indians have selected for their trapping grounds. Now a journey of some hundred miles in the middle of a Canadian winter is no light affair, as I know well, and it is not easy to get men willing to undertake for a small salary a journey which must always be accompanied by dangers of starvation or death from exposure. Dogs falling ill, provisions running out, or abnormally bad weather, are always possibilities, and any one of them may mean death. The stories I heard of the wonderful endurance which these runners, as they call them, are capable of, sounded almost impossible; and the distances they get over, would, if really true, make any European

running celebrity appear a very poor performer. What do you say to one hundred and seventy-eight miles in forty-eight hours and driving two dog-sleighs as well? It sounds incredible, yet I had it on the best authority. Another serious expense is the bringing up of goods and provisions in ox-waggons a distance of some six or seven hundred miles. So that fur-trading, as you no doubt see, is not all plain sailing nor the easiest of roads to fortune. It was a considerable disappointment to me, though at the time I bore it with wonderful fortitude, that I left the country before the snow melted, the ice broke up, and communications were opened again. It is at this time that the business in furs is briskest. The runners rarely attempt to return until the spring has declared herself. If they have done good business, all their goods are disposed of, and in their place they return laden with furs packed on some sort of vehicle put together in a hurry. Of course many of these furs are fine and rare specimens, but perhaps it was as well I did not see them as I should have been tempted to purchase, and I am assured that you can get better furs and at cheaper prices in London, than you can on the very spot where they are obtained. No, I am thankful to say that when the frozen up North-West was slowly thawing, I was basking in the genial sun of New Orleans, with all the hardships of a Canadian winter softened by being only a memory. I shall best bring this chapter to a conclusion, unsatisfactory I fear, for want of data, by saying that the so-called fur-traders do as much business in the general store line as they do in purchasing and selling furs. And they are wise, for it will not be long before civilization and a more extended settlement will drive out fur-trapping and replace it with agriculture and cattle-raising. They will then be in a position to acquire wealth by being on the spot, and able to supply such things as the new settlers cannot possibly do without.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Buffalo, Sleigh-dogs, and Pain-killer.

BUFFALO, sleigh-dogs, and pain-killer are the three salient characteristics of the North-West; and, taken mixed, appeared to me to have been mainly instrumental in making the country what I found it. At first this may seem a bold assertion; but, I trust, if I am lucid, that I shall be able to convince you that much must be attributed to their influence. The interesting natives can scarcely be said to think, but what little thoughts they have are centered on the consideration of these three things. Let us begin with the buffalo. Everybody is more or less familiar with their appearance through having seen some particularly poor specimens in zoological gardens. Buffalo there means occupation, food, clothing, and sport. The Indians, the half-breeds, and even the whites are dependent in a great measure on the results of buffalo hunting, and it thus becomes one of the most important matters in their monotonous lives. A party will kill and bring home about thirty beasts after a successful expedition. At the cry of *les animaux*, everybody abandons whatever he may be doing to join in the hunt for provisions. On their return, feasting, attended by gambling, is carried on with a vigour unknown to more effete nations. The half-breeds generally are sensible enough to reserve something for a rainy day, and lay by a stock of buffalo meat in various forms. The Indians, on the contrary, who are I suppose the most improvident of northern races, simply gorge, and gamble, and sleep. When all is gone, when every bone has been picked and every shred consumed, they begin philosophically to starve, varying the entertainment by abusing the white man. It is curious how the Indians are firmly convinced that all evils and discomforts are to be attributed to the natural wickedness of the settlers and traders; and this is all the more odd because the whites are always coming forward to the rescue of starving Indians. Every part of the buffalo is

turned into something. A robe is used as a covering for a bed or a sleigh, to soften the asperities of a backboard waggon, and many Indians consider a fine robe enough for coat, waistcoat, and trousers. The hide is turned into moccasins, coats, sacks for pemmican, and last but not least "shaganape." Shaganape is used for everything which in civilization would be replaced by rope or leather. It is also given as food to the dogs when it can be used as nothing else. I have often thought that I have eaten some. There is such a striking likeness between it and dried meat, that I defy a stranger to tell one from the other. They taste the same, they look the same, and they are equally tough; so that I should recommend those who propose visiting the North-West to in no wise neglect to have their teeth sharpened. For it is inconvenient and unwholesome to swallow lumps of leather. The expression, "There is nothing like leather" here becomes "There is nothing like shaganape"; and there are people found who contend that were it not for that durable substance the country could not possibly hold together. But this is, of course, open to doubt. Still, I can vouch for the fact, that when the materials of which waggons and sleighs are made have given way, shaganape nobly supplies their place, so that it is impossible to say what part is shaganape and what wood. I now come to the world-renowned "pemmican," which is as marked and universal an article of diet as oatmeal is in Scotland. My first introduction to this national dish was not encouraging. Its appearance, to begin with, is against it, for it looks like exceedingly rotten cheese, and is of a dirty, greenish-brown colour. Barstow anticipated my natural prejudices, and I encountered a piece of it early in my journey. After some hesitation I tasted it, thinking I had never put anything quite so nasty in my mouth before. I am not as a rule fastidious, but I never got to like or even tolerate pemmican. There is no doubt, however, of its nutritious qualities, and, if you can only get it to stay in your stomach, a very little of it will keep you from starving for an indefinite period. Of course, I am now speaking of the common, ordinary pemmican; but there is some made of carefully-selected meat, fat, and marrow, which is really excellent, and which I shall

have occasion to speak of later. Buffalo have a great deal more marrow in their bones than bullocks, and this is melted down, and when liquid is poured into bladders like the ones used for lard. It is then, like marmalade, considered an excellent substitute for butter. I, however, was not much struck with the excellence of the substitute, for, whenever I ventured to try it, a nausea came over me, not unlike what one experiences after having inadvertently swallowed a mouthful of rotten egg. When using it for butter becomes impossible it is turned into candles, which is perhaps the reason why even now when the odour of an extinguished candle reaches me, I imagine there must be buffalo meat cooking somewhere. The buffalo were hunted on all sides with a perseverance which, in spite of close seasons being afterwards instituted, promised before long to exterminate them. When that time comes, the Indians will starve, the half-breeds be reduced to poverty, and agricultural pursuits and the fur-trading interest considerably impaired. I may be wrong; but my notion is that, until that time comes, and the energies of the people are concentrated on something less ephemeral than buffalo, the country will never be worth anything. It was to see, hunt, and kill this all-absorbing animal that we put ourselves to enormous inconvenience and hardship. I soon learned the dangers to guard against in this kind of sport, and, if you will follow me on to the end, you shall see what sort of adventures I had. I now come to the sleigh-dog. The first question a man asks when a dog is mentioned, is not, "Is he well bred? or what breed is he? or is he good with a gun?" but "Can he haul?" If a dog comes into a man's possession—and they have a way of turning up, you know not from where, and offering themselves to you in that mute though eloquent way peculiar to dogs—he is looked over with a view to hauling. If the examination proves satisfactory, well and good; but if he shows no signs of strength, he meets with no mercy, he is coaxed within range and then shot. It is cruel no doubt, but under the circumstances necessary. The settlers cannot afford to keep any but working dogs; if a worthless animal is allowed to hang round a settlement, he very soon

acquires a taste for harness, furs, boots, or any leather thing he can find. The Indians, I believe, always keep any kind of cur, because they always anticipate a time when food will be scarce, and roast dog is better than nothing. It is said, that on nearing an Indian camp, you can always tell in what state you will find them, by observing the dogs that come out to meet you. If they are well fed and fat, food is plentiful; if they are thin and poor, provisions are low; if none at all come to meet you, things are very bad, they are eating them. Every house you pass is garnished with at least a dozen dogs who, at the approach of strangers, rush out and bark furiously; at night these amiable quadrupeds vary the entertainment by howling. These dogs are as necessary in the North-West as horses; for throughout the length of winter when the snow lies thick everywhere, it is impossible to travel with horses. Not only would they sink in and flounder hopelessly about, but one could not carry food for them. A good dog will haul at least a hundred pounds weight, and keep up a trot for months, provided he is well fed. But even sleigh-dogs are only fed when travelling; at other times they manage to subsist on bits of shaganape and scraps. When a party leaves a settlement, a good many dogs are sure to follow on the chance of getting something to eat, they having long since devoured everything edible, *chez eux*. When you camp near habitations, you must hang all your leather things well out of reach if you want to find them in the morning, and even your own dogs will eat their harness at night if you do not hide it, nor is it unusual to wake up and find them chewing your bedding. The best dogs are what are called "huskies": they look like large Esquimaux or Spitz, and I fancy they are crossed with wolf. We had one fine specimen who answered to the name of "Shou-shou" (Long Ears). He was black with white breast and legs, and looked just like a wolf. He was well trained, and was consequently used as a leader. He took a great fancy to me soon after I arrived, and his antics used to amuse me, they were so little like those of a dog. When a lot of other dogs surrounded him with hostile intent, he would put his long bushy tail between his legs and assume the

appearance of an abject coward. If any dog, deceived by this attitude, came too near him he showed his long wolf-like teeth in an unpleasant manner, unaccompanied by the usual growl; a further advance on the part of the enemy caused him to wheel suddenly and quickly round, and inflict a crushing defeat, after which he would again assume a terrified attitude, We became more intimately acquainted afterwards, for he was the head dog of the twelve which drew our sleighs down to Manitoba on our return journey. Whatever else I may have to say on this subject will be best left until I come to that part of our expedition during which our dogs were, next to questions of wood and fire, by far the most important matter in the world. On their health and strength depended our lives.

I now come to the famous Pain-Killer. Let me approach the subject with gravity, for in the North-West its importance is second to not even the buffalo. Pain-Killer is a quack medicine. I trust Mr. Perry Davis, the happy and wealthy inventor of it, who is I believe a shining light among a constellation of good people in Providence, R.I., will forgive me for giving it its right name. I believe he is not to blame for the unwholesome use which is made of it, as he intended it for outward application only. It is the fault of an ignorant and barbarous people that it is considered too precious to be ever used in that way. Its reputation extends throughout the length and breadth of the North-West, and there is no man, woman, or child, from Hudson's Bay to Minnesota, from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic, who has not heard of Pain-Killer. It shares with gunpowder and water the proud position of being the North-Western panacea. If anybody has anything the matter, from a stomach-ache to cancer, gunpowder and water is prescribed, followed by a dose of Pain-Killer. Generally these two cure the patient. At least they think so, whereas it is the pure air and healthy climate which really does it. We had a case of a girl who had accidentally poisoned herself by purloining and eating dried apples prepared with phosphorus, for the especial use of rats. We gave her copious draughts of the only two medicines in turn, and she recovered. But

whether it was the gunpowder or the Pain-Killer which saved her was never known. I think I have mentioned that a wise government has made it illegal to take spirits of any kind beyond the province of Manitoba, except in small quantities, presumedly for medicinal purposes. Necessity is the Mother of Invention: the law is evaded, and the cravings for strong drink allayed by a variety of ingenious methods. Brandy cherries are imported in large quantities for the sake of the spirit; there are no end of so-called "bitters" manufactured exclusively for the North-West trade, which have alcohol for a foundation. That brand is most popular which contains the largest percentage of spirit the most ingeniously disguised. But these sink into insignificance in the presence of the mighty Pain-Killer, whose strength is colossal, and whose intoxicating properties are warranted to encourage jim-jams in the systems of the most seasoned drinkers. It is a red, innocuous-looking fluid, and under analysis exposes the presence of alcohol, cayenne pepper, camphor, and opium. Pain-Killer "cocktails" are as deep rooted an institution among the hardy Scots as whiskey ones are further south, though men are found who prefer the Worcestershire Sauce cocktail, but they are in a minority. I fear those who drink them will share the fate of a gentleman residing in New Zealand who was killing himself, when I met him, with sarsaparilla, which he was in the habit of drinking instead of whiskey, when the frequent invitation to conviviality made it imperative for him to drink something.

I once, in the innocence of ignorance tasted Pain-Killer neat, and it burned my tongue and lips for an hour after, and yet many of the men who have grown old in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company think nothing of drinking a pint bottle of it per day with scarcely any dilution. The Indians are nothing if not thorough, and having long appreciated the attractions of "pank" as they call it, when they inaugurate a spree, they mix a strong decoction of tea and tobacco with it, in order to ensure certain and speedy intoxication. It has been said, that when a people either from compulsion or accident finds itself deprived of alcoholic stimulant

it lives happily and healthily without it. My experience goes to prove the contrary, and I have found, that the longer a man goes without drinking spirits, the more certain he is of abusing it when he gets the chance. The truth is, that the craving for strong drink is implanted in the very nature of man, and nothing will eradicate it. I have seen the savages of a good many parts of the world, and amongst all of them there was some method, of one kind or another, of obtaining for themselves the privileges and pleasures of intoxication. I admit that as far as the North-West is concerned, there are many worse things than Pain-Killer with sugar and plenty of water on a cold winter's morning: and it was a matter of deep sorrow to me when our stock of it ran out. In conclusion, I contend that buffalo, train-dogs, and Pain-Killer have made the country what it is. When the buffalo are all killed off, when trains abolish train-dogs, and when a liquor licence does away with the traffic in Pain-Killer, the North-West will feel the influence which has led to the prosperity of other countries. That time is at hand, and no doubt before my children are grey, Duck Lake will have blossomed into a second Chicago hastily put up, and flourishing through fictitious credit and the inflated value of land, and ready to "bust up" like any other well organised American town. *Absit omen.*

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Visiting.

IT will be just as well, in order to give an idea of how the people live in the North-West, for me to briefly describe a round of visits we made just before we started on our expedition against the buffalo. You shall see how full of annoyances this journey proved to be, and, if you see no cause for irritation, you deserve to take a superior rank to Job himself. I was looking forward, after our

long days of inaction, to meeting Captain Mann and his partner, who enjoyed the reputation of being amusing and clever; and I was delighted at the prospect of hearing my native tongue unsullied by the perpetual discussion of fur-trading. Shortly after we started, we met a wretched creature shivering with cold and hunger who, when somewhat revived by a draught of spirits, detailed the news of the total loss of some boats Barstow had sent down the river for the purpose of found'ng a new trading-post. I was naturally sorry, but when the wreck of these boats became the only topic of conversation for three or four days, I felt I was justified in looking upon those boats as an unmitigated nuisance. My first night found me in an incongruous, not to say ridiculous, situation. Could anything be more droll than for me, the humble admirer of all that is broadest in thought, and most tolerant in religion, to be plumped down in a Roman Catholic priest's shanty in the wilds of British America? My wildest dreams never put me in such a position. I was obliged to listen with a grave face to the conversation of a garrulous old man, who was the professor of all that is ignorant in superstition and all that is tyrannical in thought. I hasten, however, to testify with gratitude to the old fellow's hospitality and kindness; he was a good old soul, which did not, all the same, prevent him from being an old bore with his puerile stories about his village home on the coast of Brittany. He gave us a good supper and comfortable, warm beds, the two things which, if you have ever roughed it, you will readily admit are the most essential to a man's well being. It is needless to say that, the next morning, it was nearer noon than sun-rise when Barstow consented to entertain the question of making a start. Still the weather was so fine and Nature looked so delightful and cheerful in her early autumn dress, that a man must have been a churl who could have felt otherwise than well disposed towards the whole world. The folly of our dilatoriness was not long in becoming apparent. Four o'clock came and with it hunger and approaching night. As luck would have it, we suddenly came upon a place, the existence of which Barstow had forgotten, where he had once contemplated farming, but

there was nothing agricultural to be seen, though it might be considered a grand monument of my friend's magnificent procrastination. We found a house half-built, and under the lee of an embryo wall we broke our fast with a man we discovered there to Barstow's surprise. I thought our meal excellent, though scarcely suitable for London dinner-parties. It consisted of very ancient pemmican cut with a chisel, some hard bread which appeared to be made of saw-dust and barley, and tea in a pannikin stirred with a stick. We succeeded in hanging about this bleak spot, the discovery of which caused Barstow unbounded satisfaction, until long after it was dark, and only reached Mann's place at eight o'clock. So far so good; we had an excellent supper, our *al fresco* meal having in no way injured our appetites, and, nectar of the gods, some hot brandy and water to warm our shivering bodies. I found the Captain a very pleasant fellow, but suffering from absurd notions on the question of how one ought to live in the wilderness. He had built a fine big saw-mill, which promised, when the place got more populated, to pay him well, and, seeing the difficulty of getting materials, did infinite credit to his industry and perseverance. But he himself was content to live in the most miserable hovel I ever saw, surrounded only by the bare necessities of life. He and his mate were both Irish, and it was not long before they gave us capital specimens of their Celtic humour. We slept comfortably on the floor on a heap of rugs and blankets, while the owners of these palatial premises took their well-earned rest in contrivances very like old-fashioned ship's bunks. Barstow, next morning, kept us waiting for breakfast, but his peculiarity being well known it passed unnoticed. In spite of the snow, which had fallen to the depth of several inches in the night, we harnessed up and started off a party of four to look up another Captain, quartered some few miles away. This worthy was a queer character. Her Majesty had, for some irregularity in connection with a bottle, dispensed with his services. Misfortune had driven him hither and thither, and finally landed him in the North-West, where he lived precariously on farming on a small scale. He was a veritable Ishmaelite, living in a tent, and

theoretically at variance with the whole world. He was, however, sufficiently civilized to recognize the advantages of a cook, and, in order to induce her to put up with his curious customs, he had built her a substantial house a few yards from where he had pitched his tent. "All these half-breeds are such dirty brutes," he explained, "that I won't have one nearer to me than is absolutely necessary; none are allowed to enter my tent upon any pretence whatever." During his chequered career he had picked up much valuable information in culinary matters, which, after much labour, he had taught to his cook. She prepared a dish for us with the unpromising ingredients of pemmican, a few potatoes, and a little chutney, which was really delicious, and so disguised was the pemmican, that it was not until I had made a capital lunch, that I learnt how important a feature it had been in our meal. We brought the gentleman back with us, and on reaching Mann's shanty we found that the snow on the roof was melting. It was perfectly fine outside, but raining "cats and dogs" in the best drawing room. Every crevice, and the roof was as much fissure as anything else, supplied a trickle of water. One drop soon fell on the only lamp; it gave a click, the glass broke, and we were left to do the best we could by the light of the fire. In spite of this cheerless prospect, we supped merrily on roast duck, and soon finished up the remains of a keg of brandy procured for medicinal purposes. The difficulty that night was to find a dry spot on which to lay one's head. The wandering Captain was too old a campaigner to be caught resourceless. Early in the evening he secured the one table of the establishment, with which he formed a canopy over himself, and thus sheltered himself from the wet. All the rest of us woke up the next morning more or less soaked by the dripping which continued all night. Over-night plans were soon altered, and we postponed our departure till evening. Two dogs were discovered in the course of that afternoon, which were not only no good for hauling, but uncommonly good harness eaters, and immovably fixed to the soil. Kind words brought the half-wild curs within range, and a couple of shots from a duck gun stretched them lifeless in the snow. With

rare wisdom, Barstow made up his mind to start on a forty-mile drive just as it was getting dark. and any sort of weather probable. After going some four miles, we were obliged to seek quarters for the night at a half-breed's house, who gave us the best he had and a hearty welcome. Next morning, Barstow submitted to what to me would have been torture, rather than lose his reputation for procrastination, of which I believe he was really proud. He knew it was imperative for us to make an early start, and that I was weary of those uncomfortable half-breed shanties. So, when he could stay in bed no longer, he managed to waste half-an-hour walking about in the snow on his bare feet, when he could find nothing else to cause us to delay. In consequence of these perverse delays, we found evening and darkness coming on, and our horse beginning to show unmistakable signs of fatigue when we were a long way off from home. Before long, we came to an unusually steep hill, which the horse refused to tackle. We hauled, and thrashed, and swore at him, but he wouldn't budge; and at last we had to push buckboard and horse bodily up. After this Herculean effort, it became evident that we should have to make another halt. We eventually reached shelter and shaganape supper towards eight o'clock. The gentleman who befriended us this time rejoiced in a small hut and a large family. We found no less than twelve people assembled, of which eight were women, and the atmosphere of the place was asphyxiating. They gave us a shake-down on the floor, which was luxury itself to our tired bodies; but, unfortunately, there were babies too in the party, and they howled without ceasing the greater part of the night. We had now only a few miles to go, and I felt certain that we should reach Duck Lake that day. But I was doomed to be disappointed. When we got to the old priest's establishment a halt was made. I then found myself let in for Mass, it being a Saints' Day, and I never endured anything so tedious in my life. At first the ridiculous ceremony interested me. The old man put on gorgeous apparel of needle-work and satin, and two of his faithful flock crooned Latin remarks, which I knew they did not understand. Then the priest himself

put in his cracked voice, which was speedily followed by a howl from all the children. This business took two hours to get through, when we were conducted in a half-frozen condition to dinner. After our meal I thought we must start, but, as ill luck would have it, some old woman caught sight of Barstow and suggested dominoes. He at once consented, and went off, leaving me to the tender mercies of the priest. Fortunately he had parochial duties, and I took refuge readily enough in tobacco, my pencil, and a piece of paper. Of course the dominoes did not end till late, so we slept there again. Next day we waited until a snow storm was fairly under weigh before starting, so as to make sure of a thoroughly disagreeable drive. This time, as there was nowhere else to stop, we really did get to Duck Lake.

On our arrival, we were surprised to find camped near us a party of surveyors, who had just come down from the far North, where they had been working for more than a year. They had been doing, I imagine, the preliminary work for the Canada Pacific Railway, then only a half-projected scheme, now a reality. They were right good fellows, and kept us alive as long as they stayed in our neighbourhood. Too much alive, I think, for on one of our visits they brewed some remarkable stuff which they called brandy and water, but which produced astonishing head-aches the next morning. Their halt turned out to be to me a most providential one. I had learned with dismay, that on our return journey we should have to go very light, and the fate of a portmanteau I had brought up hung in the balance. Here was an opportunity for getting it taken down to Winnipeg. The party had plenty of pack horses, and one small bundle could not make any difference. I was somewhat disconcerted, on broaching the subject, to hear that the chief had just given orders for each man's baggage to be reduced to forty pounds, as the horses were not equal to carrying more through the snow, which had already fallen pretty heavily. However, I formed a plot, it worked admirably, and my portmanteau was saved. The chief had not tasted brandy for months. We invited him one evening to supper; after it we begged him to fill himself a bumper out of one of the few

remaining bottles of the priceless fluid. It was a mean advantage to take, but, whilst he was in the midst of enjoying the long-untasted nectar, I proffered my request. He could refuse us nothing after such a precious offering, and found himself compelled to consent.

And so our round of visits ended, and I was heartily glad of it. I saw and heard little of interest, and all those stoppages were dull, dreadfully dull. I learned, however, how utterly hopeless it would be for me to attempt to live in such a way, the freedom and pleasures of which have been so often extolled. It struck me that the reason why I found it so miserable, is that I have no capacity for doing nothing busily. These fellows really do nothing; they don't even talk much, and what they say is the same thing over and over again. The power to sit contentedly over a fire and smoke a pipe in silence is an art, and I regret that I have never made an effort to master even the rudiments of it.

---

## CHAPTER XV.

### The Half-breeds.

HALF-BREEDS form a marked feature in the North-West Territories; without whom all intercourse with the Indians would be impossible, for they are the only interpreters. As probably the reader knows, there are both English and French half-breeds; but I have decided to describe *les métifs Français*, as they call themselves, not only because I had more opportunities of observing them, but also because they seemed to have more distinct and salient characteristics, and, owing to their language, to be less affected by the influence of emigration. In all countries where the work of civilization is incomplete, and where the borderland between heathenism and Christianity, between wilderness and settlement, is almost imperceptible, the phenomenon of the half-breed is always to be

found. The reason is simple enough. Streams of emigration are incessantly pouring out of the over-crowded countries of Europe into those thinly-populated lands where a man may gain that competence which inevitable circumstances have combined to deny him at home. He finds himself in a spot where life is as free as air, where Nature smiles on and rewards his labour, and where industry and hard work are the only keys to comfort and well-being. There he soon loses all the habits and social restraints of home, and as soon all desire to revisit the scenes of his poverty. His associates are men in a similar position, and he is pretty sure to imitate their mode of life. He comes in daily, hourly contact with the savage tribes around him, with whom he is soon in friendly intercourse. When prosperity shines on him, and when he is able to complacently contemplate the good things which hard work has procured for him, what is more natural than for him to be charmed by the dusky graces of the Hottentot maiden in one hemisphere, or by the bright eyes of a copper-coloured Cree in the other? To woo her and to wed her is simple enough, and the half-breed is the result. My friends are sprung from a union between the French colonists and the Cree maidens of the North-West, and as such have a more distinct nationality than the other half-breeds. Their ancestors have been severed from the mother country ever since the days when France and England fought for the possession of America, and when the United States did not exist. Unlike their English co-colonists, they have little or no fresh European blood brought among them. They have thus remained unaffected by innovations, and have preserved almost unaltered their old customs, many of which are precisely the same as those of the Normandy and Brittany peasants, from whom they are undoubtedly descended. In features, in character, in passions, they are Indians; in name, in customs, in religion, they are French. They speak a French which can hardly be distinguished from the *patois* of Brittany, and even their priests are natives of that part of France. So anxious are they, in spite of their savage proclivities, that their origin should not be forgotten, that their

patronymics are among their most jealously guarded treasures.

The fitful light of a camp fire shows the interior of an Indian lodge, in which skins, blankets, guns, bowie knives, and coarse tin plates and cups are strewn about in picturesque disorder. Roughly-cut joints of buffalo, an open tea-bag, and some loose sugar are heaped up in a corner; whilst opposite, a long-haired youth is propping up close to the blaze a buffalo marrow-bone, with the skin and hair still on it. Look at that tall, angular, yet firmly-built man, who is squatting on his haunches in a way to which no European frame would lend itself. He is chattering a queer, yet musical language, in which the gestures are as plentiful as they are graceful. Observe his dark complexion, his gleaming black eye, and his hooked, though well-cut nose; mark his high cheek-bones, his large firm mouth and his low forehead. His attitude, his surroundings, and his appearance are all purely savage. Presently he begins humming a weird and monotonous sing-song, to the accompaniment of a rude drum, while his companions watch him intently. Gradually he raises his voice, and his song grows quicker and quicker as his movements become more and more rapid, much after the manner of the dervishes of Cairo. His hair is now streaming over his face, as he twists and turns in a frantic way; and though his excitement is now intense, his companions still remain silent and motionless. He is swinging his arms about, holding, or seeming to hold, a small bit of wood in each hand, which now and then he plunges into the blanket wrapped loosely round his body. This is not a sacred observance, or the worship of Manitou, as might be imagined. No! It is the indulgence in that passion which, go where you will, is practised in some form or another throughout the whole world—in a word, he is gambling. The game is one of skill and quickness, and consists in concealing the pieces of wood, so that the other side cannot name the hiding place. It appears at first to be mere guess-work, but long practice has made them very sharp, and I found they could always beat me at it. Both Indians and half-breeds readily stake their horses, their furs, and the very clothes off their backs, and win or lose with the

equanimity of a Sclave. They have a method of marking the game with little twigs stuck in the ground, and with nominal bullets for counters, which I could not quite understand. The game is such a passion with them that two sides have been known to play for a week without stopping night or day, each man taking a rest when nature refused to hold out any longer. My friend is in the thick of it now; his whole mind is occupied in trying to outwit his opponent. Both grow wildly excited, and the song rises and falls from a frantic shouting to a low humming, the winner of the last "coup" yelling, and the loser humming and biding his time. Look once more at his beardless, bronzed face, his wild eyes, and his glistening, wolfish teeth, and you see in them cunning, recklessness, and delirious gaiety. Vanished is all that is French in him, forgotten are the teachings of the Church, gone is all that held him in restraint and clothed him in a thin veneer of civilisation. His real nature has asserted itself, and he has become a savage.

Now for the reverse of the shield. Look at this polished gentleman in a picturesque half-Indian dress, with its gaudy leggings and elaborately embroidered moccasins, in which all the colours of the rainbow are indiscriminately mixed. Look at him as he bows you into his rude hut, with all the grace of a *vieux chevalier*, begs you to be seated, and places before you a plentiful meal, with a charming apology for its simplicity. He speaks a French which, though not the pure Parisian I like to hear, is neither harsh nor unmusical. He is perhaps a little stiff in his manner, which is only natural in a partially reclaimed son of the prairie. His little vanities are very much on the surface, and his conversation is a trifle limited, rarely extending beyond the discussion of horses in general and the excellence of his own in particular, the price of furs and the state of the trade in them. But with what sovereign contempt does he speak of the Indians—*les sauvages*, as he calls them! You could almost fancy him echoing Tennyson's sentiments in "Locksley Hall," only he never heard of him or his poems. With what easy confidence does he assure you of his own and his family's good qualities, and how carefully does he try to conceal his ignorance of the

world, while endeavouring to get information which he pretends to have known before! The Indian has disappeared, and our friend has now become a courteous Frenchman, whose hospitality and pleasant welcome compels you to admire him. So much for first impressions. Now let us go deeper. You find the Indian qualities so mixed up with the French ones, and yet so distinct, that at one moment you think him a savage, at another a Frenchman, and all the time you are sure he is something of a hypocrite. At home he is a gentleman, vain to puerility, generous to a fault, and lazy to a vice. On the plains he is a keen hunter, a perfect guide, capable of bearing any hardships, a man of energy, and, in his calling, of ability. He possesses the art of flattery to a degree that would have excited the envy and admiration of an old courtier; but he is almost as ignorant as his despised progenitress, it being quite the exception to find one who can either read or write. He is, as I say, the soul of generosity, and parts with a favourite horse or a valued gun as easily as with the veriest trifle; yet gratitude is a virtue of which he does not know the meaning. He is cunning and sharp at a bargain, yet he knows of nothing beyond his native prairie. He will assure you with much warmth of his independence, and, almost in the same breath, will beg something from you with all the importunity of a Naples lazarone. He will speak with scorn of the Indians, yet he is never so happy as when living among them, and like them.

The reason, I imagine, why you find in half-breeds such a constant contradiction, and why the French and Indian characteristics lie side by side and appear in turn on the surface, is because the Roman Catholic religion exercises a powerful, though intermittent, influence over them. They are all devout, or seemingly devout, Catholics, and look upon a Protestant with contempt. So long as the eye of the Priest is upon them, his influence is paramount, they are good Catholics, and much more respectable members of society than their fellow-countrymen of the Protestant faith; but the moment they are out of his sight they forget the threats of punishment for wrong-doing, and become wholly and utterly Indian in their unbridled passions and wild recklessness. They

have no stability, no strength of character, no firmness of will, and the Indian is so deeply rooted in their nature that no method has yet been found successful enough to crush out the savage. Nothing will induce them to adopt any other mode of life than the precarious one of the chase. Their attempts to trade on a small scale are nearly always ephemeral and fruitless, and those few who have been led to try agriculture, have in a short time, with few exceptions, given it up as a failure. They spend their money lavishly and foolishly as soon as they get it, and trust to chance for the future. Their wives are almost as much slaves as the Indian squaws, and their huts are rarely more luxurious or cleaner than an ordinary lodge. They live, as a rule, in a single roomed building, where their female belongings occupy the post of domestic servants, not only doing every kind of indoor work, but also waiting on their lord while he eats, never being allowed to sit at table with him, or to open their lips unless addressed. Their customs are a mixture of old French and Indian ones, and, though their language is French, they are more at their ease when speaking Cree. They keep the Church holidays and feasts, but amuse themselves like savages. They dance like French peasants, but keep up their dancing, as long as food and drink will last, in the Indian fashion; and they love spirits with an exceeding love, and rarely neglect an opportunity to (*vulgè loquor*) get "blind drunk." Weighing the two sets of qualities which are found in this people, I am inclined to think they are more Indian than French, and the balance falls thus because their French attributes are more artificial, and the Indian ones more natural. My object has been to describe an average specimen; so of course there are many superior, as there are many inferior, to the one I have selected as a type. Though one is not long in discovering their faults, I hasten to say that their pleasant welcome and unvarying kindness was extended to me wherever I went.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

### Le Père Pierre.

IT now becomes my pleasant duty to devote a chapter to a man who did much towards relieving the monotony of many dull days—days which usually remain unchronicled in a book of travels, but which are none the less wearisome because they are passed over in silence. My friend le Père Pierre was the important personage of the Roman Catholic Mission of the Saskatchewan. His individuality was so marked that no one who has visited the North-West can have failed to have at least heard of him; if he should have had the misfortune to have missed meeting him. For, no matter what the subject of conversation, or who you happened to be talking to, his name was sure to be mentioned sooner or later. I can still see his well-used and well-filled cassock, his shaggy beard, and his merry, twinkling eyes. Should these pages ever chance to be read by him, I can well imagine his exclamation: "I knew it. He was an awful man, always poking fun at somebody, sparing no one, taking notes in order to laugh the more heartily and heartlessly at everybody and everything." He was a jovial priest, with large views and wonderful toleration. Yet (don't mistake me) every half-breed within reach of his influence had reason to fear his censure when they had misconducted themselves. Many a time have I seen him cuff an obstinate and vicious youth; yes, and treat a would-be wanton young woman with equal severity. But, in spite of his unbending and strict treatment, everybody liked him. They all admired his rectitude, placed unbounded faith in his judgment, and were always ready to be guided by his decisions. They knew he was at bottom their best friend, and no innocent festivities and amusements went off really well unless the jolly, kind-hearted Père Pierre was among the honoured guests. He was the right man in the right place, and it would have been impossible to choose a better man to fill a post beset with many difficulties.

It is much to be able to say that I never heard anything about him which did not redound to his credit. The priest of a congregation such as his, composed as it was for the most part of men little better than savages, had need of no little supply of tact, firmness, patience, and at times of courage. The tract of country over which he exercised spiritual authority was so vast that he was obliged to be continually on the move in order to keep himself and his teachings fresh in the minds of his scattered flock. To me he was a perfect godsend. Without him I should have been without society, and it was in talking to him that I learnt many of the less conspicuous features of the country, became acquainted with the customs of the people, and discovered the true value of spirits. He used to give me grand opportunities of indulging in my favourite arguments, and many were the friendly battles of words which we fought on those long winter evenings. When the wind was shrieking round the house, blowing the frozen snow into deep drifts, we would pile up the fire, light our pipes, and while we sipped at our steaming glasses of hot brandy and water, we would settle the affairs of the universe with mutual satisfaction. These discussions were often carried on far into the small hours, and by the time our third glasses were getting empty, we both used to make the most startling assertions. The breadth of my views used often to startle him, and he always looked upon me as by far the most wicked and reckless free-thinker he ever saw. Dear, simple old man! How good-tempered he was, too, except when he arrived from a long cold drive and found we were out of brandy. Then his face would fall, and he would bitterly complain at the hardness of his lot. I shall never forget his righteous indignation when his consignment of sacramental wine arrived from Paris and it turned out to be "vin grave." "There is no warmth in such stuff as that," he exclaimed, in pained accents. "Why do they not understand that this is not France? They ought to know that the thermometer, when it feels in the humour, can easily fall low enough to freeze such thin rubbish. Is the Church properly treated, and can the sacraments be rightly administered with ice?" Per-

haps he was rather too fond of ardent spirits. But we all have our little weaknesses, and I never blamed him for it. His was a hard life with few enjoyments in it, and although he never refused a drink, in fact refused to leave a place until the drink was all consumed, taken in the aggregate, it did not amount to very much. Spirits are too rare and priceless to be other than exceptional luxuries, so that, with the best of intentions (and I will give him credit for them), it would have been difficult for this excellent curé to drink too much. I hope he will forgive me if I conclude this brief mention of him by relating a little episode of which he was the hero, and which is both characteristic and true. The story is such a good one that I fear I might spoil it in the telling. So I shall venture to give it to you in the words of a friend of mine, who has a turn for versifying and good-natured satire.

"There lived a priest in the far North-West,
His life was holy and his soul was blest,
Long was his beard and tonsured his head,
Full was his paunch, and people said
He was fond of eating the best to be found,
In the little log huts of the country round;
But most of all this pious man
Loved 'spiritual' food in a little can,
Poured from a keg which smelt like gin.
Of course there couldn't have been any in,
For he crossed himself in an open way,
And said many prayers in the length of the day.
But oddly enough, if a cork were drawn
The priest would appear in the early dawn.
To preach against drink no doubt he had come,
But still—yes! he'd take just a 'filet' of rum.
Now there—I'm forgetting the point of my song,
And making it really a great deal too long.
One sabbath in winter he boldly drove off,
In spite of a cold and a troublesome cough,
To perform as he could in this barbarous land
A mass that conformed to the Church's command.
He had in a bag a great number of things:
His vestments, in which he so beautifully sings,
Some golden and purple, some green and some blue;
Some candlesticks bright and a napkin or two;
He'd a censer and incense, but as for the bell,
He thought that a can and a spoon did as well;
And, last but not least, he'd a flask made of tin,
And the wine for the sacrament bubbled within.

The damsels approached, and with dext'rous hands
Fixed everything up while he gave the commands.
They altered the table—they made it an altar
(I won't pun again, so pray do not falter);
They'd a card of the law and a book of the scriptures;
A selection of cheap but bright-coloured pictures.
Now all things are ready. The half-breeds appear,
Their daughters and wives come up in the rear.
All voices are hushed; 'tis a solemn occasion
For all who belong to the Romish persuasion.
But alas; as the priest began counting his stock,
He suddenly stopped—he'd experienced a shock.
'The chalice! I fear I have left it at home.
Without it a mass is forbidden by Rome.
I greatly regret, yet I know you'll agree
'Twould be sinful to act 'gainst the Church's decree.'
And as he thus spoke the flask caught his eye,
He smothered a smile, and heaved a full sigh:
'We can't have a mass, let's drink up the wine;
I'll preach you a sermon and then we can dine.'
We did as he said. We each took a sip,
But the liquor was scarcely yet dry on the lip,
When a messenger came, the chalice in hand.
The effect on them all I assure you was grand.
The priest only smiled, and most pleasantly said:
'We have tickled our palates, it's time that we fed.'
His speech was a short but a thund'ring oration,
Which spoke of the devil, and hell, and damnation.
The merry old man was soon in his place,
And paid for his meal with a short mutter'd grace.
When we parted, he blessed us and begged us to come
And see him again, bringing plenty of rum."

# PART II.

## *WHAT I DID THERE.*

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### We Start Again.

THE first week in November passed drearily along, and still Barstow showed no disposition to start off on our buffalo-destroying expedition, which after all had been the attractive novelty held out to me as compensation for leaving the comforts of civilization. He did nothing all day but eat and sleep, and I gladly testify to the fact that he did both excellently well. Although I am able, in their place, to take my share of these two essentials, I found them scarcely sufficient occupation for the entire twenty-four hours. I was therefore strangely delighted when a wholly unexpected budget of letters arrived from home. I know that colonists from time immemorial have sung about, written about, and wept over "letters from home." Until then, I had considered all sentiment expended on such a subject as so much sentiment wasted, and had often thought that it would be bliss to get to a place where post-offices are not; where you cannot be peppered with circulars, stabbed with dunning letters, and bombarded with news every half-hour. But I retract all that now. Give me the ingenious advertisement, the cheery rat-tat of the post-man, and even the annoyance of the dun rather than the weight and monotony of knowing nothing of what is going on in the world. During these days of enforced idleness, winter seemed to have been

driven back. The sun shone brilliantly on the glistening snow, and it was disheartening to think that had I been under a less "Fabian" leadership, we might have been travelling under exceptionally favourable conditions, instead of, as it afterwards turned out, in the teeth of an icy cold wind. But let that pass, we did make a start at last, and the whole settlement turned out to witness the departure of the hunters, and to wish them good sport and a safe return. We learnt by report that *les animaux*, as the buffalo are called, were within ten or twelve days' march of us, sheltering among the hillocks on the prairies which lie in the elbow of the North Saskatchewan River, so we had to prepare ourselves for quite an expedition. I heard afterwards, that those experienced in such matters looked upon our venturing out so late in the year as little short of madness. However, Providence is supposed to take drunkards and fools under its particular care, and it must be owing to this fact that we did not die of cold or starvation. Now when I can look back calmly, I know that, had the buffalo elected to seek other pastures, we should certainly have perished for want of food. Winter—and especially such winters as those of the North-West, where I have often seen the mercury frozen—does not seem to be the time to pick out for buffalo-hunting, and I recommend no one to follow our example: but we had no choice. Besides, when one remembers that one thus escapes the intense heat and myriads of mosquitos—that the holes, with which the prairies are honeycombed, being filled with snow, one runs little or no risk of getting one of those sudden "croppers" which are the great danger in buffalo running—and that the animals are more easily reached in the heavy ground—perhaps it is as good a time as any, in spite of numbed fingers, frozen cheeks, and such like unpleasantnesses. But to our muttons. We started off our two half-breeds early in the morning with our *impedimenta* packed on an old cart, to be cut up and used as fire-wood as soon as the snow got too deep to drag it easily, two "trains-à-glisse," merely long flat boards, and a "trompeur," or rudely-made sleigh on wooden runners; in addition to these we had a "cariole," a thing something like a long bath, which,

though meant for dogs to draw, came in very usefully. We took six horses to harness to this miscellaneous collection of vehicles, and a hard time they had of it before they got home again with little but skin and bones on their bodies. Buffalo-robes of course we had lots of, and each of us had a couple of blankets sewn into the shape of a long sack to sleep in. My costume, which has since proved invaluable for fancy dress balls, was sufficiently fantastic to merit a description. I wore a cap made of an entire kit-fox, brush and all, an elaborate moose-skin coat, "mitasses," or Indian leggings with gaiters and regulation fringes, and the thickest pair of moccasins I could get; and for particularly cold weather, a "capot"—a garment like a frock coat, made of coarse thick cloth, and supplemented by a hood. Barstow and I made a brave start later in the day, mounted on our buffalo-runners, and very comical we must have looked, wrapped up as we were to the very eyes in fur and wool, for all the world like a couple of German students prepared to do battle for the honour of our corp. We had hardly gone a hundred yards before Barstow's horse came down in a hidden hole, and he went bowling into the snow, where he lay helpless, though unhurt, owing to the many wraps he was wearing. I soon succeeded in releasing him, and in a few hours we reached our party, just as they were preparing to camp. It was fortunate that we did not get more than some ten miles away from habitations, for, as soon as we began to get our camp in order, we found that we had forgotten some of the most essential things for an arduous journey, the duration of which could not possibly be computed. Flour we had, but there was no pan to make bread in. The frying-pan which was to be used for cooking the humble salt pork, as well as for baking the bread, was discovered with its handle missing. The tent, theoretically a beautiful contrivance, proved hopelessly unmountable. These were disheartening disclosures, but supper was none the less a necessity. It was quite dark when the whole magnitude of our misfortunes became apparent. However we made the best of it. There was plenty of wood around us, and we began by lighting a huge fire,

then we all set to with a will and scraped away the snow near it, and laid out some buffalo robes. We soon got a pot of water boiling and prepared supper. This is the menu of our first *al fresco* meal: Canards sauvages glacés, pain gelée, glaces aux pommes sèches, thé à la Nord-Ouest, *i.e.*, with a little "Pain-Killer" in it: thermometer ten degrees below zero. Our meal, you will see, was not one to tempt an epicure, but we all thoroughly enjoyed it. I had taken care that our supply of tobacco should be a large one, and after carefully and deliberately smoking a pipe of myrtle-navy we began to consider the question of sleep, and how best to obtain it. We had one more try at the tent, only to find it as stubborn as ever. It simply refused to stand up, and as soon as we let it go the props gave way like a naughty child's legs do, when it has thrown itself on the ground in a temper. However, we managed to build up a sort of shelter against the wind, made of boughs of trees, and hoping no bad weather would overtake us, we retired to rest. The novelty of the situation kept me awake all night, but, thanks to a mountain of coverings, I did not suffer from cold. There was plenty of cold about all the same, for in the morning I found that my blankets were frozen together, the moisture of the body and breath having been caught by the sharp frost in spite of our roaring fire and layers of buffalo robes. At sunrise we despatched one of our half-breeds in search of an Indian lodge to replace the useless affair we had. It took him all day to do this, and it became necessary to occupy ourselves till he returned. Barstow, who is the most philosophical of mortals, never seemed the least put out at any of our delays, and on this occasion quietly went out rabbit shooting, as if that was the only object he had in view. I sincerely envy a man who has the faculty of thus adapting himself to circumstances. The rabbits of the North-West are somewhat different to ours. They are only to be found in the woods, and do not burrow at all; they are of a brownish-white colour, which in winter turns to snow-white, so that in the snow they are very difficult to see. I had already tried to shoot them, but finding that I invariably selected a stump to waste my shot on, under the impression that I

was aiming at a rabbit, I declined to join Barstow's expedition, and started off alone into the open in hopes of finding stray prairie chicken. Our united bag was not a large one, viz., a brace of rabbits and a chicken, but they made us a supper. Just before dark we were glad to welcome the arrival of our half-breed, bringing the much-needed lodge. It may be of interest to describe how an Indian tent is pitched. Three poles of firwood are tied together and spread out in a triangle like stacked arms, care being taken that two of them are only some three feet apart, to form the doorway; these are the backbone of the thing, and we never travelled without them, the other poles, which go towards forming a conical-shaped framework, were nearly always cut fresh every night. Round this is stretched the tent made of deerskin, and drawn to the front, where it laces up, leaving a hole at the top and a small one at the bottom, which by courtesy is called the door, though one could only just creep under it, The top is furnished with two flaps, called "oreilles," which by the help of other poles can be raised so as to prevent the wind from blowing the smoke down the chimney—the side view is then not unlike the mainsail of a cutter. The fire is lighted in the middle, and there you are, as jolly as possible, except that you may not stand up without risk of suffocation from the smoke, and that, as the bottom has to be open all round to give the fire a good draught, you never can feel your back quite warm enough. Of course they differ very much in size. Ours was but a small one, barely large enough for the four of our party. The dimensions are calculated by skins, and ours was, I think, a lodge of seven skins, but some of the Indian chiefs have lodges of over twenty.

That night I realized what a much more serious journey I was about to undertake than the one up to headquarters, and which I had considered such a hardship. We had a tent it was true, but the weather had grown colder and more windy, and I suffered so from the cold that I was not able to sleep. We made a very late start the next morning owing to a lazy fit of Barstow's, and, after a couple of hours travelling, halted for a mid-day meal which consisted of nothing but pemmican

and tea. We had started out with a good supply of bread, but the delay caused by the frying-pan's accident had just been long enough to cause us to be without any, just at a time when we could not afford to stop and make more. When our frugal meal was ended it began to snow, and we prepared for an unpleasant state of affairs. We were obliged to go on, as our only chance of refuge was in an abandoned hut, once a telegraph station, some twenty miles off. The darker it grew the harder it snowed, and the more difficult we found it to get our cart along. The abomination of desolation would not be inaptly described, if it were depicted as a prairie of boundless extent swept by a fierce snow storm, and night coming on. The rude sleighs even began to slacken their pace before the wind, and it became a necessity to ease the horses by running. Running is not and never was one of my accomplishments, and as I blundered along with icicles hanging to my beard, I bitterly regretted my folly in allowing myself to be persuaded into undertaking such a mad expedition. When I was pretty nearly exhausted one of our fellows came to my rescue, put me into his "trompeur" and covered me up with robes. It is impossible to decribe the delight of this change. I went off into a sort of opium dream of the most exquisite pleasures, which like all pleasures was soon over. In ten minutes I was so cold that I had to get out and run again. This went on until it was pitch dark, and until I thought it would be heavenly to lie down in the snow and rest, no matter what happened. Just as I was beginning to fall about from exhaustion, I heard a shout of triumph; the half-breed's sharp eyes had seen our goal, and I breathed again. I made one more effort, and a few minutes after we were all scraping for dear life at the door of the hut, which was choked up with five or six feet of snow. A lighted match disclosed perfectly palatial premises. We were saved. We soon started a fire, which is always the first thing thought of on the prairies. Once it is blazing, everything bears another and a pleasanter aspect, and one makes "light" of one's discomforts (pun ruthlessly erased). By its light we found some tables and chairs, and a quantity of old cases which

promised to supply us with plenty of fuel. We also discovered a lovely bed made of reeds, and hung on telegraph wires from the rafters of our mansion. We all cast covetous glances at it, while secretly hoping nobody would notice it. You must sleep on frozen ground for three or four nights in order to understand the anxiety each of us felt to secure it, rough as it was. The question was a serious one, and we decided it by lot, as if it had been the last biscuit on a ship-wreck raft. The snow never ceased falling all that evening, so we doomed our cart to destruction. It was solemnly cut up and burnt, in order to save the resources of the hut as long as possible. We could not tell how long we should be imprisoned, and were obliged to be prepared for the worst.

## CHAPTER II.

### A few Leaves from my Diary.

PRINTED diaries are, as a rule, dreadful nuisances to read, and I must apologize for introducing a few pages of mine at this point. My only excuse for taking this unwarrantable liberty is, that I find it quite impossible, short of this course, to give a true and graphic account of what "roughing it" is. A bare record of distances traversed conveys no idea, and it is only by dosing you with a running, if brief, commentary of trivialities, garnished with the reflections of the moment, that I can hope to make you understand what you yourself would feel, had you been placed in my position, which, I take it, is the true way to interest a reader.

*November 15th.*—It is a lovely day and the sun is shining brightly, but—and a very important conjunction it is to us—there is a strong east wind blowing, and the "poudre" or frozen snow is flying about in blinding clouds. Our road takes us right in the teeth of the blast, so that even the hardened half-breeds admit that

it is beyond human endurance, and that it would be little short of madness to attempt to travel to-day. We are therefore stranded for the present, but may consider ourselves fortunate indeed to have found such comfortable quarters. After drawing lots for the bed, Faucon, one of the half-breeds who won it, generously offered it to me, and I made for myself what I thought a perfect bed. But as the thing hangs loosely from the roof, I find it has a tendency to slide out of the horizontal. In the middle of the night I woke out of a heavenly sleep, finding my feet hanging in mid-air, the bed almost perpendicular, and all my wraps on the ground. We breakfasted pretty late on pork and buffalo-tongue which had reached an unnecessary elevation. "Galette," a sort of cake made of flour and buffalo fat, is to be a special luxury for our dinner. I have been trying to think what kind of life the two wretches must have led when this place was used as telegraph station. I was told they never saw a soul for six months, and eventually deserted the place in order to avoid going mad for want of occupation, and the sight of their fellow men. The poor fellows seem to have passed a good deal of their time twisting telegraph wire into useful things. They bound their hut together with it, they used it for hooks to hold pots over the fire, to hang their clothes on, and had even constructed an ingenious gridiron out of this material. I am learning by degrees the precautions one ought to take to avoid being frost bitten. Thus—never allow snow or ice to pass your lips; both irritate the throat and make you unnaturally and unwholesomely thirsty. When you reach camp, at once scrape the snow well off your moccasins, for unless you do this the heat of the fire will melt the snow and wet your moccasins. As soon as you go away from the fire this moisture freezes and you run a great risk of getting your feet frozen. Even if you do not feel cold run or walk as much as you can, for the great thing is to keep the circulation of your blood going freely. From time to time pass your hand briskly over your face, as you get your cheek or your nose frozen without being aware of it. When you do find it out by approaching the fire, it is too late. You will then suffer a great deal of pain, as well as have a

permanent scar on the spot. We are to stay here all day and hope for a change of wind to-morrow. It strikes me very forcibly that, at this rate, we shall be a long time reaching the buffalo, and that when I have done with this spell of "roughing" it, I shall not be in a hurry to try it again. I admit, however, that it is doing me all the good in the world, and that my health will benefit much by this violent rousing out of my lazy, comfort-seeking habits. I feel a pleasure at the least bit of comfort, such as no civilized enjoyment ever gave me. I am learning how little a man requires in order to live, and am realizing how many things there are which I have looked upon as necessities, but which after all are merely checks to the enjoyment of health.

*November* 16*th*.—I have had a good supper and a splendid pipe, and now feel that intense happiness which can only be experienced in camp by the fireside after a long day's journey. Last night I fixed up my bed with a couple of old barrels, and made it up warm, quite forgetting that the weather had grown milder. I soon found it out, for when I got into my sack, it was not long before I got into a perspiration. It is my luck either to be too warm or too cold, the *juste milieu* always just escaping me. We didn't leave the hut which had afforded us such providential shelter until 11.30. To begin with Barstow wouldn't get up, and then our horses had wandered so far in search of food, that it took a long time to find them and drive them in. We had not been going three hours before it began to snow again in the most determined manner, so having reached the banks of the Saskatchewan, it was thought advisable to camp. I took the precaution to saddle my horse on this occasion and ride. I find running very hard work, and there is no praise or gain to be got out of it. We soon got our lodge up, and in an hour the supper I have spoken so highly of was steaming before us. I haven't the least idea how much further we have to go, nor how much longer we shall take going; but I have now got into that charming state when the worst is realized and endured. I feel it does not matter, and worrying over troubles to come will not remove them. We shall have the coldest time of the year to travel down to Red River

in, and will not have even the scant covering of a lodge. It sounds awful, but I dare say we shall manage it somehow.

*November 17th.*—This morning proved snowy and windy, so we are obliged to stay where we are. Towards afternoon things improved; the sun came out and the wind went down, but it was too late to think of making a start. Hilaire, who seems a good shot, brought us a rabbit, which we discussed for supper with much gusto. Though fine it still remains very cold. I find my face scorched by the fire and my back frozen—the sensation is not pleasant. In order to appreciate our coarse and roughly cooked food one must have had a hard day's journey, and to-day I found the bread unpleasantly stale. Our half-breeds have been amusing us with that Indian game of which I have spoken. When they got tired of that, they told us Indian stories in which talking buffalo and bears occur frequently, and freaks of nature perform wonderful deeds. They also interested us with details in their religion. Their legends are all tinged with the supernatural, but it is curious to notice that they have a version of Noah and the flood which in the main is almost the same as that familiar to us all in the scriptures. I am too cold and uncomfortable, and the light is too uncertain for me to attempt to write more. I suppose we shall go on in the morning.

*November 18th.*—We did not get off till late this morning, as our horses had again travelled far in the night. The horses are a constant marvel to me. They have to work all day, and all night they eat, I suppose. The question is, when do they rest? Fancy subjecting an English horse to such a life! I should think he would die in a couple of days, and be glad to do it. After three hours' march we camped again. It was awfully cold, and the "poudre" was particularly unpleasant. We were ankle deep in snow, and I don't think I ever did such hard work. I was dead beat; but to get on a horse was to freeze, so that, though I was ready to drop, I was forced to blunder on. If this is the sort of weather we are going to have, I fail to see how I can possibly enjoy running the buffalo; I shall be too cold to pull the trigger, let alone hit the beast. I have discovered

with pain that I shall never be able to run with the dogs, and they will have to make a passenger of me. Barstow is a splendid runner, so that he cannot sympathise with my exhaustion. He now talks of going a journey of some six or seven days more, to look up one of his traders, and we shall run a great risk of dying of hunger or getting frozen for want of wood. To-morrow night, if we only make an early start, and the weather treats us well, we shall enjoy the bliss of camping in one of the abandoned houses of an extinct settlement called the "Prairie Ronde." I am sorry to say there is but one of our frozen ducks left, and we shall after that have to fall back on dry meat and salt pork and an infrequent rabbit until we get among the buffalo, when of course we shall have meat enough and to spare. I am amazed at the quantity of fat one is able to absorb with relish, and now understand why it is that the Esquimaux take so kindly to candles as an article of food.

*November 19th.*—Though to-day is Sunday, we could not afford to rest; provisions are getting low, and it is imperative that we should reach the buffalo as soon as possible. We left our last camp at 11 o'clock, passing through a much pleasanter country. The bleak prairie has given place to pleasing woods, where fuel is abundant. We crossed the river as if it had been *terra firma*, but at half-past three found it necessary to camp again. The sun seems to set earlier every night, and now it begins to get dark soon after three o'clock, which leaves us little time for journeying. One cannot have one's cake and eat it. We ate our last duck this morning, so to-night our bill of fare was pork and dried meat. Still I enjoyed it more than I have some of Bignon's choicest dishes. Last night we were astonished by what there was no mistaking, positively a shower of rain. I learned that had it lasted all night every horse in the country would have died, which is a somewhat sweeping assertion and of serious import to us. It appears that it would have drenched the grass, which would soon after have got frozen and become uneatable. We should have been compelled to start back. I am ashamed to say that I almost hoped such a catastrophe would overtake us, so anxious am I to return to civilization.

However, Faucon prayed to his grandmother, which is the only course in these cases according to the half-breed's theory, and she considerately interceded on our behalf and turned the rain into snow. We saw several chickens on the way, but could not get at them. Barstow, too, got a shot at a grey wolf, but only succeeded in frightening him. It is snowing now, and those who know say we shall have six feet of it. Pleasant prospect! I was wise in my generation this morning, and kept hold of my horse, which I mounted whenever I got tired. The poor brute is getting thin in spite of his oats, and I find that his wearing shoes on his fore feet is against him. While the other horses, who are shoeless, scrape away the snow and get at the grass, my unfortunate quadruped scrapes away everything, grass and all. We are going to alter this, and take off his shoes.

---

## CHAPTER III.

### A Few More Stray Leaves.

I SLEPT on the fire side of our tent last night, and of course found myself too warm. I could not sleep, and all night long I listened to a concert of nocturnal noises: hooting owls, barking prairie-dogs, and howling wolves succeeded each other in making night hideous. What was worse still, I heard "Nero," a mongrel brute of a dog who has elected to share our fortunes, eating our reserve of "beignes." I managed to turn him out of the tent, but he devoured a good number of them in spite of me. We rose early, with the intention of slaughtering many rabbits to re-stock our scanty supply of provisions. It was a lovely morning, and if the supply of deadly weapons at our disposal counted for anything, we were in for a regular *battue*. A Remington rifle, two fourteen shooters, a duck gun, and two revolvers formed our arsenal. I think the

rabbits must have had early information as to our intentions, for our combined bag, after two hours tramping, produced the ridiculous result of one rabbit, torn to shreds by a rifle bullet. It fell to the unerring aim of Hilaire, as for myself, I only succeeded in plunging into a spring, and never saw a rabbit or discharged my weapon. We started on again at 1.30, and at about 4, after encountering a hail-storm, reached our present camp. This is evidently the Deserted Village of which we have all heard so much, and which is called the loveliest of the plain. I have often wondered where it was, but I scarcely expected to find here. We have taken possession of the nearest house, and the one least likely to tumble down about our ears. Faucon went on in front, and when I arrived at a racing gallop on a little Indian pony, I found a tremendous fire blazing on the hearth. It is a small log hut stuffed up with mud, whose floor is only partially laid with rough planks, but to us it seems a perfect palace. We have filled up the window and door with the lodge, and I am looking forward with great pleasure to a really good night's rest. Barstow managed to shoot a consumptive prairie-chicken, and considering its painful condition it was not bad. For an *entrée* we used the tattered rabbit, and though I have eaten better meals, I found this simple one more than enough. We are going to camp in a house again to-morrow night about five miles off, which marks the end of the settlement. After that we go straight out on to the plains, and if our information is correct, we may expect to see the buffalo in a few days. Last night being fine and clear, the sky was illumined by the brilliance of the Aurora Borealis, but it was a great deal too cold to stand in the open and admire it for more than a minute or two. The "Prairie Ronde," our present position, is some sixty-five miles from Duck Lake. To get here we have taken no less than nine days, so you can imagine how slow and deliberate our progress has been. To-night I have managed to rig up a lamp, made with a strip of linen and a lump of buffalo fat, so that my hurried notes are being written under most favorable circumstances. My pipe is a delicious one, and I find it so pleasant to sit

before the crackling fire, that I am ready to change my mind about the hardships of roughing it. When we have bad weather, when I am cold and hungry, and when the lodge smokes, I curse my luck and dub myself a fool for leaving the haunts of men, under the impression that I should like a taste of wild life. Whenever we reach a house, miserable hut though it may be, when I am warm and comfortable, I feel perfectly happy in knowing myself far from the allurements of *les femmes*, *le vin et le jeu*, eating simple, in truth beastly, food, but enjoying splendid health. And this too, with no change of linen, no handkerchiefs, no baths, scant washing, filthy trousers, and the dirtiest of hands. But how I shall appreciate the luxuries of civilization when once I get back!

*November* 21*st*.—It was 10.30 before we got off this morning, and for once I was glad of the delay. I had the best sleep I have had since we started, I suppose because I had plenty of room to stretch myself, without being afraid of rolling into the fire, a thing I have done once or twice in the lodge, and which has not improved my blankets. We soon reached the end of the settlement, and have now made ourselves quite at home in another little hut. Barstow secured a brace of chickens as we went along, so that we were again able to put the pork and dried meat on one side. The rest of the day has been a busy one. It has long been evident that our trains are gradually coming to pieces, so to-day a general tinkering and mending has been going on. And we can but hope that they will be found strong enough for the weeks of rough usage that is yet in store for them. The work of the evening has just begun, viz., the making of many "beignes" and much "galette." The fire is burning bravely and I admit that I feel more cheerful and jolly than I ever expected to be. However I must turn in now, for this is our last night for a long time in a house, and I want to make the most of it, and, if possible, lay in a stock of sleep to last me for two or three days.

*November* 22*nd*.— For a wonder it was fine this morning, and by some miracle we got off at ten o'clock. We now have six vehicles, three of them are capable of

accommodating a passenger. The weather was a little warmer, so I was glad enough to take a seat nearly the whole way in the blue bath, as we called the cariole, and very comfortable it was, and a delightful change to trotting in the deep snow. We got to our mid-day stopping place and had intended going further, but rabbit-shooting being suggested, camping followed. The party secured a brace, I again never so much as discharging my gun. How on earth they see them I cannot understand. I astonished myself by going off without my capote. We crossed the river and made quite an extended tour round the country, but as game was scarce we ended by having some rifle practice at a stone target. The banks of the Saskatchewan are here very high and thickly wooded. At sunset the view of the snow-clad expanse was remarkably beautiful. I feel I am getting hardened to the cold and can now actually walk bare-footed in the snow. The lodge, after the luxury of houses, seems small, smoky, and uncomfortable; but after a good supper one can find anything tolerable.

*November 23rd.*—Another lovely day! crisp and bright. I started off for the first time without wrapping up my ears or putting on my capote. We got off early and did five hours' steady plodding, but we are still on the banks of the river, and some miles from Lac la Biche, where we expect to find the buffalo. We were fortunate enough to come across a lot of chickens, and they were so tame that they sat in the trees like domestic fowls. It does not say much for our markmanship, when even under such favourable conditions we only secured three of them. Tonance fired six shots with a rifle at one, but the bird did not take the slightest notice of them. I believe he would be firing at it now had not the horses gone and kicked the reckless bird up. A badger proved too cute for us all, but they managed to get some rabbits just before sun-down. After fasting for about nine hours, Barstow propounded the absurd notion that it would be better to keep the birds until morning, because, being hungry we could eat anything and to-morrow we should be more fastidious. I am happy to say that *carpe diem* was more the idea of the rest of us, and an excellent supper

was the result. All of us wanted it badly. On our journey we saw a number of comparatively fresh buffalo carcases, also the "pistes" or foot-prints of them in the snow, and we may expect to see some of them to-morrow. It is not a moment too soon. We have eaten all our sugar, we have no salt, and all our provisions are getting distressingly low. We are therefore now making for a place where a half-breed is camped for trading purposes, who can re-provision us, and give us a chance to rest our horses which bear only too plainly the marks of the hard work they have had.

There! I think I will now bother you no longer with extracts from my diary, and hope sufficient has been written to give you an idea of how we travelled. Monotonous beyond endurance, is it not?

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Buffalo at Last.

WE left our quarters early one beautiful morning when travelling was a real pleasure; the air was crisp, the sun shone bright, the snow glistened, and every bush seemed to have a crop of diamonds. After crossing Lac la Biche, we ascended a steep bank, which brought us to the edge of a huge prairie, extending as far as the eye could reach—a pathless expanse of glittering snow, without so much as a stick to break its vast white level. Before long, one of the sharp-eyed half-breeds reported some little black specks just visible far away in the distance. In a moment those specks absorbed us all, we had no eyes but for them, and a tremor passed through us as we mentally ejaculated, "The buffalo at last." The trains were stopped, and, after a hurried consultation, rifles were loaded, horses were saddled, leathers looked to; we all braced ourselves up, and everybody tingled with suppressed excitement.

Shortly afterwards four horsemen might have been seen stealing over the plain in the direction of those specks, which grew larger every moment. They spoke in whispers, and looked so serious and resolute that they had more the appearance of a desperate assaulting party than anything else. Two of them carried no arms; but you could see the rifle-barrels glistening in the hands of two who headed the little company, and you could mark the keen delight of the chase in the flashing dark eyes of the Canadians. The last of them all was mounted on a little mouse-coloured pony, backed like a razor; he had no stirrups, and only a blanket for a saddle. He looked very uncomfortable—and I know he was, for I was that last one. In short, Barstow and I, being novices, thought it best to let the half-breeds go first—not only to show us how the thing was done and get our horses used to their work, but also to make a certainty of getting some fresh meat—an article of food which we were greatly in need of, and the very thought of which made our mouths water. There would be time enough for us to shoot buffalo, for the sake of the sport only, when all questions concerning our next meal were happily answered.

Profiting as much as possible by the little there was to hide us, we crept on a mile or so without disturbing our prey. Not a sound was heard but the measured crack of the hoofs as they broke through the crust on the snow. Prairie chickens and rabbits sprang out of our path; but we were after big game now, and no one spoke, or even appeared to notice them. On we went. Silence! We are within four hundred yards of them now—nine huge beasts quietly grazing. They see us, look leisurely about, then start walking slowly away; and as soon as their backs are turned we quicken our pace. Suddenly the half-breeds draw up abreast, give a whoo-whoop like a view holloa, and dash off at full gallop. The buffalo start too. But the spurt brings the horses right in among them, and the rifles can almost touch them. "Crack! crack!" rings out sharply in the frosty air, and the beasts scatter in all directions, and three go off together and disappear. None seemed to be hit, and I was beginning to think the half-breeds

were not such good shots after all; but I was mistaken. Soon one, then another buffalo, fell with a thud, gave a convulsive kick, and died. A third was desperately wounded, for I walked up to him and gave him a *coup de grâce* with a revolver. They proved to be a small band of matured bulls, who frequently separate from the rest of the herd because they can no longer hold their own against their younger brethren. As they grow older and more feeble they isolate themselves completely, and generally die alone.

The hunt over, I was able to examine our spoil. They were huge beasts, with large shaggy heads, enormous chests and fore power, maned down to the fore hoofs, ungainly humps, somewhat mean-looking hind-quarters, and the most ridiculous little tails imaginable, in no way resembling the creature who serves as an advertisement to "Boulikon Floor Cloth," whose tail is his strong point. They seemed harmless enough—not in the least inclined to show fight with their short thick horns; and shooting them appeared to be the easiest thing in the world. Without any waste of time the "breeds" stripped off their coats, rolled up their sleeves, and in an incredible short period had "accommodé" (as cutting up is called) the three carcases, pausing now and then, I am disgusted to say, to eat a tit-bit raw. I noticed during the butchering business that they took particular care not to step in the blood, for that too would have quickly frozen, and stiffened their moccasins just as unpleasantly as water would do. That night we made merry over our good fortune, and enjoyed a supper of tongue, roast ribs, and marrow-bones, as only those can who have been for a fortnight on a diet of salt pork. We commemorated the occasion by cracking our one and only bottle of brandy, and slept the sleep of the just after our tiring day. The bulk of the carcases were made into what is called a "cache"—that is, piled up, covered with their hides, and then buried in snow, to serve in case of necessity. The breeds had their misgivings as to its safety, for being hurried by approaching darkness, the "cache" was only a temporary one. Next morning nothing but the hides and bones remained. The wolves, with which the prairies swarm, had scented

blood, and, sneaking up, had eaten up every shred of meat in the night. None of us felt inclined to get up that morning. The richness of our supper, and the novelty of a glass of spirits, made us sleep most soundly. We came upon a woody spot, after a few miles travelling, and we decided to camp there, as wood was now only found at long intervals. Near this we also descried a solitary and ancient bull. We knew he must be old to be thus alone and abandoned, seeking some quiet spot in which to meet death. Barstow and I thought he would be a first-rate animal for us to make our maiden attempt on. I grant it was somewhat cruel, but I did not know then what I know now about their habits. Barstow was on the quickest and handiest horse, and, when we made our dash, he was the first to reach him. The old gentleman seemed anxious to die, for he made no effort to escape. Barstow fired at about five yards just when the buffalo turned to face us, and this caused him to receive the ball in his shoulder. I fired almost immediately after, and, so suddenly did Barstow pull up, that it was little short of a miracle that I did not shoot my companion. The poor old beast glared at us for a second, raised his tail—the signal for attack—and the next moment rolled heavily over, when a revolver bullet finished him. We did not cut him up as he was too old and diseased for food.

We now started right out into the open, and were obliged to cart our wood, as well as economize it as much as possible. The weather had become many degrees warmer, so we could afford to let our fire go out as soon as our supper was cooked. We continued to travel slowly on towards the camps of the winter traders, stopping once a day to kill a buffalo or two. There were always some in sight, so that we had never far to go. A day or two after our exploit with the aged bull, we fell in with the biggest herd we had yet seen, containing not less than one hundred head. Among these we expected to find some cows who supply both the best meat and the most valuable robes. Barstow and I now determined to have a proper run on our own account, that is, mounted on the only two horses which could claim the name of buffalo-runner. We selected a likely-looking

band, and crept up to them as we had seen the breeds do. So far, so good; but, when it came to the final burst, I was all at sea; I not only found it difficult to guide my horse without reins, but also hard work to get him near enough without spurs, which I had neglected to provide myself with. The buffalo do not appear to go fast, but they keep up a steady canter, which after a short time takes them right away from such horses as we had. I managed, however, to get pretty near one at last, but I found shooting from the hip at full gallop was a very different thing to shooting from the shoulder, and I only succeeded in wounding him after firing several shots. My horse was pumped, and so was I, and he got away from me. I consoled myself with the thought that, with more practice, I should eventually bag one. The next time I tried I thoughtlessly took off my gloves, and, when the critical moment arrived, my hands were so frozen I could not pull the trigger, and there was nothing for it but to jump off and thaw them under my horse's saddle. After repeated failures, I at last killed one, but not without using a good deal of ammunition. Though I ran them often after this I never could do more than wound them; my horse was too slow and lazy for the work, and the buffalo got away from him too soon for me to do any execution. Our party had now killed more buffalo than we knew well what to do with, so we decided to journey on without attempting to shoot any more. Barstow kept two heads to take back with him, but none of us thought the robes worth carrying. You see they were no use to us in an undressed condition, besides which they soon got frozen as stiff as a board, and in this state were most awkward things to pack. This practically ended our buffalo-running, but I had many dreadful things to endure before I reached Duck Lake, and which I hope you will find of interest.

## CHAPTER V.

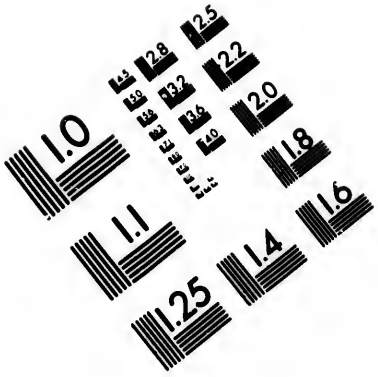
### A Parting and an Adventure.

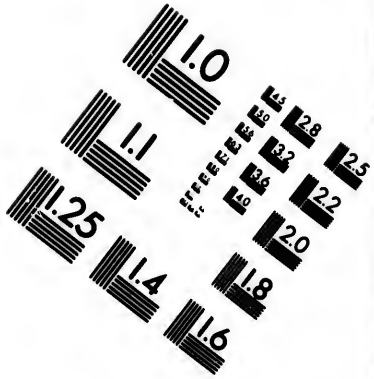
TRAVELLING had now become both tedious and monotonous. The excitement of seeing and chasing buffalo had worn itself out; we had all the meat we wanted—often more than we could conveniently carry, especially as Barstow was taking two heads to have stuffed when we got back; and everybody was sick of the name of buffalo. We often saw them in the distance, but we took no more notice of them than if they had been a lot of bullocks in an English meadow. The weather was fine it is true, for which we were very thankful. But when you have seen a series of glorious sunrises and sunsets for a fortnight, and found nobody will take the least interest in them, they fail to rouse any enthusiasm. These beauties, to be really appreciated, must be seen in selected company—*tête-à-tête* for choice. Our horses had become mere skeletons from their incessant work and the poor food they were able to find under the snow on these barren prairies—our little supply of grain had long since been eaten. Poor brutes! they were pitiable objects, and it was hard work to thrash them into keeping up even a three-miles-an-hour walk. Day after day passed without our seeing a soul; and with the exception of buffalo, not a living thing did we meet, not a bird or even an insect. This I think began to affect our spirits, and made us morose and disinclined to speak, just as Arctic explorers gradually settle down to absolute silence after a period of isolation. Our road took us through a country entirely without trees or anything which could be used for fuel, and we were obliged to save up the charred remains of our fires, pack them carefully away, and use them again. More than once we had to burn pieces of our sleighs in order to get enough heat to boil the kettle. "Buffalo chips," as the dry dung of the buffalo is called, are often used when nothing else can be found to burn, but we were not fortunate enough to

find any, though we were always on the look out for it. We were accustomed to, and did, exist on very little, but we felt that we could not get on without tea. In such a climate it would have been dangerous to attempt to slake one's thirst with snow, and would no doubt have affected us almost as seriously as drinking salt water. We had finished all our sugar, and we had not enough fire to cook our flour into the unleavened and saltless bread we had hitherto been able to make. I have heard it said that man cannot live without salt, but that is certainly a mistake, for we had long been without any, and after the first two or three days we never noticed its absence or felt the want of it. We were thus reduced to a diet of hastily-roasted buffalo and tea. Just enough to live on and that was all. One of our half-breeds having collected what he wanted in the shape of fresh meat, now proposed to return with it to his wife and family. I have always admired that man's confidence in himself. We wished him good luck, and off he went without the slightest misgivings. He took nothing with him but a few handfuls of tea, a small box of matches, and a little tobacco. We gave him two sleighs filled with buffalo meat, and three horses to drag them. He had a journey of at least seven days before he could get to the "Prairie Ronde." For two nights he would have to lie down in the snow, wrapped in a much-worn robe, without so much as a fire to comfort him after his long tramp, and without a can of tea to warm his chilled body. We could give him no wood, and there was not a bush within thirty miles. Still, in spite of this miserable prospect, he started off as cheerfully as if he were only going a few miles, and, what is more, he arrived safe and sound. These fellows are of course accustomed to journeys of this kind all alone, for I could not persuade him when we met again that he had done anything extraordinary. Yet, if bad weather, always a possibility, had delayed him, or had his horses given out, which, to look at them, seemed not improbable, I cannot see how he could have escaped death from cold and exposure.

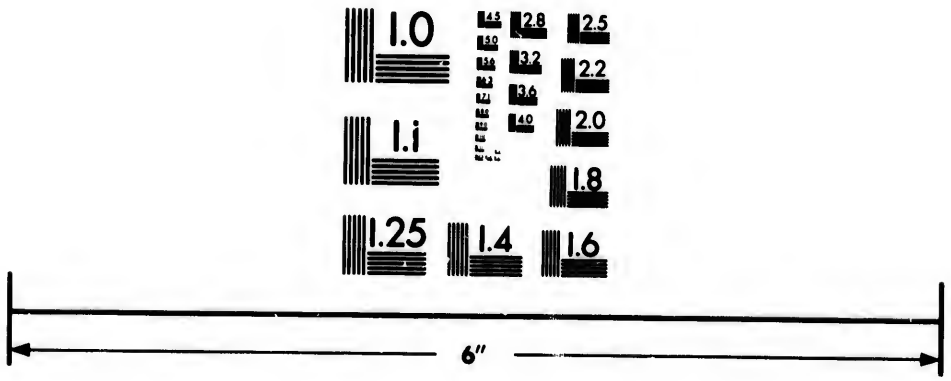
I had quite an adventure shortly before we reached the winter quarters of the traders, which very nearly proved fatal. One day we thought it would be fine sport to try

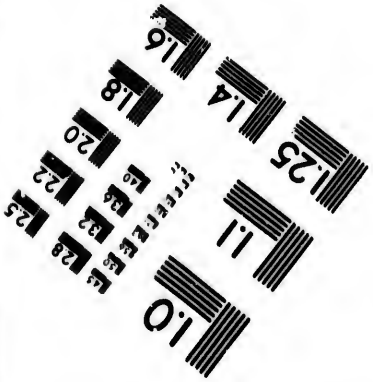
and trap a wolf with the remains of a carcase for bait. The wolves in northern Canada are very large, and though naturally of a greyish-yellow colour, they turn almost white in winter—a dispensation of Nature, no doubt, to prevent their being seen in the snow. They do not move in large packs—three or four were the most I ever saw together—and, unlike the Russian ones, are great cowards, and never venture to attack a man, even when driven by hunger, though they often sneak into stables and kill horses. That they act differently when wounded will be seen by the sequel. They are almost invisible on the snow-covered prairies, and seem to spring out of and vanish into space like evil spirits. Their scent is marvellously keen and acute, and I remember one day strolling over to see a fallen buffalo, just killed and still warm. Already there were three wolves at work on him, and I was too late to save the tongue, which had been torn out; it is a delicate morsel they always dispose of first. We baited and set our trap in the afternoon, and that evening, being a moonlight one, we sallied out to see if we had caught anything. When we approached the spot, sure enough we found a fine big fellow nipped fairly and squarely by the paw, and standing there as if he were wondering what to do next. As I was the stranger and the guest, it was proposed that I should have the privilege of going forward to a convenient distance and despatching him with my rifle. Accepting the offer with pleasure, I stepped towards him and, as I am not the very best of shots, I determined to get near enough to make sure of killing him with my first barrel. I got within twenty yards of him, and was going a little nearer, when, to my amazement, he suddenly sprang forward, broke the chain of the trap, and, carrying it along with him, came bounding at me with the angry growl of a wild beast at bay. It was so little what I was expecting, and took me so by surprise, that my first impulse, I won't deny it, was to drop my rifle and run; but he was almost on me in an instant. I had dropped my rifle, but I had just sufficient presence of mind to draw my bowie-knife and hold it out before me with a trembling hand, in the hope that if he sprang at me he would stab himself. My companions,




# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)





Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

fortunately for me, had seen what had happened, and one of the half-breeds snatched up his rifle and fired. I don't know what took place; but when the smoke cleared off, I found the beast had fallen literally at my feet, with a bullet through his body and a stab in his breast. It was a fearful shock, and I never look at his skin, which I of course kept, without thinking with a shudder of my narrow escape.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### Winter-Quarters and Growls.

AFTER spending three weeks travelling incessantly, and never sleeping twice in the same spot, it was much to, at last, reach a place where one could again get a sight at one's fellow-creatures, and where one could take a few days of thorough rest with no gloomy thoughts about wood. I enjoyed it beyond measure, and I am sure that if possible our poor horses enjoyed it still more. We managed to get a shake-down on the floor of an English half-breed's hut, though he was not the man whom we had expected to find, and on whom we had, all along, been trusting to re-provision us. He was some miles further off, and we had to make up our minds to a little more tramping in the snow. We found this resting-place swarming with Indians in all-coloured blankets, all squalid and wretched-looking, and all innocent of those qualities which the world has been pleased to ascribe to the noble red man. The nomadic colony in question was hard at work "robe passing" and skin drying, at least the female portion of it was, for, it is one of the salient virtues of your true red Indian that never will he do a single stroke of work which he can get his women-folk to do for him. Whenever you approach an Indian camp you will always see a lot of work being done; but you may be certain that the men are not doing it. The two sexes among the Crees are so alike in appearance and dress, that it is almost

impossible to tell a man from a woman. The only way to distinguish is by their occupation. If you see a creature sitting down smoking it is a man; but if you see one doing anything in the way of work, no matter how unsuited for the strength or capacity of a woman that work may be, you may swear that it is a woman. The process of getting a buffalo-skin from the rough to the condition which entitles it to be called a "robe" is a much longer affair than one would imagine, and the poor women seem to be leaning over scraping at them from early dawn until sunset, which fortunately for them rarely exceeds the hour of 3.30 in winter. We went round, after our first night's rest, and inspected the lodges; they were mostly about the same size as ours, only older and more full of holes. There was no way of getting away from these savages, they had nothing to do, and were therefore able to devote the whole of their time to us. Ten or so of them insisted on calling on us the first thing in the morning, almost before we were up, and they would stay with us until late at night. They said very little, and what they did say of course we could not understand; but they smoked a great deal, spat incessantly, ate and drank anything you offered them, and observed our every movement with all the intensity of a cat watching a mouse. We also visited the chief of the tribe. We found him a very shabby old gentleman and the happy possessor of three dreadfully plain, dirty old wives. His lodge was a large one, in which there were many ingenious devices for making yourself comfortable. It seemed particularly sumptuous to us, after living so long in a tent in which it was impossible to stand upright. I soon discovered that the greater the chief the greater the beggar, and it was not long before our friend had annexed a good many odds and ends from among our small stock of possessions. He honoured us to the extent of making us a set speech, though the Indians are as fond of being verbose as a budding politician. His oration was rich in gestures and was no doubt as flowery as anything Mayne Reid has put into the mouths of his red men. I am sorry I cannot give it to you verbatim, but it was only hurriedly translated to us. However, the gist of it was:—That

we had no right to come and shoot his animals, that the governor and himself had made arrangements for their preservation, and that a law was to be enacted handing over all the buffalo in the country to himself and his tribe, who alone were to enjoy the privilege of killing and eating. He was pleased, however, to be gracious to us, because, as we afterwards heard, he was anxious to become the possessor of a rifle. I believe he was very indignant when we left because Barstow did not make him a present of one. I was exceedingly hungry after the long harangue, but I found it quite impossible to swallow the nasty stuff the chief placed before us. The mess was unpleasant enough in appearance, but when I saw his squaws and their offspring plunging their filthy fingers into the greasy dish, I really couldn't attempt to eat any of it, but he gave us sugar with our tea which was a luxury unknown to us for weeks. While in this camp we purchased some dogs for our trains; Barstow had none at his place, and as we required at least twelve, it became necessary to begin collecting them at once, so as to be ready to start as soon as possible after we got home again. Of course the half-breeds were quite in their element among the Indians, and nothing pleases them so much as an opportunity of showing how vastly superior they are to them. They did everything to delay our departure so that they might gamble with them at that game which I described elsewhere. They always think the Indians are easily duped, and look upon them much as a racing sharp does a greenhorn. They spoke confidently of winning a horse or two, besides sundry other useful things. As often happens, they were sold. I believe one of our fellows lost his horse, the best of our lot, including his bridle and saddle. It took him all one day and most of the night to do it, so I suppose they were pretty evenly matched, and then he gave the savage who won it five lbs. of tea, and called it quits. I was very glad when in a couple of days we made a fresh start in the direction of Swift Current River, for not only was it disagreeable living in the midst of the unsavoury savages, but I could find nothing to do, and our food was getting so infrequent that I was fain to go to bed with a very empty stomach.

As a sample of my life at the time, kindly read the following extract :—

We have come about a mile away from the Indian quarters, but Barstow and the half-breeds could not resist the temptation of going back to spend the evening with them. I am therefore all alone. The lodge threatens to fall every minute as it bends before a strong wind, the fire gives but a fitful light, and helps to make my surroundings look weird and uncanny. I have just put a tongue on the boil for to-morrow's breakfast, a can of tea is within my reach, and my old pipe is smoking bravely. This is the first bit of solitude I have had for a long time, and I am thoroughly enjoying it. They say man is a gregarious animal, but I for one couldn't live unless I had some hours now and then when I can be perfectly alone; I am filled with amazement when I think of the dreadful exile I have willingly imposed upon myself. Here I am, some six or seven hundred miles from civilization, lying on a pile of robes in an Indian tent on a cold winter night. When I describe myself further, I do not recognise myself at all. Famished with hunger, I have just eaten a lot of half-cooked buffalo meat with my fingers off a greasy plate which has not seen water for weeks. My hands are black with filth; I have worn the same clothes for over three weeks; my hair is down to my shoulders, and my face is the colour of mahogany. I feel that I am now thoroughly cured of any desire to wander beyond the limits of civilization, and for the future shall endeavour to confine my restlessness to the exploring of places within reach of that noble institution, the main-spring of independence, the railway. What helps to keep me irritated is that there is no way, short of flying, for me to make an end of it. I must drink the cup to the dregs, and I cannot call myself my own master for at least two months, by which time I hope, if I am lucky, to once more hear the music of a railway whistle. As I was preparing for bed, the dog, our new purchase, began to howl dismally. I undressed myself as much as I dared; the fire was almost out when I saw the little door of our lodge cautiously lifted, and then two black eyes peering at me through the

gloom. Here was a situation. Of course it was one of those wretched savages, and by his coming at that hour of the night (it was after 1 o'clock) he must have come on an annexing expedition. He came in, and said something I did not understand, and my only answer was to pick up my bowie-knife in a significant manner. I offered him a cup of tea, not knowing what else to do. He took it, and at once became loquacious and friendly. Our conversation was carried on by a method of his, which would never have occurred to me. He pointed to some object, and then gave it its name in Cree. In this way he amused himself for an hour, while I found it dreadfully fatiguing, and only kept myself awake by an effort, and by the fear that he might steal something if I went to sleep. At last even he saw that I had had enough of it, and after shaking me warmly by the hand, he departed much to my relief. But my slumbers that night were light, as I never could be quite sure that other visitors would not call before morning.

At day-light my companions returned with red eyes and parched tongues, the result of sitting up all night smoking and drinking pain-killer. They brought several Indians with them, who positively refused to leave us. Towards noon they were persuaded to go home, and we started, but we only succeeded in travelling a few miles when darkness came on. The road was dreadfully bad, and our "trompeurs" had become so rotten that we had to stop every now and then to tie them up. Two days more of weary, monotonous travelling passed by, and at length we reached Swift Current River. Our poor horses were almost beyond another effort, and our sleighs were a mass of bandages. We ourselves were reduced to our last pair of moccasins, our last pound of tea, and our last handful of flour. I shall never forget how thankful I was to be able to say that we had reached our turning-point, and that when we started again our faces would be turned southward. I was very, very tired of it all, and I expect you, reader, are also. The rest of my journey to Duck Lake, I promise you, shall be shortly told.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### Back at last.

IT was a fine afternoon in December. Columbia's sun was drawing myriads of diamonds from the snow-clad hills. A mild zephyr had for a time vanquished rude Boreas, and had brought warmth and brightness in its train. Six hundred miles from the vestiges of civilization, in an obscure and nameless valley, sat a miserable being. Nothing but the regular beat of an axe against a tree broke the silence. Not a living thing could be seen. That miserable being was me; and I was miserable because I was bored to death, because everything around me was so hopelessly uncongenial, and because I was suffering from the dreadful affliction of having nothing to do. Swift Current River is a grand name, but its resources were painfully small. To me it proved a case of "out of the frying-pan into the fire." With the Indians I lived on nasty messes; I was forced to be cheek-by-jowl with unsavoury savages, and I was compelled to be the unwilling spectator of an all-night orgy of pain-killer, gambling, and drum-beating. At the river things were no better, and everything was so terrible that I had to go and hide myself in the woods to get away from it all. For four days I lived in a small log hut, surrounded by dogs with rare talents for midnight howling. This hut contained but one room, with the bare earth for a floor. The proprietor of this magnificent mansion was the proud father of no less than five small girls, who wallowed in filth and quarrelled noisily all day long. As if that were not enough, there was a baby, who for howling held its own with the dogs. The floor of this awful abode was littered with dirty rags, greasy plates and spoons, scraps of meat, bones, and every conceivable kind of filth. There were three beds in three of the corners; on these, three or four long-haired, greasy-bodied, feeble-minded half-breed youths lounged all day, taking it in turns to scrape a cracked fiddle to the same tune, while the others danced a sort

of double shuffle. The unhappy mother of the brood, who looked worn and ill, wandered about, and with the same filthy hands wiped her offsprings' noses, prepared the food, and held her tired head. Her lord and master reclined in a broken-down arm-chair, and smoked unconcernedly through all the din ; but he never did a thing towards lightening his poor wife's burden, who seemed to be hard at work from sun-rise until late at night. In the midst of these very unpleasant surroundings, the days, though they were short enough in actual time, seemed endless. There was nothing to shoot nor a book to read, and not a person who had an idea to speak to. I smoked until my tongue got blistered, and I thought till thinking drove me mad. For my thoughts turned to cigarettes, Turkish baths, clean linen, decent meals, and such like impossibilities. The solace of paper and pencil, which had hitherto helped to while away many a tedious hour, now began to fail me. There was absolutely nothing for my mind to dwell on but the perpetual "When I get to Red River." And that happy event seemed so far away, and so hopelessly wrapped in uncertainty, that I found it better not to think at all. However, all things come to an end at last, and after four days of torture we made a start once more. Our provisions were not exactly abundant, but we had enough to keep us alive. Our next halt was made at Mosquito Lake, where Barstow had an employé trading with the Indians. We took up our quarters in one of a line of hovels hardly larger than sentry-boxes. It was unspeakably filthy, but I found it a pleasanter place than the one we had just left. It is true there were ever with us five or six Indians sitting round the fire, smoking and spitting in silent wisdom. At least, silence in an Indian is supposed to indicate wisdom ; but you may take my word for it that it is only a proof of their empty-headedness. They don't speak, because their minds are a blank. Still this was a heavenly rest, after the torture of those howling children and that awful fiddle-scraping. We stayed in this settlement some two or three days, I forget how long it was exactly, for I had fallen into such a melancholy state that I did not notice the lapse of hours and days. All I can tell you is that

we started again after a time, and that it took us from the 18th to the 27th of December to reach Duck Lake, during which time we saw no living thing. Our horses were then scarcely able to stand, and how they ever got back at all has always remained a mystery to me. I remember on Christmas-day we had a particularly long and tiring day's march. We had got short of victuals again, and it was absolutely necessary for us to walk if we hoped to save our horses' lives. But as soon as we began to get within measurable distance of Duck Lake my spirits began to revive, and the prospect of real rest gave me fresh courage. In fact, I was inspired on Christmas-night to the extent of writing some lines on the occasion, which are very much at your service.

I've spent Christmas in country and Christmas in town,
When dullness and boredom were weighing me down.
I've spent it at home, and I've spent it abroad,
The pleasures of which I consider a fraud.
I've spent it on railway, I've spent it at sea,
When the day was as long as a day well can be.
I've spent it surrounded by friends and relations,
When all will confess 'tis a day of probations.
I've spent it in reading all day in my bed,
When I ought to have done something wiser instead.
I've spent it with her—ah! then the time flies
In a dream of warm kisses, sweet smiles, and soft sighs.
I've spent it in trying to quite understand
Why the day is so dull in our fog-girdled land.
I've spent it, in fact, in as many odd ways
As anyone can who but impulse obeys.
But the queerest of all that my wandering knows
Is the one which I spent in the region of snows,
When, tired of Europe, I started in quest
Of buffalo and wolves in the land of the West;
Far from the turkeys, plum-puddings, mince-pies,
Light laughter and music, glad greetings, bright eyes.
I travelled all day, it was bitterly cold,
Ate nothing but "pemmican," nasty and old,
Which I moistened with milkless and sugarless tea;
And that's all that Christmas that year was to me.

Let me conclude this painful chapter by giving you a specimen of the toughness and endurance of Barstow. No wonder he felt little sympathy with me when I got tired and dead beat. One of his half-breed employés had come with us from Mosquito Lake with a dog-sleigh, meaning to take it back again with goods to

trade with. When we got within about forty miles of Duck Lake, Barstow started off with this fellow, who was a professional runner. They left us at eight o'clock one morning, at a sharp trot, and actually ran the whole distance, and got comfortably in before night. We who remained with the tired horses had to make a two-days' journey of it, and then it was night when we arrived. I shall never forget the exquisite bliss of getting into bed that night, nor the joy of knowing that next morning I should not have to get up at sun-rise and drive horses all day.

This brings me almost to the end of the second part of my experiences. They began well, but ended very tamely. I fear I have given you but dull reading, and I can only say that it is a truthful record of what happened. Roughing it is dull work.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Resting and Preparing.

THE six weeks spent on the plains had seemed intolerably long and wearisome to me, but, when once they were over, I could not deny that I was glad I had undertaken the expedition. There is always a feeling of satisfaction in looking back at hardships endured, more especially when you have accomplished something which most people have not done. I had seen and hunted the buffalo, I had learnt the meaning of roughing it, and I had come back with the priceless possession of perfect health. I could scarcely recognise in the bronzed and bearded face, in the clear eye, in the long flowing hair, in the broad chest, and in the well filled limbs, the miserable sallow creature with dull eyes, pale face, and wasted appearance of four months before. The pure air, the simple, and in truth, filthy food, and the constant exercise, had made me bodily a changed man. I had filled out so much that my clothes, that is

my civilized clothes, seemed too tight everywhere, my digestion was capable of any feat, and I felt that I had lengthened my life by ten years, if that can be considered an advantage. Shortly after our return, the knowledge that Duck Lake had become possessed of a keg of brandy soon spread over the country, and almost as soon as the fluid was unearthed, the Père Pierre arrived as if by instinct, and took up his abode with us. The jovial priest was in his element when spirits were visible. I found him excellent company after my many weeks of almost perfect silence, and I venture to say that we had a friendly discussion on every subject under the sun, on all of which we differed in the most delightful way. He found me alarmingly broad, I declared him shockingly narrow. However, as soon as the keg was dry, and it dried very rapidly, he felt it was his duty to return to his parish. He was anxious to take me with him, but I told him it could not be. I protested that his example of godly life almost persuaded me to become a Roman Catholic, and that I considered it was my duty to my relatives to keep away from so powerful an influence. While we had been away, the Duck Lake mansion had undergone a complete renovation. The ingenious New Brunswicker who came up with us as cook, and whose Mark Tapley nature had made me cheerful on many depressing occasions, had done wonders with the few materials at his disposal. The spare room looked simply magnificent, and seemed a marvel of cleanliness and comfort when compared to the filthy holes I had been accustomed to.

It now became my duty to inform my relatives that I was still alive. As luck would have it, a single sleigh passed our quarters on the way down from the most Northern Hudson Bay Forts, and we easily persuaded the solitary occupant to spend a few days with us, while we got our letters ready. It is only after living in the open air for weeks that one really appreciates being indoors, and I looked upon the prospect of writing all day as little short of luxury. I have a mother, which is usual, and my first thoughts were for her. I knew the dear old creature, in spite of my warnings concerning the uncertainty of posts, would be worried and anxious

at my long silence. I could see her fretting herself to death in the far away home, imagining all sorts of unlikely accidents must have overtaken her worthless darling, and trembling every time the wind blew at night, as if she knew I must be cowering from it on the frozen prairies. We gave the half-breed a whole sheaf of letters, and wished him God-speed on his long, lonely journey. Hardly had we wiped off the fatigue (it would be absurd to say dust when snow had covered all) of our journey, when to my amazement, Barstow, contrary to all precedent, began bestirring himself with a view to starting as soon as possible for Winnipeg, which now seemed to me to be the very centre of civilization. The country was scoured for dogs, the weight of our *impedimenta* was calculated, men were engaged to accompany us, and in less than a fortnight we were almost ready to start out on our last and most perilous journey. The first thing to be got ready were the sleighs, or "trains" as they are called, and the vagueness of the latter word certainly better describes the nondescript affairs they proved to be. We were to be a party of four, so it was arranged that we should have a train a-piece, each drawn by four dogs. Our old and valued friend, the "cariole," was patched up, and with but slight alterations was made suitable for a team of dogs. The other vehicles were sublimely simple in their construction, and merit a brief description if only to prove how difficult it was to attempt to travel as a passenger. The principal part of the structure was a thin strip of oak, about eight or ten feet long and a foot and a half broad. The end nearest the dogs was turned up so as to slide easily in the snow. About three feet from the back end was fixed a board, against which you leant in a sitting position, on those rare occasions when the road was good enough and the thermometer high enough for you to indulge in a rest. Our luggage and provisions were simply tied on anywhere where they would stick with shaganape strings. As the sleighs have to be made narrow in order to offer as little resistance as possible, you may imagine it did not take much to make them top-heavy. It became therefore a feat rather than otherwise to prevent yourself from falling

off, and the least inequality in the ground invariably capsized the concern, and sent you rolling into the snow. Dogs did not seem so plentiful as we could have wished, at least dogs such as we required, and I soon saw that, if nothing else stopped us, we should be delayed some time for want of sufficient hauling power. Our sixteen dogs, when we got them, would have to be regularly and liberally fed, and, allowing them no more than two pounds of pemmican each per diem, it was not considered too much to start off with five hundred pounds of food for them. We were obliged to make some allowance for unforeseen accidents and delays, so you will see that we had not much room for luxuries. In fact we could afford to take nothing but the bare necessaries of life. I know my entire wardrobe could have been easily packed away in a bandbox. The first thing to be left out of our list was the tent. It only seemed natural to the others to travel without so heavy and bulky an encumbrance, so I said nothing. But in my inmost thoughts, the prospect of sleeping out in the open prairies with nothing but blankets and buffalo-robes between us and the bitter cold, seemed little short of suicide. Especially as, when the subject was discussed, it was all we could do to keep from freezing in the house with no less than three stoves burning night and day. Still, I had got fairly hardened, and I tried to console myself with the reflection that what they could bear I ought to be able to bear, and that probably it sounded a good deal worse than it really was. Another thing which filled me with dismay was the knowledge that on all expeditions with dogs, the party has always to do a great deal of running, as it is impossible, except when going very light and for a short distance, for them to drag you along as horses would do. All they can be expected to do in heavy snow is to carry your luggage and provisions for you. I may be conceited, but I have always had the most modest opinion of my running capacity, and I can safely say that before this I had never run a mile in my life. I explained to Barstow that with all the will in the world, I was sure I was physically incapable of running more than a mile at a stretch, if that. He admitted the statement, and good-

naturedly promised that the cariole should be packed very light, so that whenever it was possible I should travel as a passenger. This re-assured me, and it seemed that so long as the snow was not too deep, and provided we had good weather, we had not much to fear, and might expect to reach our destination in about three weeks.

Most of the snow falls in December. January is generally a fine clear month, and so intensely cold that not a breath of air stirs, and the very atmosphere seems to be frozen. Still anything like snow-storms, "poudre," or invalided dogs, all possibilities, was bound to be a very serious matter to us. Now, when I can comfortably look back at that time, I feel glad that I scarcely realized the many chances there were of our coming to grief. And when all is said and done, there is no doubt we were singularly lucky throughout that whole affair. I think I have now given you a fair idea of what we had to accomplish, and the materials we expected to have for the purpose. If you will persevere and read on you will see how we got on, and how much of what we expected we had to do without.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### An Egotistical Digression.

I MUST apologize for wearying the patient reader with the present chapter. Let me beg of him to bear with me while I halt in my narrative in order to show him to what a condition an apparently sane man may be brought under certain circumstances. I found myself, after weeks of almost perpetual shivering, semi-starvation, and continual travelling, suddenly surrounded by warmth, plentiful meals, and absolutely no occupation. I had to do something. There were plenty of pens and paper, and there was some indifferent ink. So I wrote:

*January 1st.*—For the first time since my return, a week ago, I have been out of the house. After being in

the open air so long, I was determined to give myself a good spell of stopping in doors. But to-day was so fine and bright that I actually went off for a solitary tramp in quest of exercise and the medicine of this wonderful air. I took my gun with me, but I might have saved myself the trouble as I never saw a living thing. The cobwebs were beginning to gather over my not too lucid brains, and I thought it necessary to give them a good sweeping previous to beginning the retrospect which the commencement of the year suggests. On reviewing the past twelve months, I fail, and I fear it is not the first time, to see that I have done anything meritorious, that I have advanced many steps towards any object in life, or shown any signs of being anything but a very common-place individual easily lost in the crowd of mediocrity. On the other hand there are many follies distasteful to me to think of, and many mean actions repugnant to my pride which I see distinctly across the film which a year throws over my memory. I see no progress in the development of that intellect for which I often dream a glorious future. I see no advance towards that goal, which, in spite of my declared indifference, I fain would reach. I am no nearer that happy mental state, when I shall have ceased to turn blindly hither and thither in search of that indefinite something, which is to smooth all rough places, and make life a peaceful gliding down a pleasant stream of happy, careless indolence.

The old enigmas remain unsolved, and the ephemeral pleasures of the past year have only brought out into bolder relief the dulness which hangs over all. The incessant question: "Why this thusness" (to use Artemus Ward's quaint expression) still remains unanswered, the secret of happiness is still undiscovered, and I feel that I have drifted on through one more year, a careless and idle man, who has known but few moments when everything within him has sprung up in arms against his aimless mode of living. Perhaps I am seeking far and wide for what is close to me and within my grasp. Perhaps Happiness, with a large H, consists in having succeeded in beating into indifference all longings and cravings for something better—*Quen sabe?*

But enough! How can I expect to amuse my lessening audience if I drag them with me into melancholy speculations, which I cannot carry to a satisfactory conclusion, and which they, happy things, have never thought of, and into which they would much rather not enter. Let me leave so unpleasant a subject, and cry with the rest of my fellow creatures: "*Vive la galère! Au diable les soucis!*" I suppose it is natural for men, thinking men I mean, no matter their creed, no matter their character, to make a sort of mental review of the year when it is past and gone for ever. The Christian looks to his growth in grace, to the service he has done his Maker, the temptations he has resisted or succumbed to, and the sins he has committed or omitted. He draws the balance. Then he stifles a sigh of despondency or represses a feeling of satisfaction when the world begins to roll on again for him. The student looks to his advance in learning, to the solutions he has made of life's problems, and to the progress he has made intellectually. And both, whether satisfied or not, feel that the new year brings regrets for opportunities neglected; and it also gives them courage to make resolves to do great things in the future. I do neither. I follow neither Christian nor student. I cling with all the fervour of a lover to my mistress oblivion. Let me be steeped in forgetfulness, and let me idly gather such pleasures as come in my way. Wealth cannot tempt me to toil, ambition cannot goad me to study, pride cannot wake me out of my lethargy. Let me dream and think, and let the world's distinctions be given to those who, with outstretched arms and straining eyes, fight and strive so eagerly for them.

Bah! Is there no way of pulling me out of the mud of idle speculations where I invariably find myself floundering when I get hold of pen and paper? Let's try a pipe.

I have only been in Barbaria four months, yet in that short time what a change has come over me. The use of the linen collar has become a forgotten art; I look upon it as both unnecessary and unhealthy. I have long since abandoned sheets, and much prefer blankets to sleep between, and I consider a bed is an uncomfortable

perch, which places human beings on a level with fowls. Moccasins are the only things which rationally protect the feet. Boots are barbarous and little short of a torture imposed upon an unthinking world by the tyrant fashion. Away with trousers of modish cut and material. Give me a nice, dirty, old pair of "bags," on which you can strike a sulphur match with no misgivings, and in which you can sit down as carelessly as you please. A four-coursed dinner is a barbarism copied from Rome in her decline; the origin of indigestion, and destined to blunt the human intellect. In a word, I have returned as nearly as I can to a primitive state, and have thus discovered the countless errors which civilization has forced us to share with her. When I return again to her influence, I know that my first impulse, on entering a house, will be to sit on the floor, pull out my pipe and plug of tobacco, and, while leisurely preparing a smoke, enter into a discussion with my astonished host on the merits of three-point blankets and black tea as a safeguard against cold, or commence an argument to prove that the French half-breed is the most intelligent being in existence. In extenuation of all the rubbish I have written, I must state that before I took refuge in pens and paper I read every scrap of printed matter to be found in the whole establishment. Although the library is small, it embraces a very wide field, and I trust that a brief epitome of the result will prove that the mixture was fairly ludicrous. When the mysteries of the "Philosopher's Pendulum" and Benthanism have been poured into "Natural Religion" and the "Unseen Universe," and when the result has been seasoned with much tobacco and spiced with an American democratic paper, the effect is curious. First, I would try intellectual experiments with my son from his birth, which should lead to the explanation of what is torturing all the "savants" of Europe. Next, I would become a democrat, have a pipe made on utilitarian principles, build a house in the unseen universe, and found a society for the cultivation of natural religion and the economical manufacturing of vortex rings. Lastly, I would make myself into a philosopher's pendulum, and keep myself swinging from ambition and mania of greatness to

madness and despair, just to see how long I could stand it. Seriously, the impression left on my mind by all the metaphysical reading which I have just concluded is this: The authors of half the novel theories, peculiar views, and atheistical pamphlets have no serious conviction of what they say. Most of their work is the result of a logical mind when acted on by an unquenchable thirst to shine distinctly, and have an existence apart from the great crowd who are born, live, die, and leave no mark. Having said my nothing, kindly imagine the curtain falling amid the hooting, hissing, and groaning of a disappointed audience.

# PART III.

## *HOW I GOT BACK.*

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### Southward Bound.

AFTER four false starts we managed to get off one fine afternoon the first week in January. I knew we were now beginning the toughest job of all, but anything was better than hanging about Duck Lake doing nothing, and I was delighted to be on the move again. In a former chapter I gave a sort of rough inventory of the materials with which we hoped to travel the 500 odd miles which lay between us and Winnipeg. Our actual outfit was even smaller than that, and if ever there was a case where ignorance is an advantage it certainly was one here. Had I known what we were to go through, and what we might have gone through, nothing would have induced me to set out on such a suicidal expedition. It was found impossible to get together more than twelve dogs, only one of which had ever been trained or used as a sleigh dog before. It is usual to use three dogs to each sleigh, that is three big thoroughly trained strong ones: but even Barstow, whose rashness is unapproachable, was obliged to admit that with such sorry cattle as ours (all the useless curs of the neighbourhood) it would be madness to have less than four in a team. This meant leaving one of our sleighs behind, so that three small sleighs had to be divided among four of us, which at first seems a difficult thing to do, but we did it. We were all more or less on

our legs all day, it was absolutely necessary in order to keep warm, and there was generally a vacant sleigh when anybody was warm enough to sit in it. The one dog who was supposed to know his business rejoiced in the name of Chou-Chou (Longears) and occupied the post of honour in the van of our expedition. He was leader in the leading sleigh, and happiness was reached when we could get all the other dogs to follow him. We only went four miles the first day, just across the Saskatchewan, all of which was fairly good going, which was fortunate, otherwise, seeing the erratic way in which our scratch teams worked, it would have taken us a week to do it. The poor brutes really did not know how to do their work, and our first task was to teach them. Of course I knew nothing of the business so that the half-breeds had to take a turn at each train to keep the caravan together. Dog-driving is a science I discovered, and it is really hard work breaking them in. When you have four dogs tandem they make a longish line, and the first thing an untrained team does, when you attempt to get them to move, is that the whole lot jump in and out among themselves and get tied into a knot. The whip is of course freely used, not to mention blasphemy and other modes of persuasion. One of our dogs, after the first day's experience of the business, deserted us in the night, taking his collar and traces with him, preferring probable starvation to our tender mercies. As luck would have it a large retriever had followed us, no doubt in a spirit of adventure without a suspicion of his fate. We secured him next day, rigged up a collar for him, and soon had him working for his living. I trust his owner never missed him. It took us fully ten days to get our dogs to work evenly, during which time our progress was dishearteningly slow. At first ten miles was considered a big day's journey, and, as during that time the whip was ever in use, our poor dogs must have found it long enough. In three days most of the dogs had their ears torn to ribbons and their noses grotesquely swollen under the severe thrashings it was found necessary to administer. It seemed awfully brutal to me, but I suppose it had to be done. The half-breeds arranged little rattles, rudely made of bits of tin, on to

the handles of the whips, and, after a time, the sound of the rattle was sufficient to start the dogs at a gallop, so often had that rattle been the prelude to the lash. In that w .y we gradually taught them until the use of the whip became quite unnecessary. My sufferings were so great, and our discomforts so numerous, that it was fully ten days before I had the power to do more than mark the lapse of time on some dog-eared sheets of paper I carried loosely among my tobacco and pipe. Each day was so exactly like the last, and so little of interest took place, that all will have been said when I say that we just lived and lived only by perpetually moving our camps, and the selection of a suitable spot for that purpose was our one absorbing theme. Whether we found wood or not at the right moment was really a matter of life and death to us, so we may be excused for confining our thoughts to one idea. "Un Campement" is a good deal more picturesque than comfortable; it makes a good picture, but affords scant comfort. I was pleased, however, to find that sleeping out in the open in winter is not so awful as it would appear. The simplicity of camping reaches the altitude of the sublime. Towards sundown, and we found the sun set before four o'clock, a spot was selected where there was an abundance of dry wood. Each of us armed ourselves with a snow shoe, and as rapidly as possible we scooped out a circular spot, banking the snow up to windward when there was any wind. There too we arranged our sleighs with a view to sheltering ourselves with the materials at our disposal. We then built a long horizontal fire at the opposite edge of our circle so that the smoke should drift away from us. We spread our robes and blankets, and while snow was being melted into water for tea, we watched the dogs feeding and quarrelling over the crumbs. When the kettle boiled we had supper and tried to be as happy as circumstances would permit. We sat down in a row as near the fire as we could bear, but the sensation produced by a scorching face and a frozen back is not one which any man in his senses would hanker after. Pleasure, however, is only a matter of comparisons, and I found that even when undergoing what may fairly be called hardships, there was a great deal of solid comfort

after a meal of tinned meat, camp-made bread, and three or four pannikins of tea, in a good pipe, and an assurance that if a tired body meant a sound sleep, I was going to be as dead. Our day's routine was scarcely ever altered. We got up at about five o'clock by the light of the most gorgeous auroras; but neither Barstow nor I ever dared to leave our blankets until the fire was fairly going. I have always admired the courage of our half-breeds, who calmly set to work to light the fire on those terribly cold mornings, when exposing your uncovered hand for a moment gave you acute pain. We then tore open our blanket sacks, for we were always frozen stiff to the waist, and hurriedly swallowed a few mouthfuls of boiling tea in order to store up a little warmth with which to meet the icy air. In about an hour everything, and everything was not much, was packed on the sleighs, the dogs harnessed, and we were off. I very soon found that my running powers were scarcely up to what was required of them, and, as Barstow always remained a bad starter, I used to start off half-an-hour before the rest and trot on to gain time. It did not take me long to tell by the touch when I got off the road, so I ran little risk of getting lost. I found when they caught me up that there was always a sleigh very much at my disposal, on which I could rest a while and get my breath. As a rule it was of little use to me, for after five minutes or less my feet got so cold that there was nothing for it but get out and trot again to restore the circulation. At noon, or what we thought was noon, we stopped, drank more tea, made a hurried meal, and then off again. It was hard work and frightfully monotonous; and it was doubly hard to me as I had never done anything of the kind before. Often when we camped at sundown I was too tired to eat or even sleep. In fact I slept little in the earlier stages of our journey; for, in addition to finding it almost impossible to keep warm, I suffered acutely from rheumatism contracted in the autumn wet weather. Meeting people in this dreary waste was of course an event to be talked of for days, and even to use as a date. After being ten days out we came across one solitary mail-carrier, who was if anything more miserable than ourselves. He was beyond measure overjoyed at a

present of a few lumps of sugar and a piece of bread. He was travelling on a diet of "straight pemmican," and, though he fared no better than his dogs, he seemed to be quite unconscious of the fact that he was living truly as well as figuratively like a dog. It is curious how very easily a man's mind loses its use and power. I don't profess to be a bigger or profounder thinker than nine men out of ten; but in a week's time I took no sort of interest in anything but the approximate distance we had travelled, what sort of camping-place we should have, and how much longer my tobacco would last. We never knew what time it was, and very soon lost count of the day of the week and month. All we did was to go on and on without intermission, and oh! how fervently I prayed that it would soon be all over. A journey like this is only pleasant when you are able to talk about it afterwards surrounded by all the comforts of civilization.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### Still Southward.

THE rest of my journey is best described by quoting from the rough diary I managed to keep in spite of all the privations I went through.

*Lac la Plume, January 17th.*—Barstow's sinister design of going on this afternoon has I am happy to say been frustrated—wood within reach is a doubtful matter, so we are to camp here. I have taken the opportunity of this brief rest to brush and comb my long and tangled locks, a luxury which the decent Englishman can never understand, and which the long-haired fraternity would not appreciate, there being no merit in long hair unless it is dirty and uncombed. The prospect of sleeping under cover is delightful, and though the shanty is only half roofed and half planked, it seems a palace to me. Everything is a question of comparison. The regular and monotonous questions

with us are, " How far have we gone ? Where shall we get wood ? What will the road be like ? " The answers to them take up all our attention and thoughts and admit of no other conversation. The weather though intensely cold has been brilliantly bright, and we have only had one day of snow. But that one day's snow has ruined the road. " La racquette " in front of the dogs is an absolute necessity. People have an idea that snow-shoeing is a delightful exercise, something like skating. So it may be in the neighbourhood of civilization, but let them try it in the North-West and then tell us what they think of it. After a day's walk (running on snow-shoes is a myth), your feet become a mass of blisters ; the long awkward things get heavier and heavier, and you think bitterly where does the fun come in ? I have not had a wash since we started, it is considered a dangerous experiment to wash in weather like this—and, no doubt there is warmth in dirt—I must admit I don't hanker after water in the form of ablution. We rise by the light of the most magnificent auroras at 5.0, or thereabouts—it is much too cold to be accurate—and we go to bed readily enough at 8.0, *i.e.*, with the help of our half-breeds we get shaken into our blanket-sacks. The surprising part of it is that, though our fire sends a flame twelve feet at least up into the frozen air we often find a thick coating of hoar frost on our backs. And I remember on one occasion noticing some white stuff on the inside of my faithful " capote," and wondering where the chalk came from, until I rubbed it with my gloved hand and found it was frost right through my coat. Once in the sack with a buffalo-robe under and over (it is most important to keep every vestige of air out, for a hole as big as a pin-point has all the effect of an æther-spray), we sleep comfortably enough, but in the morning we find we have to tear ourselves out of our sacks, which open with a crisp, crackling sound, as we are glued up together to the waist by the frost. My hair is long enough to satisfy the most fanatical æsthete, and my beard, which has run riot since my chin and the razor of civilization have become strangers, has grown just long enough to get frozen on to the hood of my capote, and causes me agonies of suffering when I turn my

head until the genial warmth of the camp-fire severs those who never should have been joined, except for the torture of the human race. We expect to get to Fort Pelly in five days and then we shall not have gone half-way. Still the roads will be better and we may meet somebody, which is a thing to look forward to.

*Thursday, January 18th.*—This morning proved too awful for words. Even the hardy half-breeds declared it was too bad to attempt to go on; and if they won't travel you may depend upon it it is because death is inevitable. How thankful we ought to feel that fortune threw a little tumbled-down hut in our way at such a critical time. I know that we should all have died of cold if we had not found this shelter in that dreary waste of snow. I am most anxious to get to Red River, and to get there as soon as possible, but I am more anxious still to reach it with fingers, nose, and toes complete, and had we started out the chances are we should have left some of the necessary appendages behind.

The sun rose on a clear and cloudless sky and one might have thought pleasantly of a comparatively warm day. One had only to put one's nose out of doors in order to hasten to alter one's opinion.

A strong wind is driving, sweeping, and hurrying the frozen snow in blinding clouds as dry as salt over a bleak and apparently boundless prairie, obliterating every vestige of road. The atmosphere is cutting enough to freeze an Indian dog, and I was not surprised to hear afterwards when we got to Fort Pelly, that on that day they registered 49° below zero. Camping out in such a temperature would have been pretty nearly death to me. Bad weather has caught us at last, and misery has marked me for her special favours. We can't stay here for ever, and if things do not mend soon, we shall have to push on in search of food. If we don't all get frozen to death before we reach Pelly we shall have much to be thankful for. There is nothing for it but to button up your coverings and run till you run your heart out. Dying of cold is, I am given to understand, less unpleasant in a sweat than in cold blood. I can believe it, for I remember one evening when I was so exhausted that I let the party get well ahead of me, and feeling

worn out sat down to rest. I realized in time the danger I ran by doing such a thing. It was a delightful sensation: a pleasing drowsiness crept over me and I could have gone peacefully off to sleep, never to wake again. I had just sufficient will left to drag myself out of the insidious lethargy and stumble on to the camp and so save my life. After that I never allowed myself to lag behind, not so much as a dozen yards. Another time I might not be so strong.

*January 19th.*—We are still here. I am rapidly sinking into confirmed melancholy—a book of American oddities and anecdotes has failed to rouse me, and a novel thick with blood and murder awakens no interest, and my condition is clearly desperate. We rose early this morning and a start seemed a certainty, but my friend was suddenly taken with violent pains in his abdomen and other queer things. A delay was proposed till the afternoon, and it has by common consent been extended until to-morrow. Again I feel no wrath. The wind which had craftily fallen in the morning as if to tempt the traveller out, the more surely to destroy him, has now risen into a respectable hurricane, and the familiar but unpleasant spectacle of a "poudre" swept plain meets our anxious gaze. The fat I so meritoriously acquired while after the buffalo, and of which I was so justly proud, is being slowly but surely worn off my bones by that dreadful instrument of torture the fiddle. There are two of them with us and they generally go both at once, intervals being allowed only for meals. All these half-breeds possess a fiddle even if they can afford to own nothing else. They tune them a good deal, but I believe fiddles require and insist on this. Still it has been a matter of the greatest wonder to me how it is they always learn the same tune and never really know it. They scrape the same discords cheerfully a hundred times an hour and always make the same mistakes—like a parrot. I purposely call this obnoxious instrument a fiddle and not a violin. A violin is a beautiful and perfect thing only played by a musician, but anybody can irritate with a fiddle. They get sounds which a violin would be ashamed of; but which no doubt a bag-pipe or a hurdy-gurdy might

father. If you can imagine a highland fling played on an asthmatic bag-pipe you may have some faint notion of what I have to endure from sunrise until sunset, fortunately not more than seven or eight hours in these latitudes at this time of the year. I would give a "fiver" to be able to smash the two beastly things at work now. If ever some brilliant prospect of successful commercial enterprize tempted me to come and live in this country, I would refuse to embark in it unless I could get the Canadian Government to pass an Act making it a penal offence to possess a fiddle. It's no use. I cannot write—all my attention is required to prevent me from going mad.

---

## CHAPTER III.

### Better Quarters.

*FORT PELLY, Wednesday, January 24th*, 1877.—We have arrived here at last, and I thanked my lucky stars for it with a fervour I did not consider myself capable of. After leaving Quill Lake, I found the travelling dreadfully hard, more especially as our provisions were all but exhausted. There was not a living thing to be seen in that dreary waste of snow. And, even if there had been, we could only have looked and longed. Anything in the shape of fur or feathers was quite safe with us. We had not a gun or a cartridge amongst us. During the three days before reaching this, we were reduced to eating the dogs' food (the coarsest kind of pemmican), and we still had a little sugar and tea. It was impossible to make a satisfactory meal on such a limited menu. And, I shall never forget the solemn way in which we prepared our last cooked meal. There were three strips of salt pork, about the size of three fingers, and a handful of crumbs from the bottom of the now empty bread sack. These we mingled, and made, with the help of a tin plate and the

camp fire, into a sort of *au gratin*. We divided the mess into four equal parts and ate it as if it were a last supper. After that, it was a case of positive starvation. We had to travel hard; it was bitterly cold, and of course we felt the pangs of hunger all the more on that account. Still we had to push on; it was our only chance of saving our lives. Fortunately it was not until long after, that I realized what a single bad day, either in the form of high wind or snow-storm, would have meant to us. It would have been death, pure and simple. Here let me say that, as far as my experience goes, tobacco as a relief from the pangs of hunger is all nonsense. I am not exaggerating when I say I have smoked, almost without cessation, for thirty years. But the only time when I really did not care for my pipe, was when I was starving on tea and sugar. Our poor dogs fared worse than ourselves. We had reached such straits, that we dared not give them any of the little pemmican we had left, wolfish and murderous as they looked at times from starvation.

There was always the fear that, if the worst came to the worst, we should have to kill and eat them. So, we found that at night it was necessary to give them all a severe flogging to prevent them from turning on us while we slept. Poor brutes! there was desperation in their eyes. They had tasted of no food for nearly a week, and it was pitiable to see them follow each of us out to the woods, and more so to be unable to prevent them from greedily devouring our rapidly decreasing offerings to nature.

Yesterday we did over forty miles, by far the biggest run of the journey. We were favoured by finding a fairly good road, eight miles of which was through a huge pine forest. The dogs, as if they knew food was near, simply flew along. They went at full gallop, and the moon being up, we determined to push on, and even if we travelled all night, get to the settlement without another camp in the open.

At about nine o'clock, we came in sight of the first hut, and man and beast being thoroughly exhausted, we halted there by unanimous though unexpressed consent.

I may as well say that I went straight into that hut,

and seeing on the way in a crust of bread on a rough table, I promptly picked it up and devoured it silently. All trace of it had disappeared when I stood paying my respects to the owner of the magnificent premises we had thus unceremoniously entered.

The good man saw at a glance our condition, and at once set to work to cook us a steak and give us as good a meal as he was able. To this, I need hardly say, we did ample justice. And having as it were saved ourselves from dying of starvation, we felt bound to hurry on and pay our respects to the head of the Hudson's Bay Territories Company. The place was imposing enough, and, to folks who had not seen a building of any kind for months, it was simply magnificent!

Mr. Macbeth was the reigning monarch in this region. (He said he was no relative of the Shakesperian gentleman of the same name, and I believed him.) He also appeared very glad to see us, and, after expressing surprise at what we had done with such indifferent materials, offered us yet another supper. To this we again did ample justice, asking, as a favour, that our dogs might also be fed.

It was a treat to see them enjoy the scraps thrown to them. Their grateful faces, after they had eaten every bone and were settling down to a well-deserved sleep, can only be described as "seraphic."

Mr. Macbeth was all friendliness. He did not, it is true, offer us rooms in his "palace," but he gave us the use of an outhouse where we made ourselves very comfortable. The dogs had a nice corner and were too full of food to quarrel, we got a thorough clean up, and slept as only half-starved travellers can after a really satisfying meal. We arranged next morning, after what appeared to me to be an ideal breakfast, to make a call at the Government establishment about nine miles off. And on our return to start South once more; but now, without any fear of starvation before us.

*Swan River Barracks, Thursday, January 25th*, 1877. —This is like a bright oasis in the desert of our journey, like sugar in pemmican, like a bath in summer, like anything you please, in fact, which expresses the difference between abject misery and semi-starvation,

and real pleasure and a full stomach. It is 10 o'clock, and luxury of luxuries, divested of my clammy garments, I am sitting on a real bed, a bed, alas! shared by my old man of the sea, but still a bed. Think of it! Hot Water! Looking Glass! and all the other indefinite little nothings which go to make life pleasant, are around me. I feel my soul expanding under these genial influences, and prepared to think well of all men. We left Fort Pelly yesterday afternoon under a bright sky and warm air. The road was in perfect order, and having left all our baggage until we returned, we came along faster than any horses could have brought us. The dogs, like giants refreshed, seemed to exult in the unaccustomed hardness of the track and the lightness of their burden, and simply flew. Barstow rode in solemn state in our only "cariole" as befitting his rank. I followed on a plain flat sledge. I took my trip standing, and when I got tossed off into the snow by a sudden jerk, it was nothing to scramble up again and catch my racing team. The ups and downs of the road gave me lots of tumbles, but it was rare fun all the same.

There are quite a large number of buildings here, and, as we approached the place, it looked almost like a town; and, to me, it appeared fully to represent the temporary seat of the Government of the North-West Territories.

Accustomed as we are to look upon the discovery of one "shanty" as a matter for congratulation, on arriving in front of this long row of buildings we were quite at a loss to know where to turn. However, we soon made our arrival known; and, from the Honourable David Laird, the Governor, downwards, everybody has been particularly kind to us.

I cannot express my joy at seeing and talking to English gentlemen, or at meeting once more the pleasant Canadians. It was like returning to Europe again. The mounted police were there, and their captain—one Herkmer—is a charming fellow. The sight of English papers lying about, of comfortable rooms, combined with the most gushing hospitality, were calculated to quite intoxicate the worn-out and "roughing it" traveller. It

was well for him that he could intoxicate himself in this harmless fashion; for the drink was nothing but pure water. All the same, the police fellows complain that they are worse off than the half-breeds, as they cannot even get a "permit," as it is called, to have spirits. Herkmer told me a good story about a fellow-officer, who having had, according to regulations, to throw away twenty barrels of contraband beer, writes, after detailing the painful incident, "and may God forgive me for committing so awful a sin."

The Governor is a strict temperance man, and is going to lay down even more stringent laws than already exist against the importation of alcohol in any form. He is about seven feet high, a Scotchman, and also a Methodist. He speaks with a succession of jerks most trying to listen to, and is constantly delivered of specimens of that old grim humour which was such a salient characteristic among the early Scotch reformers. He invited us to dinner, however, and to us it was a magnificent banquet. The presence of napkins, a table-cloth, and even a table, was very refreshing. Soup, roast beef, and tart made up what I then thought a princely feast; although six months ago I should probably have turned my nose up at it. The Christmas number of the *Graphic* was there, and after having seen no newspaper for so long, it struck me as something quite beautiful. In the evening we played a slightly dull game of whist, and did not get to bed until after midnight, full of good food and good spirits—I mean animal ones. I don't suppose we shall get away for another day, but I am rather pleased at the prospect, anxious as I am to get back to civilization again. The seat of Government is only temporarily established here, and moves up to Battleford in the summer.

*Fort Pelly, Friday, January 26th*, 1877.—We had a good deal of trouble in getting off yesterday, but Barstow, oddly enough, was inexorable. He does not find himself looked upon with so much importance here as amongst the half-breeds, and did not shine in the society of the Government folk; so he was anxious to be off. We purchased a lot of canned provisions from the Government sutler, and tore ourselves away from

the place, which was as anxious to keep us as we were to stay. We started at about 9 o'clock in the evening, after having lunched with the Governor on moose-meat and dined with the police. It was a lovely moon-light night, and we did the nine miles to Pelly in a little over an hour. We all rose late this morning, and I fear I shall do little more than make a start. This is unfortunate, as it is a lovely day and we should have been able to make a splendid run. The sun is getting very bright as we get south, and we are beginning to feel its effect on the snow; all of us finding our eye-sight weakened, but, curiously enough, this is not noticeable except in the evening.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### Easy Going.

*SHELL RIVER, Sunday, January 28th*, 1877.—As I anticipated, we didn't leave Fort Pelly until very late; in fact it was 4.30 before we were fairly off, and the sun far on its way towards setting. However, the road was good and the moon promised to be bright. By keeping up a good pace until 8.30 we did something over fifteen miles, a good half-day. Yesterday was lovely and spring-like, and we got over a great deal of ground with much comfort to ourselves.

This morning proved even brighter and finer, in fact too warm for the dogs to work really well; although, if you come to think of it, it would have been considered a cold day in England. We managed to get here at 1.30, accomplishing seventy miles in less than two days.

This morning was really the first since we started when I am able to say that I was thoroughly comfortable on the march. The men have rigged up another "cariole," and Barstow has taken the one I used to have with his favourite dogs, all of them lazy and ill-

trained in the opinion of the half-breeds. Napoleon looks after me and I have no trouble. It was actually basking weather, and I lay back and sunned myself in a manner to bring back memories of far-away Serk. The smooth, easy motion of a "cariole" reminds one of a sailing-boat. As it swishes up against the snow piled up on the sides of the road, one has only to shut one's eyes to imagine one can hear the water running. This is a tumbled-down little shanty, I believe once a police-station, but now abandoned. We are to stay here until 8 o'clock as it is too hot for the dogs, and are to travel all night by moon-light to make up for it. Shoal Lake is about sixty miles off, but, if all goes well, we shall probably get there to-morrow night. I have availed myself of this opportunity to have a good wash. The comfort of such a thing does not seem to appeal to my companions, since I alone have thought the thing either necessary or desirable. Barstow, after eating inordinately, has been asleep all the afternoon. It seems a long time ago since I became convinced I had had more than enough of roughing it; and, if enough is as good as a feast, I am beginning to think that I have had really more feasts than a person so unimportant as myself is entitled to. How glad I shall be to get to Red River, no one can tell. The mere thinking of the time when I shall be able to get up in the mornings without seeing Barstow, is positive bliss. I suppose I must try and sleep a little to make up for having none to-night, though I am afraid I have not eaten enough to do it properly. If all goes well (see how I count the days), we ought to get to Winnipeg in another ten days; but once we get near the houses, I am afraid Barstow will want to spend a day with each of his dull and stupid acquaintances all along the route. I remember what it was on the way up; it will probably be worse on the way down.

*Monday, January 29th*, 1877.—The weather has now entirely changed. Instead of cold, snow, and misery, we have balmy air, the sun is positively hot, and things look as pleasant as they so lately looked the reverse. I have just had a splendid dinner, consisting of sardines, beef and vegetables (also out of a tin), and coffee. Our

bread, worse luck, has very nearly run out again, so we are obliged to be sparing with that. Only those who have found themselves without it, know what an important part bread plays in the list of our daily comforts. Our hours of march, owing to this unexpected turn in the weather, have been quite reversed. Last night we got up and put our things together at about 11 o'clock p.m. We had a meal, which I am quite at a loss to give a name to, for it answers to none of the ordinary ones of civilization. We started off at 1.30 a.m. under one of the loveliest of moons I think I ever saw. It was as clear as day, and from every branch and twig glistened a thousand diamonds. I started off in front, in order to enjoy the sight alone. I got across the river, up a steep bank, and half-way across a prairie, when it suddenly occurred to me, "I wonder whether I am on the road?" I looked round; I could see nothing but snow, bounded by a circular horizon, such as one is familiar with on the ocean. It was as clear as day in that wonderful moonlight, but I could see no living thing nor hear any sound but the beating of my own heart and the crisp crackle of the snow when I shifted my position. I stopped and listened again. Before long, I was made aware that I had not strayed very far from the road by hearing Barstow's well-known cries: "Marche, Weepatim, mon diable! 'cre tonnerre! Come on, will you, Beaver!" and the yelping of dogs who were being flogged. When they caught me up, I got into my own cariole and was able to finish a book given to me by one of my friends of the police. We marched on until the moon began to make for the horizon and pale her ineffectual fires. Then Lucifer rose in all his beauty, only to be eclipsed by the effulgence of Venus. And, last of all, came the first flush of Aurora, rosy-fingered dawn. Then, just as we stopped for a mouthful of breakfast, proud Phœbus arrived with his fiery chariot to drive over a cloudless sky. It was a glorious procession, and never have I seen so magnificent a display of the heavenly bodies.

In an hour we were off again, and managed to do eight or nine miles before the heat of the sun drove us into taking shelter here. Here is nowhere in particular, but there is a ready-made camp, plenty of food, and

therefore, all we want. On our way we met a Captain Brisbore, whom the police fellows told us was on the way to the seat of Government. The brute was comfortably stretched in his cariole, and covered with robes and wraps. He was drawn by three splendid dogs and had two half-breed attendants running on either side of him. He was a thin little rat of a Canadian, spoke with a fearful twang, gave himself no end of airs, and treated us as if we were dirt beneath his feet. He had a little barrel in front of his cariole, which must have contained whiskey or some equally delightful drink. He must have known that we had not even smelt such a thing for months, yet he never so much as offered us a "horn" (anglici, sip). For that want of politeness, which the meanest man in the country could scarcely have been guilty of, may every sort of misfortune overtake the miserable little wretch.

The scene is an unusual one; but I alone see it. The sun is shining brightly through the leafless trees dulling the light of a huge fire. On one side of it snores a half-breed, on the other, stretched full length on a buffalo robe, Barstow is sleeping off the effects of an appalling meal, he having, to my knowledge, eaten as if there were no hereafter. Tin pots, plates, knives and forks, lie about in all directions. The trees are festooned with moccasins, mitasses and socks, in the process of drying. The dogs are dozing all round us in a happy and contented way, having finished quarrelling over their meal. There is not a soul to be seen, nor a sound to be heard, except when a funny little bird, harbinger of fine weather, comes hopping on to a twig with a queer little chirp. And, last of all, to complete the picture, seated on a bag of dirty linen is your humble servant. He is bare-footed, with his pipe in his mouth and his pencil and paper in his hand. However, I must put a stop to this. We are going to start this evening at six o'clock and travel all night. So I must imitate the rest and do a sleep before then.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### Nearing the End.

*WEDNESDAY, January 31st*, 1877.—Just as I am beginning to enjoy this kind of travelling, and the weather is becoming spring-like and altogether delightful, we are rapidly coming to the end of our journey.

After sleeping till sundown as sweetly as a child, I was roused by an arrival and, hearing the sonorous oath of a thorough Englishman, I jumped up. He proved to be a fellow with a train of dogs bound north from Shoal Lake. A very tall member of the police, but jovial and pleasant withal. We all supped together and then started on our journeys under a brilliant moon at about eight o'clock. At one a.m. we stopped and had some food, then off again at a gallop, and without a check reached Shoal Lake at 3.30, the dogs going splendidly. You see they are now thoroughly trained, and the warmth of the noon day sun just thaws the snow enough to make it turn into ice at night, thus making a most perfect road. At Shoal Lake Captain French popped his head out of his hut, told us to make ourselves comfortable in the men's quarters and come to breakfast in the morning. Considering I had hardly slept at all for forty-eight hours I was soon oblivious to everything. In the morning we breakfasted with the Captain and Mrs. French, both very merry and very Irish. Mrs. French made us quite at home and we spent a very pleasant day with them. Her little daughter, aged two, was soon my fast friend. Mrs. French is the first lady I have spoken to since I left New York, and I thoroughly appreciated her society. She is rather a slangy little woman, not at all pretty, very free and easy, but no vice. I have no end of commissions for her at Winnipeg. We very reluctantly left our charming host and hostess at about nine in the evening. The moon was somewhat clouded, so we only did about seven miles and then took a sleep and then did fourteen more. I believe we have slept

our last sleep in the open, thank God, and shall arrive on Monday or Tuesday next.

*Palestine, February 2nd*, 1877.—Surely our arrival is heralded by the Spring! We are having the most charming weather, just warm enough to be comfortable, and no mosquitos or other beastly insects to plague one. I am sitting in the "cariole" and can actually do so without wearing gloves. We have just left the Holy Land, or rather a miserable little collection of nondescript huts to which the inhabitants have given the ludicrous name of "Palestine." This spot is within the province of Manitoba, and the "fruit defendu" of the North-West Territories, *i.e.*, spirits are allowed to be sold and consumed. Like all liquor on the borders of civilization the quality is excessively bad and the price exceedingly high. We had a good dinner, that is to say, good when compared to what we have been accustomed to; and were waited on by a buxom Canadian maiden. The place, by courtesy called an hotel, was full of loafers of all sorts, hungry, spirituous, out-at-elbow sort of ne'er-do-weels, many of whom, as I soon found out, had seen better, much better, days. Most of them were attired in what the Americans call "store clothes." You can call the awful shapes and materials of these wonderful garments by no name which would be so comprehensively and exhaustively descriptive. We reached the spot where we were to camp, a certain half-breed's establishment, an hour before we expected to. We were, however, made welcome and generously entertained by the gentleman's wife and daughter. The latter is a frisky young damsel, of some seventeen summers, the height of whose ambition, poor girl, is to be married to Barstow. From there we went on to the Police Depot at Riding Mountain, where we fed well. You may be astonished at the emphasis I undoubtedly give to all meals, but if you knew what semi-starvation meant you would understand and forgive. The police fellows, minus officers, treated us most hospitably. There was a curious fellow amongst them, half Dutch and half Belgian, who has led a queer kind of existence. After working at one thing and another in Chalons and Paris, for some years, he made for America without a penny. He managed to get

tick for his lodgings in New York, then settled the score by enlisting at the outbreak of the American war. He assured me with calm effrontery that he deserted no less than seven times by jumping out of the train as he was being taken to the front. It paid pretty well as he got a bounty each time of something like $800. Still it was risky work, for if he had been caught at it, he would have been shot there and then without even the formality of a court-martial. He must have had plenty of nerve; for, though he escaped being shot himself, a fate he richly deserved, he told us he had often been ordered to shoot deserters. We left them all this morning and when we got well away we discovered that we were in a land flowing with bad spirits and worse credit. However, we committed a felony, and opened a letter entrusted to us, which we knew contained $3. With this we not only dined but each had our first drink after months of abstinence.

*Portage la Prairie, February 4th*, 1877.—This place has already been the scene of some of my adventures and here we are again. Astonishing as it may seem, it is warmer now than it was when we went past it in the autumn of last year. We arrived at Westbourne *vulgè* White Mud River in the evening, and the place proved so attractive that we found it difficult to get away. It is a little colony of English fellows, and it was interesting to come across men who had all been to an English public school, and who knew so many of my Oxford friends.

The rest of our journey to Winnipeg was quite uneventful, but much slower than it need have been owing to Barstow. He *would* stop the day at every place where there was a semblance of an acquaintance, in that way wasted quite a week.

However, we got to Winnipeg at last, and a fine show we made as we galloped into the town. Our arrival created quite a little excitement. Dog sleighs in Winnipeg itself were unusual, and everybody turned out to see us.

There! that's the end of that wonderful journey with dogs, the experiences of which people in England would scarcely believe.

B. P. W.

Farewell to thee, Western Country,
Farewell to thine ices and snows,
Farewell to thy barren prairies,
Where never a zephyr blows.

Farewell to the endless trading,
Farewell to the odour of furs,
Farewell to the hideous howling
Of half a hundred curs.

Farewell to the stupid half-breed,
And his mother the dusky squaw;
She's the ugliest thing in women
I think I ever saw.

Farewell to the noble Redmen;
They are strangely full of fleas—
Big fleas—that must bite sharply
Those philosophic Crees.

Farewell to the iron platters,
And the coarse food they contain;
Farewell to that Western sweetmeat,
They call it "*taureau à graines.*"

Farewell to dinners of buffalo;
Farewell, O harmless tea!
How often have I wished you
At the bottom of the sea!

Farewell to the dirty digits,
And trousers greasy-bright;
Farewell to the convenience
Of a place to strike a light.

Farewell to my pipe of briar,
With muzzle as black as jet;—
But no!—I cannot leave thee,
I cannot leave thee yet.

Farewell to the Indian wigwam,
And the stories of the hunt;
It used to smoke well-d——ly
When the wind came from the front.

Farewell to the winter-quarters,
With the fiddle every day;
Perhaps in course of centuries
They'll learn in time to play.

Farewell to scant ablutions,
  And that little bit of soap;
The time is coming quickly
  When I'll be clean, I hope.

Farewell to moccasins, mittens,
  Mitasses, and *jarratière;*
No doubt I'll find some costume
  More suitable to wear.

Farewell to the bed without sheeting,
  And its blanket of blackest hue.
When out on the frost-girdled prairie,
  How often I then thought of you!

Farewell to the empty rum barrels.
  How hollow, alas! do they sound!
Yet still how oft have I sniffed them,
  And very much comfort thus found!

Farewell to the days of forced temp'rance,
  With never a drop to cheer;
I will think of you oft in the future,
  And drink your good health in good beer.

Farewell to the priest *à la* Balzac;
  His stories were not sacerdotal,
And mixed with a passion for liquor,
  He made up a comical total.

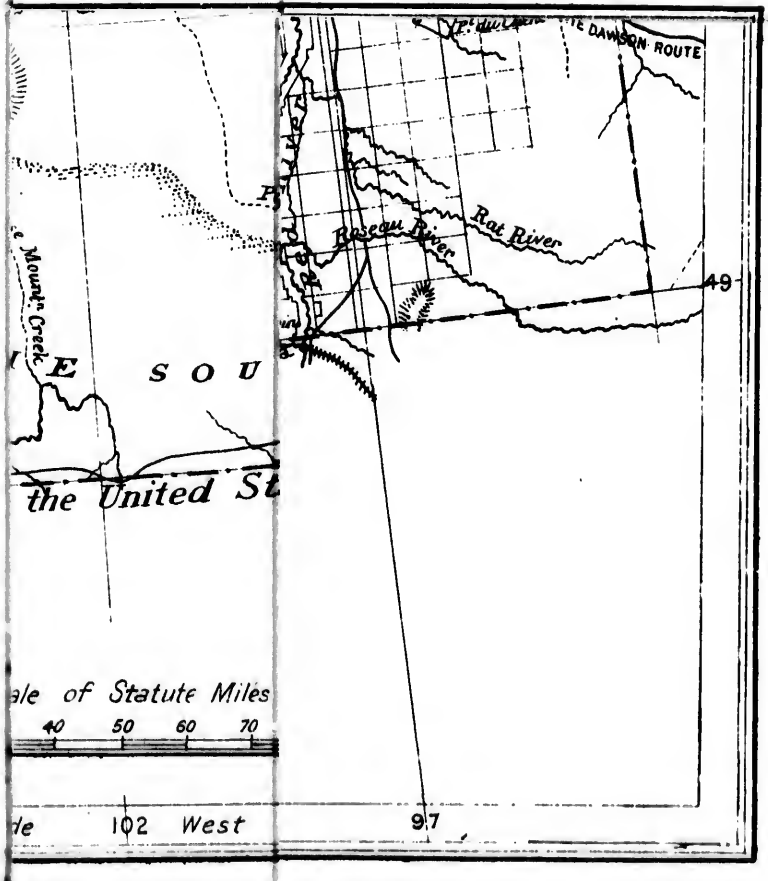
Farewell to my stolid companion,
  He meant well enough, I dare say;
But still, I think I can manage
  If I see him no more from to-day.

Farewell to thee, dullest Barbari[illegible],
  How I long once more to be free!
And if e'er I return to thy dwellings,
  May I live to be wedded to thee!

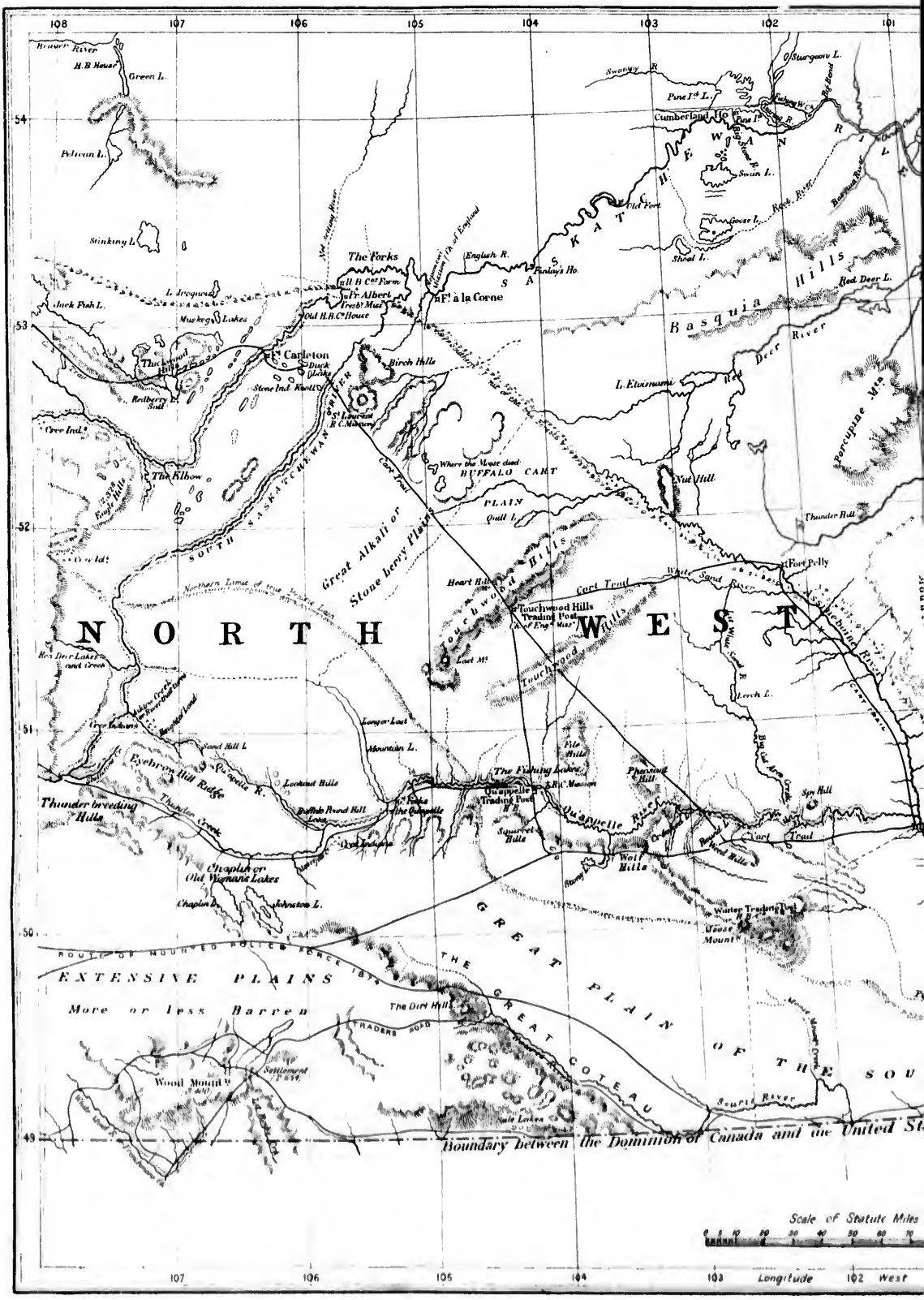
B. P. W.

P. W.

# PART O
# T T
LUDING THE
# OF M



# MAP OF PART O
# NORTH WEST TE
INCLUDING THE
# PROVINCE OF M



# AP OF PART OF THE
# WEST TERRITORY,
INCLUDING THE
# VINCE OF MANITOBA.

*January 20th, 1875.*