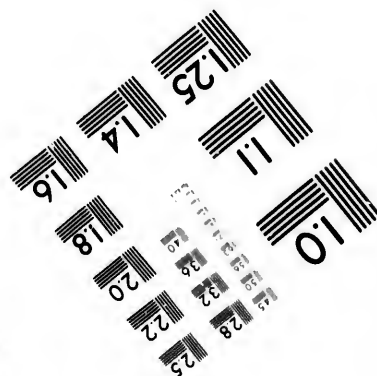
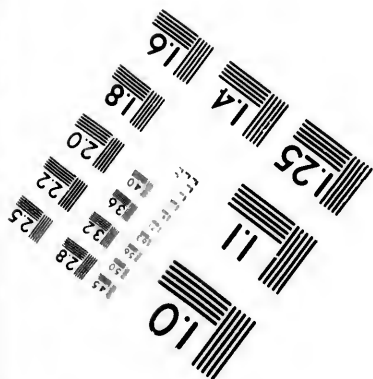
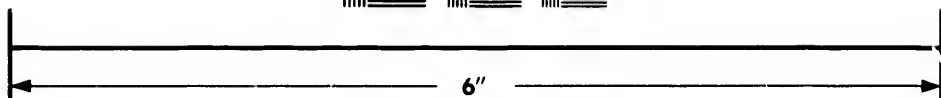
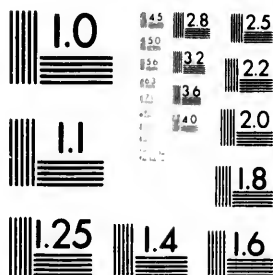
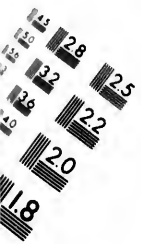


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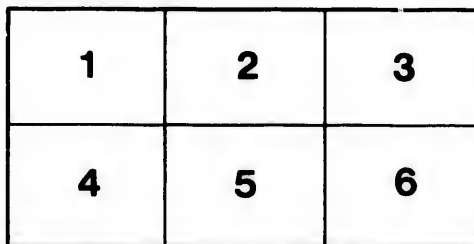
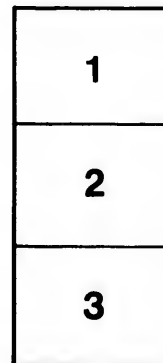
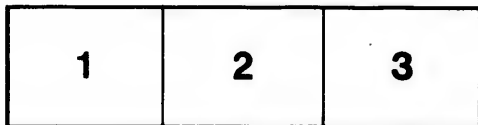
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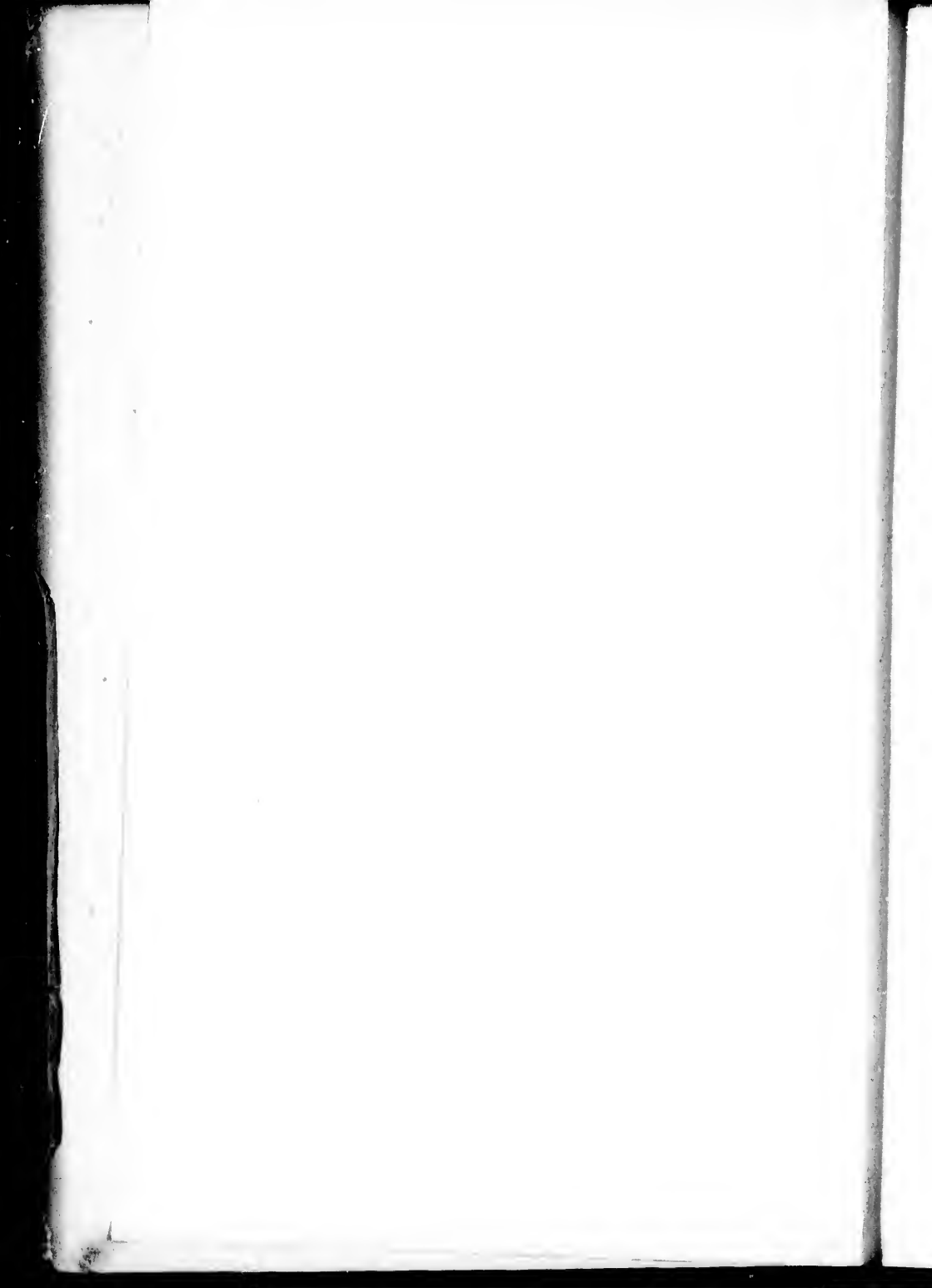
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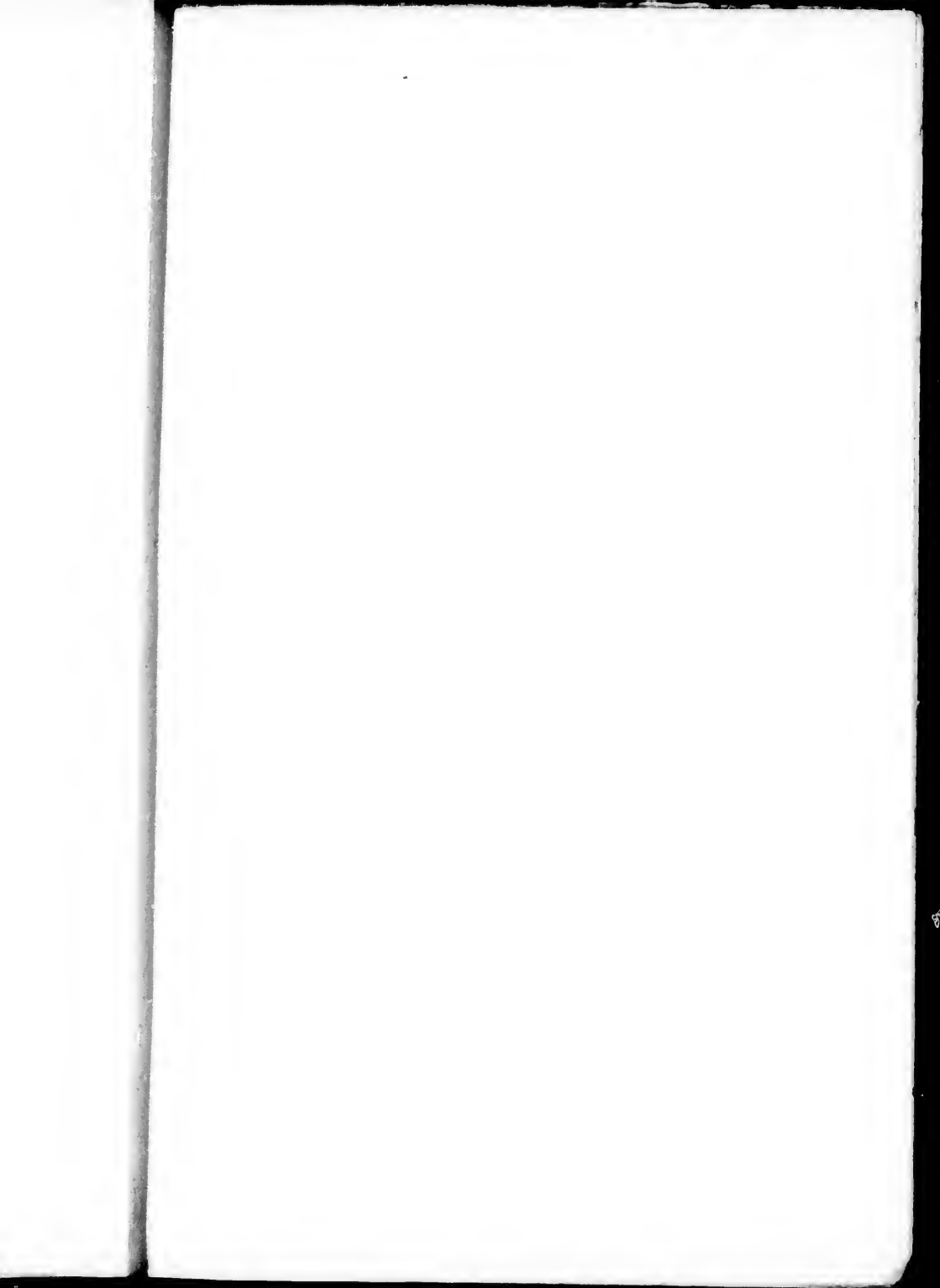
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The Land of the Muskeg







Frontispice.

Hommes Somerset

The Land of the Muskeg

By H. SOMERS SOMERSET

With a Preface by

A. Hungerford Pollen

*With One Hundred and Ten Illustrations from Sketches by
A. H. Pollen and Instantaneous Photographs
and Four Maps*



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To
MY MOTHER



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PREFACE

It was only about ten days before we left England that we decided upon making the expedition described in this book. Two years before, Somerset and I had made short hunting trips in the mountains in the north of the State of Wyoming, and in the more southerly sierras in California. Here we had hunted with fair success, and incidentally had learned what roughing it really means. In Wyoming we had struggled with a premature gust of wintry weather, and had been snowed up, and in California too had experienced the pleasures of being lost on snow-covered heights. So that, though only nineteen, Somerset had had a considerable experience of mountain travelling. But so far our adventures had not been anything out of the ordinary lot of the sporting tripper; and we



A GOOD TROPHY

were now anxious to break new ground, if possible, in a country that offered a fair prospect for sport.

It was at this point that a recent map of British Columbia and certain mendacious Canadian Blue-books fell into our hands, and in a moment our plans were laid. 'Unexplored' figured so largely



ROUGH WORK IN THE ROCKIES

and alluringly in one and prodigious accounts of bears, moose, wolves, beavers, cariboo, and other animals so seductively in the other, that we felt to force our way through this untravelled region promised a certain amount of novelty and adventure, while it seemed impossible

that we could pass through the great fur reserve of the world without getting such an amount of sport as would justify the labour of our undertaking.

What Mr. Pike had so courageously done (and so admirably described) in the extreme North, must, it seemed, be a much easier thing to do in more

temperate and less barren regions ; so we determined to strike off from the highways of that region—the rivers—and make an overland journey into the unknown.

The first thing to do was to gain the support of the Hudson's Bay Company ; and let it be said at once, nothing that we asked for in the shape of either advice or help was ever denied us. From Lord Lichfield and the officer in charge of the smallest fort we passed, every one who had to do with that great organisation treated us with a real kindness that is not to be explained by any mere consideration of commercial courtesy. Without the Company, one could hardly travel there at all, but the services one is so happy to remember are those voluntarily given, often at considerable cost of trouble to the giver, and always with a spontaneity and goodwill that made the kindness doubly delightful.

The farthest point the railway could take us to was the little town of Edmonton, that lies to the north of the Province of Alberta, and there we arrived on June 7th, 1893. We set to work at once to find some one who could give us information based on personal experience. Judging merely by the map, the Blue-books, and the fur returns we

had seen at Winnipeg, our original plan had been to travel by water and wagon to Fort St. John, on the Peace River, and make that our base for a journey to the North. Of course we were reckoning in entire ignorance of the character of the country.

We were in Edmonton a full week, and though most hospitably welcomed in that flourishing sentinel town, it is to be said that our plans were received with derision. What folly to go to certain misery and failure, when by staying where we were we could get the finest wild-fowl shooting in the world! Then there were any number of black bears and, if I remember rightly, deer,



WINTRY WEATHER IN WYOMING

moose, and a whispered rumour of buffalo, and all in a neighbourhood teeming with comfort. It is always so in my experience in a frontier town. One would have thought that, having come so far afield, these pioneers from an overcrowded world would have warmed to the project of fresh adventure; but no, one is invariably warned with circumstantial (but quite unveracious) anecdote of the perils of the beyond, and gratuitously (and quite

incorrectly) advised as to regions and routes one has no wish or intention of exploring.

But most luckily at Edmonton there was one man who did know the country we were making for, and knew it and its inhabitants well, for he had for years been stationed at Dunvegan in charge of the Hudson's Bay

Company's fort.

This was Mr. H. B.

Round, about whom

I shall have more to

say later. Suffice it

at present that he at

once encouraged our

making the attempt,

and only corrected

our plans by suggest-

ing that we should

start from Dunvegan

and work west in-

stead of north. The thousand perplexities that

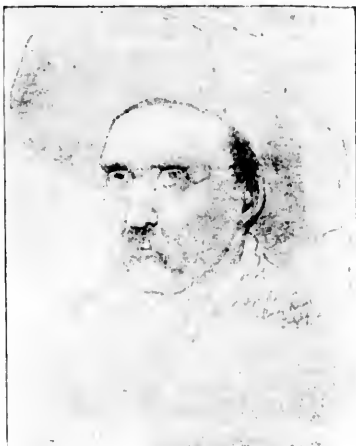
threaten every traveller who enters a country new

to him were in great degree dissipated by the

information and advice that Mr. Round gave us,

and after three days' acquaintance we had got to

lean on his judgment so completely that we begged



H. B. ROUND

him to accompany us if he could. Most fortunately for us he was able to do this, and at once threw himself into the business of buying stores and perfecting arrangements with a heartiness that boded well.

Our first move must be to get to the Athabaska Landing, a hundred miles north; here we should find a river steamer that plies on the Athabaska, carrying the Company's fur and stores, and in this we should be taken up to meet Mr. Ewen Macdonald from the Little Slave Lake, who was expected at the mouth of the Little Slave River with the fruits of the winter's trading. Mr. Macdonald would see us safe to his headquarters on the bend of the lake, and here we should be left to our own devices.

The steamer was due to start on the 20th, but our arrangements being all made, and we in a hurry to escape into camp-life, we thought we might as well start, and so on the 14th, amid the cheers of the good-hearted folk of Edmonton, and a drenching downpour of rain, we left in two wagons heavily loaded with passengers, the more precious baggage, stores for a week, and our camp outfit. Round and I drove in one, and a hired driver, who was to bring the teams back, had charge of the other, with Captain Robert Ramsey and Dr. Dudley as

Unfortunately
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his mess that

At Athabaska
we should
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SNOWED-UP IN CALIFORNIA

passengers. The Doctor was a young practitioner from Chicago, whom we had engaged on our way out, a stranger to the wilderness, but who nevertheless bore the hardships of our expedition without complaint. His skill was greatly in request amongst the Indians, and the medical stores he had brought with him proved of immense use.

Captain Ramsey was an old friend of ours. We had made his acquaintance in California, when a sudden shock of earthquake brought all the five occupants of a tiny hotel together into a pathway, under an ominously swinging oil-lamp. We were on the point of starting into the mountains, and Ramsey, who had heard of our plan, begged to be allowed to come. The son of a substantial ship-owner of South Shields, he had been brought up to a sailor's life, and having visited every port in the world, and seen life in a hundred different countries, was an immediate volunteer for anything that promised novelty. In camp he showed a genius for usefulness that made him an indispensable ally, and when we regretfully parted, we readily acceded to his request, that in the event of our making another expedition we should let him know. This I had done just before leaving England, and the rendezvous being made at a distance of 7000 miles, it

seems to be worth recording that he met us in Edmonton within half an hour of our own arrival.

Besides the wagons, we had hired a horse to ride, on which Somerset and I took turns; but there was no romance in the journey. The country, it is true, was fair to the eye, and I should imagine of great agricultural value; but incessant rain and a poor



WINTER CAMP IN WYOMING

road made travelling the height of discomfort, so that on the third day we were glad to find ourselves, late in the evening, making our way down the hill that leads to the square mile of territory and half-dozen log-houses and stores that rejoice in the sonorous name of the Athabaska Landing.

Here Mr. Wood made us at home in his office, while he sent out to have a small shack cleared for

our reception. It was a tiny log-hut of two small rooms, but there was a stove in it, and we gratefully accepted his offer of its shelter, as the alternative of camping in the mud was not pleasant.

The Athabaska Landing is the gate of the great North. It is from here that all the stores go out that supply the Hudson's Bay Company's forts from Hudson's Hope to the mouth of the Mackenzie. A steamer built on the spot plies up the river to the mouth of the Slave River, and down to where



A STERN FATHER

the rapids make the Athabaska no longer navigable, where the stores are transhipped to York boats. Beyond the warehouses, offices, and Mr. Wood's residence there are no buildings, although most of the year there is a large Indian encampment near by. It is, too, the last outpost of the Government, and a couple of the Canadian police were on duty to stop the importation of strong liquor. But once on the north shore of the

river, the constituted authority of the Queen's Government ends. Over all the rest of Northern Canada the land has been taken and settled after

treaty with the Indian tribes, the natives giving up their right to range freely, and getting reservations of territory and an annual supply of food in return. With the northern Indians no such treaties have been made, and I believe it is an open question whether they are at all under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Courts. I think it was the day after our arrival that a weatherbeaten old savage landed in a beautifully made birch-bark canoe while we were loitering at the landing-place, and came and shook hands with us in the friendliest manner. His story was curious, and illustrates what I have just been saying. There was a domestic quarrel, it seems, one day in his lodge, and his son offering some serious incivility to his mother, he gave him a lesson in good-breeding by chopping off his head with an axe. For this he was taken out to Winnipeg, I think, and tried for murder, found guilty and sentenced, his counsel all the while protesting. The sentence was changed to imprisonment, and finally, after a few weeks' detention, he was released and restored to his country—whether on the score of health or want of jurisdiction in the Court I am unable to say, but I was told that the first was made an excuse for not deciding the latter question.

One thing, however, is certain, and it is that

north of the Athabaska there is no function of Government that is discharged either by the Dominion of Canada or the Imperial authority; nor has the original power of the Indian chiefs survived in its integrity, and over far the greater part of the North-West all the machinery of control they know is represented to the uncovenanted Indian by the Hudson's Bay Company and the missionaries of St. Mary Immaculate.

These last fill a picturesque place in the story of the country. At almost every fort you will find the neat log-houses and church of the Roman Catholic



WE HUNTED WITH FAIR SUCCESS

Mission; and the priests themselves are all highly educated men, while the most of them are of good French or French-Canadian families. Their influence with the Indians is immense. During the last rebellion the Canadian Government owed much to the missionaries' power of restraining incipient revolt, and every Hudson's Bay Company's officer we met was loud and unqualified in their praise. This

would hardly be so were not their services to civilisation and good order known beyond dispute, for the officers in question were to a man alien to their race and their creed, and as we had lamentable occasion to remark, the bitterness of religious differences is not a whit softer in that country than in ours. For ourselves, we have a score of services to thank them for, and the fathers at the Little Slave Lake, Smoky River, Dunvegan, and Fort M^cLeod each and all put themselves and all they possessed at our disposal in the friendliest way. It was through Père Husson, at Dunvegan, that we were able to make the arrangements that enabled Daukhan Tustowits and John Knot—those invaluable men—to leave their families for the summer, secure in the consciousness that they were in good hands: to Père Morice we owe a debt of thanks for much of the information that we obtained,—and to all a recollection of personal kindness and consideration that it will be a lasting pleasure to remember.

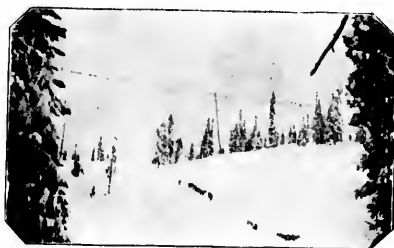
The Hudson's Bay Company itself, however, holds the pride of place in the North. With its long history, its wide ramifications, its vast property, and its huge power, so benevolently used, it seems more like a political institution than a mercantile

concern. To borrow from the name of their excellent tobacco, there is something of an Imperial Mixture about their organisation. At the forts flies the Union Jack, with the Company's monogram upon it: amongst the officers there is an *esprit de corps* and a loyalty to their calling that is almost patriotic. To them rivals, like the smugglers of old, are 'free traders,' and the survival of the old-world phrase is eloquent of the very tale of the Company's history.

And yet the stress of modern commercial life is making great, and in a sense devastating, changes in the old order. The system of appointing a new Commissioner every five years disturbed the continuity of the Company's policy as little as the changes in the Viceroyalty of India now disconnects that Government, so long as that policy was determined by an annual conference of the chief officers. Those were days when great discretion was necessarily left to each officer in the discharge of his duties. Fraud, speculation, and dishonesty were unknown things in the Company's history, and it must be obvious to any one that to secure trustworthy men, and trust them absolutely, would have remained the best security for a continued immunity. But with the new system of

centralisation which improved methods of communication have made possible, the system works differently, and the old order is rapidly disappearing. Competition and the rapid decay of the fur trade in so many districts contribute much to the change in the character of the officers, and with it the general aspect of the Company as an institution must in a few years' time be altered beyond recognition.

It is useless to regret the inevitable, but a casual traveller may be pardoned if he deplors the invasion of the spirit of modern dividend-hunting into a domain so romantic and inspiring. For the trail of economy is over all. Old servants are being dismissed, and their places taken by cheaper



PACK-TRAIN IN THE SNOW

men. Forts are abandoned, and Indians forced to move to follow their markets, and everywhere there is a consciousness of uncertainty as to the future, and ignorance of what the next move from headquarters may be, that but ill replaces

the old self-reliance and security that made such splendid servants of the officers, and endowed them with an authority that the Indians instinctively respected.

The change in its least attractive features was brought home to us very vividly from the fact of our having had the great good fortune to secure Mr. Round's company on our journey. He was a man of a good English family, educated in a public school, and bringing to his work all those high ideals of loyalty, perseverance, and devotion that are the distinguishing mark of our public servants. When he joined the Company's service more than twenty years ago that was the universal spirit of its employes, and in that spirit Mr. Round put in his score of years of toil. After fourteen years' charge of the fort at Dunvegan he had just reached the point at which he would have been entitled to expect promotion, when, for what was alleged to be an error of judgment, he was summarily dismissed. At Dunvegan he had the care of a large ranche of cattle. Several died of an obscure disease. It seemed to him that the disease must be contagious, and in the exercise of his discretion he killed the survivors that were afflicted to save the rest. In all, if I remember aright, he only

killed two or three. These acts were duly reported; but, owing to the indiscreet anxiety of a friend to discover the action of the disease, the fact of the disease at Dunvegan became public, there was an outcry from Europe, the Company was blamed, and the unfortunate Mr. Round was made the scapegoat.

Now it is hard for me to believe that if the control of the Company had been in the hands of any one who had personal knowledge of Mr. Round's character and service, so cruel a punishment would have been inflicted for so small a fault—if fault indeed it was; for the inquiry which was promised into the nature of the disease has not, so far as I am aware, ever been made. And that is why I alluded just now to the five years' Commission: the chief of the Company has no knowledge, of his officers, and in a moment may part with one of the best the Company has ever had, inflicting a double wrong—one on the organisation that has been so well, so loyally served, another on the man who has given the prime of his life to its service.

But to us the incident was all gain, for we enjoyed the companionship and help of a man whose like one could seldom hope to light on in

the pioneer places of the earth. Never out of humour nor down-hearted, he did more work than any in an outfit where all were from the first almost driven to work their hardest all the time. And his advice and judgment made us as much his debtors as his exertions, for he knew more of the country and our method of travel, and the character and idiosyncrasies of the Indians, than any one we came across. His complete mastery of the Cree language was an invaluable help, and the fact of the Indians all knowing and liking him personally made a hundred things easy that might well have been impossible. It was during our idle stay at the Athabaska Landing that our final plans were laid. From Round we had learned that the north bank of the Peace River was practically impassable—and moreover, not well stocked with game. The country between Pouce Coupée's prairie and the Pine Pass, on the other hand, was a favourite hunting-ground both of the Beavers and Crees. This route had another attraction for us, as by working through towards the mountains we could get out again to civilisation by McLeod's Lake and the Frazer River instead of retracing our steps. There was a chance too of finding tolerable trails, Mr. Dawson having come over the Pine

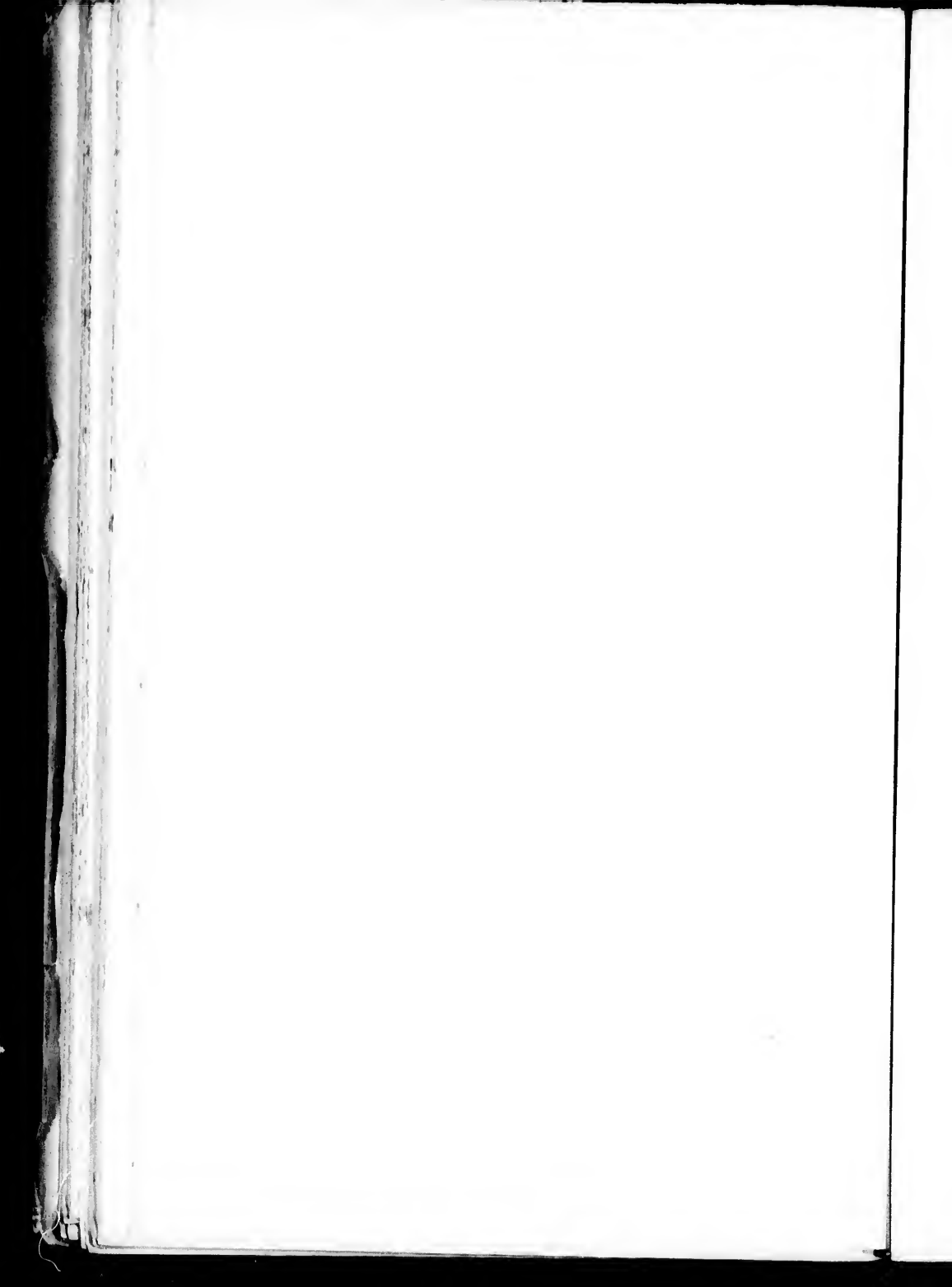
Pass and through to Dunvegan some fourteen years before. This therefore we determined to attempt; but of course all would depend on the guidance and information we should get later from the natives. How far our hopes were realised, and our adventures in carrying out our plan, the reader will learn in the following pages.

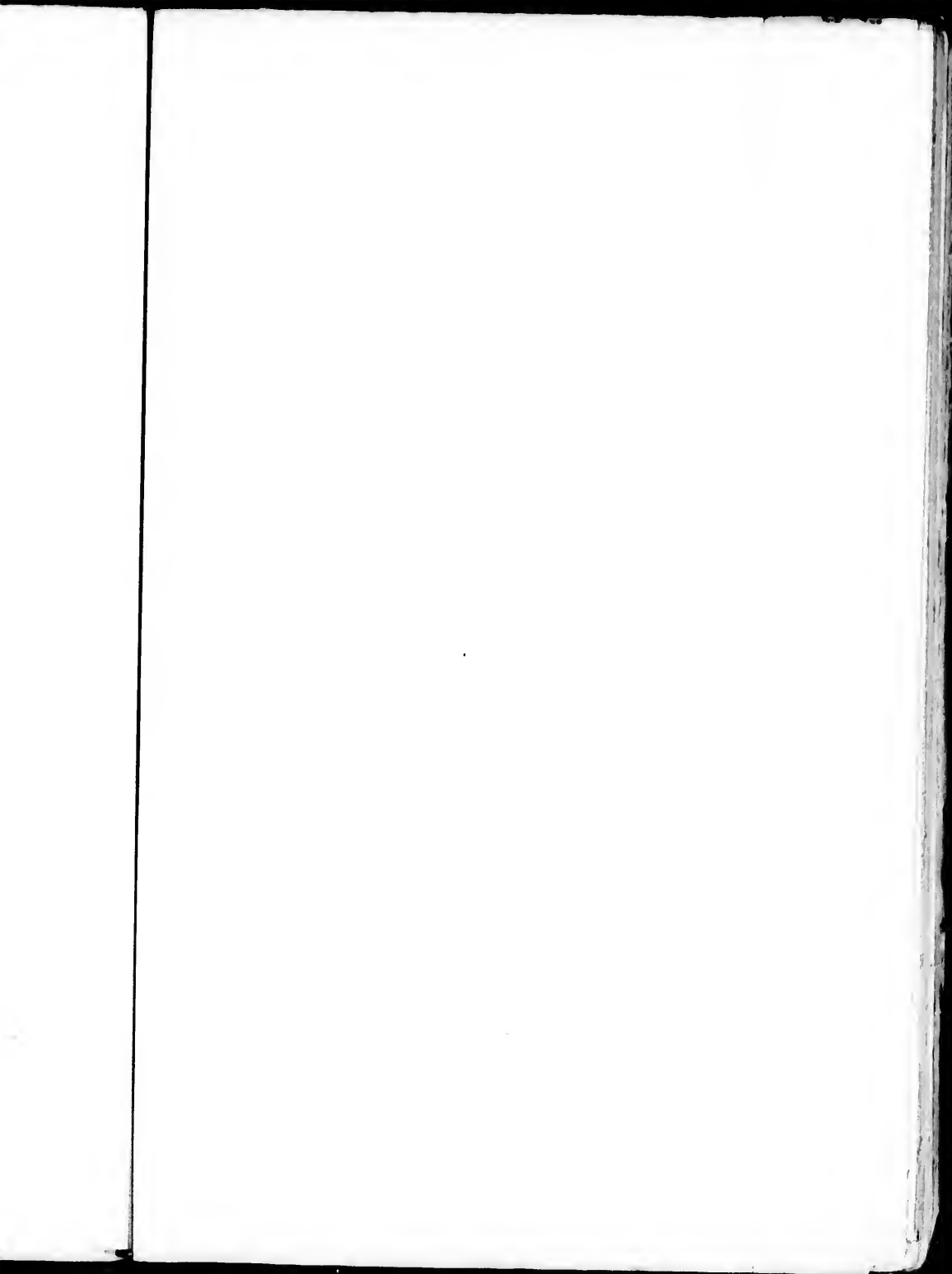
ARTHUR HUNGERFORD POLLEN.



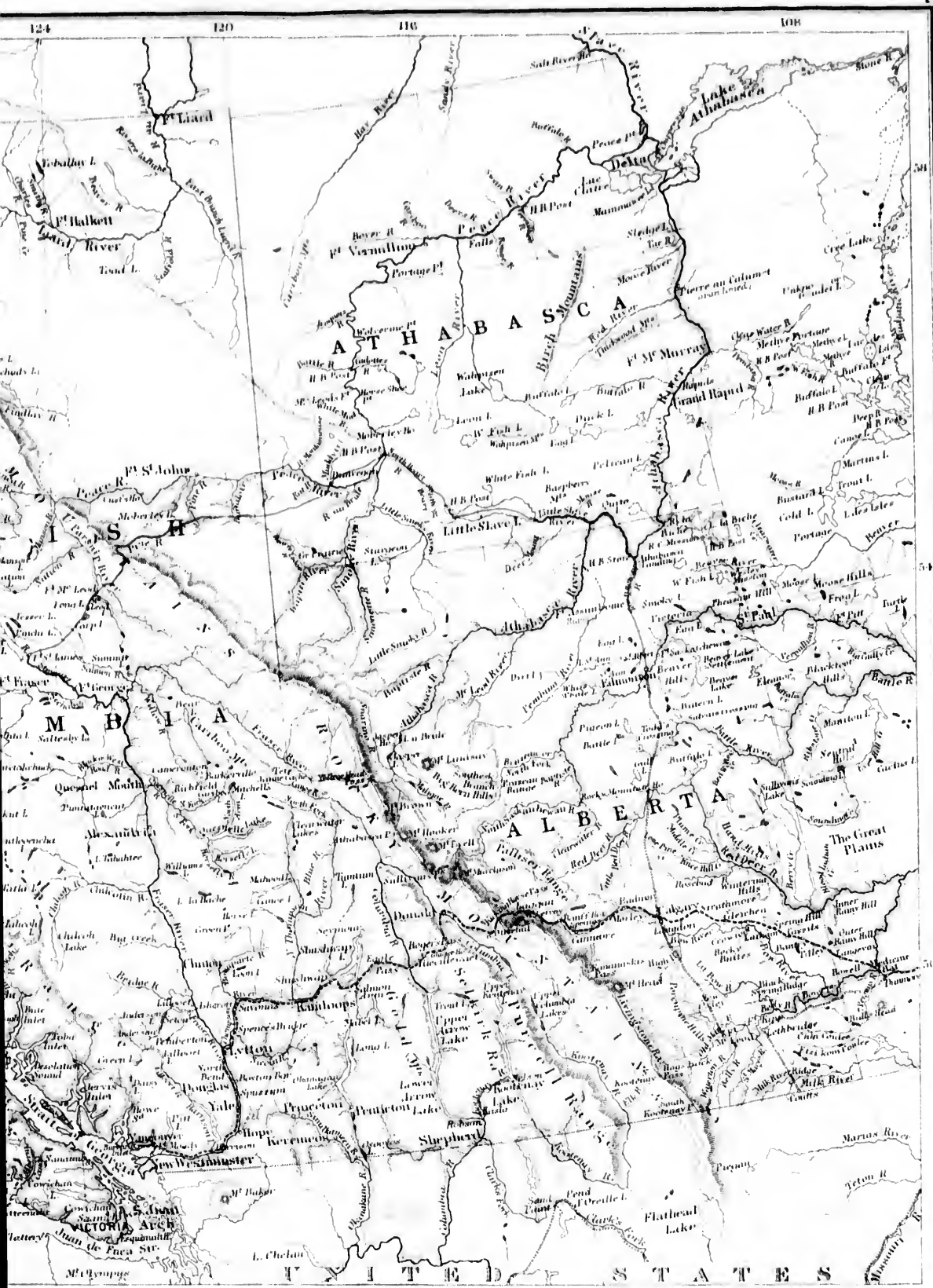
H. S. SOMERSET

(From a sketch made in camp by A. H. P.)









From Bathurst &c. &c.



CHAPTER I

FROM THE ATHABASKA LANDING

FOR five days we remained in our cabin at the Athabaska Landing, talking to Mr. Wood, the officer in charge, or wandering over to the camp of Cree Indians by the river-bank. For hours together we sat watching the great stream flow by on its way to the Arctic, and wondering what our journey would bring forth. The steamer lay moored to the bank—a curious stern-wheeled affair steered by five rudders, and of a somewhat rough-and-ready build. All day and all night the mosquitoes hung over us in clouds, but we were told that their numbers would be multiplied a hundred-fold when we got into the bush country; and this certainly proved true. Torrents of rain fell perpetually, so that we were forced to sleep under the tables in the cabin if we wished to keep dry beds, and often above the roaring of the rain we heard the beating of the tom-tom through the night, while the Indians gambled or held a tea revel. Our stores had been delayed, and did not arrive until we had nearly exhausted our patience.

and, to add to our troubles, the captain of the steamer lay dying, so that she could not start. At last, however, a substitute was found, and with Mr. Livock in charge, on June the 23rd, we got under way, and steamed slowly up the Athabaska to the West. The rapid current impeded the little boat, so that she shook and splashed her single paddle, and made but a poor pace. Reach after reach of that monotonous river came to view



STEAMER ON ATHABASKA

and was left behind with no landmark to tell of its passage. The banks, high and choked with dense woods of pine and poplar, advanced and receded with the bending of the stream, dark and sombre, like houses in an ill-lit street. And yet they were full of interest to us. We sat on the little deck and watched them, wondering what the woods we should journey through would look like, and whether the underbrush would always be as dense and the trees so thick. Now and then we passed Indians paddling easily with the current, or towing their light canoes against the stream. About mid-day one of the rudders broke loose and swung into the stern paddle, breaking some of the buckets, so that we were obliged to lie up by the bank and effect repairs. The mosquitoes flocked out from

the bushes in thousands, and brought with them a new tormentor, the bull-dog fly. This insect is about the size of a bumble-bee, and indeed much resembles one in appearance, but has also a suggestion of the horse-fly about it. They flew silently, and alighted so skilfully that one did not notice them until they had already commenced the attack. Then one felt a quick pain, as though some sharp steel instrument had pierced the flesh; and even after the insect had been driven off, the blood would continue to flow for several minutes. During this halt an accident happened to one of our belongings that will delight any superstitious person who has the endurance to follow our wanderings and note our misfortunes, for we had broken a looking-glass—the only one we had—on the first day of our travels. I would not have mentioned this apparently trivial incident had it not been that several persons have seriously told me we got off extremely easily after so evil an omen. That night the steamer was again moored to the bank near an old camping-ground, where the native hands learned from the writing on the trees that one 'Two Cheats' had lately spent some days. On the following day the river appeared shallower, and about six hundred yards broad. We were obliged to proceed with great caution amongst the islands and sandbanks, so that it was not until past midday that we came to the mouth of the

Lesser Slave River. There we met Mr. McDonald, the Hudson's Bay Company officer, in charge of the Slave Lake Post. He had come down the Slave River to meet the steamer which was to carry the 'fur-kill' of his district out to the landing, and which brought him his winter's stores. Of course he had no knowledge of our coming, and was much surprised to see us, for, with the ex-

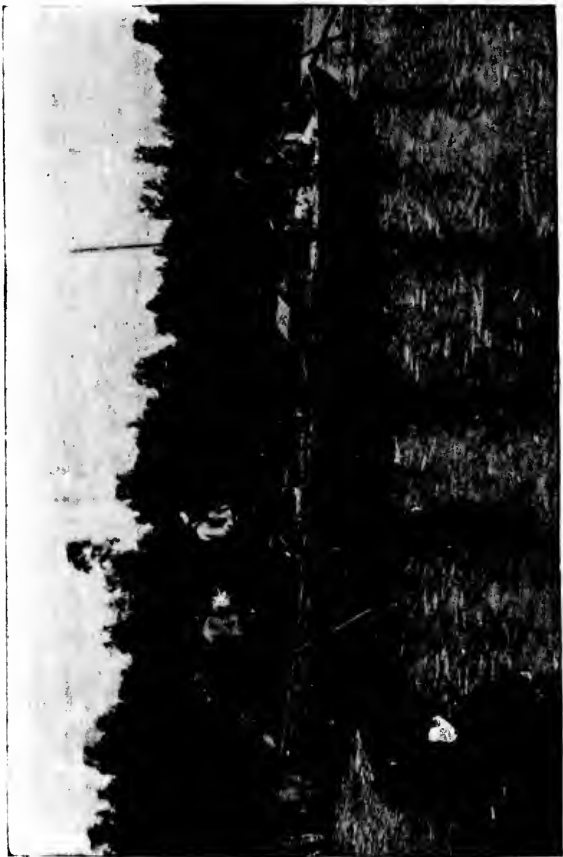


PASSING AN INDIAN CAMP

ception of Mr. Pike, we were the first party in his time who had travelled up the country for their own amusement. His crew of Indians joined forces with the steamer hands, and the interchange of baggage was soon effected, our belongings being neatly stored in the bottom of his open boat, while the business of the Company was being attended to. It was pretty to watch the way in which the men moved the fur bales, one half-breed of the name of Brassand handling two-hundred-and-fifty-pound packages with the greatest ease and swiftness. After luncheon we said farewell to Mr. Livock, thanking him for his kindness, and then the steamer turned down the river again and disappeared round the bend, cutting off all com-

munication with the outer world. Now at last we felt that we had started, and that, come what might, we had set our faces towards the unknown.

The sturgeon-head boat in which we were to travel is one of the features of a country where rivers are the only highways. There are but three kinds of boats in the North-West,—the canoe, the York boat, and the sturgeon-head. A sturgeon-head somewhat resembles a canal barge, but is broader of beam and draws less water, having also a flattened bow, from which it derives its name. This one was about forty feet long and eight feet wide. We embarked and shoved off into the stream, and then proceeded up the little river in most picturesque fashion. The crew of ten stood upon the thwarts and punted with long poles; the steersman, upon a platform in the stern, guided the boat with an oar or sweep trailing behind; whilst a man in the bow, balancing a pole after the manner of a tight-rope walker, pointed out the shoals and shallows with either end as they appeared to the right or left. After a time the current ran stronger, and we disembarked the men, who proceeded to tow us. Towing—or tracking, as it is called in the North—brings up before the English mind pictures of well-kept paths and neat white gates fitted with easy springs. But the shores of the Slave River can boast none of these advantages, the country being thickly bushed and very rough; and nowhere



THE STURGEON-HEAD ON THE LITTLE SLAVE RIVER

for a hundred consecutive yards is there good going.

In tracking, two lines are used, three or four men being harnessed to each rope. Behind them walks another, whose duty it is to free the line when it becomes caught in the bushes. These unfortunates stumble along through the underbrush or bruise their moccasined feet against the sharp rocks by the water-side, often up to their waists in the river, always leaning on the rope, and frequently almost losing their balance when it gets entangled in some twisted root. Hour after hour they go steadily forward, only halting for food; while the white man in the boat smokes his pipe in whatever amount of peace the mosquitoes allow him, and, protected from the weather by tarpaulin and macintosh, idly watches their labours. At first sight it seems wonderful that any one can be found willing to endure such slavery, but the men are well fed and well paid, earning far better wages than their more independent brothers who spend their life in fur-hunting, in a country from which the greater part of the game has long since disappeared.

We had no sooner started than the rain fell in torrents, so that camp was not made under cheerful auspices. Nevertheless that first supper of bread and bacon tasted good, for we knew that every step carried us farther into the wilds, and this brought back more forcibly the old love for the

wilderness. The crew shot several owls near camp, and this addition to their regulation meal seemed to afford them immense satisfaction. The routine of the day was as follows: A light and hasty breakfast was taken at five before starting; at 8.30 a halt was made for a more serious meal, and again at 12.30 for dinner. As a rule the men eat again at five, and finally had supper in camp at nine. In this fashion we moved up the little river until the third day, when we reached the lake. As the shore was swampy, we went on a little way and made camp on a small island some miles from the coast. The lake itself is about seventy-five miles long, and from five to fifteen broad. It is a shallow piece of water, lying in a low, swampy country, and it is said that every year the shore encroaches, and that the day is not far distant when the water-way will become impassable for any but extremely small boats. Be this as it may, the enormous expanse of water stretching to the horizon is very impressive in its utter desolation. Mr. McDonald told us that the ice had only broken up about three weeks before our coming, but not a vestige of it remained.

As the wind was directly contrary, it seemed that we might have to wait some days before we attempted to cross. However, we kept everything in readiness for a sudden start in the night on the chance of a lull or a change in the weather. The island where we were encamped swarmed with

sleigh dogs belonging to the Company and neighbouring Indians. These animals will eat almost anything, so we were compelled to hang the greater part of our goods upon the trees, high enough to be out of their reach. The lake is full of white fish, which the Indians smoke and dry in native fashion; and very excellent they are. Some were brought to us, and, giving a few handfuls of tea in exchange, we roasted them for supper.

The wind was still blowing a gale on the following morning, so that we did not make a start until well on in the day, and had only travelled about twelve miles by evening. It was then too late to cross the lake, and so that night we slept upon the southern shore. On Wednesday the weather moderated a little, but the waves still ran high, and the rain fell in torrents. The men, however, rowed in splendid style, and we made a late camp upon the northern shore. The strength and endurance of these men—both Indians and half-breeds—is quite extraordinary. They are for the most part small spare men, with slender arms and narrow chests, yet they are able to work in the most wonderful way, and to go on for any length of time. Each oar of a sturgeon-head boat weighs about a hundred pounds, being of great length and thickness, but suddenly narrowing to the dimensions of an ordinary oar towards the end, so that the men may obtain a firm grasp with the hand. The rowers

place a pad under one foot, the leg being held nearly straight before them, with the other leg beneath the seat, they rise to a standing position, and then throwing their weight on the sweep, and getting a sharp kick off from the pad, they sink back to the bench, thus completing the stroke. As may be imagined, this is no light work, but the men do not seem to mind it, and will go on all day, and sometimes all night, laughing and cheerful, so long as the food is plentiful and to their liking.



ONE OF THE CREW

Towards the south there lay a low table mountain about two thousand feet above the lake; it was the only hill in the landscape, and, as such, gained a certain distinction. But it appears that it has a far greater claim to reverence than one would be led to suppose. For, according to Indian tradition, this is the home of thunder. They say that upon it there dwell many enormous birds; now and again they flap their wings with loud noise, and this is what men call thunder. As these immense creatures never condescend to visit the plain, but remain for ever upon the revered mountain, there is no legend which would lead one to suppose that they have

ever appeared to mortals, but for many years the fact of their existence was never doubted. I do not imagine that any up-to-date Indian believes or even considers these traditions. Christianity has long since reached them, and they have lost even the semblance of their former mythology. Yet so strongly does the religion of one generation affect the speech of another, that you will often hear a man say, after a stormy night, that 'they have been flapping a good deal.'

During the entire voyage the wind remained contrary, and the rain swept down the lake in drenching squalls, so that we were glad to find shelter under a friendly tarpaulin, and there remained huddled above the bilge in somewhat dismal mood. On the third day we sighted land towards the west, lying low and unbroken on the horizon, but it was not until late in the afternoon that we drew towards the shore. Once more under the lea of the swamp our lives again became a burden to us, for the mosquitoes seemed to scent our approach and came out in unnumbered deputations to welcome us. Until this time we had encountered only the small grey mosquito, but it seemed that its season was over, and that the reign of the large yellow insect had come. This was of a light brown or yellow colour and of immense size. We measured the trunks of several specimens, which we found to be a quarter of an inch long. Neither

clothing nor thick gloves were any protection from their attacks, and their boldness and recklessness of life and limb made them almost unendurable. The last part of our journey was along a shallow channel through the large swamp that lies below the Fort—the haunt of innumerable ducks and wild-fowl—and, turning slightly towards the north, we unloaded the boats on the open shore in front of the Slave Lake Post. This post is the metropolis



THE LAST OF OUR BOAT

of the district, being the headquarters of the Company for an immense area and the chief trading-place of the Cree-speaking Indians in the

North-West. The names of the Company's stations make a brave show upon the map, standing out in such clear black type that the stranger expects to find a city at least as large as Manchester, and might be excused if he expressed some surprise upon seeing the place as it actually is. At the Little Slave Lake Post, for instance, the 'fort' is a low log building, comfortable enough, but not imposing. Near by are several barn-like

structures where the fur is sorted and stored; a little to the left stands the Catholic Mission and small chapel; a few sheds and paddocks, a corral for the horses half hidden by the bush, and a score or so of the roughest Indian shacks complete one of the chief centres of industry in the North-West. But small and cheerless as such places are, the hospitable kindness of their inhabitants makes one ever remember these little settlements with pleasure. It is seldom that a stranger visits one of these lonely posts, but when he does, he feels that he has found a second home in a foreign land. We passed a pleasant evening at the post with Mr. McDonald's family, and then returned to our camp to fight off the insects and try to sleep.

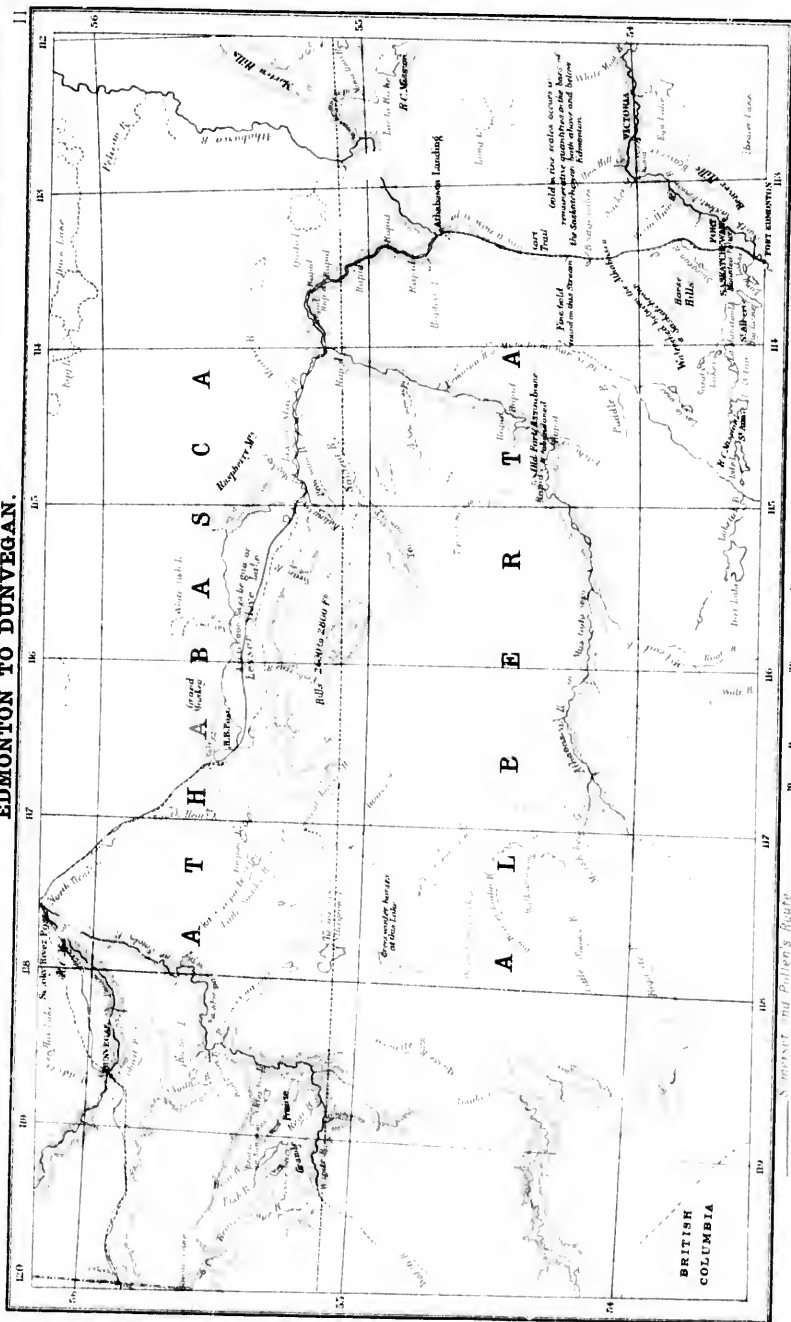
On the following day we called upon the missionaries, and very pleasant fellows we found them. One of them seemed to be in bad health, so we turned the Doctor on to him and watched with interest his treatment of the sick man. Now the Doctor, although by no means a large man, had a stentorian voice, and of this circumstance he seemed inordinately proud. In all cases of emergency or need he was in the habit of shouting his loudest, and he roared out his questions and medical advice in so savage a tone that the unfortunate priest seemed to think that he had committed some monstrous crime in being ill, and had hardly the face to describe his symptoms.

We were still about one hundred and thirty miles from Dunvegan, and had the following arrangements to make: *In primis*, we were told that it would be difficult to get pack-horses farther up the country, so that we should be obliged to obtain them at Slave Lake, where we then were. Secondly, we had to get carriage for our goods as far as the Peace River Crossing, by what is known as the Slave Lake Road. But the Company's ox-train was not due to start until two days after our arrival, so that thus far all was simple. Finally, we should have to trust to luck and the missionaries on the Peace River to convey us to Dunvegan, after reaching which we should be independent of the Company, and might set out through the bush with the horses, in whatever direction we chose. Of course, if the missionaries failed us, we could march with the pack-train to Dunvegan, but we knew that we could travel more rapidly with a wagon, giving the horses unpacked before us.

Mr. McDonald had given orders that the horses should be brought in from the range for our inspection, so we all adjourned to the corral and there spent the greater part of the day. Finally, we bought nine horses for four hundred and ninety dollars, small hardy-looking animals, and well up to weight. We knew that we should require more for the rough work in the bush, but we had taken all we fancied, and Mr. McDonald told us that

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EDMONTON TO DUNVEGAN.



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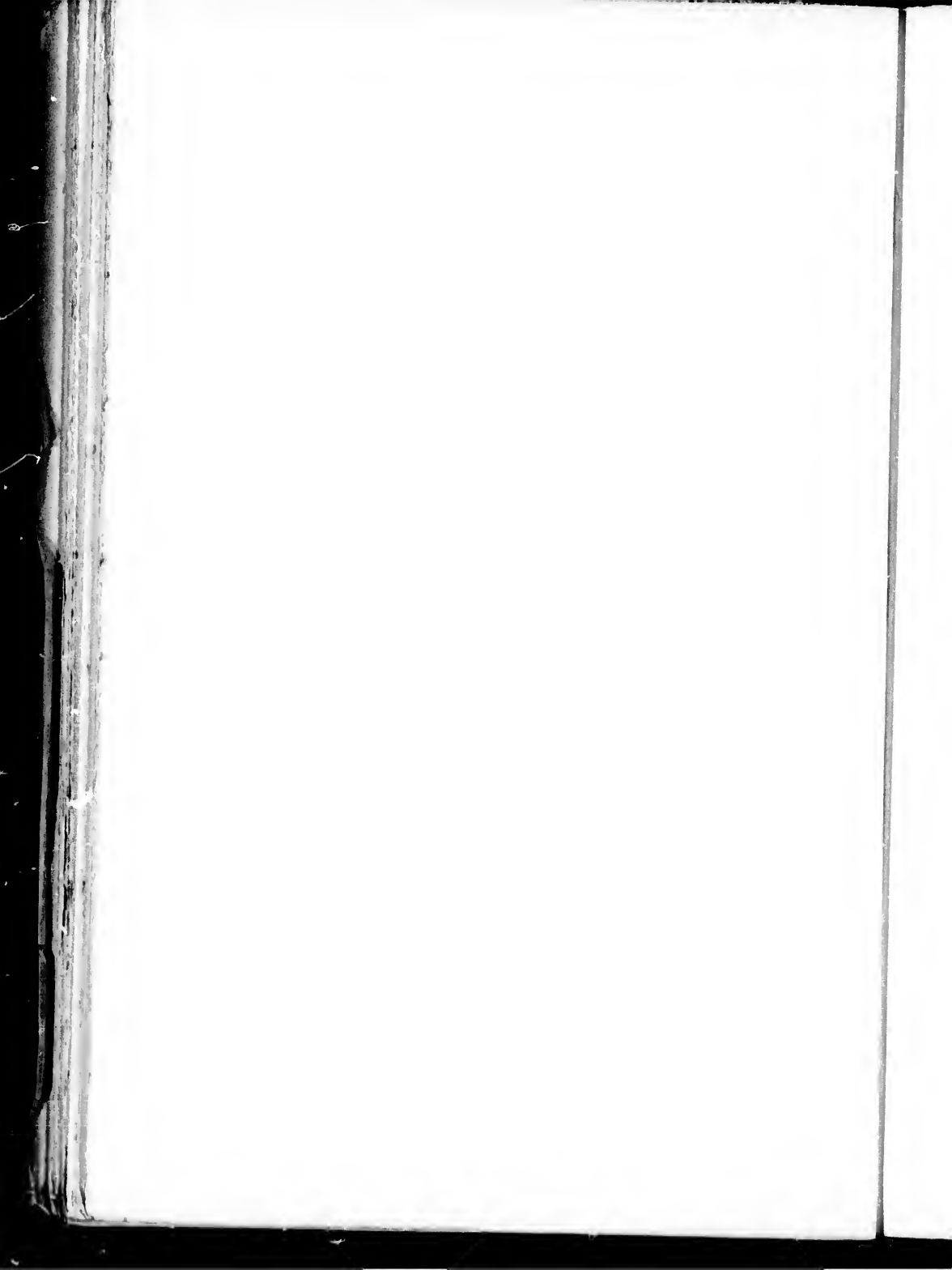
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though we should be certain to get a few animals on the Peace River to carry the extra burdens, we could not count upon finding enough to make a pack-train. And this turned out as he had predicted.

But most important of all, we had still to find an Indian who should combine the skill of a hunter with some sort of knowledge of the unexplored country through which we proposed to travel. Round knew the natives well, and said that one Daukhan Tustowits, a famous hunter, was just the man we wanted. He told us that if we could only find this man the success of the expedition would be assured, but that we might have great difficulty in discovering his whereabouts, as he would certainly be away hunting in the bush. If he were within reach at all, it was probable that he would be somewhere in the Peace River country; and so it was settled that Round and Pollen should ride on to the river and send out men to scour the country for him. They were to take food with them upon a pack-horse, and make what haste they could, so that by the time the main party arrived they would know whether they were likely to get him or not, and thus the expedition would be delayed as short a time as possible. Ramsey, the Doctor, and I were to follow on horseback with the ox-train, driving the pack-horses with the assistance of one John Knot, a half-breed herder and dog-

sleigh driver of the Company's. This plan seemed excellent, but we had forgotten one thing. The Doctor was no equestrian, and did not look forward to a riding lesson over nearly one hundred miles of rough road with any pleasure. Of course, travelling with the ox-train, we should not go beyond a foot-pace, but still he showed a very natural distaste for so unwonted an exercise. We were told that the road was at all times atrocious, and at this season



A NATIVE

of the year in particularly bad condition, and he could hardly be expected to jolt for so long a journey in a springless ox-wagon. Mr. M^cDonald, however, again came to our rescue, saying that he would himself drive the Doctor in his light cart, and thus get us out of our difficulty. To this kind

proposal our inimitable medical adviser gave his assent, saying that he did not mind in the least.

Having secured the necessary number of gunny sacks to supply deficiencies in the matter of saddle-blankets we were ready to set out. The sturgeon-head and Indian crew were once more requisitioned, and we moved round the last curve of the Lake, and camped amidst the ox-carts at the extreme west end, ready for the march on the morrow. There we visited Mr. Holmes, the

Anglican missionary, and his family, and talked of the old country and of our present surroundings. Of course, all Anglican missionaries in this country are to a certain extent poachers. The country is without doubt Catholic—that is, in so far as it may be said to be Christian at all; and the unnecessary rivalry of sects must do much towards confusing the simple-minded native. It may be answered that two good things are better than one, and I do not deny it for a moment. Mr.

Holmes is a model missionary, and the pity of the thing is, that they are not all like him. But the fact that in many places the Indians are Protestant in the winter when the times are hard, and Catholic when there is nothing to be gained, is somewhat startling.



A HALF-BREED

We were up betimes next morning, and Pollen and Round got their kit together for their flying ride. At twelve, after a hasty lunch, they set off at a sharp trot; and about a couple of hours later the ox-train began to get under way. Each animal drew a two-wheeled cart, and was tied to the tail of the cart before him, so that one man was able to manage four or five carts, and by leading the foremost ox could direct a small procession. In

addition to the fourteen small carts there was a wagon drawn by four oxen, and another to which four horses were harnessed. The wagons moved off first, then came the ox-train, then a single cart in which the whole of John Knot's family travelled, sheltered from the sun by green branches, and finally, Ramsey and I brought up the rear on horseback, driving our newly purchased animals before us. The whole country was covered with a dense forest of poplar and cotton-wood, so that one could see but a few yards to the right or left. The branches met overhead, and the road beneath was an oozy swamp of black mud untouched by the sun. Great pits and dykes furrowed its surface, and were filled to the brim with the stagnant water. Through these the wagons pitched and swam like ships in a heavy sea, now falling on the brink of disaster, then again righting, and again all but overturning on the other side. The loud creaking of the wheels filled the air. Far away in the front of the long line a root or hole would jolt some wagon, making the axles scream; as we approached we could hear the loud cry coming ever nearer, as cart after cart encountered the obstacle, and all the while the whole train lumbered along groaning.

When we passed through the swamp great clouds of mosquitoes flew out upon us. The necks and shoulders of the horses were grey with them, and

ran blood from the bites of the bull-dog flies. As we marched at a foot-pace, we had not made more than five miles by camping-time. On the following morning we made a very early start, and soon passed the ox-train. Charley, the head of the Hudson Bay Company's transport on this road, an old hand at



STUCK IN A SWAMP

the work, drove the horse-wagon and came ahead with us. Here and there we crossed little open meadows, and it was in one of these that the wagon became hopelessly bogged. The team could not draw it out of the mud-hole, so we unhitched the horses and waited for the coming of the oxen. On their arrival we harnessed five oxen

in front of the four horses, and urging them forward with whip and voice tried to move the wagon. Charley, erect upon the box, cracked his long stock whip over the struggling animals; an Indian stood at the head of the leaders trying to keep them to the road, whilst the remainder of the party belaboured the oxen with heavy sticks. But the wagon did not move. The panting teams swerved and slipped in the mud, and finally collapsed in a heap in a shallow pool by the roadside. We tried again and again, till the coats of the eight beasts were white with lather, but did not succeed in drawing the wagon to firm ground for nearly two hours.

On the following day Mr. M^cDonald and the Doctor overtook us, and we travelled all day together in torrents of rain. The flies nearly drove us mad, so that we were forced to wave green branches round our heads continually as we rode, in a vain attempt to drive them off. On the third day we camped near another outfit—that of a free trader named Riviere, the sworn enemy of the Hudson's Bay Company. He had with him two Belgians, whose conduct was strange in the extreme. It appeared that one of them asked the other to fetch a bucket of water. He accordingly started towards the swamp to do so, but returned saying that he would not fetch water in a pail which he considered improperly cleaned. Upon

this there ensued a fiery discussion on the subject of pails, so that the Belgians nearly came to blows. However, they decided to lay their case before La Riviere, and allow him to decide whether the pail was clean or no. Now La Riviere was sitting in his tent talking to a venerable Catholic missionary, who happened to be going over the road in his caravan, when they entered, bucket in hand.



'HERE AND THERE WE CAME TO SMALL PRAIRIES'

But it was all to no purpose. Before either had stated his case a paroxysm of fury seized both young men, and they began to fight, using the prostrate bodies of the free trader and the missionary as their battle-ground. The tent was small, and the view of the interior during the next few moments suggested a human kaleidoscope.

Here and there we came to small prairies a mile or so across, where the ground was firm; but for the most part we continued to travel through

swampy woods. Now for the first time we made the acquaintance of the muskeg swamp, and from this time forward hardly a day passed to the end of the journey when we did not curse this particular abomination. At first sight a muskeg seems no very terrible affair. Green spongy moss covers the ground, whilst here and there lie small pools of clear water. One realises that the moss is soft and wet, and that the travelling may be heavy, but nothing more. But no sooner have you set foot upon its treacherous surface than the thing becomes more serious. The beautiful green moss seems to catch your foot as in a vice, and to rise swiftly towards you. When a man faints he sometimes imagines that the ground has risen up and struck him; this is exactly the sensation of him who walks in a muskeg. You feel that you must quickly take another step before it is too late, and so you plod on, and soon you tire. In point of fact there is little danger of being sucked down, but the place has a most melancholy look. Nothing else on earth can be so vividly green and yet so utterly desolate.

Several times we saw skunks upon the road, and indeed John Knot contrived to kill one—a most difficult job, as no one dares come to close quarters with these small and inoffensive-looking animals on account of the fearful stench which they are capable of emitting when provoked. The

distance to which they can throw the stinking fluid is remarkable, and their aim unerring. Any garment which they even sprinkle must immediately be thrown away, and the man who wore it is no welcome guest for many days afterwards.

John was a most pleasant companion, and had a mightily quaint way of expressing his ideas. He was also a very hard worker, with a high character for honesty. Besides his other accomplishments he spoke Cree like a native, and understood the language of the Beaver Indians, through whose country we were to pass. We were already short-handed for so long an expedition, and so when I met Pollen at the crossing, he needed little persuasion to agree that it would be best to engage John to join our party.



A TYPE

The flies were so troublesome in the evenings that I was often obliged to make a small fire, or smudge, as it is called, and sit in the smoke when writing up my journal; but even when so uncomfortably situated, and with gloved hands, I could hardly write two words without stopping to crush some bold insect which had found the seams in the gloves, and had already commenced his meal.

CHAPTER II

THE PEACE RIVER

ON the seventh day after leaving the Lake we sighted the great Peace River. We had been travelling on a plateau sloping gently towards the north-west; but now the land sank down rapidly to the river at a sharp angle, and we stood upon



FIRST VIEW OF THE PEACE

bold bluffs overlooking the plain. Below us lay the mighty river, winding majestically amongst the little hills and prairies. Mile after mile of

thickly timbered rolling country stretched out before us in great sweeping lines of hill and valley. Towards the south-west, where the Smoky River joined the Peace, a great curtain of blue haze shut out the view. No white man, and but few Indians,

have ever penetrated this country, or solved the mystery of this perpetual smoke; but it is thought that a burning coal-mine must exist upon the river-bank, as no sign of volcanic action has ever been observed in the surrounding district. The Indians give the place a very wide berth, but one more bold than his fellows once confessed to me that he had explored the region, and gave a picturesque if not entirely scientific account of what he saw. He said that the ground was hot and scorched, but that he could perceive no noise or subterranean rumbling. Upon drawing near to the centre of activity, the smoke, he said, jumped up at him 'like a man from his bed.' We moved down the slope, and presently came to the river-bank, where we found Round and Pollen settled in a small log cabin, the property of the Company. They were full of tales of the road, and gave us graphic descriptions of their forced march. On the first half-day they had covered twenty miles, and had done the remaining eighty in the two following days. What with the flies and the incessant rain they had had a pretty hard time. They had taken no tent with them, but contented themselves with the large piece of canvas or tent-fly, and so had been but scantily sheltered from the rain. Whilst in Edmonton we had purchased square coffin-like mosquito-nets; but, as we always slept in the tent, we had only used them to block the door the more effec-

tually. Round and Pollen, however, had been tentless, and therefore pitched the nets each night, and were loud in their praise. Every man in the country, Indian or white, uses these contrivances if he is sleeping in the open, for the alternative of lying between fires of damp logs is by no means attractive. When the Indian is pitching with his tepe he is safe from the attacks of insects, as a fire is always kept burning in the centre of the lodge. But when he rests in the open he uses the protective net, even if it costs him a half of his worldly wealth.

We found that our advanced guard had been by no means idle. They had sent out a man named Akinum to look for Daukhan Tustowits, and by great good fortune he had found him. Akinum himself had already returned, and Daukhan had promised to be with us in a few days. They had also visited the Smoky River Mission, on the far side of the Peace, and had secured a wagon and the services of a lay brother for the journey to Dunvegan. The brother had promised to call for us at the house of a half-breed named Pat, on the other side of the river, and it had been arranged that Ramsey, the Doctor, and I should take our possessions up to the Mission, whilst Pollen and Round were to take the horses across the river with whatever native help they could muster.

The Peace River is here about thirteen hundred

feet wide, with an eight-mile current, and is said to be very deep. The water is so muddy that one can hear the sand hiss in the stream, and even a bucketful will make a slight noise when freshly drawn. Our first move was to take the goods across. The only available scow, a punt-like boat, leaked alarmingly, and it seemed hardly safe to load it with the whole of our possessions, which weighed nearly twenty-five hundred pounds. However, we knew that it was getting late, and that we should only be able to make one trip before nightfall, so we piled our stores and goods into the ferry, and hunted the neighbourhood for Indian help. Akanan, an Indian called Piddlicks (the native rendering of Frederick), and a half-witted man named Monias, were pressed into our service, and soon we were ready to start. After many adieus to Charley, and expressions of gratitude to Mr. McDonald, we set out for the farther shore.



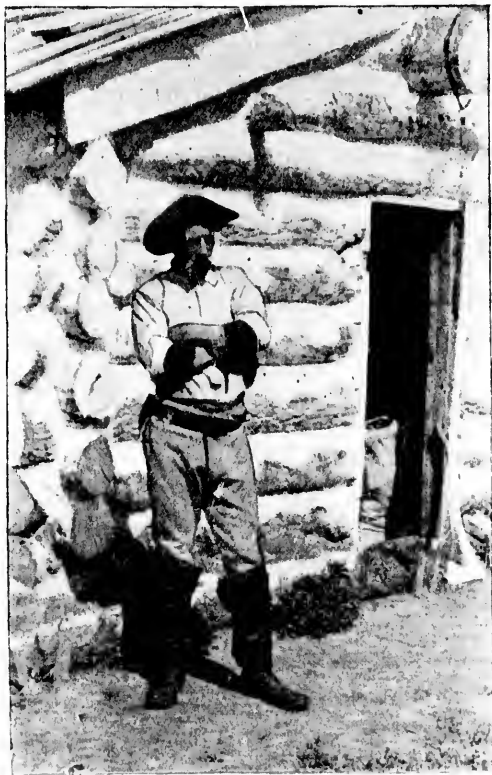
MONIAS

On account of the swiftness of the river we were forced to go up the stream for more than a mile before we left the bank, and very arduous work it was; but finally we decided that we might safely turn across, and in a moment were whirling in the swift current. A man who has never rowed in rapid waters can have no idea of the feeling of utter helplessness which comes over one at such a

time. The whole landscape seemed to spin by us at an alarming rate, and row as we might, we could make no headway against the current. Here and there we saw huge pine-trees floating down the river. Now and again some undercurrent would catch them, and they would rear sixty feet of their length clear out of the water, as though upheld by some giant hand, and then fall without warning, making a mighty splash. The least touch of one of these would have sent our frail craft to the bottom, and our own chances of safety or rescue would have been slight indeed.

At last, after a fearful struggle, we came to calmer water, and landed opposite Pat's cabin in a very exhausted condition. Pat, who was a mild-faced half-breed, did not seem the least disturbed at seeing us, and when we told him that we intended to spend the night in his cabin, expressed no surprise, but simply sat on his door-step whilst we made ourselves comfortable in his mansion. I do not think he had any objections to our coming, but I am bound to say that we calmly took possession without asking his leave. He would have been astonished if we had done so. He sat on the door-step while we cooked our supper on his stove, until we felt obliged to entreat him to come in and share it, as if we had been the hosts and he the guest. The three men who had helped us across the river now came up for payment, so we wrote cheques

on the Hudson's Bay Company for so many 'skins' apiece, and then remained talking to them for some



H. B. ROUND

time. Poor half-witted Monias told us stories of his unfortunate and almost supernatural powers, which, though extraordinary, are quite unprintable.

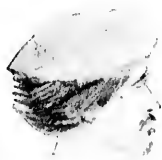
That night we slept on Pat's floor under our mosquito-nets, which gave the little room the appearance of a laundress's drying-yard. On the following morning the lay brother came down with the wagon, into which we packed our goods, and then Ramsey, the Doctor, and I started towards the Mission, leaving Pollen and Round to cross and the horses to follow next morning. Our driver, who was a Frenchman, and an exceedingly pleasant fellow, told us all he knew of the land and the climate, and made the journey very agreeable for us.

Never have I seen such a glorious country as we now travelled over. On our left we could see the mighty river flowing between the dark pine-trees, wooded hills and sweeps of green prairie extending on all sides, covered with countless flowers, and acres of blood-red lilies; while thickets of saskatoon, raspberry and gooseberry bushes, were banked up against the timber. After a while we descended into the river-bottom again, and stopped at the house of one Mackenzie, where the Doctor attended a patient. Then we went forward a little way and made our camp near the Mission. The priests and Mackenzie have cultivated a considerable portion of the valley, which is exceptionally fertile. But it is said that it is very difficult to grow anything upon the beautiful plain above on account of the early frosts. The notes to be found on the maps of the country are emphatic in their praise of the

soil, which is undoubtedly fine; but if the experience of the inhabitants is to be relied upon, the whole area fit for cultivation only comprises a few small river-side flats in many thousands of square miles. There has lately been a great 'boom' about the Peace River. Mr. Pike has already done his best to prick the bubble, but I have heard so many ignorant people aver that this is a great farming country, that I think these facts cannot be too often repeated. It is a dreadful thing to think of the wretched emigrants who toil to this promised land only to find a useless country, and who are often unable to return to civilisation, but are forced to endure all the severities of the winter in a latitude where the temperature has often fallen to sixty degrees below zero.

The missionaries, Peres Xerc, Husson, and La Treste, were kindness itself, making us presents of milk and butter, and allowing us to camp before their door by the banks of the Peace. The news that we had a great medicine-man in the outfit spread fast, and soon our camp became a sort of hospital. Ghastly old hags hung round our fire, whilst maimed men and sick children stood silently watching us, waiting to be cured. The natives put great faith in the 'medicine' of the white man, and believe that every Hudson's Bay Company's officer is a past master of the art. So great is their faith, that when the medicine-chest is exhausted they are

often completely cured of minor ailments after taking a tumbler of dissolved tooth-powder or some such harmless compound. I very much doubt if the doctor's remedies were as successful, for they were made up in small tablets and globules, very convenient for traveling indeed, but then they lacked the unpleasant taste and bulk which the sick of the district believed to be indispensable to a complete cure.



PAT

On Sunday Pollen and Round came up from 'The Crossing' with the pack-horses, having had hard work on the previous evening ferrying them across the river. They told us that Daukhan



DAUKHAN

Tustowits was already at the river-bank, and he rode up in the morning, accompanied by John Knot. Daukhan was a small wiry man about forty years of age, with thin black hair upon his chin. The pure Indian grows little or no hair on his face; but Daukhan had white blood, and indeed somewhat resembled the ideal French cavalry officer in appearance. His manners were perfect, and the neatness of his speeches, which Round interpreted, was beyond

praise. Of course he had no English, but spoke in the soft and beautiful Cree language, and with the assistance of Round we carried on a long conversation with him. Daukhan said that bears were very plentiful, and that he thought it would be a good hunting year, as the saskatoon bushes would bear a large crop of berries. He approved of our plan of march, saying that he knew the greater part of the country which we proposed to explore, and that although he had never crossed the Rockies by the Pine Pass he had no doubt he could find the way.

During the afternoon Mr. Gunn, the Hudson's Bay Company's officer at Fort St. John, rode into camp. He had been paying a visit to Mr. Brick, the Anglican missionary, close at hand, and he proposed that we should go and call upon him. The Mission lay near the river, within three or four miles of the Catholic church; and so, as the day was Sunday, we thought it best to ride without our rifles, in case we might break in upon some open-air service and seem too mundane to His Reverence. The trail was open and smooth, and the leaves of the young poplar-trees glittered wonderfully in the sunshine. Away up the valley we could see the fences and ploughed fields of the Anglican Mission, but the house was still hidden from us by the bush. Suddenly we heard a loud crash in the undergrowth. The most inexperienced 'tender-foot' could

have told in an instant what was the cause of the commotion. When a horse or a cow is stampeded, it rushes headlong forward, but to a certain extent it avoids small trees and dead branches; a bear, however, crashes through the bush without a moment's hesitation. We had hardly reined in our horses when the animal appeared. It was a black bear of immense size, standing nearly twelve hands high at the shoulder. He swung along at a lumbering canter within a few yards of us, but through our silly desire to please the missionary we had left our rifles behind and could do nothing. The shiny coat of the huge brute was wringing wet, and he seemed much exhausted, so that we made sure that he had only just crossed the river. Shouting to Mr. Gunn to ride forward and try and head off the bear, we turned our horses and raced back to camp for our rifles, but when we returned the bear had disappeared. Mr. Gunn said that the animal had been so exhausted that it could hardly move, and that he had ridden alongside of it for a considerable distance. But finally it had escaped him in some thick undergrowth, and had made for the hill. Half-way up it had been obliged to rest, hanging out its tongue and panting like a dog, but finally it had recovered sufficiently to proceed, and had made off towards the timber on the upland. We knew that it would be useless to attempt to follow it, as the ground was hard, and it would have

left no tracks. Before long, however, we discovered the place where it had landed after crossing the river, and found the great foot-marks of the huge animal in the mud. The Peace was particularly broad and fast at this spot, so that it was no wonder that the bear was exhausted; and we turned our horses towards the Mission again, feeling very cheap, and sorry for ourselves.

John Gough Brick was standing at the door of his house when we rode up. He wore a large pair of moccasins on his feet, blue overalls covered his legs, surmounted by a long black frockcoat, a grey flannel shirt and a celluloid collar. Mr. Brick was kindness itself, entertaining us with a jovial hospitality that was past praise, and with a fund of Rabelaisian anecdote marvellous in its steady volume. I have heard that he has gained for himself quite a reputation as a *raconteur* in this particular line. And there can be no doubt that few ministers of the Church of England have so full and varied a vocabulary of purely secular language.

He has a large farm near the river, which, as he told me, had been started as a school of Agriculture for the Indians. The game is fast disappearing from the country, and unless the natives are taught to raise crops and till the land, they will undoubtedly starve. But as Mr. Brick boisterously observed, 'I don't allow any of those damned

Indians round *my* place.' He has not even a rudimentary knowledge of the language of his congregation, and so would be quite unable to preach in the native tongue, even if he had a mind to. But he has resided at the Mission for some years, and he told me quite seriously that 'he knew the Cree for bread.'

The Mission is, I believe, not financed by the Church of England Missionary Society, although the Bishop of Athabaska retains his hold over the place, which will return to the Society upon the death or retirement of the present occupant.



JOHN KNOT

Mr. Brick is, without doubt, a most capable and energetic farmer, but he has, of course, no market for his produce, and so, although he can almost make a living by his own

industry, he cannot make sufficient to carry on the good work amongst the heathen (*i.e.* Catholic). Accordingly, from time to time he makes pilgrimages to England, and there collects funds. If this gentleman appeared in the old country saying: 'I am an excellent farmer; I am a pioneer in a savage land; I am an honest man, who works to support a wife and family. My life is hard, but I am opening up a

new centre for immigration,' no one could have anything to say against the proceeding, although Mr. Brick might not acquire as much money as he does at present. But when one thinks of the needy people, who with many a struggle have subscribed their pittance that poor savages may gain knowledge and hear the gospel, the case alters considerably. For my own part, I believe that more good might be done nearer home by the outlay of the same money; and to me it seems particularly absurd to keep ministers of religion in a foreign land simply to convert the remnants of a dying race to Protestantism, when the Catholics have already made them about as Christian as they are capable of being. However, it was impossible to know Mr. Brick and be angry with the man; he was so plausible and so amusing that one forgot his faults in laughing at his sallies and highly seasoned humour.

As there were many pigs and cattle round the place, we agreed to buy a calf from him, in order that we might lean as lightly as possible upon our provisions on the road to Dunvegan. Then we said 'Good-bye' and returned to our camp. We had already hired another wagon from Mackenzie, so that we were ready to start, which we did upon the following morning. We rode, driving our pack-horses, whilst the Doctor drove beside the lay brother, and Mackenzie's

boy brought on his own wagon behind. Round and Pollen went down to Brick's with one pack-horse to fetch away the calf which Mr. Brick had promised to kill for us, arranging to meet us at luncheon-time upon the trail. They arrived at the Mission, and were shown the carcass of the calf hanging in the slaughter-house. Now this building stood within a log palisade, fourteen feet high and wonderfully solid. We had complimented Mr. Brick upon his meat-safe on the previous evening, and had examined the structure, being much struck with its strength and careful construction. Pollen was not up in the details of the butcher's trade, but Round had had much experience during his long residence in the country, and therefore did not fail to remark that the liver, brains, and sweet-bread were absent from their accustomed places, which fact he pointed out to Mr. Brick. This gentleman was loud in his apologies, saying that he was more sorry than words could express, but that a dog must have jumped over the palisade during the night and carried off these portions. The thing was of no importance to us, but I give it as an example of the high intelligence and great activity of the Indian dog.

The trail was good, and we marched on at a rapid pace until lunch-time. But we had hardly commenced to cook the veal when we were joined by an Indian, named Nistamapu, who seemed

passionately devoted to calf. After the meal he came and rode with us, discoursing loudly upon the country and the chances of game by the roadside. He was by profession an orator, and made his living by attaching himself to camps where there was plenty of food. He would eat his fill and then deliver speeches, and would remain with his entertainers until their stock of provisions (or forbearance) was exhausted, when he would suddenly make up his mind to depart. He had been born on the plains, and so could tell the woodland Indians many stories of blood and adventure and of the departed glories of his race. When a band of Indians from the plains comes to the camp of a



NISTAMAPU

different tribe, they halt, and send one of their number forward, who sits down by the fire, and is in fact a sort of pledge of good faith. Our friend had been born just as such a herald had entered the lodge, and so had been called Nistamapu—the first to sit down. That night we camped by a marshy pool, named Old Wives' Lake, where the water was almost too nasty to drink. Nistamapu evidently intended to clear us out of food as quickly

as possible, for he ate enormously. In this he was joined by Mackenzie's relative, who drove our second wagon, and whom we named the Gluttonous Boy. The days were warm, but the nights very chilly; the mosquitoes, however, did not appear to feel the cold, and hummed round our nets in hundreds. On the second day out from the Mission we met Mr. Tait, the Hudson's Bay Company officer at Dunvegan, and bought two more horses. Torrents of rain fell all the afternoon, but we



ALBERT TAIT

pushed forward and arrived at Dunvegan about ten on the following morning. We had imagined that it was about twelve o'clock, but found that we had mistaken the hour, and started at three in the morning by accident. Mr. Tait lent us a room in his house, where we slept, and very glad we were of this friendly shelter, for the rain fell continuously.

Fort Dunvegan is a charming little place, lying close to the river between high bluffs. Round had lived there for fourteen years as a Hudson's Bay Company officer in charge, and was quite devoted to the place, which he had never thought to see again. Here, as a young man, he had captured a fugitive white murderer, and had gained the name of 'Shymaganis'—the soldier. Every Indian in the camp beyond the fort knew him well, and greeted

him with respect and enthusiasm as a master and a friend.

One night as we sat round the warm stove in the fort we heard hurried whisperings at the door and a wild figure rushed into the room, apparently imploring our aid in the native tongue. It seemed that his wife had been chopping wood and had cut her leg off—or so at least he said. The Doctor brought out his instruments and medicines, and we started for the encampment with the anxious husband. Seven or eight lodges were pitched in the little prairie, and shone white and brown in the firelight. Our guide led us towards one of these, and showed us the unfortunate patient. The sight was wild beyond description. On the right rose the huge smoke-blackened lodge. Just before the door a shelter of green branches had been erected, and under this lay the woman, moaning with pain, and wrapped in a many-coloured blanket. Around her sat a score of her friends, chanting slowly and solemnly a wordless song, and beating time upon a tom-tom. Their wild faces and long straight hair stood out sharp in the firelight, whilst their ragged bodies were faint and indistinct in the gloom. As their song rose louder and louder the woman's moan rose with it and then died away with the lower notes of the tune. The Doctor examined the wound, and found that it was not so serious as we had been led to suppose. The bone was not broken, but the leg

was badly cut and bruised, and caused the patient considerable pain. He began to dress the injured limb—a few grains of morphia were administered, and the woman ceased moaning. This impressed her friends enormously, and they gathered round, wondering at the power of the great white medicine-man, which had accomplished more than all their chanting and bandaging. Then they boiled a kettle for us, and we syringed the wound. If you would cure an Indian you must impress him with



FORT DUNVEGAN

the difficulty of the proceeding, and so, instead of going about the business in an ordinary fashion, we squirted water

through a long india-rubber tube, and watched the terrified pleasure on the face of the sufferer. There was no more chanting now, for a feeling of awe had come over the group of savages as they watched the mysterious doings of the great white man. But our Doctor did not rise to the occasion, and so we had to act the bedside manner for him. When we left the camp the woman was asleep and her friends silent. But we had hardly got beyond the circle of firelight when they fell to chanting again, and so continued through the entire night.

Ever since we left the Athabaska Landing we had been in the country of the Crees. I was told that they are not really natives of the soil, but simply an offshoot of the Crees who inhabit the plains, and that they had driven the original inhabitants out of the district. At all events no other Indians live in the country, although there is nothing to prevent their doing so if they have a mind to. The Crees themselves, however, wander all over the district, which by rights belongs to the Beaver Indians. The two tribes are entirely dissimilar, both in appearance and language, and retain to a certain extent a hostile feeling towards each other. But as all tribal authority is at an end there is no open strife or fixed territorial boundary between them. And so the Crees trespass upon the hunting-ground of their neighbour with impunity, thinking that the Beavers are not worth noticing—and, as they say, 'scarcely human.' If the tribal feeling had been retained, and the whole nation moved under the direction of a chief and council of elders (as it did until recently), this state of affairs would be impossible. But as it is, the missionaries and Hudson's Bay officers are the only chiefs, and they very naturally wish for nothing but peace. At present each member of a tribe is socially as good as any other, except in so far as the one excels the other in hunting, and therefore in the number of his horses and the length of his credit with the Company.

And though the Crees despise the Beavers as an inferior race, this feeling is more personal than tribal. The Cree Indians are, for the most part, dark, spare men, showing many of the usual characteristics of the aborigines of the continent, but of peaceful disposition and great charm of manner. They speak an exceedingly beautiful



A FISH SPEAR

language, and converse with ease and fluency, pronouncing their words with wonderful distinctness, and showing their meaning with many well-considered gestures. Their chief topic of conversation is naturally hunting, for by this they gain their living, but they seem also to be very fond of tale-telling, and now and again one may hear legends and fables from the older men, which speak of

the times when the game was more plentiful in the country, and consequently men had more time for talk. I have set down two such tales here, as I think they may be of interest. The first recalls the Welsh story of Gelert, and one would be curious to know if it is current amongst other peoples. Thus runs the tale :—

There was once a young man who was very poor; his father and mother and all his relations had been killed in a raid, and he was left alone in the world with no friend but his faithful dog. So he journeyed for many days, picking up a living as best he could. One day he came to the lodge of an 'Oukimow,' or big chief. Now this chief had everything that he could possibly want—fine clothes, many wives, and the most beautiful cooking-pots. But above all he had a lovely daughter. This lucky man had a bow which was enchanted. Whatever he shot at with his arrows died, so he had always plenty of meat hanging in his camp, and no one dared quarrel with him, for if they did, they were sure to be killed. The mystery of the bow was a secret, but the great man's daughter had learned it from her father, and now she told it to this young man who had become her lover. But the chief found this out, so he drove him away, and again he wandered, thinking of the lovely girl, and full of rage at her father's treatment. One day when he was asleep under a birch-tree he was awakened by the Old Wanderer¹—the cunning one—who asked him what service he could render him. So he told his story, saying that he was very anxious to kill the big Chief of the Bow, in order that he might marry his daughter,

¹ This 'Wanderer' appears many times in Indian legend. He seems to be an evil spirit, with a strong tendency towards good. Thus he will benefit some unlucky person and yet be called 'the evil and cunning one' by the narrator.

but that he knew he could not prevail against the magic weapon, and therefore he had not tried. Now the Wanderer knew all things, and he told him that the spell was broken since the tale of the bow had been told, and that he might safely go and kill his enemy. However, he said that he would make the matter certain, and provide the young man with another magic bow. So he told him to 'cut down the birch-tree and make from it a bow and arrow, and make a bow-string from the fibres of the bark, and when you have done this,' he said, 'call me.' The young man made the weapon and the string, and called. And the Wanderer came and spoke the magic word, and gave the bow to the young man, telling him that the arrow would hit whatever he fired at, but that he was only to use it once, against his enemy. So the young man went and slew the 'Oukimow,' and became chief of the tribe, and married the girl, and owned the fine clothes and beautiful cooking-pots.

In his new greatness he became very haughty. So the 'Wanderer' appeared and told him to go and do honour to the birch-tree; but he was proud, and did not do it, saying that no harm would come. After a while a son was born to him. And the whole tribe feasted, and he said to his people, 'Let us go and honour the birch-tree.' And they all went. But instead of doing it honour he took a whip and lashed it, making the marks which

may be seen upon the bark to this day. Then came the 'Wanderer' a third time, and told him that his son was dead because of his sin. He hastened home and saw his dog standing over the cradle covered with blood. Then he was wild with rage and shot at the dog with the magic bow; and the arrow flew and killed the dog, but pierced his son as well, and he came and saw many dead wolves around the cradle, and realised that his faithful dog had protected the child, and that he had lost his son through disobedience to the laws of the 'Cunning One.'

The second tale is the Cree version of the Flood, in which the 'Wanderer' appears again, this time as Noah. The main outline of the story closely resembles the Biblical account, but it will be observed that the dove has been changed into the beaver to suit the local taste, and also that their habit of dam-building is accounted for.

Once the whole earth was covered with water, but the 'Wanderer' was in a big canoe with many kinds of animals; and after he had been on the water for many days without seeing land, he determined to send an animal to dive down to see if the water was still deep, or if the flood were abating; so he sent down a young beaver. But the little animal was afraid to dive too deep, and returned, saying that he saw nothing but water and no land. Then the 'Wanderer' was very angry,

for he knew all things, and knew that the little beaver had not done his best, therefore he cursed him, saying, 'Cursèd shalt thou be; thou shalt never grow, nor thy tail grow, but thou shalt only imitate the beavers.' And this was the first musk-rat. Then he sent a big beaver, and he swam and reached the bottom, and brought a little earth up with him to the side of the canoe, and there he died. So the 'Wanderer' took the grains of earth and blew upon them, and the world arose and was dry. And he blessed the beavers, and said that they should always try to dam the streams and stop them running, lest they might again flood the whole earth.

This tale has not been inspired by the missionaries, as one might be led to suppose; but is a part of the original folklore of the people themselves. It is difficult to say what their religion originally was, but it may be presumed that it was a sort of nature-worship combined with great superstition and fear of ghosts, which, of course, was fostered by the tribal medicine-men.

The Beaver or Tsuten Indians inhabit the districts between Fort Dunvegan and the Rocky Mountains. They are allied to the great Déné family of aborigines, which occupies the entire continent between the Saskatchewan and the Arctic Ocean (with the exception of the country of the Crees). This vastly scattered nation has not

completely retained its characteristics during its various wanderings, so that the different tribes dwelling in far-distant places speak separate languages. But for all that they are of the same stock. The Beavers themselves are but a very insignificant branch, numbering not more than eight hundred. They are for the most part small, angular men, and most repulsively ugly. They are far behind the Crees in their manners and habits, which are very disgusting. Their language is made up of guttural cluckings and hesitations. They are most unhealthy, suffering much from indigestion, consumption, and scrofula—in fact, they are by no means a charming people. It is said, moreover, that they are rapidly becoming extinct. Like the Crees, they have lost all tribal organisation, and recognise no superior but the white man. Their old chief (who is chief only in name) is, however, still living at Dunvegan, and is a sufficiently remarkable old man. His name appears on the records as a fort-hunter in 1826. Now it has always been the custom in the Company to employ experienced men as hunters, and it may safely be presumed that no exception is made in this man's favour. All the other hunters at Dunvegan at the time appear to have been about thirty years of age, and even if 'Tranquille' was younger he would by now be ninety years old. He had earned his name through his endeavours

to pacify his tribe during the Great Rebellion in the South. In this he had been entirely successful. That was during the days of his power. But when he began to grow old his son had usurped his place

as chief, and when he died the old man was too feeble to take up the reins of government again, and so authority had died out in the tribe, and the great man had fallen upon the charity of the Hudson's Bay Company. When we saw him he was entirely blind, and quite awful to look upon.



CHIEF TRANQUILLE

He was in his wheel-barrow going up to his meal at the fort. His shirt was open, and the poor withered old chest and skeleton arm were a pitiful sight. He had married again a short time before we arrived, and suspecting that his wife was not so dutiful as she

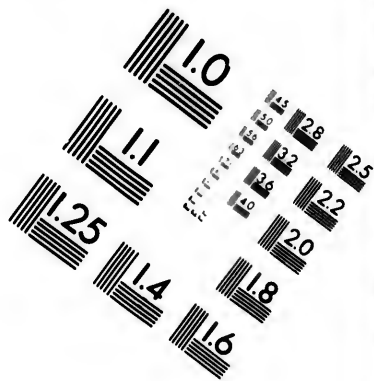
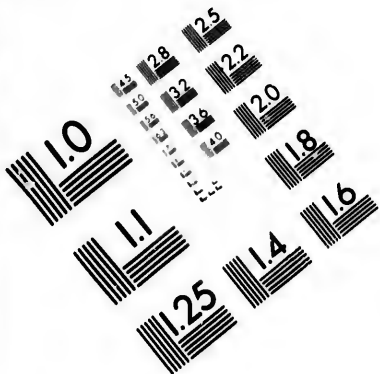
might be, he had determined to murder her. So he sat down in his lodge with a knife in his hand and lunged round into the darkness. But fortunately for her, being quite blind, he did no harm, and the offending spouse did not come to the untimely death he had intended for her, but I fancy her nerves were a good deal shaken by the ferocity of her aged husband.

At Dunvegan we met another old man of nearly eighty years of age—one Twelvefoot Davis—a white man famous throughout the country. He had been a gold miner for many years, and had made a large sum of money on a neglected claim twelve feet square. This had happened in the old days of the great Cariboo mines, and his fame and nickname had spread far and wide. When we saw him he was a free trader and a rival to the Hudson's Bay Company, but as he could neither read nor write, it may be inferred that he was not

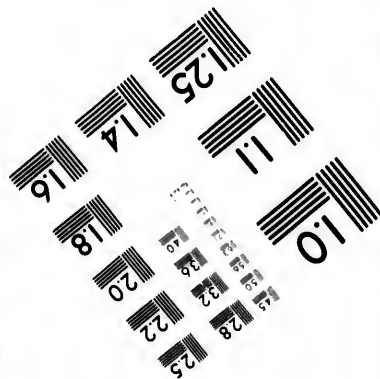
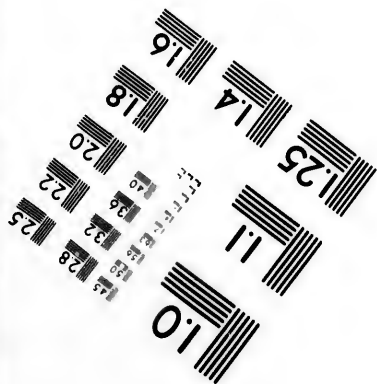
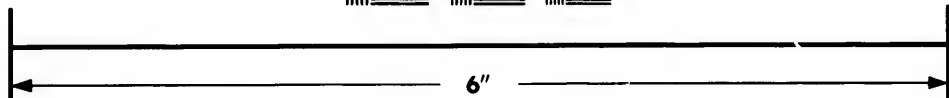
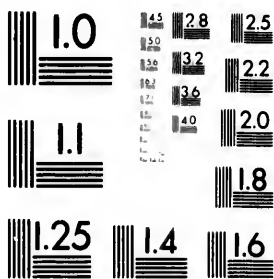


TWELVEFOOT DAVIS





**IMAGE EVALUATION
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making much by the business. Every year he would travel into the country with his store of goods for barter, and sometimes he would winter upon the banks of the Peace. One winter he was living with four other men in a log cabin near a place called Hudson's Hope. An officer of the Company was living within ten or twelve miles, and feeling lonely about Christmas-time, he sent a note to Davis wishing him the usual compliments of the season and a happy new year for 1892. Davis's friends happened to be away when the note came, so the free trader, thinking that something of importance had occurred, opened the letter and studied it carefully. As he could not read, he was entirely unable to find out its meaning; but, guessing that his correspondent was unwell, sent him the only medicine he thought at all efficacious—to wit, a couple of bottles from his scant store of whisky. When his friends returned he solemnly told them that the Hudson's Bay officer was ill, and had written for two bottles of whisky, and that he had of course sent them to help the lonely man in his distress. This seemed a somewhat serious matter, so the letter was asked for; and then the old man was told that the officer was neither ill nor had asked for spirits. 'It was that darned 2 set me wrong,' was Davis's explanation. The joy of the officer at receiving the unexpected present may be imagined, whilst Davis's rage at

parting with so valuable a possession knew no bounds; and to this day he declares that somehow or other he was cheated out of his whisky, and that no man has a right to say that he is dying when he is quite well.

At Dunvegan we stayed for some days making



JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DAUGHTERS

up our packs and arranging our saddles and provisions for the great march in the bush. Mr. Tait had helped us in every way, and both he and his wife had entertained us royally, so that again it was with a feeling of regret that we started out on our

real expedition. Before everything else we had to get our horses across the Peace River. Here there was no friendly scow to help us, but only two dug-out¹ canoes of moderate size. In these we crossed our goods, making many voyages under the guidance of John Knot and Daukhan, who were expert canoe-men. Finally, on July 27th, we set to work to cross the horses. John the Baptist—Daukhan's brother—helped us in this; in fact we left the whole business in native hands, for it requires much practice to swim horses across so large and rapid a stream, and any mistake of a bungling amateur may mean the loss of a valuable animal. Three or four of our beasts of burden were led down to the river together. A rope was tied round the neck of the steadiest, and he was led into the water. Then the men in the foremost canoe took the rope and started slowly, so that the animal might leave the shallows and begin to swim without being hurried or confused. Meanwhile the other men drove the loose horses into the water after the leader, and followed in a second canoe, shouting and guiding the animals as best they could. The poor brutes snorted in the rapid stream, and were often nearly carried away; but in the end they all reached the farther shore without accident, although somewhat exhausted by their long swim. Round told me that he had seen a horse swim the river at this

¹ *Dug-out*—*i.e.* hollowed from a tree-trunk.

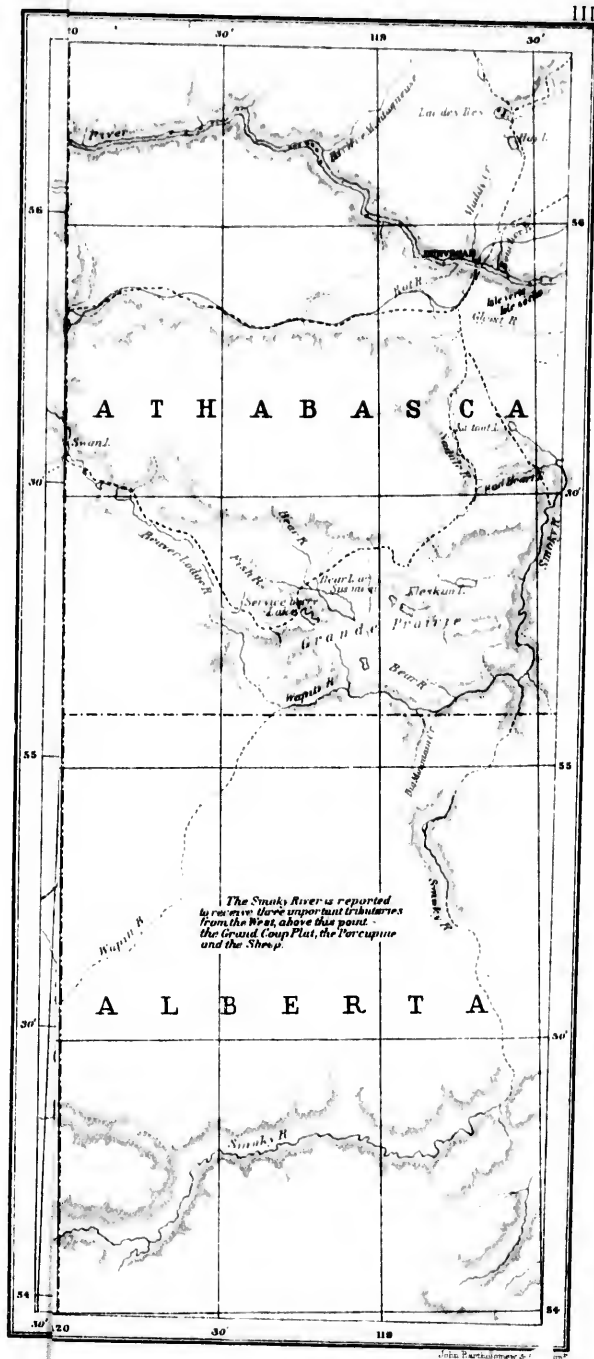
place with its front feet tied and hobbled, which any one can believe who has seen what an old and experienced animal will do on dry land when thus hampered. That night we camped on the southern bank of the river.

CHAPTER III

DAUKHAN AND THE BEARS

WE were now really making a start on our expedition. All this time we had been more or less under the wing of the great Company, but at last we were ready, and had only to pack the horses and start away into the bush. This put us all into the very highest of spirits, and even Daukhan seemed to feel that he had become a person of great importance as the guide and hunter of the party. We had given him a new rifle and a great buffalo-knife, and with these he was delighted beyond measure. These buffalo-knives are of English manufacture, being made, I believe, by Unwin of Sheffield, and we found them of the greatest use. The blade is about nine inches long, and very thick at the back, the whole knife weighing about three pounds. They are invaluable for chopping under-brush, being far handier than an axe, and yet they are not cumbersome to carry, and can be used for skinning large animals or any such work. Daukhan sat looking at his new possession—his 'amukooman,' as he called it, and discoursed to us upon its many merits.

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NEVEGAN TO FORT M'LEOD.





On the following morning we began packing the horses. Now packing is an art that may not be learned in a short time. Pollen and I had had a considerable amount of practice both in the southern Rockies and in California. Round, Daukhan, and John were experts. For my part I confess that I had acquired but a slight knowledg.



ROUND AND POLLEN PACKING

of the art, as I have never been either strong or heavy enough to get the requisite pull on the lash-rop. And so it happened that the task of packing fell to the other four, whilst Ramsey, the Doctor and I busied ourselves with the other duties of camp. And there was much to be done. Let me describe the usual routine of a morning's work in

camp. First, the fire must be made up and breakfast prepared. Then, whilst the tent is being furled and the beds tightly rolled up, two or three of the party go out and bring in the horses, no light work, for the fourteen horses may be very widely scattered. Meanwhile the pack-saddles and saddle-blankets are sorted, and each pack, tightly rolled and roped, is placed near its own saddle ready to be fixed upon the back of the horse to which it belongs. Everything having been made ship-shape, the horses are saddled, and then the really hard work commences. A man stands on each side of a horse, and, lifting up a bundle weighing anything from fifty to one hundred pounds, fixes it to the side of the saddle with a small rope called a sling-rope. When both side-packs are secured, the top-pack is placed between the two burdens, and a cloth is thrown over the whole; round this is thrown the lash-rope, a thick cord about forty feet long. This is passed round the pack in various ways, as the case demands, and runs over the girth under the animal's belly, the men handing the 'loose' to each other in regular order, and pulling on the rope with one foot braced against the pack or horse's side. When all is made as tight as can be, the animal is turned loose, whilst the attention of the packers is given to the next horse. Meanwhile the knives and plates have been washed and the kitchen-horse packed, and at last the expedition gets under

way. As may be imagined, all this takes time, and is besides so laborious that one is in some degree exhausted before the day's march begins. The great thing to be remembered about all wild travel on the American continent is that each man must do his share to the best of his ability, so the work should fall evenly upon all members of an expedition. On the morning of our start we had a very hard time. The horses were fresh, and continued to buck off the packs as fast as we fixed them, and we soon saw that we had not nearly enough animals to carry our possessions. Of course we should walk, but even then we found that several of the horses were carrying two hundred and fifty and sometimes three hundred pounds, and we knew that they could not hope to travel over a rough country with such heavy burdens. However, we decided to move on to the plateau above and then to consider what had best be done. We had cut down our baggage as far as possible, but we were afraid to send back any of our stores, as we had a long trip before us, and we did not wish to go hungry. Finally, we got a couple more horses from Mr. Tait, and with this new addition we started gaily enough towards the unknown.

We were following the Indian pitching trail which led towards Pouce Coupée's Prairie, and we made up our minds to march as fast as our heavily packed horses would allow, and not to rest until we

came to this plain, where we meant to make a camp and hunt. The country was open and very lovely, but dotted here and there with clumps and lines of low bush and small poplar. Long grass and great patches of red lilies grew in the open meadows across which the little trail ran. A pitching trail is a small path made by the feet of the pack-horses which are always driven across the country in a



'THE HORSES WERE HEAVILY LADEN'

'string,' or what is called *Indian file*. As the natives follow these paths as much as possible, and clear the bush and branches out of the road as they go, the way, where it is frequented, becomes tolerably well marked, and is beaten into a shallow trough by years of use. In several places we saw bear-tracks, and very occasionally the footprints of moose in the deeper woods, but none of these were fresh enough

to justify a halt, and so we continued our march. The nights were clear and frosty, but when the rain held off we slept in the open under our mosquito-nets, as we found this much more pleasant than huddling together in a tent. We could not march fast, as the horses were heavily laden and out of condition, so that it was not until the third day that we crossed the Rat River and started into the poplar forest. The trees grew so close together



MANY OF THE TREES WERE ROTTING

that the sky was obscured, and nothing could be seen but the green leaves overhead, the thick under-brush below, and the great white stems and branches around us. Many of the trees were rotting as they stood, and leaned upon their neighbours, ready to fall at the least touch. One day a pack-horse brushed against one of these and

brought it down with a crash. As ill-luck would have it, Pollen was walking a little in front. Seeing his danger, I shouted to him to look out, and, ducking his head and hunching his shoulders, he avoided the full force of the blow. But for all that, the tree descended with great violence upon his head, knocking him senseless to the ground. The trunk was some sixty feet long, and of considerable thickness, and it seemed a marvel that he was not killed. If it had fallen fairly upon him he must have been. We made camp at once, and did what we could for him, but he was suffering a good deal of pain, and thought that he was about to have concussion of the brain. The whole of that night the rain beat down in torrents, and the thunder rolled in the forest with appalling violence. We fully expected to find that Pollen, unable to continue the march, would be forced to return to Dunvegan. On the next day, however, he revived a little, and on the third day expressed his readiness to march. So we moved a short distance over a very swampy trail—he was too seedy to go far,—and again we camped near some most unpleasant swamps. All through the country the water was very nasty, and in some places almost undrinkable.

Pollen's accident cost us a day in camp, and one or two half-marches; but luckily he soon mended, and in a week was quite well again. And so for ten days we marched in the forest, often sleeping

in swamps and muskegs, and generally drenched during the greater part of the day. The mosquitoes and bull-dog flies still followed us in clouds and covered the horses. Once we came to a place where a great forest fire had raged. It seemed as though a strong wind had been blowing at the time, or since, for the charred trunks lay piled upon the ground in such wild confusion that we were forced to make a long detour. The awful effect of these fires is a wonderful thing to see. Huge tracts and districts have been burnt out in the North-West, and present a melancholy appearance. In most cases the trees remain standing for many years, whilst wild raspberry and such like bushes choke the ground. Sometimes, however, the wind fells the wreckage, and the black logs and twisted branches make the country wellnigh impassable. We found that we were using our provisions too rapidly, so we set a limit to our meals, giving three slices of bacon to each man per meal, with unlimited bread. In this way we lived very well, and on the tenth day after leaving Dunvegan sighted a raised and open plateau, which Daukhan declared to be Pouce Coupée's Prairie.

After fording two small rivers, we climbed the hill and marched along the ridge for about ten miles. The grass was long, and very tiring to walk through, so that we were all pretty well exhausted when we made camp. The prairie is a

fine piece of open country, dry and fertile. Many years ago, the Beaver Indian chief, Pouce Coupée, settled here with about five hundred followers, who constituted themselves a separate tribe. But a fever broke out amongst them, and when their chief returned from his hunt one winter he found their lodges empty and their bodies lying round the ashes of the camp-fires, half-eaten by the wolves and cayotes. Of the flourishing colony not one



'THE GRASS WAS LONG AND VERY THING'

remained but the old man, its founder, who is said to have returned to Dunvegan, and to have died there many years afterwards.

We found that our camping-ground was not a good one, as the water was tepid, and so nasty that the tea was almost undrinkable. However, we had some cocoa (pig's blood, the Indians call it), and so managed very well. On the following day we moved on about five miles, and camped near a small swamp, where we succeeded in picking up some ducks,

which came as a welcome change after our diet of bacon. Daukhan had been exploring the neighbourhood in search of bear-tracks, and killed a small beaver, which we ate. We found the meat fairly good, but a trifle strong. On the following day, Daukhan, Round, Pollen, and I rode over a considerable area of country looking for bear-tracks, but found none. Daukhan, however, said that he had seen the track of a yearling moose, and so it was arranged that he should go after it on the



'WE MOVED ON ABOUT FIVE MILES'

morrow, whilst we continued to search for bear-tracks in the opposite direction. Moose-stalking is the most difficult operation in a bushed country, and it is practically useless for a white man to attempt it. Indeed, there are but few Indians who can be sure of killing this animal, which is without doubt the most wary of the deer tribe. Of course, in an easy country, the moose may be shot by any moderate hunter; but when the ground is com-

pletely covered with dry twigs, and when there is much bush, the difficulty is increased many-fold. In the winter the Indians follow the moose upon snow-shoes, thus gaining some advantage in pace. There is a popular superstition abroad, to the effect that a man can go more rapidly over the snow on snow-shoes than upon open ground on his feet. This of course is not the case, at least when the netted American shoe is used. It is true that an expert can run, and even jump, when wearing them, but they are worn simply to prevent a man's sinking into the snow. As the moose sinks belly-deep at every step, he tires comparatively soon, and an Indian who is a good traveller is able to overtake it, although he is sometimes obliged to follow the animal for seven or eight days in succession. The hardships which the Indians endure on these expeditions are very remarkable. They can carry but little food with them, and have no covering except their walking clothes; they sleep for a few hours by a fire at night, and resume before daybreak the march, which they had prolonged far into the previous evening. Sometimes, when they are close upon the moose, they are unable to light a fire for fear of alarming him, and then they will curl themselves up under a bush and sleep with the thermometer at fifty and sixty degrees below zero, or keep moving to avoid being frozen. When they have killed the animal, they bring their

lodges and families and camp near the carcass, feasting and living in idleness until the meat is gone, when hunger again obliges them to seek for fresh game. This alternate feasting and starving soon undermines their constitutions, and many of them become the victims of dyspepsia and similar complaints, which, with scrofula, are exterminating the Beaver tribe. As they are utterly improvident, many of them die of starvation, which might be prevented by a little care even in this desolate land.

Daukhan followed his moose, but found that it was travelling, and so left the trail and returned to camp. Meanwhile Pollen and I had discovered a fresh grizzly track, and had left our horses and followed it for some distance, but lost it in a swamp. We returned to camp and told Daukhan, and on the next day started out again with him and Round, and came upon the track on the farther side of a small stream to the north of the prairie. The grass was long, and the bear had left a broad trail winding up the slopes and amongst the birch. Several times we came upon other tracks, but Daukhan pronounced these old, although to our unpractised eyes they looked exactly similar to the fresh one. Daukhan did some very pretty stalking, and seemed quite confident that he could find the bear. But it was all to no purpose. The animal had wandered in circles, and had crossed his own

track so often that the whole hillside was lined and much of the grass beaten down. Finally, it became evident that the bear was moving himself, so we remounted, and beat a large piece of bush, galloping for about a mile through the underbrush as fast as we could, in hopes that we should cut him off and come to quarters ; but we saw nothing, and only got very much scratched by the thorns. Round indeed declared that he had heard the bear moving, but



THE PRAIRIE

we could find no trace of him, so we returned to camp, feeling rather low. Daukhan had done some wonderful stalking, and it was only by chance that we had missed the animal. He was, however, very disconsolate at his failure.

It seems a curious thing that no definite conclusion has yet been arrived at concerning the number of different kinds of bear to be found in North America. Men talk of roach-backs and cinnamons,

silver-tips, and black and brown and grizzly bears, as though they were separate breeds; and indeed many think so. I think that the real reason of this is that in each place the animals are called by different names. Thus in Wyoming the grizzly is known as silver-tip, and so on. In the north, at all events, there are only three kinds of bear. In the far north there is the polar bear. Next comes the grizzly bear, which does not differ from the grizzly of California or the silver-tip of Wyoming. Then there is the common black bear, which is sometimes brown. Daukhan told me that he had absolute proof of this, as he had found a black bear with a black and a brown cub, just as the silver and cross foxes, and indeed red foxes, are all found together in the same litter. It has been suggested that there is sometimes a cross between the grizzly and the black bear; but Daukhan said he thought that this was out of the question, as the grizzly persecutes the smaller animal. He declared that this was the reason why the black bear keeps so much to the wood, as it is able to escape from its enemy by climbing. He also said that more than once he had come upon the scene of one of the encounters, and had found the black bear literally torn to pieces, so that its skin was not worth dressing or curing; and in such cases the black bear was not necessarily a male.

Daukhan himself is a noted bear-hunter, having

killed a wonderful number of these animals—probably not less than 120 grizzlies alone, as may be proved by the entries in the fort journal at Dunvegan. He told us the story of one of his early adventures, which must certainly have been sufficiently exciting. A cousin of his, one Thomas, had been badly mauled by a particularly ferocious grizzly, and had been carried to his father's lodge in an almost dying condition. Daukhan no sooner learned this than, as he put it, he knew he must kill that bear. But he was only nineteen, the bear was evidently a very 'bad' one, and his father flatly forbade his going after it. It seems that in the Tustowitz family parental authority was supreme. It was therefore useless to attempt to gainsay his father, more especially as the stern parent had taken away his only rifle. So now he did not dare to tell his family that he was going after this one, but quietly took an old single-barrelled muzzle-loading shot-gun and a few caps, and told his father that he would shoot a few rabbits for supper. Then he started out and reached the place where his cousin had been found. Arrived there, he found a little open space, and on the farther side, amongst the bushes, he could hear the grizzly feeding. It was too thick to try to get at him. His only chance was to draw the bear into the open. He therefore stood out, and snapped a dead stick with his fingers. The grizzly

was on its hind-legs in an instant, and, looking round, saw him. Without a moment's hesitation the grizzly (*mystahia*) had rushed out upon him 'roaring like a bull.' He had only the small muzzle-loader, and his caps were cracked and wet, so that if he did not kill at the first shot he was done for. Daukhan waited until the bear was almost upon him, and then fired and jumped quickly aside,



'HE HAD ONLY THE SMALL MUZZLE-LOADER'

grasping at his side for his hunting-knife. Then he remembered that his father had taken this from him with the rifle. But his suspense was soon over, for the huge animal rolled over dead at his feet. I had been told the story of this youthful escapade before, so that I had no doubt of the truth of the tale; and I have always thought it one of the pluckiest things I have ever heard.

Daukhan telling a bear story was perfectly splendid. All Cree Indians use gestures in conversation, but Daukhan had a little French blood in his veins, and this, I suppose, gave him his extraordinary grace and expressiveness of motion.

His father had been a cattle-herder to the Com-



'THE HUGE ANIMAL ROLLED OVER DEAD'

pany at Fort Edmonton in the old days, and was famous as a strong and daring man. He had once killed a grizzly unassisted, with a bow and arrow. It seems that a large party of Indians were attempting to kill a very large bear which was hibernating during the winter. The bear, however, had suddenly wakened up, and made a rush for the entrance

of the cave, and had so alarmed the men that they had all turned and fled, leaving Daukhan's father to face the bear alone. He had to shoot with great rapidity, and in his haste made a bad shot, so that the first arrow did not kill. It was a critical moment, and the bear was almost on him before he had let fly the second. This fortunately pierced its heart, and Daukhan told us that to his dying day the old man's constant advice was never to fire a shot that was not the best that the shooter could do. It is curious that although the bow has disappeared from amongst them, the Indians never speak of shooting without stretching out the left hand and flicking the right near the ear, as if in the act of letting go an arrow.

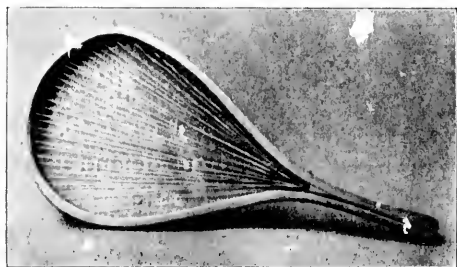
It seems that wherever men have hunted much the animals have learnt to dread them. And so in the more southerly portion of the Rockies a grizzly will seldom attack a man unprovoked. But in the North-West they have been known to attack men in the open country, and come some distance out of the bush to meet them; and once or twice they have rushed upon a pack-train on the march, and even entered a camp in spite of the fire. As a rule, however, even in the most unfrequented districts, the grizzly, in common with most other animals, will seldom attack a human being unless driven to it or wounded; although they will often attack cattle and horses on the range. Daukhan said that

they generally stand upright and take a look at the intruder before they do anything. And this is the time to shoot. But when once they have made up their minds to charge they come with fearful swiftness and ferocity, and either club with their paws, smashing in the hunter's ribs, or, as has sometimes happened, hold him down and tear out his entrails. The number of times in which a bear has first knocked the gun out of a man's hand before attacking him is quite remarkable. The grizzly, of course, does not *lug*, but they have been known to hold a man with their feet and crush in his skull with their teeth. On the whole, bear-hunting is not a safe profession, and few of the Indians seek encounters with a grizzly. The Beavers, indeed, will go any distance to avoid one. Still, I fancy that the casual hunter runs no greater risk than he does with other big game, and, at all events, the odds are always on the side of a man who has a rifle and knows how to use it. The black bear—Musqwah, as the Indians call him—is as a rule a timid animal, although at times he will turn and be exceedingly nasty. It seems that they grow to a far larger size in the North-West than in the more southerly districts, for Round told me that he had seen several skins larger than that of any grizzly that he had ever heard of. An Indian named Louisan Thomas, a brother of the Thomas mentioned above, had a very nasty time with one

of these monsters. It seems that he was following the tracks, and suddenly came face to face with the bear. Before he had time to lift his rifle the animal was upon him, and they rolled and struggled upon the ground together. Luckily he was able to reach his knife and killed the infuriated animal, but in the struggle the bear had torn nearly all the skin off his head—had, in fact, scalped him. This encounter Louisan told us himself, and his scars were eloquent of the truth of his story. It is a curious thing that amongst all the bear stories to be heard in Western America one so seldom comes across a case of a man who has actually been killed. Of course there are such cases, but it seems that the animal is generally satisfied with maiming its enemy and then retiring from the field—as the bear never eats its food fresh, but always allows it to get high, and this may account for the way in which it leaves what it believes is dead. But I fancy that it very seldom kills a man for food, but simply charges in self-protection, or to defend its cubs.

The grizzly is omnivorous, eating both flesh and vegetables, but it seems generally to prefer the latter, and subsists mainly on berries, although in the spring, when there is no wild fruit, it appears to devour many insects, attacking ant-hills and beating up the rotten logs with its paws in search of food. The force of its blow is quite extraordinary, so that it will pulverise the dead wood and

scatter the fragments far and wide. When enraged, the grizzly will often stand upon its hind-legs and break down young trees with its fore-paws, roaring loudly the while. The female gives birth to two cubs every alternate year, and defends them until they are about twelve months old. The cubs often hibernate by themselves whilst the mother remains in retreat close at hand. There is a theory that the bear nourishes itself during its long sleep by sucking its paws, and it is said that the under surface of the foot is sore and inflamed in the early spring. At all events it is certain that the bear is fat and in good condition when it emerges from its hole, but becomes thin and emaciated after it has been abroad for a few days.



INDIAN ICE SCOOP

CHAPTER IV

CAMPING IN SWAMP

DAUKHAN declared that there were not many bears in the neighbourhood of the prairie at the time when we visited it. Our hunts at anyrate were fruitless, and so we moved the camp and made a short march on 3rd of August. On the march Pollen ran a bramble into his eye, causing him much pain, and we camped early on the edge of the prairie. During the afternoon, Daukhan, John, and I, ascended a low mountain to the west of the camp and obtained a magnificent view of the surrounding country. Before us stretched mile after mile of forest-covered plain, showing great blackened patches where fires had raged through the trees; here and there the bend of a river shone in the sunlight; and the wind rippled the long grass below us. Far beyond we could see the low foothills of the Rockies, and here and there a peak rose white and indistinct in the blue haze of distance. On the way back to camp we came across an old grizzly track of great size. As a rule we marched and hunted in the native moccasin, but I happened

to be wearing shooting-boots on this particular occasion, and I found that my two feet, side by side, fitted easily in the footprint of the bear. On returning to camp we found that Pollen's eye had become very much inflamed, and that he was in great pain. The Doctor had mixed some cocaine for him, which afforded him some relief; but he could hardly bear the light, and so had pitched his



'FAR BEYOND WE COULD SEE THE LOW FOOT-HILLS'

mosquito-net under a shelter. He was entirely without sleep during the night, but continued to bathe his eye with the cocaine, which he kept in a saucer amongst his blankets. On the following morning, however, he was much worse, and the affair had become very serious. On examination we found that his saucer was full of ants and other insects which had crawled into his bed and fallen

into the medicine during the night, and that in short he had been bathing his eye in a solution of formic acid. No wonder it had set up a violent inflammation. Wherever we camped we were always much annoyed by ants, which swarm throughout the whole country, so that even when protected by a net from mosquitoes and other flying insects, one's bed was always invaded by hosts of creeping things. Without mosquito-nets life would be unendurable, and



MOSQUITO NETS

a man once stricken down by illness would most likely be worried to death. Even the moose and deer in the country are often killed by bull-dog flies and mosquitoes, their blood being sucked away until they succumb through exhaustion. Pollen remained in the tent during the whole day in great pain. On the following day, however, he was much better, and with his eye bound up we put him on a

horse and continued our way, travelling over a fairly open country.

A forest fire had felled the timber and made the ground very fertile, so that we found an abundance of wild strawberries, and raspberries which were excellent. Towards evening we came to a river known to the Indians as Escapesscow Sepe, or the Sharp Stone Creek, where we camped and lay for the night in a thunderstorm. It had not rained for nine days, and this was the longest period of fine weather we experienced during the entire journey. On the morrow we crossed the river and marched on through much muskeg until we came to a small lake, where we camped. Ramsey now became very ill, suffering agonies of pain from rheumatism, so that we remained in the same place for several days hunting and exploring the country. The number of wild geese on the river was quite extraordinary. They would fly past in flocks for more than half an hour at a time, and even when these were gone off, the next bend would disclose hundreds more.

It was while we were camped here that we first saw that most wonderful of all the beauties of nature—the aurora borealis. The sun had set with unusual splendour, the light and vaporous clouds holding for long a thousand shades of scarlet, orange, and gold. But no sooner was the last ray gone than pale streaks of green shot horizontally

down the sky and then quivered and passed from side to side like luminous hangings in the wind. First one, then another, of these would appear, and then a score; the intensity of light changing from one end to the other of the streak, and all passing and repassing each other with endless and entrancing activity. It was a most striking and glorious sight to see half of the dome of heaven ablaze with the shifting dancing fires, the more so as the colour, a pale apple-green, seemed so unusual in the sky.

When Ramsey was better we continued our march in the same manner as before. In many places we came across bear-tracks, but they were condemned by Daukhan as old, and not worth following. Once, however, he found a trail which he declared was fresh, and I immediately started to follow it with him, Pollen's eye being still troublesome. Daukhan said that a female black bear and three cubs had gone into the timber, and that they had not passed more than half an hour before our coming. We accordingly took up the trail while the others made camp as quietly as possible. The bush was thick, and the ground in many places hard and dry; but Daukhan seemed to follow the animal by a kind of instinct, leaping swiftly from log to log and only following the actual footmarks where the earth was soft or the grass long. It seemed as though he hunted by scent. Presently we came to a large muskeg, where the trees lay thickly piled one upon

another. Here it was easy to see the footmarks of the bears in the soft moss. Suddenly we sighted a small cub, and Daukhan raced after it, leaping over the fallen timber with wonderful agility, whilst I vainly attempted to keep up with him. The cub promptly ran up a tree, where I shot it. Meanwhile Daukhan had discovered another cub, and was already some distance away doing his best to tree it. This one was killed in the same way as the first, but still the old bear did not appear. We searched the surrounding country, but only found a broad path in the underbrush which she had made in her rapid flight. At this we were greatly disappointed, as we knew from her tracks that she was of considerable size. However, we returned to the camp with the bodies of the unfortunate cubs, and, I am bound to say, were mightily pleased with them, for, although small, they were the first bears we had killed on the trip. Daukhan dried the skins in Indian fashion, making a hoop of willow branches, and stretching the hide as tight as a drum. When the skin was dry, he scraped the gristle from the under side with a bone implement, and in a wonderfully short time the fur became quite sweet, and could be rolled and packed upon the horses. We were now marching towards the South Forks of the Pine, and intended to follow up the main river in the direction of the Rocky Mountains. Daukhan declared that we had better move forward as rapidly

as possible and halt amongst the foot-hills for some days, as he said that we should find abundance of bear and other game in that district.

The pitching trail by which for the first few days after leaving Dunvegan we had travelled did not take us far. Beyond the prairie there was little trace of it, and now all evidence that the country had ever been travelled over had long since disappeared, so that we had only a vague knowledge



AN EVENING CAMP

of our position, but marched across the country entirely under Daukhan's guidance. He said that we were approaching a muskeg which covered an immense area of country, and that he was uncertain which direction we had better take. He had never crossed this great swamp, although he had hunted in the outskirts, but he said that he thought that we should be able to find a ridge of firm ground run-

ning through it, and thus save a long detour. For some days past the country had been becoming more swampy, and more thickly timbered, until at last we left the poplar woods behind and entered a dense forest of small pines. The soft moss and deep muddy pools of the muskeg impeded the horses, and we were obliged to cut a path through the trees, so that we made but slow progress. It was impossible to see more than a few yards in any direction; but Daukhan led us straight forward without a moment's hesitation. Now and again we halted, whilst he climbed a tree and scanned the horizon, looking for some mountain by which he might steer our course; but he could see nothing but trees and swamp for miles in every direction. At every step we sank deep in the cold ooze, so that we were chilled to the bone, even whilst chopping the trees and driving the refractory pack animals.

One evening, just as we were about to camp, we came upon a deep ravine, and camped between high bluffs near a small stream. On referring to the map, we noticed a river marked Coal Brook, which had been discovered by Mr. Dawson; but we were uncertain whether this was the right stream, and were inclined to think that we had already reached the south branch of the Pine River. Even if it was Coal Brook, we had no notion where we were upon the map, and we imagined that we

had come upon the river higher up stream than we had intended. And so, on the following day, Daukhan and John went out to look for the Pine River; for we thought it useless to move the pack-train through so difficult a country if there was any doubt about our position, as we might march far out of the line and be compelled to return, and thus lose much time and do unnecessary work.

As soon as our scouts had left camp Pollen and I set off down the river in search of game. Here and there in the sand by the waterside we found tracks of black-tailed deer, but none of these were very fresh. There are but few of these deer in the country; but they are more plentiful than the cariboo, which is very seldom seen, although it is to be found in the foot-hills. The wapiti is quite extinct throughout the entire district. It is said that forty or fifty years ago these deer were very plentiful; but the Indians have waged so deadly a war upon them that a few stray antlers whitening amongst the hills alone remain to tell of their existence. It is curious to notice that when they became scarce the bulls ceased to whistle, as though fearful of attracting attention. We followed up the black-tail tracks for some distance, and then returned to the river bottom. The cañon was deep and precipitous, and in many places very narrow, so that we were obliged to cross the river many times on the way. Here and there we noticed great lumps

of coal in the river-bed, and this led us to suppose that this was Coal Brook, as we had imagined. The stream was strong, and the water very cold, but it did not reach above our knees, and so did not inconvenience us much. On the return journey, however, we found that the river had risen considerably, and now rushed in a roaring torrent, often rising nearly to our armpits. The strength of the stream was extraordinary, so that we had much ado to keep our feet, and were often carried down a long distance over the slippery rocks. Several times I thought that we should certainly have been drowned, for if a man were once swept away he would stand but a poor chance in such a swirling mass of water. The roar of the torrent beat back upon us from the rocky sides of the chasm with a deafening sound that was calculated to shake one's nerves when one felt the tug of the water. At last, however, we came to camp very wet and exhausted, having crossed the stream no less than forty times during the afternoon. Late that evening John and Daukhan returned, saying that they had found the forks of the Pine River, and so we made haste to march there the following morning. On the way we came across the grave of an Indian in a little open space amongst the trees. A small wooden cross stood close at hand, whilst the body was protected from the attacks of wolverines and coyottes by a stout wooden frame filled with stones. The

man had evidently died as he had lived, upon the hunting trail, and had been buried in his deep forests, far from the dwellings of men. The grave seemed pitiful in its loneliness, but I suppose that it was as he would have wished.

About midday we descended into an open flat, and, skirting the clumps of low bush, came to the juncture of the South Pine and the main river. We should now be forced to cross to the northern shore,



'ABOUT MIDDAY WE DESCENDED INTO AN OPEN FLAT'

and we thought it best to take the rivers in detail, crossing the south river first, and then turning our attention to the main stream, which was smaller and less rapid above the confluence, although still about six hundred feet broad. We soon found, however, that the horses would be obliged to swim in any case, and as we had no wish to spoil our provisions and ammunition, or lose any of the pack animals, we determined to make a dug-out canoe,

and thus save our stores and cross more safely ourselves. We had already chosen a tree suitable for our purpose, when we discovered a very good canoe hidden amongst the branches, and shortly afterwards another less perfect one a little lower down. This stroke of good fortune cheered us considerably, as we should have lost much valuable time if we had been compelled to make our own boat.

We had wasted many days through illness or misadventure, and travelled far more slowly than we had anticipated. It was already the 15th of August, and a month since we left Dunvegan; but we had killed no game worth speaking of, and had not even got to our hunting-grounds. The length of time which remained would, of course, be limited by the coming of winter, and we knew that if the snow came whilst we were still in the mountains, we should be obliged to remain in the country until spring. Already the nights were cold; and although the sun still shone brightly by day, we felt that the height of the summer was past, and that we must make a better pace if we were to get any hunting, and cross the mountains before the long northern winter set in. The frost had, however, done us one good turn, for the mosquitoes and bull-dog flies had disappeared. It is true that the sand-fly had taken their place; but this insect was not nearly so ferocious as its predecessors, and always retired at sundown, so that we could

now sleep undisturbed, and live free from continual torture and worry.

The great thing now was to hurry forward, and so we made what haste we could, and swam the horses across the two rivers, whilst Daukhan and



HORSES SWIMMING THE PINE RIVER

John ferried our goods to the northern shore of the Pine in the canoe. Daukhan was a wonderful canoe-man, and John was very handy at the boat, so that by evening we were all safely across, and had made our camp on the further shore. We had discovered a small parcel of tea and tobacco—so

Indian's greatest luxury—near the canoe, so we made sure that the boat had been left for the use of some other party, and felt bound to leave it in the place where we found it. We accordingly took it back, and having contributed a small present to the 'cache,'¹ we returned to camp in the warped canoe which we had discovered upon the beach.

Now at last we were sure of our position, and every day took our bearings by the mountains near the forks. We marched up the valley for some distance, and then ascended to the higher grounds. The hill was very steep, and one of our pack animals, a small horse known by the extravagant title of Duke, slipped on the short grass, and rolled down the mountain-side with his burden. After bouncing amongst rocks and stumps, now on the flat of his back, now sliding, with despairing up-turned face, upon his side, he came to a sudden stop against the trunk of a pine-tree two hundred and fifty feet below us. Every one imagined that the luckless animal had broken his neck, or at least done himself some fearful injury. And our surprise may be imagined when we saw him get upon his feet, shake himself, and then quietly trot away from us, dragging a mass of bundles and pack-ropes behind him.

No one who has not tried it can have any idea

¹ *i.e.*, a thing hidden or stores left protected from animals for future use. Thus a man will 'cache' meat and return to his 'cache.'

of the trials of pack-train driving. Horses knock off their packs against rocks, or rush incontinently under low boughs, sweeping away their valuable burdens. In an agony of fear one watches one's precious kodak rocking on the back of some loose animal that has a mind to roll in a soft muddy place, or stands vacantly in a river, whilst his brother, who is perhaps carrying the bacon, slips on the soft bank and goes wallowing down upon his head in the deep water. At every moment of the long marching day some refractory brute leaves the line and goes exploring in the bush or browsing in the swamps. A clever horse will so hide himself as to be invisible from his driver's trail, and often one has to return and search the forest, only to find him rolling contentedly upon a burst flour-bag, and whitening himself with its priceless contents. No lover of animals should march with a pack-train if he wishes to keep his self-respect.

Duke was one of those annoying horses, and made himself objectionable on every possible occasion. After his roll he trotted down the hill, and did not stop until he found a place where the grass suited his taste, and there we found him enjoying his ease. Even after he had been brought back and packed, and set upon the trail, he evinced a decided inclination to roll down to the rich grass again, although any ordinary horse would undoubtedly have died at the first attempt. But he

was to be of much use to us afterwards in a manner we did not dream of at this time.

And thus, with many struggles and pantings, we reached the higher ground, and pushed forward through a fairly open country. Once during the

day we came upon a deserted Indian camp. From the condition of the ashes and other signs we judged that it was not more than two weeks old. There had evidently been a sick man in the party, for the remains of a sweating-house were still standing. It is made after this manner: Many small branches are stuck in the ground in a circle, and the extremities and twigs are plaited together so as to form a kind of roof. Blankets are then thrown over the whole, and the patient creeps in and sits down upon the floor. Meanwhile large stones have been



JOHN AND DAUKHAN IN
THE CANOE

heated in a fire, and these are passed into the hut by the man's friends, whilst he pours water upon them, and so makes a steam under the blanket. After a while the heat must become almost unendurable, but the process is continued until the unfortunate patient can stand it no longer,

and is forced through sheer exhaustion to emerge from his Turkish bath. Whether this cure is beneficial in the treatment of the various diseases to which Indians are subject, I am unable to say, but they all place great faith in its healing powers.

To our great sorrow Daukhan himself, two days after we left the Pine River, became an invalid, suffering great pain from lumbago. It seems curious that a savage should feel the injurious effects of a climate and a mode of life to which he has been used since childhood, but such is nevertheless the case. It is the greatest mistake to suppose that savage man enjoys uninterrupted health. In the North-West, every man, whether white or Indian, is sure sooner or later to become a martyr to rheumatism and like complaints. And no wonder.

I am afraid that I have entirely failed to give any idea of the real nature of the country through which we had passed, all of which would apply equally to the region through which we were destined to go. Unless an actual day-by-day diary were given, it is almost impossible to show the extraordinary amount of damp to which we were subject. To begin with, it rained almost every day, and even when the sky was unclouded the bush was nearly always very wet, so that one became thoroughly soaked from top to toe before the morning's work was over. For many days to-

gether one walked continually in swamp or muskeg to the ankle, and often for hours at a time in water reaching well above the knee. But all this was of small consequence. A warm fire would always dry out one's clothes as one stood, so that one went to bed moderately dry. But it was during the night that the damp worked its worst upon us. We had small waterproof sheets under our blankets, and these were of great service to us, but one piece of waterproof will do little against an acre of water. It must be understood that on many occasions one could plunge one's hand out of bed to the wrist, or even to the elbow, if one had a mind to, in slushy water or sodden moss and mud. Of course now and again we found hard pieces of ground, and even made dry camp; but the country as a whole was nothing but a vast morass, and in this sodden condition we marched and worked and slept. I have heard people who ought to know say that England is a damp climate to camp in, but England at its wettest would be child's-play to this rain-haunted land, and not to be compared with it for a moment. Looking back on the expedition now I do not wonder that we were delayed a little by sickness, but I always marvel that we all got out of that country alive, or at least without some serious illness. And the most amusing part of the whole thing was, that one of the party had gone there under doctor's orders. But of course, neither this

medical adviser, nor any one else for that matter, had any idea of the nature of the country.

There is a conspiracy of silence about worthless British possessions. One remarks with wonder the notes of 'fine soil' and 'open rolling country' on the maps of a territory where the casual traveller can find nothing but muskeg and sludgy swamp. Now and again, hidden away in a corner, one may find a tiny 'marshy,' and a few infinitesimal tufts of grass marked upon a Government map, as though the conscience of the map-maker had pricked him, and driven him to fill up some neglected corner. But of the miles of worthless country, of the useless rotting timber and the bare, barren mountain, there is never a word or a sign. Of course no one can expect to find definite information about unexplored country, and it were folly to condemn a district because so many others are bad, but if the maker of maps were honest he would use the dotted line in many places where he now fills in with a bold stroke, as though he knew the surface of the country and the lay of the land. It is natural that he who makes a map or writes a book about the land of his birth should smooth over many little deficiencies, and should draw a little on his imagination in depicting advantages which may have accidentally been omitted in the creation. The vanity seems a harmless one, and, to judge from present evidence, it has been freely

indulged. But when one considers that men who know the true state of affairs actually pass it over, thus consciously enticing the unwary emigrant to strike out from the borders of civilisation and starve in a hard and cruel country, the vanity becomes a crime, and a crime of no mean magnitude.



FISH SPEAR

For the unfortunate settler cannot know if the land be good or worthless when the maps say that all the land is good. But happily, as a matter of fact, few emigrants have as yet pushed beyond the fertile plains of the Saskatchewan and the Edmonton district, for the truth about the North is leaking out, and men are beginning to realise that the vast territory from the Athabaska to the Barren Grounds and on to the Arctic Ocean is practically worthless for agricultural purposes.

There is, however, a little gold in the rivers, which, with improved machinery, might be worked to some small profit in spite of the short summer season. Gold will draw men into any country; and so it has happened that, from time to time, a few, more adventurous or more foolish than

their fellows, have penetrated to the Peace River country.

Some years ago a man arrived at Dunvegan, prospecting for precious metals, and set out up the river in the early spring. Months went by and still he did not return, and at last, in the latter part of August, a search party was organised. One day the Indians found him. He was lying under a bush feebly clawing at a few berries. The skin had shrunk from his face, and his lips, 'like two lines of gristle,' were drawn back, showing his teeth, whilst his eyes seemed bursting from their sockets. His reason had left him, so that he tried to crawl away from his captors, and even to fight them off with his teeth when they came up to where he was lying. It seems that through some accident he had lost his provisions, and had lived for three months on roots and berries.

Another man had started nearer the mountains, and had gone up one of the rivers. He was a musician, and had taken his banjo with him. Some months later a boat coming down the river was rowed quickly past a point because of the fearful stench in that place. When the men got a little lower down, some of them returned and found 'Banjo Charley,' as the unfortunate had been called, corrupted almost beyond recognition, and lying with his banjo beside him.

The Indians themselves suffer fearful periods of

starvation, and I have even heard of cases where men have been driven to devour each other. In a land where the native starves, what chance is there for the white man?

But let me return to our expedition.

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CHAPTER V

ON THE TRACK OF A GRIZZLY

DAUKHAN, for all his hardiness and strength, was utterly broken down from the continued damp, and had fallen a victim to excruciating pains of rheumatism. This was a pretty serious matter—for without him we should be hopelessly lost in this trackless wilderness. However, the Doctor did the best he could for him, dosing him with salicylate of soda, and finally building up a plaster of Paris support round his waist and back, which delighted Daukhan beyond measure, and I believe he kept the plaster in its place for weeks after he had entirely recovered.

As the country became worse, our progress had grown daily slower, and now that Daukhan was *hors de combat* we cast about for some remedy or help. About thirty miles from where we were there was a large sheet of water, known as Moberley's Lake. Daukhan said that many Beaver Indians hunted round its shores, and that we should be almost certain to find them in that district at that particular time, as the berry season was coming on and they would be collected together picking

berries upon the hillsides. After much discussion it seemed the wisest thing to send some of our party to this lake to try and get an Indian to join our expedition in the capacity of axe-man, to help to clear a path for the horses. We were also badly in want of moccasins, for we had used these comfortable shoes too freely on the march, and we knew that it would be quite hopeless to attempt to hunt in ordinary boots.

A moccasin is to all intents and purposes a leather sock, so that the foot has full play, and can bend and grasp as nature intended. At the first attempt the pains of walking practically barefooted amongst sticks and sharp stones are of course severe. But after a few days the foot becomes hardened, and can stand much knocking about, and then it is that one begins to appreciate what Mr. Pike happily names 'the moccasin of freedom,' and to despise the boot of civilisation; for you soon find that you can walk easily, swiftly, and silently for long distances without becoming tired, that your foot does not stick in deep mud, that you can move with ease upon slippery logs, and, most important of all, that you do not break every twig that you may chance to step on. It would be utterly hopeless to attempt to stalk in boots in a North-Western forest. You would see more game in Piccadilly. And now we realised that we had not enough moccasins, and thought that we might

be able to get some from the Indians round the lake at the same time that we got our axe-man. Daukhan said that there was a trail from the river to the lake, and that if only he could find the place where five years before he had killed two young moose, he would be able to set us on it. For two



OUR CAMP IN THE VALLEY

days Daukhan was unable to move, but on the third, after a very hard day's work amongst fallen timber and swamps, we descended into a little valley and found the whitened poles of an old camp. Daukhan said that this was the place where he 'ate the moose,' and very soon we found a blade-bone and other relics of this long-past meal. When one comes to think that he had only visited the district once, and that five years ago, one realises the

extraordinary memory for places which the Indians possess ; but it is more than a highly developed bump of locality—it is a special instinct. Daukhan, for instance, had brought us from Dunvegan to the Pine River, a distance of close upon 150 miles, without the aid of a trail for more than half the way, and with hardly any idea of the meaning of a map. And now he brought us in a straight line to a place where he had only camped for a few days five years before.

So now, as soon as we had camped, Pollen got ready to go to Moberley's Lake, taking John Knot as an interpreter, whilst Daukhan, who knew most of the Indians, though he did not speak the Beaver tongue, said he was well enough to accompany them on horseback as guide. Round, Ramsey, the Doctor, and I were to remain in the camp to mind the horses and goods, and to do what hunting we could. Early in the afternoon the expedition started on horseback to the lake, taking a pack-horse with them, and one other animal for the use of the Indian whom they proposed to bring back.

After they were gone, I set out to explore the country by myself, and found it simply alive with game. The ground was covered with long grass and wild pea plant, which the bears are very fond of, and everywhere there were long lines where some animal had roamed, feeding as he went. Here and there one could see where a bear had rolled in the grass, whilst the soft mud by the river-sides

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DEEPER IN A CUP MOONBEAM S'AKE

and in the muskegs was covered with the tracks of black bear and grizzly. In every open space I expected to find a huge beast sunning himself, or at least to hear the crack of branches in the underbrush.

Just as I was mounting a small hill, I came upon the perfectly fresh track of a grizzly of great size. The wind was light and favourable, so I followed



TRACK OF A GRIZZLY

rapidly, and as silently as possible, until I came to a patch of bush. The tracks led straight into the undergrowth, and soon I could hear the bear snapping twigs at the further end of the clump, about eighty yards

away. I was standing on a little hill, and could see over a portion of the clump, and I noticed that in the centre there was an open space amongst the bushes. Creeping quietly on hands and knees through the undergrowth, I came to the

opening and waited. The clear space was not more than ten yards across, and just beyond I could hear the grizzly amongst the bushes. He appeared to be eating ants, for he grunted and coughed quietly, and his scent came down the wind to me like the smell of a kennel of dogs. I dared not move forward, for though the animal could not have been thirty yards away, he was completely hidden in the bush, and every moment he was coming a little nearer, so I remained quietly waiting till he should move from behind the thick bushes and step into the little space where I sat. When once he showed himself, I trusted that the heavy rifle which I carried would finish him off; at all events, I hoped to take him completely by surprise, and so waited anxiously for the encounter. The bear drew nearer and nearer, and every moment the smell grew stronger, so that I was just preparing to meet him when I heard the wind coming up the valley behind me. All day the air had been light and shifting, but from the sound in the trees I judged that a strong breeze had come up and would soon be upon me. My position now became very serious, for I saw at once that my scent would be carried straight towards the bear, and one of two things was sure to happen,—either he would run away, or charge me on the moment, and neither was exactly what I wished. There is a vast difference between shooting a bear as he emerges from the bush,

however close at hand, and standing the charge of a huge and infuriated grizzly in dense underbrush. But before I had time to move the wind was upon me, and, with a great crashing of boughs, the bear made his charge, coming, as it seemed, straight at me. All I could do was to stand with my heart in my mouth and wait for him. But instead of rushing at me as I had expected, he bore off to the right and made for a little hill. All this time I never once caught a glimpse of him, and could only judge of his movements by the breaking of branches and crashing in the bush. But as soon as I realised that he was not coming towards me I retreated into the open and ran round the clump, hoping to get a sight of him. I could not understand why he had charged the hill, but I afterwards discovered that my scent would have blown that way, and doubtless the bear had caught it when the wind swept back towards him from the rising ground.

To my great disappointment I never saw the beast at all, for he had apparently made off across the open as soon as he found that he had charged in the wrong direction. The adventure had been an exciting one, and I should without doubt have had a very unpleasant time if, in the event of the bear showing himself, my bullet had not taken immediate effect. But as it was, I felt that fate had been very hard on me, more especially when I heard the wind drop a few moments after the bear

had gone. However, I continued to hunt for the next few days, but although I came across numberless tracks I never sighted a bear. Once a black bear roamed round the camp in the night, but he was soon scared away by the stampeding of the horses. On the third day, Pollen, Daukhan, and John returned from the lake. They had been unable to find any Indians, and so we should be obliged to go without the extra axe-man and without the moccasins. They had, however, met with several adventures on the way. I append Pollen's own account.

'Two hours' careful riding had taken us clear of the muskeg that stretched across the valley, and once on the firm ground on the other side we made good progress. The country was beautiful—springy grass under foot, and a great diversity of trees scattered on the rolling hills. I suppose we had gone some twelve or fifteen miles before we struck the hills that cut into the top of the valley, and found the Indian trail that leads from the North Pine to Moberley's Lake. But look as we would there was never a trace of its having been used this year. A regular camping-ground of the Beavers lay some three miles beyond us, and Daukhan said there would be another trail converging there. So on we went, and soon came upon a series of flats, that rise by steps some hundred feet at a time towards the dividing mountains at the head and

north side of the valley. These flats cover a great space of ground, and are bounded on their lower level by a series of long lakes, varying from one- to three-quarters of a mile in length, and about a couple of hundred yards across. I believe I was the first European to explore them; and they certainly were well worth seeing.

'It was as we topped the second rise that a little way ahead of us we saw a tall wooden cross rising amongst the trees. Nothing could be more eloquent of the faith and nationality of the missionaries who had visited these tribes; and for a moment one could have imagined oneself on the outskirts of a French village in the mountain foot-hills of the Jura. The cross showed that one of the tribe had been buried there; and a little beyond we found some half-dozen sets of lodge poles, a sweating-house, fireplaces, and frames for stretching moose-skins. There was no doubt about its being the camping-place, but had it been used this year? It was with anxious eyes that we hunted round; for on some evidence of recent use of at least the trail depended the success of our expedition. But an hour's search ended in no discovery of what we wanted; and so, dispirited and tired—for it was getting near evening—we turned back and made a camp on the lower flat over the last of the semicircle of lakes.

'Daukhan was in the lowest of spirits: he was a man who hated failure, and to come all this way, to

have wasted two valuable days, for it was a long march home, and all for nothing, depressed him. I fancy, too, that the exertion of the morning's march and the long ride had set his rheumatism at work again. We made our fire for supper in silence; and while John boiled the kettle and made bread, I toiled down the steep bank to the lake, some hundred feet below us, to bathe. On my return I found supper ready, and with food our spirits revived, and in a rather better humour we lit our pipes and sat on the crest of the hill to watch the fading glories of the sunset.

'Before us stretched the long valley we had travelled over during the day, the black shadows of the knoll at the further side of the lake cutting



IN OPEN COUNTRY

off the mountains on our right ; but on the left they spread in uninterrupted series until they touched the soft turquoise of the evening sky, range on range of pale blue mountains, sometimes tree-covered, sometimes gaunt and rocky, but all their asperity softened by the haze of distance and the glamour of the setting sun. In the air was the still silence that only comes in the wilderness, and was unbroken, save for the occasional cry of a loon that circled overhead. Below us the lake lay like a gigantic mirror, every leaf and branch of the reflected trees showing clear and sharp.

As John took his place at my side, he accidentally moved a large stone at his feet, and in a second it was rolling and then leaping down the hill. A moment's stillness, and then a deep "splosh" told of the end of its course. The thing set us laughing like a lot of schoolboys ; the game became general, and soon we were up and scouring the land for more stones to throw. I have been told that grave professors have been known to indulge in this entertainment in the Alps, to the fatal detriment of village cattle below them, and indeed I can understand any one being bitten by so fascinating an amusement. For us the discovery was a god-send ; and before we had wearied of it Daukhan was himself again, and ready to discuss plans.

'Was it worth while to spend another day going to Moberley's Lake? It was difficult to get at the

probabilities. Daukhan's half-wild mind worked in obscure paths; and although John was a tactful interpreter, it was a long job before I was able to get at any sort of judgment on the matter. However, it finally appeared that there was still a trail from our side that led to the lake; and there was always a chance that from the other side some part of the tribe had made their way to the quasi-settlement for the summer. One thing appeared certain: poor as this chance seemed, it was our only one. It is true, it meant another day, but our need of moccasins was great, and if we could get old Cayahn, a splendid axe-man, our time and labour would be well laid out. And so we went to bed, resolved to be up with the dawn, and to get to the lake and back to our camp before evening.

Our plan was carried out to the letter. It was a long and a wearisome march, many awkward passages of rock, and with long interval of fallen timber to puzzle the horses, and a fair allowance of muskeg and marsh as we neared the lake. But, except for the splendour of the view, there was nothing to repay our trouble. No one had been there since the previous year. The fishing-nets were carefully cached in birch-bark roggans high in the trees; kettles and other luxuries of permanent camp were also safely bestowed; every trail was heavily overgrown with brambles and flocks. Evidently what we had already half expected had

happened—the Indians had moved down in a body to Fort St. John. Perhaps it was a selfish consolation, but in spite of the loss of three days to the expedition, I could not, as I looked on Moberley's Lake, regret that I had come. The expanse of water seemed enormous, hemmed in as it was by



BIRCH-BARK ROGGANS

high mountains on either side, and between the converging slopes at the further end the two peaks of the Bull's Head and the Porcupine glistened in the noonday sun. Every turn and contour of the shores—at one point steep and bristling with rugged pines, at another shelving away in arable prairie—was invested with a strange charm of harmonious shape and hue. The water itself was of a colour I had never seen before ; and as we waded on horse-

back across the rapid stream that forms the outlet of the lake, it seemed as if we were in the midst of a liquid opal in which the sunlight was kindling ever-shifting sparks of fire.

There was nothing for it but to go back, and it was already dusk as we rode down to the flat where we had camped overnight. I should have said that in the low ground at the end of the first lake, through which we came before mounting to the level of our camp, we had seen several bear-tracks, and Daukhan thought it might be worth while in the early morning to watch this track on the chance of a bear crossing, more especially as the place was all overgrown with pea-vine, of which "mysthah-ayah" is specially fond. So to-night we made our fire out of sight of this, some thousand yards further along the lake, where the land was lower. The lake itself here was lost in thick rushes, already crisp and dead, and one had to get water by wading out through mud. When we had got some, it tasted rank and sour from the rush-seeds that had been rotting in it all the summer, and completely spoiled the cocoa to which we were looking forward. So we fell on tobacco early to forget the disappointment, and for the first time I got on fairly intimate terms with Daukhan.

It seemed that ever since the start it had weighed on his spirit that he had so many masters; it was not part of his bargain that he should be ordered

about by every one, and the disrespect was painful. Now, I was sure that neither Round nor Ramsey nor the Doctor had ever ordered him about at all, nor yet Somerset or I; but if that was his grievance, it had to be set at rest. So I explained that all ordering about was unintentional, and that the mistake must have arisen from our poor acquaintance with the language, that Somerset and I alone were the Oukimows, and that, coming to a strange country, had asked him, another Oukimow, to guide us through; we were entirely innocent of wishing to order him; that, situated as we were, all had to do what work they could, and he, being so much stronger and handier than any of us, no doubt much fell upon his shoulders, but that we appreciated his good-will and energy immensely. As for the march, the matter was entirely in his hands. We knew we could trust him, because we had heard such good accounts of him before we came, and, moreover, had found everything we had hoped verified by our experience; that without him we could do nothing, and were entirely relying on his perseverance and skill to get to our journey's end. This long speech entirely reassured his suspicious nature, and we fell to talking of other things, Daukhan being particularly delighted with various details of English life. A city, he thought, must be a very perplexing place to live in, and very dangerous. The Queen, too, for whom prayers were offered

after every mass on Sundays at the Mission, interested him greatly. Did she rule the Hudson's Bay Company, or did the Hudson's Bay Company rule her? What was she like, and how did she govern? Could she do what she liked? I fear he was disappointed at learning that the Queen, gracious and dearly beloved as she was by her subjects, was yet not their absolute ruler. No doubt, I explained, did she choose, there were many things she could do that she refrained from. "Why?" asked Daukhan. It was rather a problem expounding a theory of constitutional monarchy to a primitive man; but the following was the best attempt I could make:—

The Queen had more subjects than any one could imagine. All the inhabitants of any country Daukhan had seen would not fill a single street of London, and London had thousands of streets, and there were thousands of cities almost as large as London. These people, too, were scattered all over the world. How could one person know what was best for all of them? and so the Queen, anxious that her people should be happy, allowed them in each country to choose chiefs and send them to large councils, so that each chief could speak for the needs of the people that sent him, and then advise the Queen what to do. However much she might disagree with her chiefs, still she always did what they advised, because she would rather go

against her own judgment than let her people suppose she was not anxious for their good. This explanation pleased, for it reminded Daukhan of the stories his father had told him of the government of his nation in the days when the Crees were a great united tribe; but I had misgivings that neither history nor law would bear me out in my account of it!

It was in the midst of this conversation that a low long-drawn note came to us from the mountain where the Moberley's Lake trail lay. Daukhan was up in an instant, and putting his clasped hands to his mouth emitted a reply exactly similar. This was again answered, and Daukhan resumed his seat, saying—as John translated it—“It is a person.” It appears this was the regular call of the Indians, and doubtless some Beaver had seen our camp, and was calling out to us to keep up the fire and have the kettle ready for a welcome. Here was luck! The very thing we thought we had missed. So the talk resumed, now on one topic, now on another, until an hour had gone by, when, no one having come, Daukhan called again. This time there was no answer. Another call was as fruitless, and after a walk round to a spot where a full view of the mountain could be obtained, and no fire was seen, Daukhan sat down, saying it was a “chepi” or ghost that we had heard. I was a little incredulous. “What else could it be?”

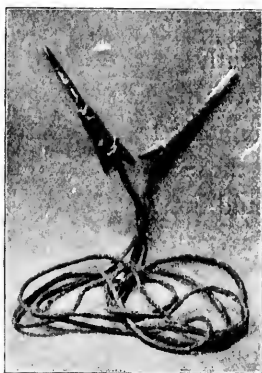
he asked; "it is not an owl, nor a fox, nor a wolverine; we heard the loons yesterday: it was not a young bear. No, it was a *chepti*"—and he went on to explain how before the Beavers were civilised (this was the word John used in his translation) they had killed and murdered each other recklessly; that the shores of Moberley's Lake were full of ghosts; how else could the inexplicable noises that were constantly heard there be explained? It certainly was a weird thing, this human cry out of the darkness, and no man coming to explain it; for, as Daukhan said, a Beaver sees as well at night as by day, and seeing a camp he would surely have come to it. None could read the riddle, and with this real ghost-story in our minds we made our beds and prepared for sleep by the glow of the dying fire. But a much more startling scare was awaiting us.

'I had just packed my cartridge-belt, moccasins, and heavier clothes under my pillow when I heard a heavy step in the dead rushes at the end of the lake, not twenty yards from where we were. In another second came another step, and then another. I did not need to look at Daukhan to guess what it was, but when I did, it was to see him crouching on one knee, with his coiled rifle in his hand and the gun sheath lying at his feet. John made a silent dash for my rifle, but I had already got its case off; and reassuring myself that it was

loaded, pushed the safety-bolt up, and knelt with it ready to fire as soon as I could see. "Mysthah-ayah," whispered Daukhan, and John got to the other side of the fire with the axe in his hand. Slowly the footsteps came towards us, as if the grizzly was uncertain to come or no; and the minute or so seemed a veritable age. The night was pitchy dark. The fire had died down so low that it threw but a pale and uncertain light over the bushes that rose only ten yards from us, and shut out the rushes from our view. The steps came nearer, so near that I was sure he must by now be clear of the reeds and already in the little screen of bush that lay between us and him. It was a trying and exciting moment, but I felt pretty confident in my 500-express, and was getting impatient to have the thing over. But once clear of the reeds the footsteps ceased. Evidently he was waiting to decide which he would charge, and Daukhan and I, like two statues, knelt in motionless expectation. The tension was becoming unendurable, for at such close quarters, and in the dark, the encounter would be a pretty uncertain matter, and I was watching the bushes with such straining eyes for the least sign of motion that more than once they all seemed to dance and vanish to my aching sight.

A full two minutes must have passed in this anxious silence when our ears were saluted with a chuckling chirrup, so pert, so sudden, so completely

absurd, that for a moment I could make nothing of it. But a little shake of boughs and another volley of chattering explained it all. To use a slang phrase, the squirrel had got the laugh on us! I could not help being rather glad, as we got back laughing to bed, that Daukhan had been as much fooled as I was. Certainly nothing more like the tread of a heavy, slow-moving beast can be imagined than the series of leaps with which this alarming little animal had made its way through the dense forest of rushes.'



HARPOON POINTS

CHAPTER VI

JOHN'S PROPHECY

So now we had to hurry on again, for we had lost valuable time, and Daukhan said that the bears were moving up to the foot-hills, where the berries were now ripening. In one place we discovered another deserted camp of the Beaver Indians. They had apparently been hunting in the country, but had made a raft and gone down the Pine River. Unfortunately they had had several dogs with them, and these had ranged the whole valley hunting. I should imagine that there were at least five of them, for we found footprints in many soft places. A bear will travel any distance to avoid a dog, and so we saw no fresh signs for some time. This was most unlucky for us, as the country was full of raspberries and a sweet berry called the saskatoon, which the bears are very fond of. In fact, we had intended to make some stay at this point and hunt, for Daukhan had said that two Indians had once killed thirty black bears and two grizzlies in two days amongst the berry bushes upon the hillsides near that part of the river.

But the dogs had driven the game out of the district.

Our stock of bacon was getting alarmingly low, so we decided to knock off meat altogether. We had still a considerable amount of grease, so we fried the bread for our meals. Besides the bacon and flour we had some dried fruits, which we took twice a week to counteract the unwholesome effects of too salt a diet. This fruit now stood us in good stead, and we ate it every other day as a second course after the bread and fat. But every day it became more imperatively necessary for us to find game, and lean less heavily on our scanty stock of provisions. It will be remembered that we had bought all the available pack-horses in the country, and had loaded them as heavily as we dared; but although we had eaten the two small bear cubs and the beaver, we had been too busy travelling to keep the camp in meat with our rifles. Now and again we had added a grouse or a duck to our supper, and at times had chanced upon a few rabbits; but so paltry an addition did not suffice to feed seven hungry men even for one meal. A single man travelling through the country would probably be able to snare enough rabbits to keep off starvation, but a large party is more difficult to feed.

The Indians themselves, who generally hunt in small parties, depend greatly upon rabbits. But

for some mysterious reason the rabbits in the North-West die out every seven years. Between whiles there are a fair number all through the country; but every seventh year they disappear, so that one may travel for months without coming



JOHN

across a single one.

The consequence is that at these times many of the Indians starve, and as the game in the district becomes more scarce, the number of deaths amongst the natives becomes greater every seventh year.

The vast majority of the Indian tribes, both in Canada and in the United States, are supported by the Government. But it must be borne in

mind that these northern Indians are not even British subjects, but are an alien race upon a soil that is British only in name. In a few years the Hudson's Bay Company will be compelled to withdraw its officers, as the fur trade will no longer be of any importance. Then the natives

will have no bartering-place for their goods, and indeed would have nothing to barter when the fur-bearing animals are finally killed out. Unable to till the ground, and in a land where all but the carnivora will be extinct, they will undoubtedly starve unless the Government steps in and saves them, and burdens itself with the feeding and clothing of some 12,000 souls.

The future of the country is not bright, nor was its present aspect very cheerful about the time of which I am writing. We continued to march for some time through a succession of muskegs and patches of fallen timber, whilst a drizzling rain continued to fall during almost every day. Once we had a really fine day, and made our camp in the evening in high spirits, for the sky was cloudless and the night still. We were so sure of the weather that we did not even unfurl the tent or stretch the fly, but made our beds where we pleased, and turned in under the shelter of some magnificent trees, confident of a good rest after our day's work. About one o'clock in the morning, however, it began to rain in torrents, and did not stop until midday. It had been so dark that we could not find our tent-roll, and therefore we had returned to our blankets and slowly became soaked. I think I have seldom passed a more miserable night. I had a waterproof sheet under my bedding, and on getting up found that it had most inconveniently held the water,

and that I was surrounded by a pool six inches deep.

We spent the morning drying our blankets before a huge fire. John, who was helping us in this, and who had been silent for some moments, suddenly turned towards us and said, 'Gentlemen, we shall meet three Beaver Indians to-morrow on the river.' Of course we all imagined that he was joking, but Round told us that whenever John prophesied the coming of strangers he was always right. He said he had known him for close upon fourteen years, and that he had never made a mistake about this. The most of us were incredulous, thinking that the whole thing was absurd; but John stuck to it that he was right, and that we should see on the morrow.

On the following day we scattered through the country in search of meat. Daukhan and I had started towards the river, intending to ford the stream on horseback, and then leave our animals and hunt to the right of the camp, when we were joined by Round and John, who also wished to cross the river and hunt to the left. The river was very rapid, and the stones slippery, so that the horses stumbled and lurched in the swift water in a manner not very pleasant to the rider. When we reached the southern shore we tethered our horses and were on the point of starting into the bush when we saw something moving on the river some distance

further down. We waited, and presently a canoe came round the point. Now it must be remembered that since we left Dunvegan, nearly two months before, we had not seen a single human being, and this made John's prophecy the more extraordinary, for there had been nothing to show that we should meet these Indians. John himself showed no surprise at seeing them, but simply remarked that he knew they were coming and was glad they had arrived. He afterwards told me that he had not always possessed this gift of second-sight, but that he had had it since the death of his infant daughter some fifteen years before. He said that he was upon an island on the Peace River, twenty miles from Dunvegan, when one afternoon something told him that his child was dead, and that a man was coming to him in a canoe to break the news. After a few hours the man came, and ever since then he had always known when he was going to meet any one, and from which direction they would



ALLAH'S MOTHER

come. He added that sometimes people came when he had had no presentiment; but when he had had the presentiment they were sure to come. Whilst he was talking the canoe had approached, so we went down to the water's edge and signalled to the Indians to come ashore. They proved to be Beaver Indians, three in number, as John had foreseen,—a young man, his wife and mother,—and more wretched specimens of humanity I have never seen. We made a fire for them, upon which they produced dried meat and grease, and we all ate. Then we began to talk. John was able to make himself understood, and could interpret, so that we got along fairly well, although it is always difficult to explain one's meaning to a savage, and to understand his ideas in general, for their minds do not work the same way as a white man's, and you can never tell what they really think.

Fifty years ago the Indians of the North-West were in the stone-hatchet period. Many of the tribes have made extraordinary mental strides in so short a time, but there has been little progress among the Beavers, so that one comes across the anomaly of a man with a primitive, stone-implement-period mind, carrying in his hand that product of centuries of thought—the Winchester rifle. His ideas and wants are expressed in a series of chucks and grunts, and he is careful to move his lips as little as possible in speaking. It would be impossible to shout in

his language. He uses primitive gestures, pointing to mountains or trees when he speaks of them, and signifying the departure of an animal or person by throwing out his hand before him.

The three specimens of the Beaver tribe who had joined us were ugly beyond description. They were small, emaciated, and scrofulous. 'Allah,' the young man of the party, was especially revolting, and he had a habit of spitting every few minutes with a horrible recklessness

of aim. All Beaver Indians look weakly, and as a fact few of them are strong. But one never knows what a man will do when put to it, and thinking that a little help would be better than none at all, we asked him to join our expedition as axeman. He said that he had

been to Fort McLeod through the Pine Pass, and so we thought that even if he was not strong enough to chop he would be useful as a guide. We told him that we would give him a horse as payment if he would join us. He answered that he would visit our camp on the following day, and make up his mind whether he would come, and that if he decided to do so his wife and mother could pack their goods to Moberley's Lake on their backs.



ALLAH'S WIFE

Accordingly he came next day to the camp with his family, and told us that he would join us for the pay agreed upon. But he said that he would not be able to come at once, as he must wait until his wife and mother had made him more moccasins. On hearing this we asked them to make some moccasins for our party, for which we paid them in goods. The old lady, Allah's mother, who was of most forbidding aspect, and smoked an exceedingly rank pipe, made us a present of bear-meat and dried moose-meat; and this civility we returned, as they expected, by a large present of tea and tobacco. They had killed a couple of small black bears on the river-bank, and this showed us the more clearly that the only way to move through the country was in canoes. A pack-train is always noisy, and when there is much chopping to be done is calculated to frighten away the game. Also the neighing and tramping of the horses at night would disturb the country for a long distance around the camp. A canoe, on the other hand, moves very silently, so that a man may hunt as he travels, and will find the game unprepared for his coming. Allah himself was extraordinarily dirty and unattractive, and his manner of eating and general behaviour was not pleasant, so that we did not relish the idea of having him for a constant companion. On an expedition of this kind one is compelled to live very close to the other members of the party, often

sleeping under the same shelter with them, and always eating from the same loaves of bread or dish of meat; and so when you have a man with you who spits amongst the cooking-pots and plates, and who is not even careful to avoid the meat, there is no escape, and you can only warn him not to do so again, and grin and bear it as best you can.



LODGES

However, Allah had brought us fresh meat and moccasins, which were of great service to us. It was very pleasant to return to a more rational diet after our long course of fried bread; for we had soon found that a man cannot do much hard work without substantial food. The dried moose was especially excellent, being crisp and sweet to the taste. The Indians make a mixture of dried meat and grease, which is called *pemmican*, and no more sustaining food can be procured. It can be compressed into a small space, and so is easily carried.

A wonderfully small quantity is sufficient for a meal, and I should advise any one proposing to travel through the North-West to procure this by sending a message to one of the Northern forts some time before he arrives in the country, as it may be difficult to get enough meat at short notice.

When all was ready we started again, and continued to move up the valley of the Pine River amongst the foot-hills, hunting as we went on both sides of the stream. When we wished to cross, we either made rafts of logs or waded in the shallower places, and thus we managed to explore the whole valley. Now and again we heard the young bears playing amongst the fallen timber, or the older ones coughing as they ate the wild berries; but not once could we get a sight of them. The bush was thick and rotten, and the ground covered with dead branches and twigs, so that it was almost impossible to move without making a noise. Daukhan, who was one of the best native hunters, could walk quietly enough to get near game when by himself. But I do not believe that any white man could stalk in such a country, and the bush is so thick that one must get within a few yards of an animal before one can see it at all. Only a few of the Indians are sufficiently expert to creep up to a bear, and the majority are obliged to kill the greater part of their game in traps.

All this we began to realise, and after repeated

failure we gave up hunting in the bush as a useless waste of time, and moved on towards the more open mountains, where we hoped to have a better chance of success. By this time we had finished all the meat (in the course of three days) and had returned to our diet of bread and fat, and so were

using up our flour far more quickly than we should. One day Daukhan managed to kill two small beavers, but these did not last us long, so he turned his attention to the river again, in the hope of discovering another dam. In many places we

found open paths, about three feet wide, in the woods leading down to the water, which had been made by the beavers as they dragged the logs towards the river. Daukhan said he had watched them many times, and that they would sometimes carry logs more than sixteen feet long for a mile-



CAMPED BY THE RIVER

along these roads. It seems that when they have used all the suitable trees near the water, they cut a road through the underbrush and seek timber on the hillsides. Then they cut down a tree with their teeth, and having gnawed it into lengths, haul it down the path to the water-side, carrying it in their mouths, and turning their heads slightly over their shoulders so that the log may drag behind them. Daukhan said that he had seen them leave a tree half cut when they saw that it would not fall clear, but would remain resting upon another.

The beavers build their dam when the river is low in the autumn, so that they may have a deep pool during the winter months. The shallow water will be frozen solid, but there will always remain a little open water under the ice in the pool in which they can swim. Of course at night, or in time of danger, they retire to the 'lodge' beneath the bank. When the river rises in the spring, the dam is washed away; and then the male and young travel about the stream as they choose, but the female remains in the vicinity of the lodge.

The Indians generally capture the beaver in steel traps set under the water in the shallows. The animal, swimming towards the shore, feels for the bottom with his feet, and so treads upon the trap. But a beaver has a very keen sense of smell, and to counteract the scent of the hand and the steel of the

trap the natives smear the metal with the oil which is extracted from the animal itself, so that it believes that all is safe, and thinks that another beaver has just landed in this place.

It is exceedingly difficult to get a shot at these animals, as they are extraordinarily wary. Having found the 'lodge,' the hunter chooses a convenient spot on the bank, and sits with his rifle on his knee waiting for the beaver to appear. Two, and sometimes three, hours may pass before the beavers move; then they come out and swim near the bank,



AFTER A HARD DAY

keeping a sharp look-out. At the least suspicion of a movement on the part of the man they would rush back to their holes, and remain there for the rest of the day. Suddenly the hunter seizes his rifle and shoots as quickly as possible, from either shoulder, as the case may require. Daukhan was

an expert at this kind of shooting, which requires very great patience and a rapid aim.

In this way he killed several animals for the pot. But as a rule we had to content ourselves with the fried bread. We found a few trout in the river, but they were very hard to catch, and paid little attention to our baits. Once or twice we managed to shoot one, but they were generally small. The country was becoming worse and worse, and was full of muskegs and choked with fallen timber, so that we had to chop a path for the pack-train. As an axe-man Allah proved quite useless, as we had feared, and so our progress was but slow.

At last we left the foot-hills and entered the main range of the Rockies, camping by the river under a large mountain, which, with the customary humility of a traveller, I named Mount Somerset. The weather had, as usual, been abominable, and we had hardly been dry for days, but now the sky had cleared a little, and we made up our minds to leave the horses and camp in the charge of Round, Ramsey, and the Doctor, and start out amongst the mountains for a week's hunt with Daukhan. The hill was so steep that we should be unable to take a pack-horse with us, so we settled to pack our provisions on our backs, taking John and Allah, who would leave us upon the higher ground, and would return with a fresh stock of provisions in a few days. After this John was to remain with

us as interpreter, but Allah might return to the main camp in the valley if he wished to do so. This arrangement suited everybody, so we made our preparations as quickly as we could.



A BEND OF THE PINE

CHAPTER VII

ON THE SNOW-LINE

September 1st.—Early in the morning we made up our packs, and, turning our backs to the river, started towards the mountain. We each carried a blanket and a few necessaries, besides four loaves of bread and our rifles. The packs weighed about



THE START

thirty pounds each, and with a ten-pound rifle made a sufficiently heavy load for mountaineering. After struggling through about a quarter of a mile of driftwood and

underbrush, we came to the foot of the torrent-bed, which seemed the easiest route up the steep slope. The day was very hot, and the heat beat back from the rocks, making the narrow gorge into a sort of natural Turkish bath. The small stream rendered the rocks as slippery as glass, so that we were obliged to rest every two or three

hundred feet to recover our breath. About noon Daukhan discovered some grizzly tracks leading up the mountain to the right, and we immediately determined to follow them. The side of the hill was littered with fallen trees, and was very steep, so that it was with great difficulty that we made our way. A heavy pack is always an awkward thing, and very greatly increases the difficulty of climbing a steep and slippery hill. It was quite impossible to follow the signs over the hard ground, so we simply plodded on at our best pace in the hope that we might catch a sight of the bear before he disappeared over the spur of the mountain. From the tracks we had seen we judged that the animal was of large size.

After a time we came to a patch of berries of a kind which we had not seen before. They grew on a small bush like the blueberry, and indeed somewhat resembled them in appearance, but were three times the size, and black in colour. As we found a great abundance we rested and made quite a feast. Presently we came to the ridge, and, sitting down, searched with a glass the amphitheatre which we had just left, but saw nothing of the bear. We therefore moved down the eastern slope, and cooked a small lunch near a pool of water. Allah, the Beaver, who was a man with a very gross appetite, was quite unable to restrain himself at the sight of food, and ate an alarming

amount of our scanty store. After lunch we returned to the top of the ridge, and, as we had heard some marmots whistling, sent Allah and John back to the eastern slope to try and get some for dinner, Daukhan, Pollen, and I remaining in the amphitheatre to watch for the bear. At some time long past a forest fire had swept over the mountain, leaving the slopes covered with dead, whitened logs. The ground was rocky and without cover,



AN AMPHITHEATRE

and the whole country had a melancholy aspect. Towards evening a strong west wind came up, making the air intensely cold, so that it was with a feeling of relief that we left

our post and set out to find a camping-place. Water was scarce, but at last we found a small pool lying between two ledges of rock, and there we decided to camp.

The place did not look promising, but it was the best we could find. We made a fire, and awaited the arrival of our pot-hunters. About dark they came up with four marmots. A marmot is very like a grey beaver, with a bushy tail. His back is brown, turning to grey over the rump.

He has two long brown teeth in the front of the upper jaw, which give a strangely comical look to his face. The whistle of these beasts is at first very startling, and one is sometimes inclined to answer, under the impression that some person is anxious to attract one's attention. The single clear note is very loud, and can be heard a long distance off. A marmot is light for its size, only scaling about twelve pounds. We immediately set to work to cook the results of the hunt for our supper. A roasted marmot is not bad food, but as he has about an inch of fat all over him he is inclined to be disagreeably greasy when eaten without a plate. Allah's table manners were too disgusting to mention.

After supper John made a confession. It seems that shortly after leaving us Allah had turned up the ridge, whilst John had chosen the rough rocks at the foot. Allah had seated himself upon a rock waiting for the reappearance of a marmot, when suddenly a grizzly had turned the corner and come face to face with him. John had immediately shouted to Allah to run back and fetch us, but the Beaver Indian had preferred to remain where he was, and, seated upon the rock, had continued to fire his rifle into the air, even after the bear had long got out of earshot. This was the tale. Of course John had the advantage over Allah in that he spoke English; but still I daresay that his

account was tolerably correct. As may be imagined, we were not very much pleased, more especially when Daukhan told us that the bear had probably travelled a long way. Allah's position had without doubt been a trying one, but it seemed to us that once the bear had turned tail, the necessity for firing had ceased, and that a golden opportunity had been lost to us, for we were, as



ON THE NORTH SPUR

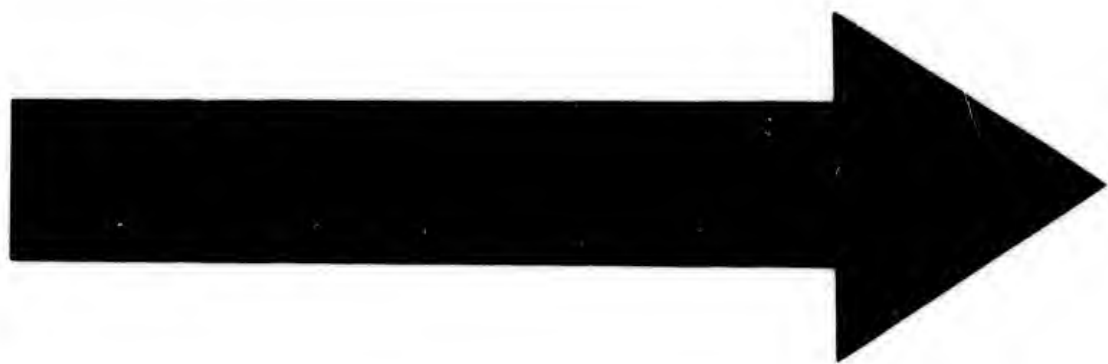
they well knew, only half a mile away, and had they told us at once, we could have got to the other slope in a few moments, and very likely would have been able to cut off the bear's retreat.

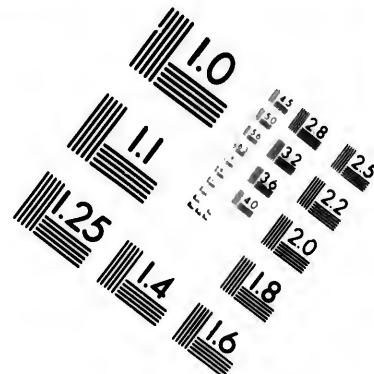
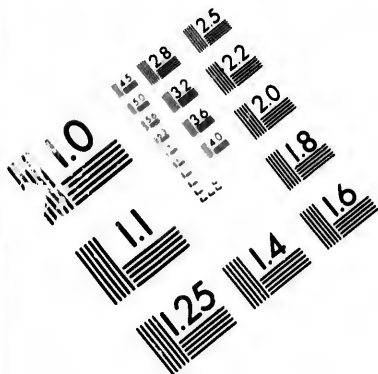
The wind had risen with the coming of the night, and now blew a perfect hurricane. We wrapped ourselves in our scanty blankets, and tried to find solace

for our disappointment in sleep. But all to no purpose. Gusts of wind swept over the ledges of rock, and literally tore the blankets from under us. We tried to remedy this by strapping our beds to us with our portage-straps, but even when thus secured stray ends would be torn away, and would flap noisily about our feet. To add to our discomfort, we had nothing in the shape of a pillow except the two extra pair of

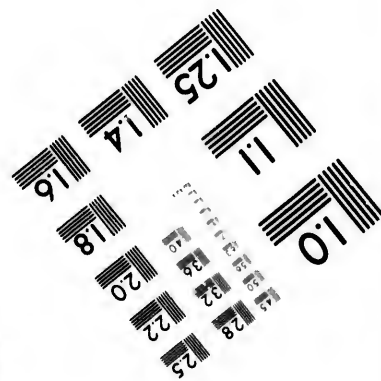
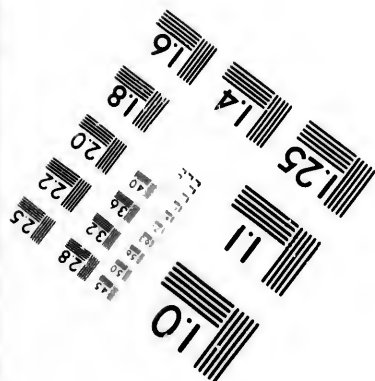
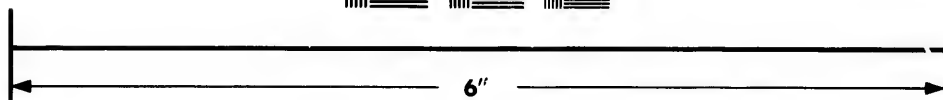
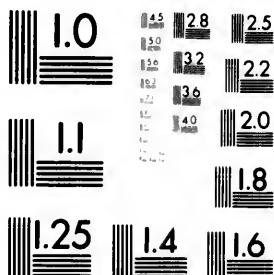
moccasins which we each carried. The cold was intense at so high an altitude, and the remains of the fire were soon scattered by the wind. Altogether our camp was a miserable failure, and I can say that, for my part, I have seldom passed a night in greater discomfort.

September 2nd.—At the first signs of light we were up and off, marching along the eastern slope of the mountain. We were all in very low spirits after our chilly night. The mountain was bare and rocky, and sloped gently to the east. Far below us we could see the timber-line showing dark against the rock ledges and brown scrub. We kept just below the snow-line of the peaks, and were often troubled with soft marshy ravines. John complained much of carache, so we decided that, as we had killed three marmots during the morning, he and Allah should take them down to the camp on the Pine. There had been no fresh meat in the camp for some days, and we knew that the marmots would be a welcome change after the long course of fried bread. John thought that if he could get a night in a warm camp his ear would allow him to return to us on the following day; and at all events Allah would be able to come back to us at the same time with some more bread, as had been originally arranged. Allah said he would be perfectly willing to return up the mountain, and that altogether the arrangement would suit him





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very well. Accordingly they left us in the early afternoon, as soon as we had agreed upon a rendezvous for the next day.

We were now alone with Daukhan without an interpreter. We had both picked up enough Cree for hunting purposes, but our vocabulary was somewhat limited, and our conversations were sometimes very funny. Daukhan had a great sense of humour, so that our camp would have presented to any one who could have seen it the extraordinary sight of three people gesticulating wildly—using two languages, and now and again interrupting one another with roars of laughter. After lunch we climbed the mountain, and emerging through a pass, stationed ourselves on three spurs of the western ridge to scan the country. It was arranged that if any of us saw a bear he should signal to the others, who would immediately join forces, and we would then commence the attack in a body. As no game was sighted, we returned through the pass, and, after shooting a marmot, headed to camp. As I have already said, we were a long way above the timber line, but we found a sort of scrub-pine, about two feet high, with the roots of which we made a fair fire.

September 3rd.—The night had been warmer than the first, but a sharp frost drove us round the fire in the early hours of the morning. Immediately after breakfast we returned to our watch-

ing posts of the previous afternoon. The day was absolutely still and clear, and the view incomparable. North and south, as far as the eye could reach, lay the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains, softening into a dim haze of white, hundreds of miles each way. The Rockies here are not of very great height, but have a wonderful ruggedness of outline, so that in the clear air they stood out like fresh-cut cameos against the sky. On the hillside below us some ancient fire had swept over the forest. The rain of years had washed the blackened bark from the dead trees, leaving them gaunt, grey, and barren like a spectral forest in Doré's illustrations of *The Wandering Jew*. On the far side of the valley the slopes were clothed with a dark green pine forest, above which rose a rugged mountain with the glimmer of a small lake showing above the timber-line. We had not been at our posts more than an hour when a wolverine—an animal half-bear, half-fox—came stealing up the mountain and passed within a few yards of us. It had a most beautiful skin, but we were afraid to fire, as the morning air was so still that we feared lest we should arouse the whole country.

During the afternoon we had explored the northern part of the mountain, finding many small lakes and travelling over a most picturesque country. On the steep slopes the snow was exceedingly hard, and the constant possibility of a swift glissade and

an ugly fall on to jagged rocks lent a spice of novelty to the expedition after the many weary weeks of marching in the swampy bush-country.

Late that evening Daukhan declared that through the glasses he could discern a bear on the opposite mountain, but it would have taken us a full day of steady marching to reach the spot he indicated, and we were bound to remain in the same camp for that night, as we were expecting the men from the valley to arrive before nightfall, as had been arranged.

On our way home we fell in with many ptarmigan, whose white plumage indicated the approach of winter. These we brought back to camp with much joy, thinking to share this welcome change of diet with the weary toilers from the valley. Our little hollow was, however, empty, and we ate our supper in momentary expectation of their arrival. After the meal we talked over the morrow's plans, and decided to move across to the place where Daukhan had seen the bear in the morning. Daukhan seemed in low spirits at our failure to find game, so we solemnly presented him with my field-glasses, accompanying the gift with pompous eulogies taken from the grammar at the end of the missionary prayer-book. Cree is a very hard language to read with any fluency, and we spelt out the long words with much difficulty and hesitation. He, however, seemed to grasp our

meaning, and was much delighted with the attention, making us flattering speeches in return, of which we understood little or nothing. He had at times a most impressive manner, and an easy grace and fluency of speech which would have become a Grand Seignior better than a Cree Indian! Meanwhile the wind had been rising, and now howled through the pass in a deafening manner, scattering our little fire as fast as we built it. And so the night settled down without a sign of either John or Allah.

After supper Pollen left the camp and walked back over the mountain to the ridge up which the others would have to come in hopes of meeting them. When he came back he gave me an account of a sight that I wish I had seen. From the ridge there is a wonderful view to the south and east over the range, the mountain slopes one behind the other looking like the roofs of streets of houses in some gigantic old-world city. It seemed that to-night, owing I suppose to some peculiarity of atmospheric conditions, the gorgeous sunset that was at its zenith in the west was almost exactly reproduced in the east, and so there was this extraordinary combination,—the mountain-tops flushed red with the glow of the departing sun, and from behind them wide rays of a vivid pink radiating from the EAST over the sky, in exact though fainter counterpart to the scenic splendour of the west. Daukhan after-

wards told us that he had seen the same phenomenon on two previous occasions. From our camp in the hollow it was invisible.

September 4th.—The night had been freezing cold, so that before it was light we had huddled round the fire with two pairs of moccasins on our feet in the attempt to keep warm. The wind was still blowing a gale, and roaring as loudly as on the



THE MOCK SUNSET

previous evening. As no one came by ten o'clock, we decided to move, which we accordingly did, leaving sharpened sticks stuck in the ground to indicate our direction. Having crossed the pass, we went through the forest of gaunt trees, steering for the place where Daukhan had seen the bear. What could have happened to John and Allah we

could not imagine; for although John's ear might have kept him in the sheltered valley, Allah's willingness to return had been expressed in so many apparently heart-felt chucks that it seemed almost impossible that he could have changed his mind at the last moment and left us in the lurch. We had by this time eaten all our bread, but it seemed that the store of marmots was unending, and as these convenient animals continued to indicate their presence by whistling, shortness of food appeared to be out of the question. On the other hand, had Allah not relished the idea of the long climb, it would have been far better if he had said so, as by waiting for him we had lost much valuable time, which might have been spent in travelling towards the mountain upon which we had proof that there were bears. We had not gone far into the woods on the rising ground beyond the valley when we espied two figures moving towards us on the slope we had just left. We accordingly made a fire and waited for them to come up. They turned out to be John and Ramsey. It appeared that John had been willing to make the ascent on the previous day as agreed, but that Allah had positively refused, and so much time had been wasted in vain expostulation that no one had come to us at all. Ramsey had, however, volunteered to accompany John, and they had accordingly started in the morning, and by marching the entire day had managed to overtake

us. They were both utterly worn-out with their exertions. They had brought bread and other eatables with them; they also brought news of a party of Siccancee or Chinook Indians who had camped near us.

As it was now well on in the afternoon, we moved



THE VIRGIN FOREST

forward a little way into the timber and there camped. It was the wildest spot I have ever seen—an ideal virgin forest. The ground was very swampy, and covered with a deep carpet of moss. The trees bent one against the other in melancholy decay, covered with long grey lichen and huge fungus. Overhead the matted branches seemed to

rot upon the trunks, grey with mould. Huge dead logs strewed the ground, crumbling at the touch of a foot. The place was most melancholy and weird, but a warm fire and a light meal of ptarmigan and bread cheered us and we went to bed in high

spirits, while a couple of martens jumped about in the boughs overhead, evidently consumed with curiosity about their unusual visitors.

September 5th.—The night had been still, but cold, so that long before daybreak we turned out of our blankets and sat round the fire. There was no meat in the camp, but we breakfasted on bread, and then set out for the higher ground. Before leaving the timber we cut some long sticks upon which to hang the kettle, and then made our way over the rocky ground towards the lake under the summit. After a heavy climb through the pine scrub we emerged upon a little green plateau where we decided to camp. The lake lay just above us, overhung by a steep cliff. The formation of the mountain was similar to that which we had just left, a long backbone running north and south, with steep, narrow spurs on the flanks. Our camp lay between two of these spurs on the eastern slope.

Daukhan said he thought this was the place where he had seen the bear; so we looked anxiously for tracks. On the other side of the southern spur there was a small swamp, and there we found the tracks we sought. Five grizzlies had been playing, and had stamped the ground hard with their huge feet. There were two old ones, one of which (the female) was a monster, and all the other tracks were of large size. As the country was very open, we ascended the cliff to watch. Daukhan said that

the bears had been upon the ground on the previous evening, so that had we not been delayed we should without doubt have fallen in with them. Thus again had Allah spoilt our hunt. The strength of the wind on the summit of the mountain was immense. It was with great difficulty that we were able to walk against it. After spending some time in fruitlessly surveying the country with the glass, we returned to camp and lunched off a marmot, shot at the foot of the cliff near by.

As we had seen no more bear signs in the southerly ridges, we determined to try our luck towards the north. In many places the bears had dug great holes in the mountain-side in search of roots and marmot burrows, proving that they had been in the neighbourhood for some time. This led us to hope that they had not moved far, and every moment we expected to sight them.

On the whole, the party kept together, moving cautiously as we topped the ridges, and exploring each piece of ground, as it was opened to our view, with care. There was a motive in keeping close, as at any moment we might have lighted on the whole band, and it would have needed two or three rifles to have accounted for them all. We were in hopes, there being a female in the party, that the bears would charge if we met them, and our keeping together was primarily for protection; for a grizzly is capable of travelling very fast, and if all five

were to take it into their heads to charge at once, their attack might be sufficiently formidable.

On the shores of the little lake we came across the trail again. The bears seemed to be travelling, but in a leisurely manner. This raised our hopes considerably, and we marched on faster than ever, passing several ridges and over a good number of gullies and open patches, where we often saw very recent traces of the game. At last, coming to the top of a ridge taller than the rest, and with a far larger range of view beyond it, we sat down and again examined the country, but were as unsuccessful as on the previous occasion. And here a fresh disappointment awaited us. A white curtain of mist—smoke, John called it—shut off the view of the northern mountains. Daukhan declared that undoubtedly a heavy snowstorm was coming up, and suggested that, as the bears seemed to have worked towards a piece of forest to the north, we should hurry back to camp, and, if we could, move off so that we might make a fresh camp on their trail that night. So we beat a hasty retreat. But the storm was on us as soon as we had reached our bivouac. Moving was out of the question; so for about an hour we worked collecting pine-roots for fuel, and making an extemporary shelter of bare branches. And then the snow began to fall. The wind came in strong gusts, driving the snow and sleet towards us. We had, as I have before said,

only one blanket apiece, a very insufficient covering in such weather; and these were soon wringing wet. As the storm appeared to be rising, we rolled ourselves in our coverings, and, cowering round the fire, determined to make the best of what promised to be a far from comfortable night.

September 6th.—Towards morning the sleet fell less violently, but the wind was still strong. We were of course extremely wet, and chilled through, so that it was a great relief when the light came and enabled us to increase our circulation by moving about the camp. Away from the fire the air was very cold, so that we rushed back to the fire as soon as we had collected a sufficient quantity of wood. We had eaten the last of the bread on the previous night, and so had to breakfast on 'straight' marmot. The greasiness of these animals becomes painfully apparent when eaten without vegetable food, and even to the hungriest man there is something disgusting about the sight of one's breakfast spatch-cooked on pine sticks and bathed in yellow melted fat. After breakfast, it was some hours before it was clear enough to see to hunt, and then Daukhan proposed that he should return to the spot which we had left so hurriedly on the coming of the storm, and take another survey of the country. Meanwhile, we were to dry out the blankets and try to get some marmots for lunch, as by this time we were completely out of food. During the morning

Pollen shot a marmot, but sprained his ankle, falling from a steep rock, and so for that afternoon was incapacitated from hunting. I made another trip with Daukhan in a north-westerly direction, but saw no signs for some time. The storm had dislodged some large rocks upon the cliff above camp, and avalanches fell at intervals during the day with a great noise. We were in very low spirits in consequence of our failure to find the bear: but it is probable that they had known of the approach of the storm, and had taken refuge in the timber; and, indeed, from the signs we found before evening, we made certain that they had moved in a body to the forest we yesterday suspected was their destination. So we determined to move after them next day.

September 7th.—Another night of snow and sleet had passed, leaving us wet, cold, and exhausted from want of sleep. The storm had driven the marmots into their holes, and we found to our dismay that our breakfast no longer whistled to us upon the mountain-side. This is one of the disadvantages of a hand-to-mouth existence. For some time we discussed our position, uncertain whether to remain and wait for a change in the weather, which might mean some days almost without food; or to make up our packs and start straight for the Pine River valley. Daukhan said that he thought the winter had come upon the

mountains, and that he was sure the storm would last a week ; and this decided us to take the latter course. We knew that we had a long march before us, so we looked eagerly about us for something edible. We had thrown the skins of the animals we had eaten in a heap outside camp, and a careful inspection revealed the fact that there remained a light coating of gristle upon the under surface. It was of a light bluish colour, and is usually scraped off a hide and thrown away prior to curing. We set to work and scraped this off, procuring from each skin a small wrinkled morsel rather larger than a half-crown. This we roasted before the fire and solemnly chewed. It was of course impossible to swallow, or even to sever with the teeth, but the process closely resembled eating, with the added advantage that so small a piece might be chewed for any length of time, and still afford us the same satisfaction. Having made some tea we started for the valley. A fine rain was falling, drenching us to the skin, and the morning was cold and cheerless. By the time we reached the timberline the cold had become intolerable, so we halted and made a fire. Unhappily the tree under which we had taken shelter proved to be very inflammable, and was soon well alight. In a moment every branch was in a blaze, and a column of fire shot up more than a hundred feet high. Fortunately this condition of things did not last long, as the fire

burnt itself out quickly. We had lost our shelter, and were much annoyed by the hot ashes which constantly fell upon us ; but we thought ourselves extremely lucky in that we had not started a forest fire by our carelessness.

Daukhan now became very talkative, reverting to his questions about England, and the world in general. He was particularly anxious to know if the big Squaw Chief (the Queen) owned the whole earth as her personal property, and seemed grievously disappointed that her property was so limited, and that there were other Oukimows as great as she. He then questioned us about the appearance of London, and England in general, being anxious to understand exactly what animals were found there, and what was the method of their capture. We described a day's pheasant-shooting to him, which delighted him beyond measure ; and going on to fox-hunting, said that England was cut up into corrals, like the one at Dunvegan, and that across these men rode at a gallop, jumping the obstacles. He said he considered this extremely dangerous. This conversation had, of course, been carried on through John, who was an excellent interpreter, though I sometimes imagined that more was said in the Cree than ever came to our ears.

When we were sufficiently warmed we continued the descent. By the marks on the trees I judged that the snow lay to the depth of about thirty feet

in the woods during the winter. Lower down the mountain we came to a tract of burnt timber, and there we again made a fire, and lunched off tea and a few berries. The rain still continued to fall, making the dead logs slippery as glass. Pollen's ankle had not recovered from the injury of the previous day, being still extremely weak. In one particularly bad place it gave way, and he had a nasty fall and sprained his leg most seriously. However, after a rest, he was able to go on, leaning upon a stick, having taken off his pack.

The fog lay thick over the country, but from time to time lifted for a few moments. Upon one such occasion we distinctly made out the shape of a bear moving upon the ridge parallel to the one we were on; but before we had time even to take aim the fog dropped, shutting out everything. The lower slopes of the mountain were thickly covered with small trees and underbrush. This made our progress very slow, as our packs caught constantly in the undergrowth. But slowly as we went, Pollen's leg forced him to move slower still, and at last he insisted that he could perfectly follow alone, and that it would be better for us to push on, so as to get into camp as soon as possible, and that once there we could send back a horse for him. We were very reluctant to leave him in his crippled condition, but he was so confident that he could find and follow our trail, and that we could do no

good by staying with him, that at last we pushed on ahead, leaving him to follow our track at a more leisurely pace. On reaching the valley we were to make a fire, and then to go on to camp, sending back Allah with a horse to bring him in.

After a time we came to the end of a spur, but found to our disappointment that the land fell off abruptly into a sort of mud-slide, sloping to the edge of a high cliff. This forced us to work up the hill again through the sodden bush; and it was some time before we reached the valley and set to work to build our fire.

Suddenly we were startled by the noise of rolling stones. Huge boulders were bounding down the mud-slide above us, and leaping over the edge of the cliff, falling with deafening crashes on the rocks hundreds of feet below. Through the mist we could dimly discern Pollen's figure clinging to a few frail branches, and swinging, as it seemed to us, over the abyss. Every minute we expected the branches to give way, and to see him drop to a certain death. It was a stirring moment, and one I shall not easily forget. Soon the noise of the falling rocks diminished; the branches still remained firm, and it was with infinite relief that we saw him crawl cautiously to a place of vantage, and finally haul himself over the edge of the precipice.

It appears that he had followed our tracks through the undergrowth until we came to the end of the

spur. His ankle was causing him great pain, so that though with care he could go down-hill, it was almost impossible for him to ascend.

The reason for our detour was obvious, so instead of following us in our ascent, Pollen tried to make a short cut along the face of the mountain above the slide, thus escaping the necessity of a painful climb up-hill. He had not gone far through the bush, however, before he found that a narrower slide ran into the big one from above, and that he was cut off. There was, therefore, nothing for it now but to work up the hill till he came to firm ground again.

A little way up, however, he saw projecting from the centre of the narrow slide a great piece of stone, so large that he made certain it was the bed rock of the mountain. To reach this only involved a jump of seven or eight feet, and from the rock to the other side was no further. So, balancing himself on his stick, he jumped, alighting with both feet on the rock. To his horror the whole thing began slowly to move down. At first his only chance lay in keeping his balance, and in a second or two he saw that the rock, moving faster and faster, would soon be clear of the bushes, and crashing down the slide to the precipice.

So, as a last desperate chance, he leapt, catching at the bushes at the other side, and by the luckiest good fortune got hold of the end twigs of a stout

alder, and swung headlong on to the slide with this frail support in his hand.

It was at this moment that we saw him dangling over the edge, whilst the rocks leaped down the slide from the cliff in a roaring torrent, falling a clear three hundred feet into the creek bed below.

An experience of this kind may be interesting

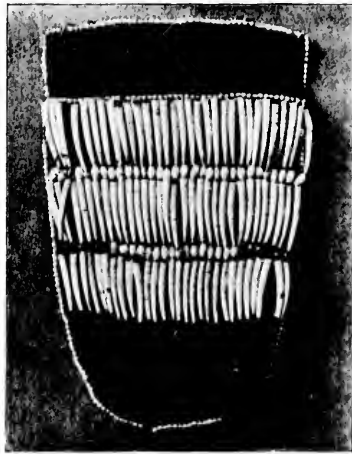


A WELCOME SIGHT

enough to remember, but I do not think that many people who have witnessed it have any keen desire to attempt gymnastic feats again under the same conditions; for it is by no means a pleasant thing to think that one's life depends upon the strength of a mountain alder.

We left Pollen, a good deal shaken by his adventure, by the fire, and set off up the valley towards

camp. We had not eaten since the previous day. The rain was still falling, and our sodden packs were as heavy as lead. The way seemed interminably long; I could have sworn it was fifty miles, and yet I found afterwards that a tenth of that exaggerated measurement was more like the truth. A hopeless gloom settled down upon us as



FIRE BAG

we stumbled along under our burdens over the rough country. It seemed that we should never reach the camp, but were doomed to march eternally forward through the drizzle and over the swamp. The sight of one of our horses feeding came to us with all the shock of a revelation; and the

appearance of smoke between the trees seemed like a glimpse of heaven. A horse was sent back with Allah, who brought Pollen in, and food was prepared while we sat and gloated over the process, and so as the darkness came on we broke our fast and turned into our blankets under the comfortable shelter, feeling that no luxury could compare with a dry bed and an untroubled repose.

CHAPTER VIII

SHORT COMMONS

A LAZY consciousness of ease and well-being, of infinite leisure and freedom from trouble, were my first sensations on awakening. Yesterday's storm continued without any sign of abatement; so there was nothing of the usual hurry of an early start—nothing of the dread of a long weary march, and the day lay before us full of hope and interest. It is true we had failed in our expedition: our chances of bear were practically gone, and this at another time would have depressed us; but on the other hand the failure had been an honest one, had come about through no fault of ours, but rather, as it were, through the hand of a pursuing fate, or, as Daukhan said, 'because some one on the mountain was working medicine against us.'

A few days of fast marching would undoubtedly bring us to Fort M^eLeod, when we should have accomplished our second aspiration, and have walked across the Rockies through an almost unknown pass. A steady cold rain was falling, driving us under the shelter whilst we ate our late

breakfast. There was much to be discussed, and each half of the expedition had its own tales to tell.

When Ramsey joined us upon the mountain he had told us of the Chinook Indians who had camped near our outfit. It seemed that they had remained in the same place waiting for our return. Some small exchange of goods had taken place, so that we found that our breakfast, bear-meat, by the



TWO OF OUR VISITORS

way, had been bought from them for a shirt.

They had kept our party in meat for some days, always getting something in exchange; they had also been very anxious to sell furs, wishing to obtain tobacco, soap, and

tea, but had been told that the big Oukimows were up the mountain, and that, as these things belonged to them, no bartering could be done until their return.

Before we had finished our meal they came into camp and saluted us. They were, with one exception, all young men. The Siccane Indians—that is, those who live on the western slope of the mountains—are as a rule better educated and more civilised than the more easterly natives. This at

least is true of the district in which we then were. Farther north the inhabitants of the western slope are said to be much the same as their neighbours, but there is no doubt that the Stewart's Lake, or Carrier Indians, have reached a far higher level than the Beavers, or even the Crees.

Our visitors spoke English fluently, not with any grammatical accuracy, which was hardly to be expected, but in a sort of pigeon dialect very droll to listen to. They sat down under the shelter with us, and soon became very much at home, laughing immoderately at the slightest provocation; as one of them truly remarked, 'Damned Indian laugh all de time.' Among the Crees, as I have already mentioned, it is not considered good form to ask about the results of a hunt. The hunter is supposed either to have killed or to wish to drop the subject. But no false modesty of this kind hindered our friends' utterance. We were asked a string of questions about our luck, and when we confessed to failure, were sweetly smiled upon, and told of their success with a brutality usually found only in the more cultured races.

They had come from Fort M^eLeod across the mountains, packing their blankets on their backs;



SYMON

or rather, to be strictly accurate, on the backs of their wives. On the way they had killed two black bear, a few beaver, and many marmots, which



'INDIAN LAUGH ALL
THE TIME.'

they had dried. We asked them about our journey to McLeod, but could get no information of any value. They had come by the mountains, and had never been through the pass, nor had they heard of Indians doing so.

This did not trouble us much, as we knew that Mr. Dawson had crossed the divide by that route, and were confident that we could do the same. On being questioned about



CHARLEY SENIOR

time they gave curiously varied answers. Charley said that we might reach the fort in fifteen sleeps; he said that the country was bad until the summit lake was reached, but that we could easily get there in four or five days. After that he thought the country was open, and that we should find an Indian pitching-trail,

which would allow us to make what pace we liked without difficulty. His brother Symon said ten sleeps; whilst the old man, their father, began by

saying a month of long marches, but came down to eight sleeps on being questioned. We already saw that we should not reach Quesselle by the time on which we had calculated, so that these various reports set us speculating, and with the natural hopefulness bred of a full diet, we chose to believe that we were already well within reach of civilisation. The Chinooks seemed greatly amused by our camp, and we pleased them much by showing them our revolvers, express rifles, and whatever came to hand which was new or strange. A large pocket-knife, filled with a multiplicity of tools, especially excited their wonder; but not their envy, for, as Charles very truly said, it was 'too much plenty.' We had, however, to keep a sharp lookout on our belongings, as the tribe has a reputation for a certain deftness of touch which might be called stealing by one not interested in their spiritual welfare. I am bound to say that they made no secret of this failing, for they had not been with



HIS SON DEDODOR



CHARLEY JUNIOR

us half an hour before Charley informed us, with an expression of deep regret, that our tobacco-case was too heavy to steal.

Our stock of flour was becoming painfully low, so that we thought it advisable again to cut down the allowance of bread, and to serve out a quarter of a cake¹ to each per meal. The allowance was short, but we had to make the best of it, and to live as far as possible on the half-dried marmots which we bought from the Indians. The meat was very high—in fact, almost putrid; but we had no choice, and necessity at times almost made it palatable. Among other books in the camp there was Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. We had little or nothing to do, and I spent hours in reading it. In the book are many references to the food of the English labourer. Men sit upon gates and eat ham and bread, or feast in barns upon cheese and cider. I had to put the book back into the packs and try to forget its existence. The contrast to our rotten marmot was too tantalising, and it was not until I was once more surrounded with the necessaries of life that I finished the interesting tale.

When a man is working on short commons he becomes hungry, but he has not quite the same longing for a full meal that comes to him when idle. The Chinooks waxed eloquent upon the food we should

¹ About three ounces.

get at M^cLeod. 'Yes,' they would say, 'yes, all kinds of muck-a-muck at M^cLeod; jam, cake, biscuits—yes, ev'ything—you see by-'n-by; plenty plenty muck-a-muck, you see.' Charley seemed to have a great love for Quesnelle and the surrounding district; this he explained to us. 'Yes, good country Quesnelle—much whisky, good.' We asked him how he got it, knowing how stringent the laws were against giving anything to Indians. 'Me gittum,' he would answer, 'Sywash' gittum all the time—me steal 'em—man at Quesnelle dam fool—good country.' We did some trading with them, obtaining some very fair beaver-skins in exchange for shirts, or orders drawn upon the Hudson's Bay Company.



GAMBLING
STICKS

All Indians are great gamblers. We had heard the boats' crews beating the tom-tom and shouting round their fire at the Athabaska Landing, but had never until now had a chance to watch their game. The process is simple. They squat in two lines opposite each other, each man facing his adversary. The players have two sticks of equal length, one of which has a small notch in the middle. Taking the sticks in the palms of their hands, they wave them about, changing them with wonderful

¹ Indian, from the French *sauvage*.

quickness from hand to hand in the attempt to deceive the opposite line. These watch the proceedings as carefully as possible, waving their open palms. Suddenly they clap their hands and point with one finger in the direction in which they

imagine the marked stick to be. Hands are promptly opened, and, should the guess prove to be correct, the loser takes a small peg out of the ground and passes it over to the lucky guesser, the exact value of these counters having, of course, been



TOM-TOMS

arranged before the game begins. Then the notched sticks are passed over, and so the game goes on. Throughout the whole performance the men repeat the same wordless chatter, which is almost a chant, whilst time is marked upon a tom-tom or the top of a kettle. Neither party is ever still for a moment,

but both shout and wave their arms, and keep time to the music by jerking their bodies up and down. When any number of Indians join in this game the din may be heard for miles. It appears that they gambled long before the advent of the whites, and certainly to this day men will lose everything, to the very clothes on their backs, in a single game.

On the evening of the third day after our return from the mountains the rain stopped, and we determined to move on the following day. The only drawback to moving was Pollen's sprained leg, which threatened at first to be a serious affair. But three days' rest had done a good deal, and the time had given him considerable skill in bandaging it. When the time came to move, he found he was perfectly able to do his share of the packing, though compelled to ride on the march. The horses gave us much trouble, being very fresh after their long rest, so that it was late before we were ready to start. We said good-bye to the Chinooks, wishing them a successful hunt, and receiving many expressions of goodwill in return.

The country was fairly open, and we had gone quite a long distance, when, five hours after leaving camp, we came to a dense forest of small pines. This gave us much work, as it was quite impossible to get the horses through without chopping a path. About dark we came to a small open space, and there camped. After supper we sat round the fire

and discussed the food question. We had bought all the marmots we could get from the Chinooks. The fat on the meat was quite putrid, but we thought it best to eat whatever part of the lean we could find in a better condition. Besides the marmots, we had only a very little bacon, a few pounds of grease, and a little flour left. We had expected to find a country abounding in game. A

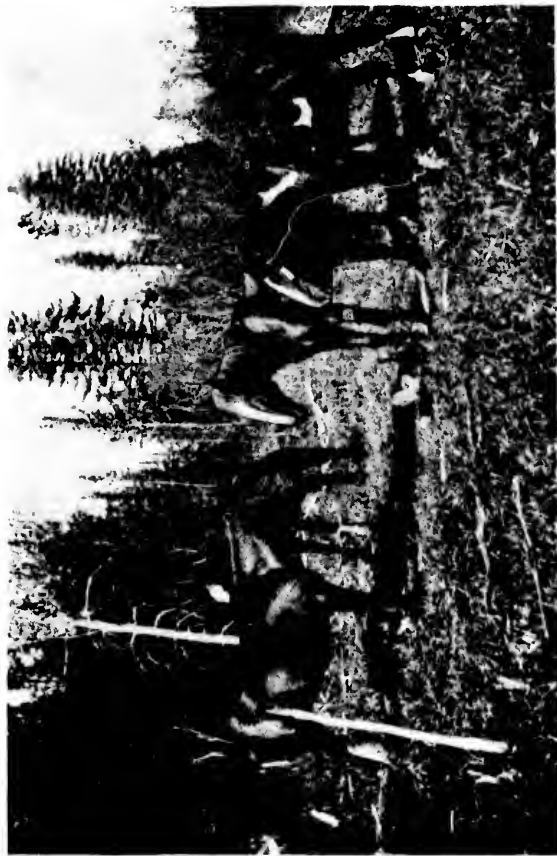


HORSES IN DOWN-TIMBER

deer or two would have gone a long way to make our provisions last. At least, we had expected to get a bear. But none of these things had happened. Two small black bear, a few beaver, and one or two moose, were all we had got during the whole trip.

We talked a good deal, but came to no conclusion. All we could do was to hope that we might have a little luck, and fall in with some animal soon. On the following day we marched steadily forward up the valley: the weather was cold and dull, and the country very bad indeed. The bush was so thick that, working our hardest, we could never make more than a mile and a half an hour. Rotten logs strewed the ground, covered with thick moss. Here and there we came to

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large patches of 'devil's clubs' (*Fatsia horrida*). The plant grew to the height of about two feet; the leaves are very large, and have a mildly innocent appearance. But the stalk under the big leaves is covered with long and intensely sharp thorns, which pierce the flesh and break off, causing a painful sore.

The order of our march was as follows:—Daukhan walked first, selecting the best road, and clearing



THE AXE-MEN HAD TO CLEAR A PATH

the more impenetrable thickets with a hatchet or hunting-knife. Next came John, with an axe, with which he chopped off the thicker branches, and generally did the heavy work, under the guidance of Daukhan. Then followed Allah, mooning along with his toes turned in, without an axe and without having any share in the work; in fact simply taking gentle and beneficial exercise at our expense. It must be remembered that we had brought him with us for two reasons—firstly, because we wanted an axe-man; and secondly, because he said he knew the route to M^cLeod through the pass. I think he had been there, but, as the event proved, any babe

would have been more useful. Neither promises of gifts nor threats of punishment could induce him to work. He would help to bring in the horses in the morning, but then considered that he had done sufficient, and would take no part in the packing, but for decency's sake would move an empty flour-sack, or lounge about with a piece of rope in his hand. In fact, he was an extra mouth to feed, but never an extra hand to help. So we waited and watched for the time when he might be of use to us, or when we could find something which would move him. If a man is not stirred by promises of presents there is nothing to be done. It is almost impossible to find a punishment for small offences in camp.

The axe-men generally kept about fifty yards ahead of the rest of the party, so as to allow them a little time to look for firm ground. As a rule I led the foremost horse, a skewbald named John. It was troublesome work, as the old brute was constantly jumping over fallen trees, and closely missing me in alighting. He also had a habit of planting his legs firmly in the mud and refusing to budge, which was very tiring. Behind John came four horses, followed by Round; then four more horses and the Doctor; finally Pollen, who was obliged to ride on account of the injury to his ankle, brought up the rear with Ramsey and the remaining animals.

The pace, as I have said, was very slow, and very often the whole line would be brought to a halt whilst the axe-man cleared a path. In fact, these halts were rather the rule than the exception. At first we had shouted to the men behind to stop driving the horses; but had found that this method was altogether too noisy, and was calculated to drive game out of the country. We therefore arranged a code of signals by whistling, and thus commands and pieces of information could be passed along the line. But even after this decision human nature could not be suppressed, and a refractory horse would call forth loud shouts and somewhat unholy abuse. The plunging of the animals amongst the rotten logs sometimes had the effect of loosening the pack-ropes, and repacking caused occasional delays. But I am bound to say that, although I have travelled many hundreds of miles with a pack-train, I have never seen packs stay on better than ours, and considering the ground we travelled over, the trees, thick brush, and generally wet ropes, our packers deserve a good deal of credit.

The woods were full of many kinds of berries, some nasty, but edible, but many pronounced to be poisonous by Daukhan. Ramsey, who was always a man of an adventurous disposition, and with a keen desire for practical knowledge, made some experiments with these, with the result that by the time we came to our second camping-ground he was

extremely ill. A sick man was a source of delight to the Doctor. He had a great love for the healing art; in fact, I might say without any ill-nature that there was not nearly enough illness in the party to please him.

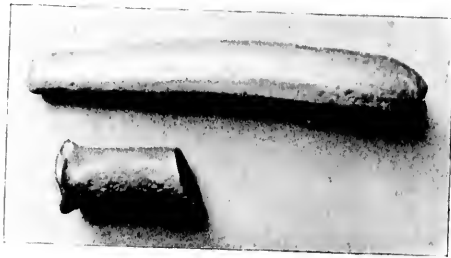
There was no fresh meat in camp, but Daukhan said that, as there were still some hours of daylight left, he would explore the next reach of the river, and try and find a beaver-dam. He was away about two hours, and returned with a fine beaver. The animal was very fat, and in good condition, so we had quite a feast, and went to bed in high spirits. It is wonderful how a good meal restores the temper of a camp.

The march the next day was as bad as before. The valley was narrowing up, so that we were obliged to cross the river waist-deep many times; the water was very cold, and the wet rocks slippery as glass. In the afternoon Daukhan went on ahead to hunt, but killed nothing; still we had been careful of the beaver, so that we managed to get a supper.

We were somewhat uncertain of our position, and so looked anxiously for some landmark which was indicated on the map. There was a small tributary coming in from the north, and dignified by the name of North Forks of the Pine River. We did not know whether we had already passed it or not. This we came to on the next day, the

13th of September. As it was Pollen's birthday, we celebrated the occasion by making a little cake, and cooking a few handfuls of the dried fruit. No one can have any idea of the pleasure this gave us. To begin with, it was some time in preparing. We took good care to make it last a long time in eating, and afterwards we gravely discussed it over our pipes. Daukhan had again made an unsuccessful hunt, and we decided that the moment our food gave out we would kill one of the horses. This had been talked of for some days; in fact, the unsuspecting animal had already been fixed upon in the person of a horse named Duke, a small beast, and the most obstinate in the pack-train. Some of the party had proposed to kill him at an earlier date, but we thought that it would be time enough when necessity drove us to it. At breakfast the next day we ate the last of the bacon, one slice being served out to each man, with a small piece of bread. The country was similar to that through which we had been travelling for the last three or four days; but we noticed that the river was becoming much smaller. At lunch-time we halted, and made a camp, where we lay all night, having sent out Daukhan to hunt beaver whilst Allah and John went up in the opposite direction. Towards dark John came back in triumph with a grouse, and Daukhan with a young beaver, so that we had a light supper.

All this time Pollen had been obliged to ride, as he was still very lame. Riding through such dense bush was most unpleasant, as one's face gets torn with brambles, and it is almost impossible to duck quickly enough to avoid the branches. But although he was unable to march he still continued to pack the horses.



STONE WAR-CLUBS

CHAPTER IX

HUNGER AND COLD

ON the morning of the 15th we came to a more open country. Here and there upon the trees we found the blazings of Mr. Dawson's party. There was, however, no trail. The map of the district marks a beautiful trail crossing this country; but when one remembers that it is fourteen years since any one had been through it, it seems wonderful that any mark of their passing remains. We marched pretty well up till midday, when we lunched. A grouse had been killed during the morning, and with this and the feet, tail, and entrails of the beaver we managed to get something to eat. During the afternoon two of our horses became frightened whilst walking on a steep bank, and rolled over into the river, wetting some of the bedding and giving us much trouble, as we had to cut the pack-rope and haul them out. As the blankets were very wet we decided to camp early. There was little or nothing to eat, so we made up our minds to kill the doomed horse. The un-

fortunate Duke was led out and tied up to a tree. Then we gathered round, each trying to shirk the unpleasant duty of shooting an animal which, with all his faults, we had grown to look upon as a friend. The whole business had the dismal air of an execution, and the fact that the first shot did not kill the poor brute did not make it any pleasanter. Somehow one does not associate a horse with butcher's meat, and it seems a sort of treachery to kill so faithful a servant for food. Once dead, however, it did not take long to skin and cut him up, and it was with a sigh of relief that we saw his identity lost in joints and ribs.

That night we made broth, as we thought the meat would be tough, and on the following morning we set to work to dry the meat. We erected a stage, and, cutting the flesh into thin slices, hung it over a slow fire. A light snow was falling, so we spent the day under the shelter of the tent fly, speculating upon the distance to the Summit Lake, and coming to the conclusion that we should, in all probability, arrive there on the morrow. We ate a considerable quantity of horse, finding the liver, heart, and kidneys very good indeed; in fact, far beyond our expectations. The process of drying is a long one, and we were greatly handicapped by the absence of sunshine, so that it was only half-finished when we moved off on the morning of the 16th.

The valley had by this time become very narrow, and lay between walls of almost perpendicular rock. High above us was the deep forest, similar to that through which we had marched for so long. The extraordinary denseness of these sub-Arctic forests



'THE VALLEY HAD BECOME VERY NARROW'

makes them appear almost impenetrable. In the river bottom where we were, willows, alder, and dogwood covered the ground, making it almost impossible for us to force a passage. The Pine River had shrunken to a deep, narrow creek, often blocked with fallen timber, whilst much of the

country was submerged by the backwaters caused by old beaver-dams. Now at last Allah was of use to us. The cañon was becoming very narrow, and the sides, as I have said, were rocky and precipitous. It seemed almost as if we were in a *cul de sac*. Allah, however, knew better, and directed us towards the eastern wall of the cañon. The cliff rose before us high and rugged, and it seemed impossible for the horses to ascend. Here and there were ledges of rock, and Allah pointed out the fact that these joined, so that a sort of zigzag path led to the summit. He said that when he went to M^cLeod he climbed the cliff in this place, and that he thought it quite possible to take the horses up. In fact, he asserted that Mr. Dawson's party must have descended into the valley here. We had noticed upon their map that they marked a cliff, and so came to the conclusion that we had found the right place. For the next hour the horses struggled and panted on the face of the rock. We forced them to ascend a little distance, allowed them to halt for breath, and then urged them on again. Many of them fell more than once, and two or three packs had to be taken off and carried up by hand to relieve the less skilful horses, but at last, weary and exhausted, we reached the summit without serious accident.

We now thought that we had said a last farewell to the Pine River, and were consequently much

disappointed when we came across it again at lunch-time. I should imagine that there must be a waterfall in the bend of the river which we had cut off, as certainly the little plateau we were on was several hundred feet higher than the cañon we had just left. The country around us was more open, rising into sharp rocky ridges on each side, whilst the valley was full of grassy meadows alter-



GOOD-BYE TO THE PINE

nating with clumps of dog-wood and willow. We had dried horse-meat for luncheon, and very disgusting it was. I can't recommend horse as a diet. The hardness of the food hurt the teeth and inflamed the gums, causing us some pain. We found that we could not eat much at a time, but always marched with small morsels in our pockets, which we chewed whenever we felt hungry. It is remarkable that this meat, when dried, has very little sustaining power. We would eat as much as we could manage, and yet become faint from want of food in a couple of hours.

Soon after lunch John declared that he could see water through the trees, so we marched on as quickly as possible, hoping to come to the lake

before evening. A little later we left the open country and again entered the dense brush, and going forward a little way came to a large beaver-dam, which was the water John had seen. Here at last we said good-bye to the Pine River. For the next half-mile the willows were very dense, and we moved but slowly. Suddenly coming over a little rise we found ourselves on the shore of the lake. The bush was thick, and the work of chopping very heavy, so that the night had already fallen when we pitched our tents at the far end.

It was a wild spot. Sombre cliffs rose abruptly from the water on the northern shore. On our side lay the dense forest, matted and decaying, and fraught with all the melancholy of the North. The sky was dull, and cast a sombre hue over the lake. No scene could have been more cheerless. The divide we had crossed was the low ridge that lies between the watershed of the Pine and Parsnip rivers, both of which ultimately flow into the Peace.

Perhaps a few words on the geography of this district may not be out of place here. To begin with, the Rocky Mountains, which form the backbone of the North American continent, run north and south. The Pine River, as may be remembered, is a tributary of the Peace River, which lies upon the eastern slope. This wide stream runs into the Great Slave Lake, which empties into the M^cKenzie, and so into the Arctic Ocean. We had

therefore been upon what is called the Arctic slope since we came to the Athabaska Landing. The Summit Lake, however, empties towards the west, where its waters become a part of the Missenchinea, which in turn is a tributary of the Parsnip River.

Now this stream lies upon the western side of the Rocky Mountains, and in the ordinary course of nature should fall into the Pacific Ocean. But this is not the case. The river flows to the north, getting ever nearer the mountains, till it is joined by the Findlay River, which runs towards the south. Turning sharply to the west, it flows in a deep gorge right through the heart of the range, and emerges upon the western slope under the name of Peace River, which, as I have said, empties into the Arctic. I do not suppose that there is another case in the world of a river returning and flowing through the mountains from which it has risen. As far as I could learn, there is no pass or valley to account for this, but simply a deep cañon. It would be an interesting point for geologists to look into, as it seems hardly likely that a river would deliberately fight its way through so enormous a wall of rock. There are many glaciers still extant in the Northern Rockies, and these would doubtless have done much to excavate any chasm or crack formed by the cooling of the rock. Also the fact that the Peace carries a huge burden of ice in the spring would help to deepen

the cañon when once the river had found a bed. Still, the fact remains, and is sufficiently remarkable. Mr. Warburton Pike, in his excellent book, *The Barren Grounds of Northern Canada*, has given a full description of this place. And certainly he had very good cause to remember it, for it was there that he suffered a period of starvation, which, from the account he gives, must have nearly cost him his life. I think that what I have stated will be understood upon reference to the map which is given.

From what the Siccane Indians had told us, we imagined that our difficulties were now over, and we might soon expect to find the pitching-trail of which they spoke. We calculated that it would take us about half a day to reach the point where the stream from the lake, called the Attunatche, joined the Missenchinea. After this we intended to follow the Missenchinea down to the confluence of the Parsnip, which we imagined would take us about four days; and finally, we allowed one day in which to march from the Parsnip to Fort M^cLeod. This made a total of five days and a half.

Although we knew that we should travel in some discomfort as regards food, we were much cheered by the apparent proximity of civilisation, and a reinforced commissariat. Our meals had become very simple. Upon the shores of the Summit Lake we turned our attention to horse-ribs. The result was extremely comical. I do not think that

I ever saw a funnier sight than we presented sitting round the camp-fire, each gnawing a huge rib, and holding the ends in our hands. The regulation three cups of tea were always allowed to each man, after which the meal was at an end. Then we would smoke our pipes by the light of the fire, and enjoy the most pleasant hour of the day in camp. Tobacco is a great comfort after a hard day's work in the open air, however superfluous a luxury in civilisation; and there are few pleasures in life which come up to an after-dinner smoke in the woods. Before you the great logs hiss and crackle cheerfully, casting a ruddy glow upon the trees. A curtain of darkness shuts off the forest behind you; around you are men with the same tastes and interests as yourself. Every day brings much that is new and of interest, and the little incidents and jokes of the hour assume an importance hitherto unknown. The talk veers round from tales of sport—hunting lies they are called in the West—to reminiscences of the old country, and again back to the expectations of the morrow; and so, as the night draws on, one by one you retire to your blankets and sleep the healthy sleep that is bred of an outdoor life. It is a quaint existence, which has many humorous sides to set off the periods of discomfort, I might almost say misery, which are certain to come to all those who attempt an expedition in the North-West. The pipe following in

the evening, after the only peaceful meal of the day, gathers round it associations of comfort, repletion, and rest that stood us in good stead when our times were hard ; and often when the cravings of an empty belly were making inroads on our spirits, and weakness was generating depression, tobacco, with its soothing memories, would drive the haunting spirit for a season away. In the hard schooling of adversity one learnt the truth of the poet's words—

‘Thou who, when cares attack,
Bidd'st them avaunt ! and black
Care at the horseman's back
Perching, unscatest !’

The morning of the 18th broke cold and cheerless, and before we had begun breakfast the snow was falling fast. Packing the horses in a snowstorm is most unpleasant. The ropes, hard and ice-covered, hurt the hands, and being almost too stiff to mould over the packs, the labour is greatly increased ; and what was ordinarily a two and a half hours' job lengthened itself by a painful hour. We had gone but a few rods, when Bishon, an animal of very strong character, bucked his pack off, and strolled away into the timber. No sooner had we brought him to reason, than one by one the horses commenced to roll and ease themselves of their burdens. There had been very little food for some days, and the poor brutes were in a miserable condition. The cold was intense, and we struggled in the thick

underbrush in melancholy mood. By lunch-time we came to the Missenchinea River, a shallow rapid stream, not more than one hundred feet across. The water was icy cold, and the rocks slippery to our moccasined feet, but we managed to reach the farther shore without wetting our knees. We now proceeded to follow the river down, marching upon the left-hand side. I had imagined that the trail ran by the right bank, but Daukhan would not listen to any word of change. The underbrush gave us the usual amount of chopping, so that we had not made more than a mile and a half by camping-time. The ground was swampy and low; but we found that the valley was too broad to allow us to reach the higher lands, and, indeed, what we could see of them was not enticing. We accordingly drew towards the river, everywhere deep pools and beaver-dams blocking our way, whilst the ground was covered with water to the depth of about six inches, and in places had a thin crust of ice. Several times we used the dams themselves as bridges, and the extraordinary way in which these frail structures bore the weight of the horses testified to the skill of the builders. At last we found a small dry patch, and there camped for the night.

September 19th.—The bush seemed almost impenetrable, and the long line wound slowly through the swamps under a cold and cheerless sky. The meagre diet was telling upon us all, so that the icy

water chilled us to the bone, and our sopping moccasins seemed like lumps of lead. There was



'EVERYWHERE DEEP POOLS AND BEAVER DAMS'

but one thing to cheer us—the idea of the good trail ahead. We were forced to cross the river

twenty or thirty times in the day. The backwaters were frozen solid, and even in the centre of the stream great lumps of ice hung to the driftwood. By lunch-time I had lost all feeling in my feet, and tottered down to the fire in a helpless fashion. All the afternoon, still crossing the stream, and often wading waist-deep, we struggled forward. Evening found us on the right bank of the river, crawling at snail's pace in a muskeg, the horses stumbling amongst the roots of the trees, and lurching on to their knees in the swampy pools. The old skewbald who led the train seemed to think that he had had enough of marching, and often he would plant his feet deep into the mud and refuse to budge. Towards dark, after much shouting, swearing, and chopping, we emerged into an open space. It had seemed from a distance like a meadow of firm ground; but no sooner had we set foot upon it than we discovered that it was simply a smooth muskeg. The bush was for the most part under water. It was getting dark, so that to go on was misery, and here at least there was in places a little feed for the horses; so we decided to camp in the open. The horses wallowed in the wet moss, sinking in up to their knees at every step, and the water gurgled round our ankles and beneath our moccasins. However, we unpacked, and, having made a fire, set to upon the horseflesh supper. After the meal we set up the tent fly, covering the floor with pine

branches in a vain attempt to keep dry. There was much discussion as to our position. We found upon Mr. Dawson's map a small river mark, called Fall Creek. During the morning we had remarked a waterfall in a tributary of the Missenchinea coming in from the south. From this we conjectured that we had already marched a considerable distance. A little below our camp the river showed deep and



'OUR CAMP WAS MISERABLY WET'

still, and seemed altogether far larger than when we first joined it. Allah, however, said that we had still a longer way to go. He pointed out a mountain at a great distance, and said that the 'hard ground' began there. Our camp was miserably wet and uncomfortable, and there was every appearance of snow.

September 20th.—Everything we possessed was dripping after lying all night in the muskeg. The

morning was as usual cold, and the surface of the moss was crisp with frost, so that packing was an actual agony. The whole party looked rather miserable; but we cheered one another with a formula which had grown to mean much to us: 'It can't be far to M^cLeod.' I still retained my post as leader of the train after the axe-men, and, though the work was hard, I was extremely glad of it, for this kind of life does not improve the temper, and



'MARCHING IN MUSKEGS'

the moral trials of pack-train driving are apt to exhaust one's fund of forbearance. The horses were constantly falling, and even the bridges of branches and bush which the axe-men made over the worst places did not seem to help them much. We had moved off at about eight o'clock, and it was not till one that we halted for lunch. In looking back we found that we had made about half a mile as the crow flies. A mile in ten hours would be considered a slow rate in

most places, but we knew that we had made the best time possible. Lunch was a lugubrious meal: the food nasty and scant, and no sooner had we bolted what we could, than we had to be up and packing again. Till then we had always roasted our meat. We now discovered that we could put it to a double use by boiling it. In this way we added a thin soup to our meat diet. This we prized as a great delicacy, being scrupulously careful that each should get his exact portion, neither more nor less. During the afternoon we were again much troubled by devil's clubs, so that the blood oozed out of our knees and shins, causing us much pain. Towards evening, to our great disappointment, we passed Fall Creek, and then we realised that we had not travelled so far as we had imagined. Soon after this, word was passed to camp at the first place where we found food for the horses, and before long we came to a halt. Pollen seemed very ill. He had been obliged to ride on account of his ankle; and it appeared that Charley, his horse, had slipped among the roots and fallen, crushing his foot against a rock. The Doctor made a rapid examination, and said that he believed that one of the bones of the foot was broken, but that he would not be able to make certain until the following morning, by which time he seemed to think the inflammation would have gone down. This was awful. We had a small flask of spirits in the camp;

but, besides this, had practically nothing with which to revive an invalid. It seemed a farce to ask a man who was almost fainting with pain to share the disgusting fragments of boiled horse which were being prepared for supper, so we sat and stared into the fire in silence. The Doctor was a man with great confidence in his own skill; and as usual shouted when he was required to show his knowledge of the healing art. And so now, whilst we all sat in silence, brooding over our misfortunes, he, with his mouth full of meat, yelled out long tales of his student-days, and histories of knife-work amongst the entrails of what he called 'cadavers.' Listening to these cheering reminiscences, we rolled ourselves in our blankets and lay around the fire, feeling too helpless even to put up the tent. In the morning Pollen's foot was again examined, and it was found that no bone was broken, but that it was badly inflamed and bruised. We proposed to remain in camp to allow him to rest, as he seemed much exhausted by a sleepless night and the pain he had suffered; but he would not hear of it, saying that it would be many days before he was well again, and that the great thing was to push forward to the fort, where we could spend some days in peace.

The country was as bad as ever, always swampy and choked with fallen trees and underbrush. Occasionally we came across Mr. Dawson's blaz-

ings, but this was no cheering sight to us, for it only proved, what we had already feared—namely, that all traces of their trail had long since disappeared, and that the road which was to lead us quickly out of the country no longer existed. The hard work, the wet, and the short commons were telling upon us all, and very weary and exhausted we looked when we stopped for luncheon. Suddenly we made a discovery. We had lighted our fire close to a big pine-tree marked with one of Mr. Dawson's blazes. Chancing to examine the tree more closely, we discovered a second blaze, with these words painted upon it, 'Survey, 21st July 1879. G. M. D.'¹

It seemed an extraordinary thing that we should have chanced to rest upon the site of this camp, but we did not wait to talk of coincidences. The writing might mean much to us. We knew that Mr. Dawson had left Fort M^cLeod on the 17th July, but had spent a whole day crossing the Parsnip. The question was, Had he made this writing in the morning or the evening? In marching through a country a man uses two camps per day; he gets up in one and goes to bed in another—on the same day. Now it might chance that the blaze had been made in the morning—that is to say,

¹ It seems wonderful that written words should remain legible after so long exposure to the weather, but the explanation is simple. A blaze is made in a pine-tree, and the writing is painted upon the fresh-cut wood; then the resinous sap flowing from the tree glazes over the paint and renders it almost imperishable.

after the third day's march from the fort ; or again, it might have been made in the evening of the same day—after the fourth march. We looked at it from every point of view, but, of course, could come to no conclusion. A whole day of misery hung in the balance. We were by this time in a sorry condition. I was forced through sheer exhaustion



DEAD BEAR

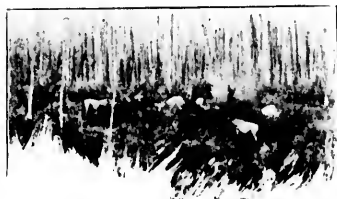
to give up my place in the fore-part of the train, and took my turn at driving the pack-horses in the better trodden path at the rear. The ever-ready Round—the hardest worker amongst the whites—was compelled to ride. Ramsey walked heavily, leaning upon a stick, and even the Doctor's voice was hushed with fatigue. Daukhan's spirits were at their lowest, and both he and John were hardly

fit for the labour of chopping the trail. For the first two days of the horse period, Allah, the Beaver, had been practically starving. He had declared that he could not eat horse, saying that once he made himself very ill upon this meat at an Indian feast after a long period of famine. Before long, however, he fell upon it, greedily pushing for the fattest morsels with unseemly haste. Our stock of meat was becoming alarmingly low, and as our meals became more and more meagre, our minds seemed to get beyond control and to run continually on food. Cookery became the one topic of conversation. It appeared that no one could speak without some hint of the dinner-table. Round the camp-fire in the evenings we would discuss our favourite dishes in a way which was hardly human, and certainly was far from decent. One would hanker after steak, another for potatoes; for my part I had but one vision of happiness in this world—raspberry jam and bread-and-butter. I would long to be in a civilised country again, so that I might go by stealth and purchase pots of preserves, and then, locking myself in my room, attack them with a spoon. I cannot imagine why this particular mania seized me; I have at times had glimmerings above jam, as I believe and trust the others had above steak and potatoes; but the disgusting fact remains.

Towards evening we entered a great muskeg.

We had already passed the point where Allah had said the 'hard ground' commenced ; but as yet we saw no sign of it. Darkness came on, and we camped in the swamp between the trees, rolling ourselves in our blankets on the wet ground, and spreading the tent over us as we lay, for there was every appearance of snow, and a light rain was already falling.

September 22nd.—We awoke feeling weak and ill. The valley appeared to be broadening out, and

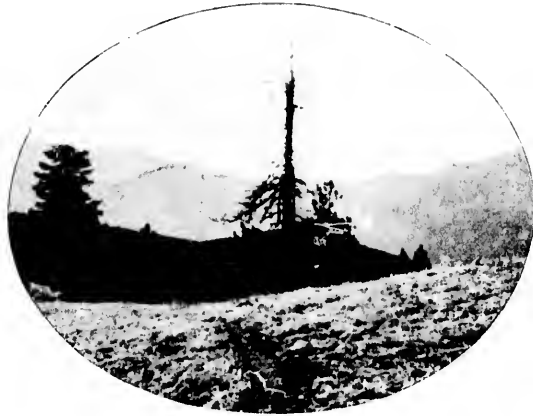


'DARKNESS CAME ON'

the muskeg seemed to cover all the lower ground, so we were forced to return towards the mountains, almost retracing our steps. John, the half-breed, complained

much of pains in his body, and seemed to be suffering from the effects of the damp. Daukhan was more haggard and worn than we. We had not gone far when the faithful Pinto became hopelessly bogged. The poor old horse struggled and plunged, but every movement sent him deeper into the mud, until at last he lost heart, and neither kindness nor brutality would move him. We were forced to cut branches and place them under him, but the combined efforts of the whole party did not succeed in extricating him until he had been a prisoner for

close upon two hours. By the time we halted for lunch every one was worn-out. Many of us walked leaning upon two sticks, utterly exhausted. The repacking of the horses seemed almost impossible, and the lightest duty a superhuman effort. For some distance the muskeg continued; dark pines overhead shut out the light of the leaden sun;



'THE HARD GROUND'

tangled branches caught our feet; deep slushy mud impeded our weary steps.

Suddenly from the front of the train there came a cry of 'The hard ground! the hard ground!' and in a few moments we emerged from the thick swamipy forest in which we had been travelling for so many days, into open country and a firm soil. The ground sloped gently away from us in a rolling plain,

dotted here and there with clumps of pine-trees. Light healthy breezes blew across the open space, cheering and invigorating. But above all—there, on our right—lay a broad Indian trail skirting the hillocks and winding through the trees.

Never have I seen such a change. A minute before we had been poor wrecks hobbling wearily along, supporting ourselves with sticks. Now in a moment the crutches were cast aside, and with a shout of joy we rushed forward, actually dancing with pleasure. The horses were driven towards the trail, and we quickened our pace. At first we seemed ashamed of our folly, but soon throwing aside all disguise we commenced to run, and with knocking knees and panting breath pounded down the trail like children. I think it was in the minds of all that we might reach the Parsnip River that night, but no one liked to say so. The thing seemed too good to be true.

We were in no condition for running, and now one, now another, would lag behind, when it became the duty of the whole expedition to shout and encourage them. About the middle of the afternoon it commenced to rain, and so continued until dark. Several times we were obliged to halt to fix the packs, and it was during one of these halts that we held a council.

According to Mr. Dawson's map the trail we were on led to the forks of the Missenchinea and

the Parsnip. Now Allah declared that it was quite unnecessary to make so long a detour, and that he knew of a trail which would take us straight to the fort. He said that he was perfectly certain that he could find the way, and that by following his advice we could save a whole day. Daukhan joined Allah in this, saying that he also had heard of this trail, and that if it existed at all he could without doubt find it.

It must be remembered that all this time we had absolutely depended upon Daukhan for our guidance. Without him we could not possibly have crossed the mountains, for a compass is no guide in so difficult a district—as one might spend a whole year in exploring the eastern slope without finding a pass suitable for horses. Daukhan himself had never crossed by the Pine Pass before, but he had all the information possible from his friends at Dunvegan. In an Indian camp there are only a few topics of conversation, so that they spend much of their time in describing places they have visited, entering minutely into the details of the landmarks, and these things mean more to an Indian than to a white man. So now, after having witnessed with astonishment the way in which he led us through an unknown country, we did not doubt but that he must be right in this instance, even though he was telling us to leave our firm trail and again take to the woods. The ground was still

fairly open, so that we continued to run even after leaving the trail; but our pace was not rapid, and, weak and exhausted, we stumbled on. Darkness was coming on fast, and still we saw nothing of our short cut. We stopped the horses and sent Daukhan, Allah, and John out as scouts, whilst we remained behind to mind the animals. In this place we found some frost-bitten blueberries, which we ate ravenously. They were our first taste of vegetables for many days, and though frozen to a dry pulp, they seemed wonderfully good. Soon John and Daukhan returned, saying that they could find neither a trail nor any water. Shortness of water was a hardship we had never looked for in that swampy country. We were already a long way from the Missenchinea, and we came to the conclusion that we would rather make a 'dry' camp than retrace one step of our toilsome journey. It seemed better to continue our march towards the imaginary trail, and chance, if possible, upon some creek, or even upon the Parsnip. By this time it was quite dark, so that we had the utmost difficulty in driving the horses through the bush. A pack-train is hard enough to manage by day, but by night, through a trackless waste, it is wellnigh impossible. John had gone ahead again, and before long we came upon him sitting by a small fire. He shouted to us that we had better camp, and proceeded to undo one of the packs, from which we concluded

that all was right. On being asked if he had found any water he was very mysterious, as was his way, but soon confessed that he had found nothing. I think we should have camped had it not been for Daukhan, who declared that he would push on, even if he went by himself. Accordingly, we moved on in the darkness, and luckily we had not far to go, for we soon found a muskeg. The rain was still falling fast, and our hands were so numb that we could hardly undo the ropes. The supper was prepared, but by this time the party were in too low a state to care much for their food. Nevertheless, the wolfish rush which was always made for the pan in which the portions were laid out was one of the most disgusting features of this wretched time. Drenching wet, and faint with weakness, we huddled into the tent and tried to rest.

September 23rd.—Torrents of rain were falling when we awoke, so we decided to remain in camp for a short time on the chance of a change in the weather. The tattered map was again produced, and again and again we scanned its familiar face, in the attempt to find out how far we might be from the Parsnip. We had that map by heart, and knew every line and every curve upon it; yet we always crowded round it as though we imagined that the position of the fort might have changed in the night.

Presently the rain lightened, but a heavy fog hid

the landscape. Daukhan had now altered his line of march, and was leading towards the forks of the Missenchinea and the Parsnip, as though he had already seen the folly of his plan. The country was open, but the ground was strewn with small pine-trees blackened by a forest fire. These hindered the horses considerably, and our march was slow. Towards midday the fog lifted, and disclosed the Parsnip about a mile to our left. We raised a cheer and hurried down the valley at our best pace. After crossing a small muskeg, we cut our way through a line of willows and stood upon the river-bank. The Parsnip was not so big a stream as I had supposed—not more than five hundred feet broad. It appeared to be shallow, but rapid. The Siccancees had told us that we should be obliged to swim the horses, as the river was too deep to ford. They said that we should find a canoe at the end of the trail, in which we might ferry our goods ; but we had left the trail and so missed the canoe. Daukhan, however, pointed out that the river was very low, and said that he believed that it could be forded. He made the attempt, and proved that he was right. Accordingly we unpacked a few of the horses, and riding these, drove the pack-train across, then, returning, transported the remainder of our goods, and finally crossed ourselves. The stream was strong, but did not rise above the horses' girths, so that we re-

mained dry. Riding in rapid water is always very unpleasant, for should a horse make a mistake the result to the rider is likely to be serious. Arrived upon the western bank, we made camp. Allah now told us that he knew of another trail to the fort. But our faith in him had left us, and we smiled scornfully when we saw him leave camp to search for it. In less than an hour he returned, and reported that he had found it. He said it passed quite close to our camp, but that at first it was poor and overgrown.

Farther on he believed that it improved, and that by following it we could without doubt arrive at M^cLeod on the following evening. Fort M^cLeod lies at the northern extremity of M^cLeod's Lake, at the point where the Pack River leaves the lake. Farther down, the Pack broadens out into a big pool known as Trout Lake. Below this again the river flows into the Parsnip. We calculated that we should be able to reach Trout Lake by lunch-time on the following day, and that we could easily make the fort from there in the afternoon. All this time Allah solemnly declared that he knew for a fact that the trail ran the whole distance to M^cLeod. We had practically finished our supply of food. Nothing remained of the unfortunate Duke but a few bones and some lumps of gristle. Some one suggested that we should kill the dog Boxer. I think that we had often looked at him

from the point of view of the butcher ; in fact, I have a vivid recollection of hearing the probable colour of his meat discussed. But now that it came to the point we disliked the idea. To begin with, the poor brute was very mangy ; and again, it seemed disgusting to kill him when we were so sure of reaching the fort on the morrow. So we boiled our bones and gristle, and drank the thin greasy water which was the result, at the same time being extremely careful to keep our stock for another meal.

At the first glimmerings of light we were up and about, but our condition was wretched in the extreme. John and Round were too weak to pack at all, and the Doctor, Ramsey, and I could do no more than get the packs made up. So the getting them on the horses was left to Daukhan and Pollen, who, though very lame, was much the strongest of us all, as he had been riding through all the hard time. But, short-handed as we were, the packing was got through as quickly as possible, and we started with high hopes and the vision of supper at the fort before our eyes—supper with bread and bacon and coffee! The Indians said that we should find all these. The idea of Fort McLeod loomed up before us great and gorgeous—a haven of rest and a palace of delight.

Meanwhile our work was cut out for us. The hill was steep, and the trail, as the Beaver had said, bad. Before long, however, we reached the

upland and moved faster. We could not run as we had done before, for we were far too weak, but still we made our best pace. At twelve o'clock we caught sight of Trout Lake gleaming below us, and, going forward to the shore, rested the horses. For some time we hunted in vain amongst the kitchen utensils for something for luncheon, and at last produced two or three scraps of fat about as big as a dollar; these we fried and solemnly divided amongst us. Without tea and tobacco I don't know how we should have pulled through. We had not unpacked the horses, as was our usual custom, for we felt doubtful if we should have the strength left to repack them if we did so.

And so, after a short halt, we marched on again, with the lake on our right hand. The country was very bad, but we still hoped to reach Allah's 'excellent trail.' In this we were, as usual, doomed to disappointment. The way became worse and worse, until we came to the borders of a burnt track; then we gave up all hope of reaching the fort, and crawled forward over the charred logs in abject misery. Hour after hour the train moved forward at a funereal gait; it seemed as if we should never reach our destination. Ahead of us we saw mile after mile of blackened trees standing gaunt and bare; thick masses of pea-vine and wild raspberry hid the earth under our feet. At last we reached the thick standing woods. But even then our case was not

improved ; fallen timber impeded our passage, so that often we were obliged to retrace our steps to circumvent some insurmountable barricade. Each log seemed like a mountain ; we could hardly lift our tired legs ; our arms hung heavy and useless from much chopping. Several times we came close to the Pack River, running deep and still between the trees. Darkness came on, and still we moved forward. Daukhan had left us the last time we neared the river, saying he would try and find the trail, and John now led the train. The horses had been saddled since early morning, and the packs were loosening and required attention. With the coming of night a madness seemed to seize the tired animals, and we wasted the last remnant of our strength in driving them ; the strain became almost too great, and it seemed that we must give up in despair. Presently a pack came off, and we left it lying.

But at last our endurance gave out, and we unsaddled the horses in a little open space. Some one made a fire, round which we sat in silence. Daukhan had not returned, so we fired off a rifle to let him know our whereabouts. Soon he came in, saying that he had already given up, and had made a fire for himself, intending to remain where he was, but, finding us so close at hand, he had come up the hill to be with us. We unrolled our beds, and then returned to the fire to see if there was anything

to eat. Again and again we searched the cook-box, but found absolutely nothing. Then we sat down again.

Some one suggested that we should try the medical stores. The Doctor brought them out, and we hunted diligently; in the bottom of a flask we found a couple of spoonfuls of Jamaica ginger, which we mixed with strong tea. This seemed to cheer us up a little, and, to some extent, to stay the pangs of hunger from which we were suffering. Once more we looked at the mangy dog, and then set to work to talk over our position. We knew that the fort could not be very far away—how far we did not know. Daukhan thought it might be just below us on the river, but seemed too exhausted to take much interest in the conversation. Allah said it was further up the stream. It was clear that unless we had food we should not have the strength to pack the horses, and even then we doubted whether one meal would do us any good. Two courses lay open to us: either we must kill one of the animals, or we must leave the camp behind and set out by ourselves that night and find the fort. This latter course seemed best. If we found the fort all would be well; on the other hand, if we did not succeed in doing so, we should be compelled to spend the night without either shelter or coverings—a trying thing for men in our thin and weakened condition.

Pollen now asked Allah if he would be willing to guide us. He said that he would not, as he had only one suit of clothes, and as we should be obliged to cross the river to reach the fort these would get wet. He said that if he remained for the night in wet clothes he would undoubtedly be ill. Pollen told him that if he brought us to the fort he would immediately purchase a new suit for him, and after this he said he would come. Volunteers were now called, and the question put to all. Daukhan said he could not go any farther that night; Ramsey and the Doctor said the same; John, Round, Pollen, and I resolved to make the attempt.

It must be remembered that we had been up, and either packing or marching, since half-past three in the morning. We practically had no food but a little watery soup and tea since the previous day, and in our condition it may be imagined that sixteen hours' work had left us absolutely exhausted. But hope is a wonderful reviver, and the idea of getting in reality to the fort that night put such spirit into us that I felt as if we could have gone on almost for ever. So we each wrapped our shoulders in a piece of blanket, and leaving the camp-fire started out into the darkness. It was now about eight o'clock in the evening. Rain had been falling during the day, but had ceased. Allah led the way, and we followed in single file.

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'A BUILDING LOOMED UP BIG IN THE DARKNESS'

Soon our eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, and falls became less numerous. We were moving across an open prairie covered with long grass, which hid the logs, thus impeding our progress. Presently we came to the river—still and deep. There was not a sound to be heard. Through the thin places in the shifting clouds we could see that the moon was up, and once, the light being a little stronger, we saw, far away upon the sky-line, a low range of mountains. They might have been five or fifty miles away. Allah said that he thought the fort lay close to this range; but as he had no standard measure of distance, it was useless to ask him whether they were far off.

Every moment, however, we became more and more convinced that we should not reach M^cLeod that night, and as the certainty of failure grew, our spirits went down, and we felt how tired we really were. After a while we entered the thick timber. There the logs lay piled one above the other to the height of a man's chest; they were slippery as glass. Not a breath of wind stirred the leaves. It was the weirdest scene I have ever looked upon, and the strange rugged figure of the Beaver Indian now and then standing clear against the sky did not make it any more commonplace. A fate seemed to follow Pollen; he had been walking very lame, and now he again slipped on one of the wet logs, and fell, once more injuring his foot. So we

halted whilst he bound up his hurt. Suddenly, far away up the valley we heard the faint tinkle of a cattle-bell. We listened, holding our breath; the woods were as silent as the tomb; then again the clear note rang out, reviving our hopes. Of course, the animal might have wandered ten miles from the homestead, but at least we were on the right track. Allah climbed up a tree, looking for any signs of a fire, but saw nothing.

Then for another hour we plodded forward. Suddenly we heard the sound of rushing water. We had been told that the river was fordable in front of the fort: was this the ford? We could see the water gleaming ahead of us through the trees. As we approached the gleam grew broader and broader. It was the lake! We rushed down to the shore. As we did so, the friendly clouds passed for a moment from before the moon, and there in the moonlight, on the opposite side of the river, a building loomed up big in the darkness. It was the fort!

We stood in a group on the bank and stared out across the stream; for fully a minute not a word was spoken; then some one said, 'By Jove!' and we relapsed into silence. After a little while another suggested that this was M^cLeod, but his words carried no conviction. We watched that building as though we expected to see it melt away like a figure in a dream. Still the fort

remained solid, and we observed it, wondering. Slowly the courage of the truth came to us, and we realised that whilst we stood, cold, weary, ragged, and starving on this side, just beyond that narrow strait was warmth, rest, and plenty. And yet we did not move, for we saw that the river was deep, and feared to find that we could not cross.

Few people who have not suffered it know what it feels like to be hungry, really hungry, within sight of food. Perhaps it is better that they should not know, for it is not a pleasant schooling. Sometimes when a crisis comes in our lives we watch it quietly, as though we had already rehearsed the complications and seen the issue. Hunger and exhaustion had brought us low—how low we had not understood; and now at last, when our work was done, and the end stood revealed before us, our minds could not grasp the idea, and we only muttered little banale phrases as we stared into the darkness.

Round was the first to break the spell. We knew that the name of the Hudson's Bay officer in charge of the fort was Alexander. Our only chance of supper lay in attracting his attention; so Round shouted, 'Ho, Alexander!' Then we all shouted. An echo took up the word, and far away across the lake we heard, 'Alexander! Alexander!' Then silence. Not a light showed from the fort.

Then again we shouted, 'Ho, Hudson's Bay!' The echo answered mysteriously, 'Bay! Bay!'

For a moment a sickening fear took hold of us that Alexander was away, or the fort deserted. So we shouted again and again, and I fired my revolver repeatedly. Then we listened. There was a sound of a creaking door and a muffled 'Halloo' reached our ears. This at least was no echo. I fired my revolver into the air once more, and again we heard the voice, 'Who are you?' Then Pollen: 'We are English gentlemen, come across the mountains from Dunvegan, and we are starving; could you send a boat and fetch us across?' For a few moments we waited, and then a canoe with two men in her came out of the darkness. Allah rushed down to the shore, but we could not allow Alexander's first impressions of the 'English gentlemen' to be quite so startling, so we moved in front of him. Twenty paces from where we stood the canoe halted, and again we were questioned. Then she came to land. 'My name is Alexander,' said one of the men, 'and this is my brother.' We introduced ourselves, and asked him if he would take us across in the canoe. He seemed only half-awake, and did not appear to understand what we were, or where we had come from, but I think that he was almost too drowsy to be surprised at anything. He landed us upon the beach, and we walked in silence towards the fort.

The ground was level, and here and there were charred logs, the remnants of old camp-fires. Alexander told us that we had better collect these and make our fire at once, as there was no other wood about the place and no room in the house. We declared that we would do whatever suited him best, but that what we wanted was food; and we implored him not to keep us waiting. By this time we had reached the fort. It was a small log cabin,



'POLLEN LOOKED VERY
GHASTLY'

similar to those used by miners all over Western America, but more than usually squalid and out of repair. I am bound to say that I did not remark this until after we had eaten. Alexander made a fire in the sleeping-room, and then had a good look at us. Certainly our appearance was strange. We were thin beyond description, our faces pinched and hollow, our bodies emaciated and clothed in rags, long, ill-kempt hair hung almost to our shoulders, and the bones upon the backs of our hands stood out sharp as knives. Pollen looked very ghastly, with a shaggy beard and pinched cheeks. I found that I was no longer hungry, but had a curious feeling of extreme emptiness. Whilst Alexander was gone in search of supper we sat upon the floor round the fire and talked of the past day; we had

marched for nearly sixteen hours with the pack-train, and now nearly three more without food, and this seemed to delight us childishly, so that we said it over and over again, and boasted about it amongst ourselves. It must be remembered in our favour that we had had a very hard time : we had not tasted food since the thin soup at breakfast ; for days we had not seen vegetables, but had lived entirely upon so much dried meat as a rigid economy would permit ; and even before we killed the horse we had worked hard for a long time on very short commons, living principally on fried bread and occasional beavers. And so perhaps it may not seem strange that now, when the work was done, we were not quite so reasonable as we might be. Alexander now returned heavily laden with ship's biscuits, canned beef, canned milk, a pot of jam, and some coffee. We hung over the food and watched the opening of the cans with delight. How good it seemed to eat ! Beef and biscuits disappeared rapidly. Then we held off a little, frightened lest we might weaken ourselves by a too hasty meal ; but we could not stop so soon, it seemed such a waste to leave good food untouched, so we set to upon the jam—and what a curious place in which to find Cross and Blackwell's jam ! Alexander produced some rancid butter ; never did anything taste better. At last we finished and sat down to smoke our pipes and tell our adventures. We talked, and Alexander

listened, lying back upon his blanket on the floor. Once more we ran over the incidents of the last two months, and told again how the thought of McLeod's Fort had cheered us on many weary marches; and each time we spoke of it we realised more and more that we had reached our goal, and found a place which seemed more precious than home. Our host was a young man, and a cheerful one, and soon there was no more talk of the fire outside on the flat, but we were told to consider the house our own, and to make ourselves comfortable as best we could. Alexander said that he had been asleep when we began to shout, and that, even when he understood that we were white men who were speaking to him, he could not realise what had happened. He saw that we had no boats, and had not come by the river—the only highway of the country; but it never struck him that we had come over the mountains, for he had not been in the district when Mr. Dawson came through fourteen years before, and so had only heard faint rumours of the possibility of a crossing. We sat round the blazing log-fire till late into the night, feeling too elated to rest. It was arranged that Alexander should take some Indians and go up the river to our camp on the morrow. He said that he would get the Indians to pack the horses, and would bring our unfortunate friends in camp back to the fort by water. It was

growing late, so we turned into the warm dry blankets, and, still trying to talk and smoke, dropped off to sleep, whilst the firelight danced upon the beams. But our rest was not unbroken; every few minutes John got up and made himself a cup of coffee, till it seemed impossible that he could hold more, and we were obliged to remonstrate. At last, as the first grey light of the morning showed faint on the window-pane, we fell asleep, utterly worn-out and exhausted.



JOHN SAYS GOOD-BYE

CHAPTER X

THE PORTAIRS AND SICCANEES

ON the following morning Alexander went down to our camp, taking an abundance of provisions with him for the rest of our company, and I believe that they fell upon them as voraciously as we had done upon our arrival at the fort. At all events they



FORT McLEOD

came in about midday with the pack-train, and then we all set down to a serious meal. We cooked bacon and potatoes, and ate our fill

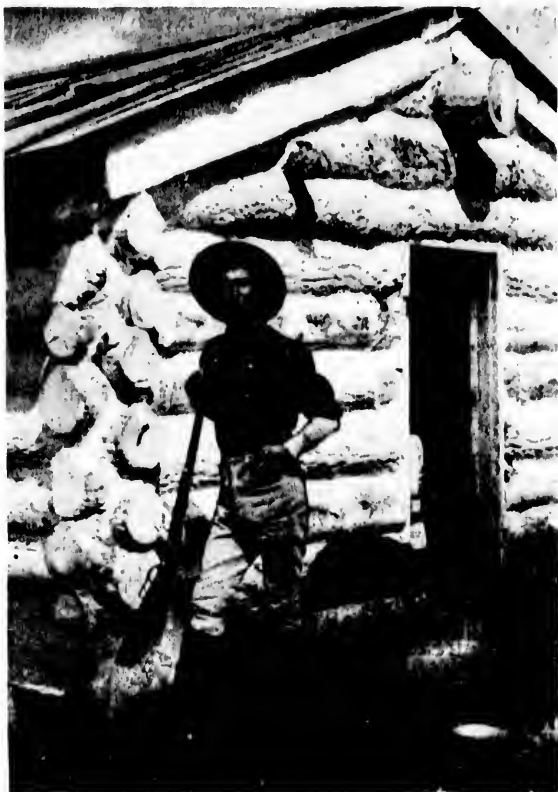
in the usual and idiotic way in which half-starved men always behave. And so it happens that my recollections of our daily life at McLeod are not very distinct, but I remember spending some days on my back upon the grass, surrounded by the rest of the party, also on their backs, and comparing the details of my sufferings with those of my companions.

One day an old blind Indian and his wife came up the lake in a canoe, and crept to us begging for food, and saying that they were starving. We were naturally very sympathetic to all who were in this condition, for we had experienced the trouble ourselves, so we gave them food in abundance. The wretched old man was evidently very much afraid of his wife, and feared that she would steal his portion, so he shielded his plate from her, and constantly fingered the outlines of the meat to see that none was missing. They were dressed in ragged marmot robes, and were a miserable-looking couple.

There can be but little comfort in old age amongst a savage people, and in so barren a country it is a wonder that any one attains to it. For once a man's strength is gone he can no longer hunt, and so must die like a beast. He may have been the greatest hunter of his tribe, but when he becomes weak there is no pity, and he must slowly starve or depend for his life on chance morsels which the young men may throw to him. However, the Company is very charitable, and feeds many of the aged and infirm who have brought fur to them in former days. As the old man, Nytsidone, was blind, his wife had to do the work for both, but in spite of her care for her husband, quite unlike the 'old Dutch,' she not only 'jawed' and 'made him smart,' but sometimes emphasised the sting of her tongue with the help of the canoe paddle.

The weather was warm and the fort comfortable, so that after a few days of pain we began to recover and to think about our future plans. The expedition was practically over, for we had crossed the mountains and passed through our hunting-grounds. It only remained for us now to march out to the railway as quickly as possible. But it was evident that neither John, Daukhan, nor Allah would be able to accompany us, for it was already late in the year, and they must turn back towards the Dunyegan district if they wished to reach home before the coming of winter. Of course they could not cross the mountains again, for this would take them far too long; but they might build a raft and float down the Parsnip and the Peace. On the eastern side of the mountains the Peace enters a cañon which is absolutely impassable in boats, and so they would be forced to make a twelve-mile portage and construct another raft on the river below. We had hoped that they would be able to march some part of the journey towards civilisation with us, and then return to the river, but we now saw that this was impossible, and that we must travel without them. Even as it was, we doubted if they would get home before the ice began to run on the Peace. We could only pay them their due, and get provisions for their long journey. In addition to a full supply of food, we presented John and Daukhan with a

couple of horses apiece in recognition of their services. Allah had already received his horse in



ROBERT RAMSEY

payment, and they would be obliged to build their raft of great size to accommodate the five

animals. Daukhan made us many speeches, and thanked us in his most courtly manner, saying that as long as he lived he would never part with the horses which we had given him, but that he hoped to live to see their children and children's children grow up under his care. For my part, I thought that the thanks should have been as much on our side, for nothing could ever repay the untiring labours and wonderful sagacity which had brought us to the end of our journey, and through so intricate a maze of swamps and mountains. And then they went, and we were very sorry to see the last of them, for more faithful men could not be found than John Knot and Daukhan Tustorwits. Allah, the Beaver, who went with them, was evidently no judge of horse-flesh, for he chose for himself the worst and weakest horse in the train, saying that he was 'tall and good-looking.' When they were all gone we felt that the strongest link with our wild life of uncertainty and adventure had already been broken, and that we must at once push forward and complete our journey. Our first move would be to the Hudson's Bay fort at Stewart's Lake, about a hundred miles away. From there we thought we could get canoes and go down the Stewart, Nechacoo, and Frazer rivers to Quesnelle, from which place we meant to travel by coach on the Cariboo road to Ashcroft. We had originally intended to go up

the Crooked River to the Frazer, but this would entail a long portage, and we heard that the river was very low, so that a man who had travelled by this route some time before had been obliged to construct dams in order to float his boat at all, and so had taken some months over a few miles. There was then nothing for it but to go to Stewart's Lake instead of taking the shorter route, and from there must travel some 250 miles by water and a like distance by road before reaching the railway.

Alexander said that the trail to Stewart's Lake was open and the ground good, and that we might march fast; but we were still weak and did not relish the idea, and were very much pleased when he volunteered to accompany us, bringing some horses of his own in order that we might ride. As soon as we had got a sufficient quantity of provisions we left the fort, and travelled gaily along the trail, driving the pack-horses. We were still very unwell, so that riding was by no means a pleasure for the first three days, and the poor Doctor suffered tortures, and bumped breathless upon an air-cushion. But after a while we re-



ON A GOOD TRAIL

covered and began to enjoy ourselves, and appreciate the firm ground and dry camping-places.

The country was lovely, the trees were already tinted by the autumn frosts, and we were really sorry when we reached the lake on the fifth day.

The Portair Indians, who live round its shores, build houses and live principally by fishing, so that Stewart's Lake is a small hamlet, and indeed looked a town to us as we rode up.

The fort is large, and has many out-buildings and corrals by the water-side, where we unpacked our animals. Mr. Murray, the officer in charge, was away in a schooner on the lake, but his wife and friends welcomed us into the house with the kindness we had learned to expect; and there we lived for some days, and read up back numbers of old illustrated papers, or lounged on the porch, watching the storms upon the lovely lake. But on the day of our departure we had much to disturb us, for we found, on getting our packs together, that our smaller kodak was missing. It must have dropped off the pack upon the march, and might be twenty miles away by the side of the trail. The only thing to do was to offer a reward, and send the natives out to search for it. We told Father Morice of our difficulty, and enlisted his help, for his influence with the Indians is prodigious. Father Morice is the Catholic missionary, and we had made his acquaintance almost as soon as we

arrived, and thus came in contact with one of the most remarkable men in North-Western America.

Père Morice was, of course, a Frenchman, but his English was irreproachable. It is something of a surprise to find a *savant* and a man of learning working amongst the Indians in a lonely Northern mission. But, judging by his congregation, it was evident that his talents were not thrown away.

The Carrier Indians are immeasurably superior to their relations the Beavers. They build log-houses, and many speak English, and read books and a monthly review in the native tongue, printed in the syllabary which their priest has invented for them. This is one of the many extra-



CARRIER INDIANS

ordinary achievements of this prince of missionaries, who not only is his own editor, compositor, and printer, but has invented a most ingenious syllabary, which is easily learnt—so that Indians who have no idea what writing is, have been known to learn to read and write this language with perfect correctness after two or three days' instruction. Of course, their manner of life is not that of the civilised man, for their employment remains unchanged, and they

still hunt and fish like other Indians; but they have been given many of the advantages of civilisation, and none of its evils.

Père Morice himself is the greatest authority upon their history and customs, and has written much concerning them. All that I shall say about these people I learned from him, and much that is written here is quoted from his writings.

It seems that the Portairs have a far keener desire for civilisation and knowledge than the rest of the



A PAIR OF
TWEEZERS

Déné family. And thus, while they received the missionaries and welcomed their teaching, many of the other tribes refused to do so. When first discovered these Indians were much the same as their neighbours, living in tents of skin, and dressing in marmot and beaver robes. They were not apparently a warlike people, but occasionally the neighbouring tribes would fall upon each other, or one family would wipe out some long-standing feud. In such cases the men went into battle in a kind of armour made of sticks placed close together, or prepared moose-hides, and attacked their enemies with spears or flint-headed arrows. Metal-working was almost unknown to them, but they procured copper from the Coast Indians, with which they made ornaments and the small tweezers that the men carried, and used to

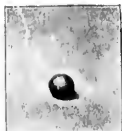
pluck with great care the few hairs from their chins, according to their custom.

Père Morice mentions a legend about this copper which I think is worth repeating :—

‘Many years ago all the Indians congregated at a certain point on the sea-coast around a tower-like mountain of copper standing in the midst of the water. Their object was to decide which tribe should get possession of this mountain. They all commenced to shout, and the mountain after a time began to totter, so that the Kaidahs, who had big heads and strong voices, caused it to fall on their side. “And thus it was,” say the Carriers, “that those men own the copper mountain, and ever since we must get from them the metal when we want to adorn our wives and daughters.”’

The Portairs do not appear to have had any distinct religion or form of worship, although they feared a kind of impersonal Nature-god, who was believed to cause wind and snow, and to regulate the movements of the heavenly bodies. They therefore employed the medicine-man to propitiate this god and his dependent spirits. The medicine-man was, in consequence, a person of great importance in the tribe, and it was believed that he could kill any one who offended him by the mere force of his will. His aid was always called for in cases of sickness, which they imagined were caused by some foreign presence or materialised evil spirit not unlike the

modern microbe of science. Having, through his violent exertions and loud chanting, worked himself into a frenzy, and almost into a trance, the medicine-man would commence to suck the afflicted part of the sick man, and after a while would produce from his mouth, either a thorn, an insect, a toad, or a small black stone ball. These he would exhibit as the cause of the illness, and after a few more passes and chant-



A PREHISTORIC
MICROBE

ings, the patient, according to the natives, immediately recovered. In serious illness, when death



STONE SPEAR AND ARROW HEADS

was likely to overtake the sick, the medicine-man would throw himself into a trance and visit the other world, begging the shade of the dying man to return to his body. Sometimes the shade declined, but often the medicine-man would awake, and, taking the spirit in the palm of his hand, would restore it to the head of the sick man, upon which he immediately recovered. Father Morice declared that

was likely to overtake the sick, the medicine-man would throw himself into a trance and visit the other world, begging the shade of the dying man to return to his body. Sometimes the shade declined, but often the medicine-man would awake, and,

many of the older men had witnessed this performance, and had great faith in the power of the medicine-man. The Portairs believe in the immortality of the soul, but also that souls in times of sickness may wander, even during the life of a man. When he is in a healthy state this soul-shade is invisible, but when he falls ill the shade will wander, and his friends must do their best to make it return to his body. In order to accomplish this, they will hang up the patient's moccasins stuffed with feather-down. Should the feathers become warm, it is a symptom that the wandering soul is present, and with great care and silence they put them on the feet of the sick man, being careful not to let the shade escape out of the shoe.

Before the Christian religion disturbed their ancient customs the ideas of these Indians concerning a future state were far from pleasant, for they believed that dried toads would be their only food. I quote the following myth from Father Morice's writings, as it will give some idea of the religion and belief of the Portairs :—

'A long time ago two young men got lost in a wood, and in the course of their wanderings came upon a decayed and hollow tree which was lying on the ground. Out of curiosity they crawled in to see where it led, as only one end was visible. They went for a long time on their hands and

knees in a dark subterranean passage, till they came to a place full of snakes, toads, and lizards. They were terrified by this dreadful place, and tried to go back, but could not; so they rushed forward, and after a time the way broadened and it became light. Suddenly they found themselves on the top of a hill, commanding the view of a broad river, on the other side of which stood a village. It consisted



BEAVER NECKLACE

of many red and black houses built of boards, where the shades dwelt; and they saw the shades enjoying themselves on a lawn. There were immense numbers of them, and they took great interest in a game, shouting and making a deafening noise. Now, one of the young men was very much frightened by all this, and hid himself, but the other called out to the shades to send some one with a canoe to fetch him across; but so great was the tumult that they could not hear him. After a while he got tired of shouting, and chanced to yawn. One of the spirits heard the

moving of his jaws,¹ and sent some one across the river to fetch him. But he had no sooner stepped into the black canoe than his foot sank down as though the bottom of the boat was elastic. Then the ferryman smelt him, and shouted that he did not smell fire and had not been burnt.² Therefore they seized him in their fleshless arms, and tossed him in the air like a ball, until nothing remained but his empty skin. This they threw into the river, where a huge fish devoured it. All this time the other young man had remained in hiding; but as soon as he got a chance he hastened back to the dark passage and passed through the chamber of snakes and toads without fear, for his sojourn in the world of shades had made another man of him. Just as he was crawling out of the hollow tree he heard a terrific voice calling, "Grandson, grandson!" and soon he met a giant, who adopted him; and after living for a long time with his new grandfather, and having many wonderful adventures, he finally went up to the moon, where he remains visible to this day.'

As Father Morice points out, the similarity between the Styx of the ancients and the river of the Portair Indians is very curious. From the same source I have taken the following myth of

¹ The Portairs regard yawning as ominous, and believe that by so doing they call back the departed spirits to earth.

² The ancient custom of cremation must accompany the honours of sepulture.

'THE CREATION OF LIGHT.

'A long time ago darkness reigned all over the earth, except in the lodge of one old man, a noble, who alone possessed light, fire, and water. Now, all men were very miserable, and continually sighed after light, entreating the old man to share it with them; but he would not. Finally, they gathered together, and decided to get what they wanted by force, so they went with all the animals to the lodge of the old man, and started a song which should win the light from him by continual chanting and beating of the tom-tom. Each of the crowd had his own song, and the young fox (*Khaih-pa-tso*, "he cries for daylight") chanted *Khaih, Khaih, Khaih*, expecting to get the light; but still the old man was inflexible. However, the assembly pleaded for light so often that, after a while, it began to steal slowly up the heavens, as it now does every morning. Then the old man shouted and it disappeared again. Yet the young fox would not tire of repeating his chant, and both men and animals vied with one another in turbulent singing, hoping to weary the old man. And now again the light began to show upon the horizon, and the old man got confused, and exclaimed, "Let there be light!" and immediately there was light; and so it has been to this day.'

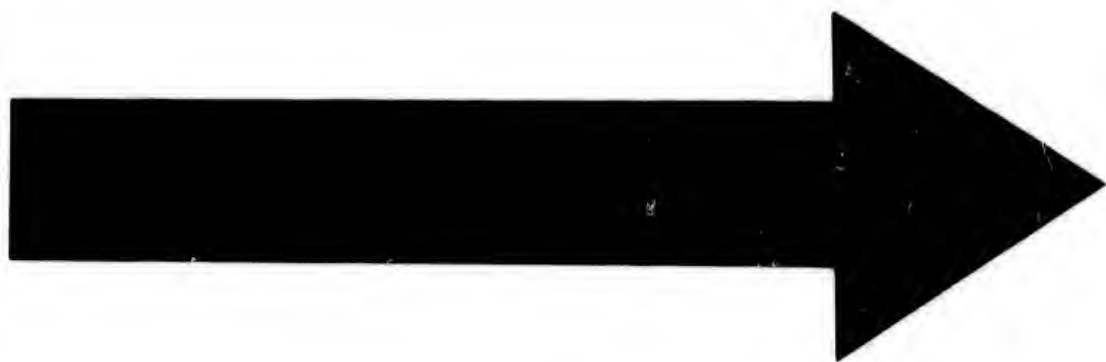
'THE CREATION OF FIRE.'

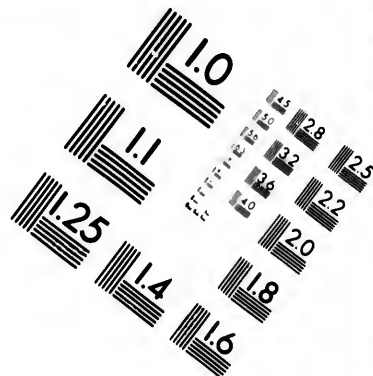
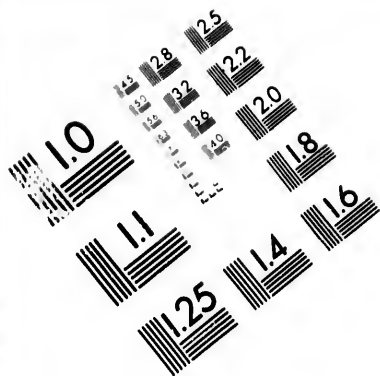
'Hitherto there had been no fire, and all were benumbed with the cold, except the same old man, who had fire in his lodge, which he jealously guarded. Again they wished to have fire, as they had already got the light; but they decided that they must gain it by stealth. And so they engaged the services of a yearling cariboo and of a musk-rat. Having made for the former a ceremonial head-dress of resinous pine shavings, and presented the latter with a ceremonial apron of marmot skin, they entered the old man's lodge and sang. The cariboo danced and the musk-rat sang *O! Skette*.¹ The cariboo swung his head to right and left as he danced, hoping to catch some of the fire with his head-dress. But whenever the fire appeared the old man extinguished it. At last, however, the musk-rat carried a live coal through a burrow in the ground and set fire to the forest. And thus men gained fire.'

CHILCOTIN
PIPE

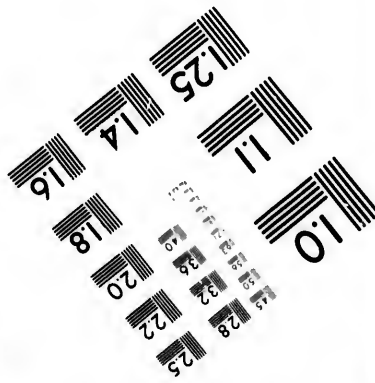
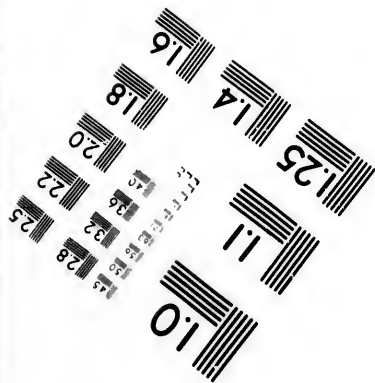
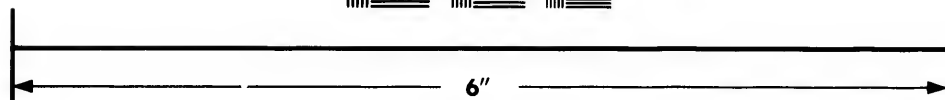
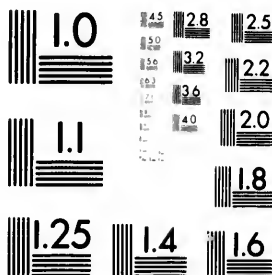
The creation of water was somewhat different. The spirit, *Estas*, changed himself into a pine needle, which the daughter of the old man, who alone possessed water, drank by accident. Not

¹ It is curious that this word is unintelligible to the Portairs, which would go to prove that the legend is not native to the people.





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long afterwards she had a son, who was Estas, though she did not know it. The child grew at a great pace, and as soon as he was able to walk commenced to move the vessel in which his grandfather kept the water. At last, when he was a grown man, he rushed out of the lodge with the water and gave it to men, sprinkling it over the earth, and making lakes, rivers, and seas.



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CHAPTER XI

DOWN THE RAPIDS AND AWAY

WE had now been at Stewart's Lake for several days, and, with the help of the priest and our friends at the fort, had procured the services of four Indians, who would take us and our belongings down to Quesnelle in two canoes. Alexander had already returned to Fort McLeod, and we had got rid of our faithful pack-train. The search for the smaller kodak had proved useless, but we felt that we could not afford to waste any more time, and so were forced to go without it.¹

All the canoes on the lake are 'dug-out,' and we found two of this variety waiting for us on the morning of our departure. We loaded in our baggage and shoved off from the shore, with an Indian in the bow and another in the stern. Ramsey and the Doctor were in the smaller boat with two

¹ This kodak was found by the natives some days after our departure, and was kept at Stewart's Lake until the following spring, when it went down the river to Quesnelle, and so out to the railway. Thus, besides being constantly wet upon the back of a pack-horse for months on the expedition itself, it travelled nearly two hundred miles in canoes in charge of Indians, nearly three hundred miles on a stage-coach, and finally from Ashcroft to London by train and ocean. Many of the illustrations in this book were taken with this camera.

Indians; whilst Round, Pollen, and I took the larger boat with the other pair of boatmen.¹

Thus we started away, waving our adieus to our friends on the shore, who had entertained us so well. After paddling a few miles we came to the Stewart River, and passed many native fishing-traps and drying-stages, where the crows sat in hundreds.



ON THE FRAZER IN A DUG-OUT

Then we went on down the stream. Now and again we came to small rapids—a foretaste of the great cascades ahead; in such places we could feel the pull of the water as it rushed ever more swiftly towards the narrow passage. Then there would be a soft gliding movement, and then the crest of

¹ The Portair Indians originally used only the birch-bark canoe; but some sixty years ago a party of Iroquois Indians came into their country with 'dug-outs,' and so the Portairs killed them, and took their boats as models.

a wave would sweep over the side of the canoe and drench us to the skin, whilst the little boat leaped and twisted amongst the rocks and currents. In this way we travelled many miles, sometimes in deep, still water, where the boat ran easy, and the Indians would sway in time, and chant their boating-song, or stop rowing, and fire wildly at a flock of geese, or at a coyote or fisher on the bank. They never hit anything, for an Indian cannot shoot in company; he must be alone to kill game; but they were very entertaining, and spoke a little English.

In camp at night they would chant their prayers until the small hours of the morning very melodiously. On the second day we joined the Nechaco River, and now the rapids became more serious. Many times we came to eight or ten miles of fast water, where the canoe would race by the bank at an extraordinary pace. Large boulders blocked the river in these places, against which the water beat and swirled. If a canoe attempted to pass one of these at a short distance, the wash would probably overturn it, so that one has to run the boat directly at the rock, and allow the water to deflect the bow just before the canoe strikes. As may be imagined, all this is most exciting, and now and then we had some very narrow escapes. Of course, if once the boat capsized, a man would stand no chance in this kind of rapid water.

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We passed the Fort George Cañon in safety, and arrived about nightfall at the fort itself on the Frazer River, where we slept. The Hudson's Bay Company's officer in charge proved to be a most delightful man, and told us many stories of his adventures in the country, and Indian tales that he had heard.

Some years before, a party of Indians, who were hunting in the bush in the Fort George

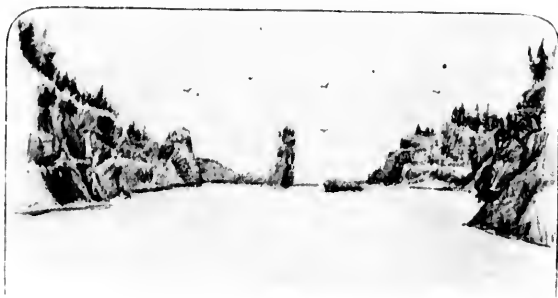


NEARLY A MILE BROAD

district, ran short of food. For many days they starved, until their reason left them. At last another Indian came across them, and found them picking the bones of one of their comrades. When he approached the camp they fired upon him, so he went away and came back some days later with a party. On returning to the camp, however, they found that the wretched men had decided to kill another of their number, but had fallen out as to the choice, and by the time their rescuers arrived

they were all dead, and the wolves and coyotes had devoured the greater part of their bodies.

On the morning of our departure from the fort we found our canoe-men in high spirits, for they had been gambling the greater part of the night, and had won heavily. The unfortunate natives of the place came down to see us off, and told sadly how one had lost a fiddle, another a shirt, another a frying-pan, and so on. Towards afternoon we



'THE RIVER DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT OVER A FALL'

reached the great Cottonwood Cañon, and halted by the bank to inspect it. I have passed over the details of the shooting of the Fort George Rapids, but the Cottonwood made so deep an impression on me that I must attempt to describe it.

To begin with, the Frazer River, which is in many places nearly a mile broad, narrows as one approaches the rapids. Far ahead you can hear a low muffled roar, and already the water begins to

pull at the canoe. It seems as though the water itself had become thicker and denser. This is one's first sensation. As you approach, the roar becomes louder and more ominous, and it seems as though the river dropped out of sight over a fall. Now and again you can see white breakers surging for a moment above this miniature horizon. Meanwhile the stream runs faster and faster, but you paddle to the shore and get out upon the rocks. Now comes the most unpleasant time of all, for there is no action or movement to distract your thoughts, and the more you look at the rushing water the less you like it. Below you the river dashes madly between high walls of rock, humming and roaring as the immense volume crushes into the narrow space. We stood and watched it, planning out our road; how we would go the right here and the left there, and where we would pass the high rock which stood in the middle of the passage. On the farther shore were two wooden crosses which the pious natives had erected to some unfortunates who had been drowned in the rapid. Our head canoe-man cut some tobacco from a plug, whilst his hand shook with excitement. He had a little English, but his remarks were not cheerful. 'Damn bad cañon,' he would say, 'awful bad'; 'Drown 'em all-the-time; yes, Sywash drown 'em, six white men, drown 'em,—awful bad,—'fraid I lose de whole damn lot of you.' Then we returned to the canoes and took

our places, stowing our baggage as low as we could in the boat; our steersman stood in the stern, and we all paddled out into the stream. The first rule in shooting rapids is always to keep the canoe moving faster than the water, otherwise you can get no steerage-way and will soon be swamped, therefore we paddled forward to the white line of spray as fast as we could. Suddenly the canoe shot away down the stream as it touched the head of the rapid, and in a moment we were tearing along in the roar of the waters. The steersman, standing up, threw himself from side to side and strained on his paddle, whilst the boat leaped to right and left as the currents altered. Never have I seen anything so wildly exciting; we toiled and struggled, bent over our paddles whilst the waters seemed to leap and yell, and the steersman shouted his orders between his gasps for breath. The rocks flew past us and the water eddied back from the cliffs, so that we were thrown half-across the river at every turn. Then slowly the roar grew less, and after a while we came to a sort of whirlpool where the water slung round in still oily curls, and sucked in the middle like a half-emptied basin. Here and there the current ran swiftly across the bed of the river from shore to shore, and even met us as we came down the stream. In some places the river was many feet higher than in others, and so, silent and treacherous, the rapids at last calmed

down, and we floated in smooth water some miles below. The Indians laughed the short laugh which they always indulge in after danger, and then we rested from paddling and watched the other boat pitching and struggling in the foam behind us.

Below the rapid the river ran sluggishly, but here and there large boulders lay just beneath the water, and the stream rippled over them with a quiet



'SMOOTH WATER SOME MILES BELOW'

splash. That night we camped near the house of a Chinaman, built after the manner of his country, and indeed we saw many of these people upon the river-bank digging for gold. A white man can hardly make a living from the gold in this part of the Frazer, but a Chinaman, who has few wants, lives cheap and makes money. As we passed these industrious people our boatman yelled out choice and entertaining insults both in English and in their own tongue. All the next day we paddled

forward pleasantly down the great river, whilst the loons cried on the bank, and hawks and such like birds hung high overhead. Night came, but we were anxious to reach Quesnelle, and did not camp, but went on in the darkness. We could hardly see the other boat, much less the rocks in the river, so we would backwater and listen for the rush of the stream over a rock and then shoot forward again into the stillness. At last we saw a few lights ahead, and came down the river singing into the little village of Quesnelle.

Quesnelle is the wreck of a once prosperous mining camp, and is sufficiently desolate. We put up at the hotel and sat in the bar-room, very ragged-looking specimens of humanity, as the new clerk just out from London seemed to think, for



BONE MINNOW

he took pleasure in staring at us, and then caressing his own collar-button with his fingers or looking at his irreproachable cuffs. Quesnelle received us kindly, as every one else had done in this land of hospitality, and with the assistance of Mr. Macnaughton the Hudson's Bay Company officer, we soon had a wagon and started on our long drive to the railway. The old Cariboo road was once famous as the great gold-carrying highway of the country, and is marked in many places with white stones, where some unfortunate had been 'held up'

and shot in the old troublous times. But all that is far away now, and the land is settled with ranchers and farmers. We pitched and heaved over our two hundred and fifty miles' drive after the usual manner of a Western stage, tearing down hills and round



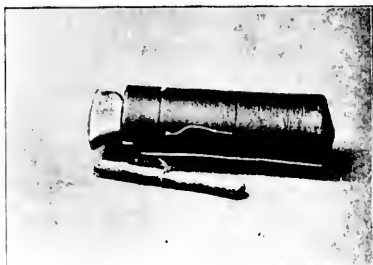
SPEAR HEAD

precipitous corners, or crawling up steep inclines at a foot-pace. Once we met the weekly stage, and noticed the wonderful skill of its driver, tested whilst he started a bucking team at a gallop with a wheeler's leg entangled with the pole. But beyond this nothing remarkable occurred. On the hills above Ashcroft we saw the faint white smoke of the train, and then we really knew that our expedition was over and gone. Coming into the little town we met many Chilkotin Indians dressed in brightly coloured clothes, who smiled upon us and said 'Clehya' in a very friendly way. It seems that there was once a Hudson's Bay Company officer called Clark, and men would come to his place and say, 'Clark, how are you?' This the Indians pronounced 'Clehya,' which answers to the English 'Good-morning,' and means about as much. These Chilkotins were coming into the town to a fair, and we found

Ashcroft decked in her Sunday best. Mr. Foster, the principal citizen, took charge of us, and through his kindness we were able to leave by train that night. After dinner we gathered on the platform of the little station and talked. Ramsey and Round were going out to the coast, whilst Pollen and I would take the train east. There was so much to be said, that we said nothing. It did not seem possible that it was all over, and that henceforth we should be obliged to sleep in houses and conform to the customs of civilisation. For months we had talked of Indians, bears, rapids, horses, weather, and the chances of food, until we had made a world for ourselves. Now we began to realise that all this must go, and was of no account; that no one would care about our topics of conversation, and that we should talk to ears that did not understand our meaning. Then the train came in, and we separated without many words, and the expedition was over. And we returned to civilisation, and were bored or amused, as it might chance, and ate and lived as others do; and at first it was novel, and we enjoyed it.

Civilisation has many things to offer—comforts, knowledge, pleasures,—but when one has felt the joy of the wilds, one knows what life is, and what it is to live. Cold and rain, hunger and storm, we

had endured, and we knew that they were not pleasant; but they pass, and this knowledge remains unchanged in the wilderness—That it is good to be alive and free.



THE END

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March 1895

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