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FRANK J. HAYES

W.S.

"HUSKIE" DOGS ON THE FROZEN HIGHWAY.

HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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"TALKING MUSQUASH."

BY JULIAN RALPH.

THE most sensational bit of "musquash talk" in more than a quarter of a century among the Hudson Bay Company's employés was started the other day, when Sir Donald A. Smith, the president of the oldest of England's great trading companies, sent a type-written letter to Winnipeg. If a Cree squaw had gone to the trading-shop at Moose Factory and asked for a bustle and a box of face-powder in exchange for a beaver-skin, the suggestion of changing conditions in the fur trade would have been trifling compared with the sense of instability to which this appearance of machine-writing gave rise. The reader may imagine for himself what a wrench civilization would have gotten if the world had laid down its goose-quills and taken up the type-writer all in one day. And that is precisely what Sir Donald Smith had done. The quill that had served to convey the orders of Alexander Mackenzie had satisfied Sir George Simpson; and, in our own time, while men like Lord Iddesleigh, Lord Kimberley, and Mr. Goschen sat around the candle-lighted table in the board-room of the company in London, quill pens were the only ones at hand. But Sir Donald's letter was not only the product of a machine; it contained instructions for the use of the type-writer in the offices at Winnipeg, and there was in the letter a protest against illegible manual chirography such as had been received from many factories in the wilderness. Talking business in the fur trade has always been called "talking musquash" (musik-rat), and after that letter came the turn taken by that form of talk suggested a general fear that from the Arctic to our border and from Labrador to Queen Charlotte's Islands the canvassers for competing machines will be

"racing" in all the posts, each to prove that his instrument can pound out more words in a minute than any other—in those posts where life has hitherto been taken so gently that when one day a factor heard that the battle of Waterloo had been fought and won by the English, he deliberately loaded the best trade gun in the storehouse and went out and fired it into the pulseless woods, although it was two years after the battle, and the disquieted Old World had long known the greater news that Napoleon was caged in St. Helena. The only reassuring note in the "musquash talk" to-day is sounded when the subject of candles is reached. The governor and committee in London still pursue their deliberations by candle-light.

But rebellion against their fate is idle, and it is of no avail for the old factors to make the point that Sir Donald found no greater trouble in reading their writing than they encountered when one of his missives had to be deciphered by them. The truth is that the tide of immigration which their ancient monopoly first shunted into the United States is now sweeping over their vast territory, and altering more than its face. Not only are the factors aware that the new rule confining them to share in the profits of the fur trade leaves to the mere stockholders far greater returns from land sales and storekeeping, but a great many of them now find village life around their old forts, and railroads close at hand, and Law setting up its officers at their doors, so that in a great part of the territory the romance of the old life, and their authority as well, has fled.

Less than four years ago I had passed by Qu'Appelle without visiting it, but last

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summer I resolved not to make the mistake again, for it was the last stockaded fort that could be studied without a tiresome and costly journey into the far north. It is on the Fishing Lakes, just beyond Manitoba. But on my way a Hudson Bay officer told me that they had just taken down the stockade in the spring, and that he did not know of a remaining "palisade" in all the company's system except one, which, curiously enough, had just been ordered to be put up around Fort Hazleton, on the Skeena River, in northern British Columbia, where some turbulent Indians have been very troublesome, and where whatever civilization there may be in Saturn seems nearer than our own. This one example of the survival of original conditions is far more eloquent of their endurance than the thoughtless reader would imagine. It is true that there has come a tremendous change in the status and spirit of the company. It is true that its officers are but newly bending to external authority, and that settlers have poured into the south with such demands for food, clothes, tools, and weapons as to create within the old corporation one of the largest of shopkeeping companies. Yet to-day, as two centuries ago, the Hudson Bay Company remains the greatest fur-trading association that exists.

The zone in which Fort Hazleton is situated reaches from ocean to ocean without suffering invasion by settlers, and far above it to the Arctic Sea is a grand belt wherein time has made no impress since the first factory was put up there. There and around it is a region, nearly two-thirds the size of the United States, which is as if our country were meagrely dotted with tiny villages at an average distance of five days apart, with no other means of communication than canoe or dog train, and with not above a thousand white men in it, and not as many pure-blooded white women as you will find registered at a first-class New York hotel on an ordinary day. The company employs between 1500 and 2000 white men, and I am assuming that half of them are in the fur country.

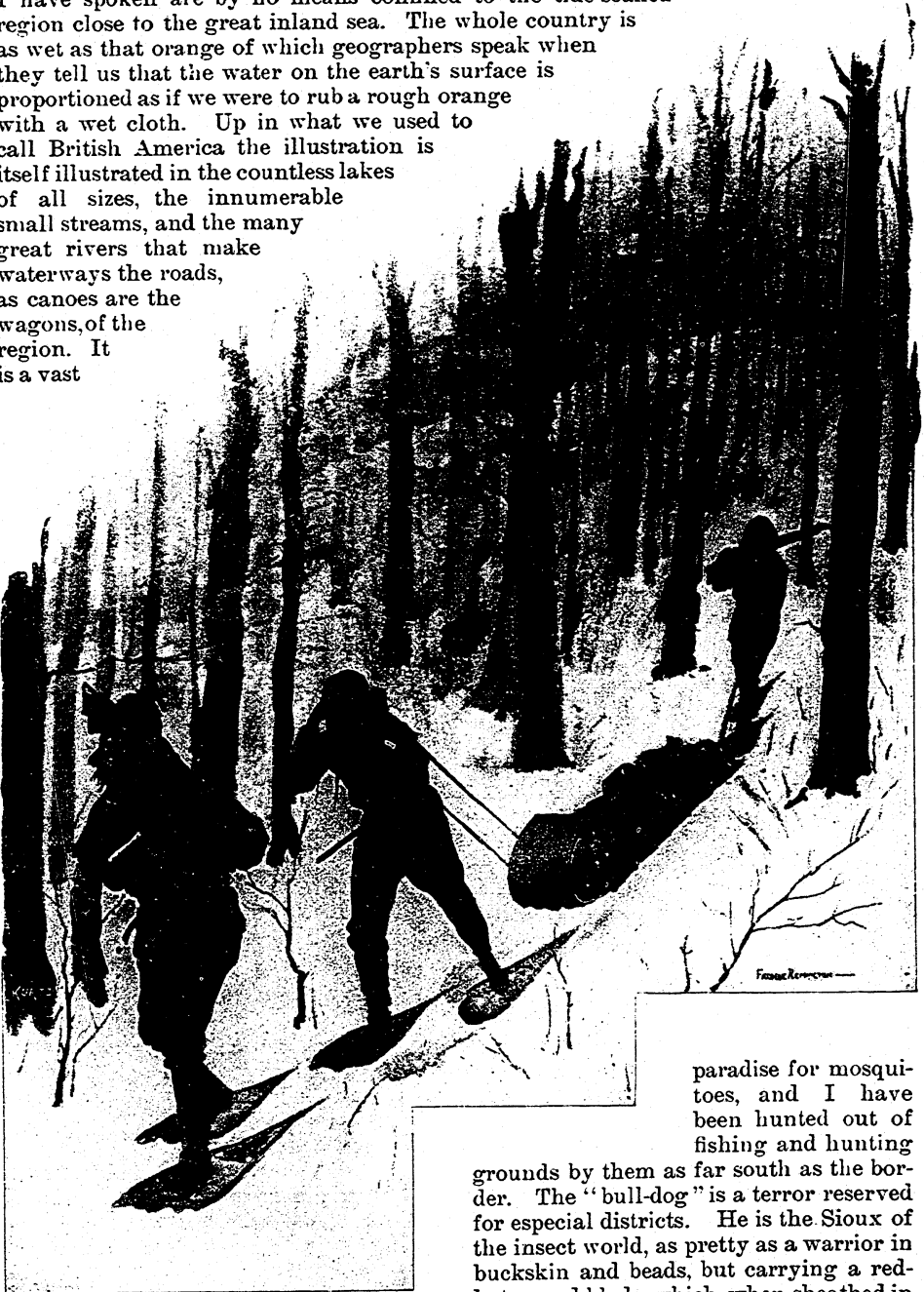
We know that for nearly a century the company clung to the shores of Hudson Bay. It will be interesting to peep into one of its forts as they were at that time; it will be amazing to see what a country that bay-shore territory was and is.

There and over a vast territory three seasons come in four months—spring in June, summer in July and August, and autumn in September. During the long winter the earth is blanketed deep in snow, and the water is locked beneath ice. Geese, ducks, and smaller birds abound as probably they are not seen elsewhere in America, but they either give place to or share the summer with mosquitoes, black-flies, and "bull-dogs" (*tabanus*) without number, rest, or mercy. For the land around Hudson Bay is a vast level marsh, so wet that York Fort was built on piles, with elevated platforms around the buildings for the men to walk upon. Infrequent bunches of small pines and a litter of stunted swamp-willows dot the level waste, the only considerable timber being found upon the banks of the rivers. There is a wide belt called the Arctic Barrens all along the north, but below that, at some distance west of the bay, the great forests of Canada bridge across the region north of the prairie and the plains, and cross the Rocky Mountains to reach the Pacific. In the far north the musk-ox descends almost to meet the moose and deer, and on the near slope of the Rockies the wood-buffalo—larger, darker, and fiercer than the bison of the plains, but very like him—still roams as far south as where the buffalo ran highest in the days when he existed.

Through all this northern country the cold in winter registers 40°, and even 50° below zero, and the travel is by dogs and sleds. There men in camp may be said to dress to go to bed. They leave their winter's store of dried meat and frozen fish out-of-doors on racks all winter (and so they do down close to Lake Superior); they hear from civilization only twice a year at the utmost; and when supplies have run out at the posts, we have heard of their boiling the parchment sheets they use instead of glass in their windows, and of their cooking the fat out of beaver-skins to keep from starving, though beaver is so precious that such recourse could only be had when the horses and dogs had been eaten. As to the value of the beaver, the reader who never has purchased any for his wife may judge what it must be by knowing that the company has long imported buckskin from Labrador to sell to the Chippeways around Lake Nipigon in order that they may

not be tempted, as of old, to make thongs and moccasins of the beaver; for their deer are poor, with skins full of worm-holes, whereas beaver leather is very tough and fine.

But in spite of the severe cold winters, that are, in fact, common to all the fur territory, winter is the delightful season for the traders; around the bay it is the only endurable season. The winged pests of which I have spoken are by no means confined to the tide-soaked region close to the great inland sea. The whole country is as wet as that orange of which geographers speak when they tell us that the water on the earth's surface is proportioned as if we were to rub a rough orange with a wet cloth. Up in what we used to call British America the illustration is itself illustrated in the countless lakes of all sizes, the innumerable small streams, and the many great rivers that make waterways the roads, as canoes are the wagons, of the region. It is a vast



INDIAN HUNTERS MOVING CAMP.

paradise for mosquitoes, and I have been hunted out of fishing and hunting grounds by them as far south as the border. The “bull-dog” is a terror reserved for especial districts. He is the Sioux of the insect world, as pretty as a warrior in buckskin and beads, but carrying a red-hot sword blade, which, when sheathed in human flesh, will make the victim jump

a foot from the ground, though there is no after-pain or itching or swelling from the thrust.

Having seen the country, let us turn to the forts. Some of them really were forts, in so far as palisades and sentry towers and double doors and guns can make a fort, and one twenty miles below Winnipeg was a stone fort. It is still standing. When the company ruled the territory as its landlord, the defended posts were on the plains among the bad Indians, and on the Hudson Bay shore, where vessels of foreign nations might be expected. In the forests, on the lakes and rivers, the character and behavior of the fish-eating Indians did not warrant armament. The stockaded forts were nearly all alike. The stockade was of timber, of about such a height that a man might look over it on tiptoe. It had towers at the corners, and York Fort had a great "lookout" tower within the enclosure. Within the barricade were the company's buildings, making altogether such a picture as New York presented when the Dutch founded it and called it New Amsterdam, except that we had a church and a stadt-house in our enclosure. The Hudson Bay buildings were sometimes arranged in a hollow square, and sometimes in the shape of a letter H, with the factor's house connecting the two other parts of the character. The factor's house was the best dwelling, but there were many smaller ones for the laborers, mechanics, hunters, and other non-commissioned men. A long, low, whitewashed log house was apt to be the clerks' house, and other large buildings were the stores where merchandise was kept, the fur-houses where the furs, skins, and pelts were stored, and the Indian trading-house, in which all the bartering was done. A powder house, ice-house, oil-house, and either a stable or a boat-house for canoes completed the post. All the houses had double doors and windows, and wherever the men lived there was a tremendous stove set up to battle with the cold.

The abode of jollity was the clerks' house, or bachelors' quarters. Each man had a little bedroom containing his chest, a chair, and a bed, with the walls covered with pictures cut from illustrated papers or not, according to each man's taste. The big room or hall, where all met in the long nights and on off days, was as bare as a baldpate so far as its

whitewashed or timbered walls went, but the table in the middle was littered with pipes, tobacco, papers, books, and pens and ink, and all around stood (or rested on hooks overhead) guns, foils, and fishing-rods. On Wednesdays and Saturdays there was no work in at least one big factory. Breakfast was served at nine o'clock, dinner at one o'clock, and tea at six o'clock. The food varied in different places. All over the prairie and plains great stores of pemmican were kept, and men grew to like it very much, though it was nothing but dried buffalo beef pounded and mixed with melted fat. But where they had pemmican they also enjoyed buffalo hunch in the season, and that was the greatest delicacy, except moose muffle (the nose of the moose), in all the territory. In the woods and lake country there were venison and moose as well as beaver—which is very good eating—and many sorts of birds, but in that region dried fish (salmon in the west, and lake trout or white-fish nearer the bay) was the staple. The young fellows hunted and fished and smoked and drank and listened to the songs of the *voyageurs* and the yarns of the "breeds" and Indians. For the rest there was plenty of work to do.

They had a costume of their own, and, indeed, in that respect there has been a sad change, for all the people, white, red, and crossed, dressed picturesquely. You could always distinguish a Hudson Bay man by his capote of light blue cloth with brass buttons. In winter they wore as much as a Quebec carter. They wore leather coats lined with flannel, edged with fur, and double-breasted. A scarlet worsted belt went around their waists, their breeches were of smoked buckskin, reaching down to three pairs of blanket socks and moose moccasins, with blue cloth leggins up to the knee. Their buckskin mittens were hung from their necks by a cord, and usually they wrapped a shawl of Scotch plaid around their necks and shoulders, while on each one's head was a fur cap with ear-pieces.

The French Canadians and "breeds," who were the *voyageurs* and hunters, made a gay appearance. They used to wear the company's regulation light blue capotes, or coats, in winter, with flannel shirts, either red or blue, and corduroy trousers gartered at the knee with bead-work. They all wore gaudy worsted



TALKING MUSQUASH.



SETTING A MINK-TRAP.

belts, long heavy woollen stockings—covered with gayly fringed leggins—fancy moccasins, and tuques, or feather-decked hats or caps bound with tinsel bands. In mild weather their costume was formed of a blue striped cotton shirt, corduroys, blue cloth leggins bound with orange ribbons, the inevitable sash or worsted belt, and moccasins. Every hunter carried a powder-horn slung from his neck, and in his belt a tomahawk, which often served also as a pipe. As late as 1862, Viscount Milton and W. B. Cheadle describe them in a book, *The Northwest Passage by Land*, in the following graphic language:

“The men appeared in gaudy array, with beaded fire-bag, gay sash, blue or scarlet leggins, girt below the knee with beaded garters, and moccasins elaborately embroidered. The (half-breed) women were in short, bright-colored skirts, showing richly embroidered leggins and white moccasins of cariboo-skin beautifully worked with flowery patterns in beads, silk, and moose hair.”

The trading-room at an open post was—and is now—like a cross-roads store, having its shelves laden with every imaginable article that Indians like and hunters need—clothes, blankets, files, scalp-

knives, gun screws, flints, twine, fire-steels, awls, beads, needles, scissors, knives, pins, kitchen ware, guns, powder, and shot. An Indian who came in with furs threw them down, and when they were counted received the right number of castors—little pieces of wood which served as money—with which, after the hours of reflection an Indian spends at such a time, he bought what he wanted.

But there was a wide difference between such a trading-room and one in the plains country, or where there were dangerous Indians—such as some of the Crees, and the Chippeways, Blackfeet, Bloods, Sarcis, Sioux, Sicanies, Stonies, and others. In such places the Indians were let in only one or two at a time, the goods were hidden so as not to excite their cupidity, and

through a square hole grated with a cross of iron, whose spaces were only large enough to pass a blanket, what they wanted was given to them. That is all done away with now, except it be in northern British Columbia, where the Indians have been turbulent.

Farther on we shall perhaps see a band of Indians on their way to trade at a post. Their custom is to wait until the first signs of spring, and then to pack up their winter's store of furs, and take advantage of the last of the snow and ice for the journey. They hunt from November to May; but the trapping and shooting of bears go on until the 15th of June, for those animals do not come from their winter dens until May begins. They come to the posts in their best attire, and in the old days that formed as strong a contrast to their present dress as their leather tepees of old did to the cotton ones of to-day. Ballantyne, who wrote a book about his service with the great fur company, says merely that they were painted, and with scalp locks fringing their clothes, but in Lewis and Clarke's journal we read description after description of the brave costuming of these color-and-ornament-loving peo-

ple. Take the Sioux, for instance. Their heads were shaved of all but a tuft of hair, and feathers hung from that. Instead of the universal blanket of to-day, their main garment was a robe of buffalo-skin with the fur left on, and the inner surface dressed white, painted gaudily with figures of beasts and queer designs, and fringed with porcupine quills. They wore the fur side out only in wet weather. Beneath the robe they wore a shirt of dressed skin, and under that a leather belt, under which the ends of a breech-clout of cloth, blanket stuff, or skin were

given out, each Indian had to surrender his knife before he got his tin cup.

The company made great use of the Iroquois, and considered them the best boatmen in Canada. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, of the Northwest Company, employed eight of them to paddle him to the Pacific Ocean by way of the Peace and Fraser rivers, and when the greatest of Hudson Bay executives, Sir George Simpson, travelled, Iroquois always propelled him. The company had a uniform for all its Indian employés—a blue, gray, or blanket capote, very loose, and



WOOD INDIANS COME TO TRADE.

tucked. They wore leggins of dressed antelope hide with scalp locks fringing the seams, and prettily beaded moccasins for their feet. They had necklaces of the teeth or claws of wild beasts, and each carried a fire-bag, a quiver, and a brightly painted shield, giving up the quiver and shield when guns came into use.

The Indians who came to trade were admitted to the store precisely as voters are to the polls under the Australian system—one by one. They had to leave their guns outside. When rum was

reaching below the knee, with a red worsted belt around the waist, a cotton shirt, no trousers, but artfully beaded leggins with wide flaps at the seams, and moccasins over blanket socks. In winter they wore buckskin coats lined with flannel, and mittens were given to them. We have seen how the half-breeds were dressed. They were long employed at women's work in the forts, at making clothing and at mending. All the mittens, moccasins, fur caps, deer-skin coats, etc., were made by them. They were also the washer-women.

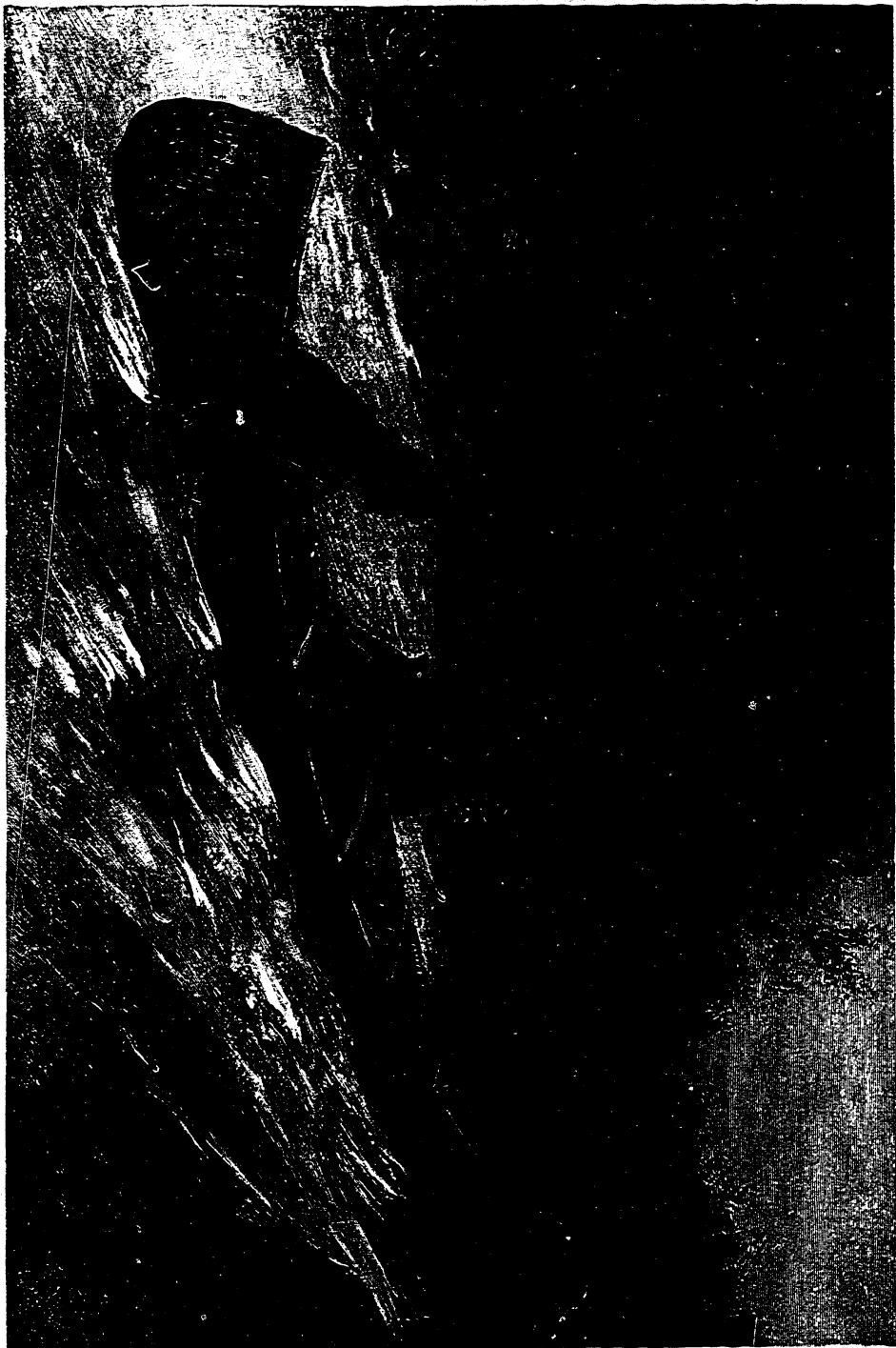
Perhaps the factor had a good time in the old days, or thought he did. He had a wife and servants and babies, and when a visitor came, which was not as often as snow-drifts blew over the stockade, he entertained like a lord. At first the factors used to send to London, to the head office, for a wife, to be added to the annual consignment of goods, and there must have been a few who sent to the Orkneys for the sweethearts they left there. But in time the rule came to be that they married Indian squaws. In doing this, not even the first among them acted blindly, for their old rivals and subsequent companions of the Northwest and X. Y. companies began the custom, and the French *voyageurs* and *courriers du bois* had mated with Indian women before there was a Hudson Bay Company. These rough and hardy woodsmen, and a larger number of half-breeds born of just such alliances, began at an early day to settle near the trading-posts. Sometimes they established what might be called villages, but were really close imitations of Indian camps, composed of a cluster of skin tepees, racks of fish or meat, and a swarm of dogs, women, and children. In each tepee was the fireplace, beneath the flue formed by the open top of the habitation, and around it were the beds of brush, covered with soft hides, the inevitable copper kettle, the babies swaddled in blankets or moss bags, the women and dogs, the gun and paddle, and the junks and strips of raw meat hanging overhead in the smoke. This has not changed to-day; indeed, very little that I shall speak of has altered in the true or far fur country. The camps exist yet. They are not so clean (or, rather, they are more dirty), and the clothes and food are poorer and harder to get; that is all.

The Europeans saw that these women were docile, or were kept in order easily by floggings with the tent poles; that they were faithful and industrious, as a rule, and that they were not all unprepossessing—from their point of view, of course. Therefore it came to pass that these were the most frequent alliances in and out of the posts in all that country. The consequences of this custom were so peculiar and important that I must ask leave to pause and consider them. In Canada we see that the white man thus made his bow to the redskin as a brother

in the truest sense. The old *courriers* of Norman and Breton stock, loving a wild, free life, and in complete sympathy with the Indian, bought or took the squaws to wife, learned the Indian dialects, and shared their food and adventures with the tribes. As more and more entered the wilderness, and at last came to be supported, in camps and at posts and as *voyageurs*, by the competing fur companies, there grew up a class of half-breeds who spoke English and French, married Indians, and were as much at home with the savages as with the whites. From this stock the Hudson Bay men have had a better choice of wives for more than a century. But when these "breeds" were turbulent and murderous—first in the attacks on Selkirk's colony, and next during the Riel rebellion—the Indians remained quiet. They defined their position when, in 1819, they were tempted with great bribes to massacre the Red River colonists. "No," said they; "the colonists are our friends." The men who sought to excite them to murder were the officers of the Northwest Company, who bought furs of them, to be sure, but the colonists had shared with the Indians in poverty and plenty, giving now and taking then. All were alike to the red men—friends, white men, and of the race that had taken so many of their women to wife. Therefore they went to the colonists to tell them what was being planned against them, and not from that day to this has an Indian band taken the war-path against the Canadians. I have read General Custer's theory that the United States had to do with meat-eating Indians, whereas the Canadian tribes are largely fish-eaters, and I have seen ten thousand references to the better Indian policy of Canada; but I can see no difference in the two policies, and between the Rockies and the Great Lakes I find that Canada had the Stonies, Blackfeet, and many other fierce tribes of buffalo-hunters. It is in the slow, close-growing acquaintance between the two races, and in the just policy of the Hudson Bay men toward the Indians, that I see the reason for Canada's enviable experience with her red men.

But even the Hudson Bay men have had trouble with the Indians in recent years, and one serious affair grew out of the relations between the company's servants and the squaws. There is etiquette

IN A STIFF CURRENT.





A VOYAGEUR OR CANOE-MAN OF GREAT SLAVE LAKE.

even among savages, and this was ignored up at old Fort St. Johns, on the Peace River, with the result that the Indians slaughtered the people there and burned the fort. They were Sicanie Indians of that region, and after they had massacred the men in charge, they met a boat-load of white men coming up the river with goods. To them they turned their guns also, and only four escaped. It was up in that country likewise—just this side of the Rocky Mountains, where the plains begin to be forested—that a silly clerk in a post quarrelled with an Indian, and said to him, "Before you come back to this post again, your wife and child will be dead." He spoke hastily, and meant nothing, but squaw and pappoose hap-

pened to die that winter, and the Indian walked into the fort the next spring and shot the clerk without a word.

To-day the posts are little village-like collections of buildings, usually showing white against a green background in the prettiest way imaginable; for, as a rule, they cluster on the lower bank of a river, or the lower near shore of a lake. There are not clerks enough in most of them to render a clerks' house necessary, for at the little posts half-breeds are seen to do as good service as Europeans. As a rule, there is now a store or trading-house and a fur-house and the factor's house, the canoe-house and the stable, with a barn where gardening is done, as is often the case when soil and climate permit. Often the fur-house and store are combined, the furs being laid in the upper story over the shop. There is always a flag-staff, of course. This and the flag, with the letters "H. B. C." on its field, led to the old hunters' saying that the initials stood for "Here before Christ," because, no matter how far away from the frontier a man might go, in regions he fancied no white man had been, that flag and those letters stared him in the face. You will often find that the factor, rid of all the ancient timidity that called for "palisadoes and swivels," lives on the high upper bank above the store. The usual half-breed or Indian village is seldom farther than a couple of miles away, on the same water. The factor is still, as he always has been, responsible only to himself for the discipline and management of his post, and therefore among the factories we will find all sorts of homes—homes where a piano and the magazines are prized, and daughters educated abroad shed the lustre of refinement upon their surroundings, homes where no woman rules, and homes of the French half-breed type, which we shall see is a very different mould from that of the two sorts of British half-breed that are numerous. There never was a rule by which to gauge a post. In one you found religion valued and missionaries welcomed, while in others there never was sermon or hymn. In some, Hudson Bay rum met the rum of the free-traders, and in others no rum was bartered away. To-day, in this latter respect, the Dominion law prevails, and rum may not be given or sold to the red man.

When one thinks of the lives of these factors, hidden away in forest, mountain

chain, or plain, or arctic barren, seeing the same very few faces year in and year out, with breaches of the monotonous routine once a year when the winter's furs are brought in, and once a year when the mail-packet arrives—when one thinks of their isolation, and lack of most of those influences which we in our walks prize the highest, the reason for their choosing that company's service seems almost mysterious. Yet they will tell you there is a fascination in it. This could be understood so far as the half-breeds and French Canadians were concerned, for they inherited the liking; and, after all, though most of them are only laborers, no other laborers are so free, and none spice life with so much of adventure. But the factors are mainly men of ability and good origin, well fitted to occupy responsible positions, and at better salaries. However, from the outset the rule has been that they have become as enamored of the trader's life as soldiers and sailors always have of theirs. They have usually retired from it reluctantly, and some, having gone home to Europe, have begged leave to return.

The company has always been managed upon something like a military basis. Perhaps the original necessity for forts and men trained to the use of arms suggested this. The uniforms were in keeping with the rest. The lowest rank in the service is that of the laborer, who may happen to fish or hunt at times, but is employed—or enlisted, as the fact is, for a term of years—to cut wood, shovel snow, act as a porter or gardener, and labor generally about the post. The interpreter was usually a promoted laborer, but long ago the men in the trade, Indians and whites alike, met each other half-way in the matter of language. The highest non-commissioned rank in early days was that of the postmaster at large posts. Men of that rank often got charge of small outposts, and we read that they were "on terms of equality with gentlemen." To-day the service has lost these fine points, and the laborers and commissioned officers are sharply separated. The so-called "gentleman" begins as a 'prentice clerk, and after a few years becomes a clerk. His next elevation is to the rank of a junior chief trader, and so on through the grades of chief trader, factor, and chief factor, to the office of chief commissioner, or resident American manager, chosen by

the London board, and having full powers delegated to him. A clerk—or "clark," as the rank is called—may never touch a pen. He may be a trader. Then again he may be truly an accountant. With the rank he gets a commission, and that entitles him to a minimum guarantee, with a conditional extra income based on the profits of the fur trade. Men get promotions through the chief commissioner, and he has always made fitness, rather than seniority, the criterion. Retiring officers are salaried for a term of years, the original pension fund and system having been broken up.

Sir Donald A. Smith, the present governor of the company, made his way to the highest post from the place of a 'prentice clerk. He came from Scotland as a youth, and after a time was so unfortunate as to be sent to the coast of Labrador, where a man is as much out of both the world and contact with the heart of the company as it is possible to be. The military system was felt in that instance; but every man who accepts a commission engages to hold himself in readiness to go cheerfully to the north pole, or anywhere



VOYAGEUR WITH TUMPLINE.

between Labrador and the Queen Charlotte Islands. However, to a man of Sir Donald's parts no obstacle is more than a temporary impediment. Though he staid something like seventeen years in Labrador, he worked faithfully when there was work to do, and in his own time he read and studied voraciously. When the Riel rebellion—the first one—disturbed the country's peace, he appeared on the scene as commissioner for the government. Next he became chief commissioner for the Hudson Bay Company. After a time he resigned that office to go on the board in London, and thence he stepped easily to the governorship. His parents, whose home was in Morayshire, Scotland, gave him at his birth, in 1821, not only a constitution of iron, but that shrewdness which is only Scotch, and he afterward developed remarkable foresight, and such a grasp of affairs and of complex situations as to amaze his associates.

Of course his career is almost as singular as his gifts, and the governorship can scarcely be said to be the goal of the general ambition, for it has been most apt to go to a London man. Even ordinary promotion in the company is very slow, and it follows that most men live out their existence between the rank of clerk and that of chief factor. There are two hundred central posts, and innumerable dependent posts, and the officers are continually travelling from one to another, some in their districts, and the chief or supervising ones over vast reaches of country. In winter, when dogs and sleds are used, the men walk, as a rule, and it has been nothing for a man to trudge a thousand miles in that way on a winter's journey. Roderick Macfarlane, who was cut off from the world up in the Mackenzie district, became an indefatigable explorer, and made most of his journeys on snow-shoes. He explored the Peel, the Liard, and the Mackenzie, and their surrounding regions, and went far within the Arctic Circle, where he founded the most northerly post of the company. By the regular packet from Calgary, near our border, to the northernmost post is a three-thousand-mile journey. Macfarlane was fond of the study of ornithology, and classified and catalogued all the birds that reach the frozen regions.

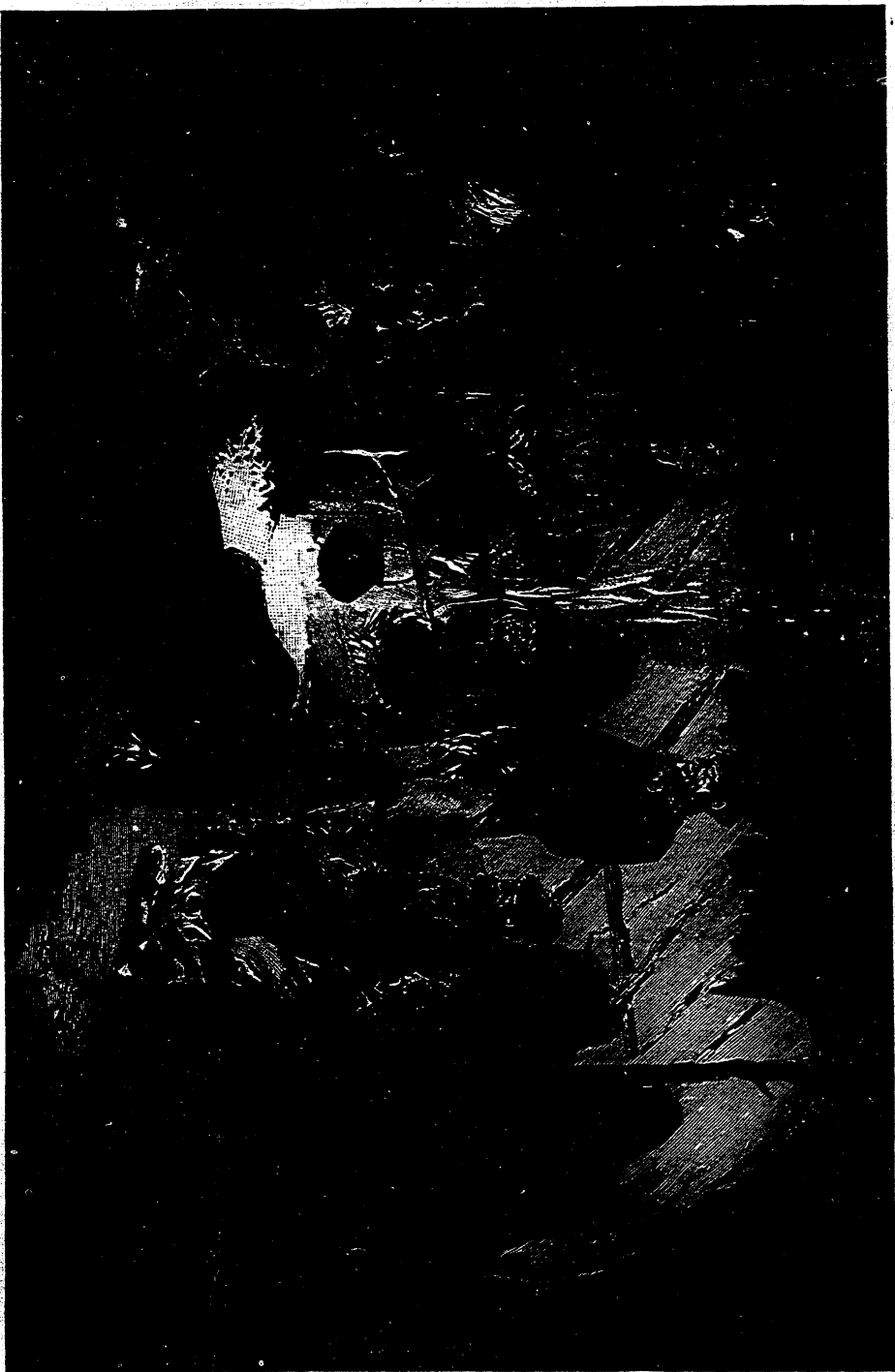
I heard of a factor far up on the east side of Hudson Bay who reads his daily

newspaper every morning with his coffee—but of course such an instance is a rare one. He manages it by having a complete set of the London *Times* sent to him by each winter's packet, and each morning the paper of that date in the preceding year is taken from the bundle by his servant and dampened, as it had been when it left the press, and spread by the factor's plate. Thus he gets for half an hour each day a taste of his old habit and life at home.

There was another factor who developed artistic capacity, and spent his leisure at drawing and painting. He did so well that he ventured many sketches for the illustrated papers of London, some of which were published.

The half-breed has developed with the age and growth of Canada. There are now half-breeds and half-breeds, and some of them are titled, and others hold high official places. It occurred to an English lord not long ago, while he was being entertained in a government house in one of the parts of newer Canada, to inquire of his host, "What are these half-breeds I hear about? I should like to see what one looks like." His host took the nobleman's breath away by his reply. "I am one," said he. There is no one who has travelled much in western Canada who has not now and then been entertained in homes where either the man or woman of the household was of mixed blood, and in such homes I have found a high degree of refinement and the most polished manners. Usually one needs the information that such persons possess such blood. After that the peculiar black hair and certain facial features in the subject of such gossip attest the truthfulness of the assertion. There is no rule for measuring the character and quality of this plastic, receptive, and often very ambitious element in Canadian society, yet one may say broadly that the social position and attainments of these people have been greatly influenced by the nationality of their fathers. For instance, the French *habitants* and woodsmen far, far too often sank to the level of their wives when they married Indian women. Light-hearted, careless, unambitious, and drifting to the wilderness because of the absence of restraint there; illiterate, of coarse origin, fond of whiskey and gambling—they threw off superiority to the

VOYAGEURS IN CAMP FOR THE NIGHT.



Indian, and evaded responsibility and concern in home management. Of course this is not a rule, but a tendency. On the other hand, the Scotch and English forced their wives up to their own standards. Their own home training, respect for more than the forms of religion, their love of home and of a permanent patch of ground of their own—all these had their effect, and that has been to rear half-breed children in proud and comfortable homes, to send them to mix with the children of cultivated persons in old communities, and to fit them with pride and ambition and cultivation for an equal start in the journey of life. Possessing such foundation for it, the equality has happily never been denied to them in Canada.

To-day the service is very little more inviting than in the olden time. The loneliness and removal from the touch of civilization remain throughout a vast region; the arduous journeys by sled and canoe remain; the dangers of flood and frost are undiminished. Unfortunately, among the changes made by time, one is that which robs the present factor's surroundings of a great part of that which was most picturesque. Of all the prettinesses of the Indian costuming one sees now only a trace here and there in a few tribes, while in many the moccasin and tepee, and in some only the moccasin, remain. The birch-bark canoe and the snow-shoe are the main reliance of both races, but the steamboat has been impressed into parts of the service, and most of the descendants of the old-time *voyageur* preserve only his worsted belt, his knife, and his cap and moccasins at the utmost. In places the *engagé* has become a mere deck hand. His scarlet paddle has rotted away; he no longer awakens the echoes of forest or cañon with *chansons* that died in the throats of a generation that has gone. In return, the horrors of intertribal war and of a precarious foothold among fierce and turbulent bands have nearly vanished; but there was a spice in them that added to the fascination of the service.

The dogs and sleds form a very interesting part of the Hudson Bay outfit. One does not need to go very deep into western Canada to meet with them. As close to our centre of population as Nipigon, on Lake Superior, the only roads into the north are the rivers and lakes, traversed

by canoes in summer and sleds in winter. The dogs are of a peculiar breed, and are called "huskies"—undoubtedly a corruption of the word Esquimaux. They preserve a closer resemblance to the wolf than any of our domesticated dogs, and exhibit their kinship with that scavenger of the wilderness in their nature as well as their looks. To-day their females, if tied and left in the forest, will often attest companionship with its denizens by bringing forth litters of wolfish progeny. Moreover, it will not be necessary to feed all with whom the experiment is tried, for the wolves will be apt to bring food to them as long as they are thus neglected by man. They are often as large as the ordinary Newfoundland dog, but their legs are shorter, and even more hairy, and the hair along their necks, from their shoulders to their skulls, stands erect in a thick bristling mass. They have the long snouts, sharp-pointed ears, and the tails of wolves, and their cry is a yelp rather than a bark. Like wolves they are apt to yelp in chorus at sunrise and at sunset. They delight in worrying peaceful animals, setting their own numbers against one, and they will kill cows, or even children, if they get the chance. They are disciplined only when at work, and are then so surprisingly obedient, tractable, and industrious as to plainly show that though their nature is savage and wolfish, they could be reclaimed by domestication. In isolated cases plenty of them are. As it is, in their packs, their battles among themselves are terrible, and they are dangerous when loose. In some districts it is the custom to turn them loose in summer on little islands in the lakes, leaving them to hunger or feast according as the supply of dead fish thrown upon the shore is small or plentiful. When they are kept in dog quarters they are simply penned up and fed during the summer, so that the savage side of their nature gets full play during long periods. Fish is their principal diet, and stores of dried fish are kept for their winter food. Corn meal is often fed to them also. Like a wolf or an Indian, a "husky" gets along without food when there is not any, and will eat his own weight of it when it is plenty.

A typical dog-sled is very like a toboggan. It is formed of two thin pieces of oak or birch lashed together with buckskin thongs and turned up high in front.



THE FACTOR'S FANCY TOBOGGAN.

It is usually about nine feet in length by sixteen inches wide. A leather cord is run along the outer edges for fastening whatever may be put upon the sled. Varying numbers of dogs are harnessed to such sleds, but the usual number is four. Traces, collars, and backbands form the harness, and the dogs are hitched one before the other. Very often the collars are completed with sets of sleigh-bells, and sometimes the harness is otherwise ornamented with beads, tassels, fringes, or ribbons. The leader, or foregoer, is always the best in the team. The dog next to him is called the steady dog, and the last is named the steer dog. As a rule, these faithful animals are treated harshly, if not brutally. It is a Hudson Bay axiom that no man who cannot curse in three languages is fit to drive them. The three profanities are, of course, English, French, and Indian, though whoever has heard the Northwest French knows that it ought to serve by itself, as it is half-soled with Anglo-Saxon oaths and heeled with Indian obscenity. The rule with whoever goes on a dog-sled journey is that the

driver, or mock-passenger, runs behind the dogs. The main function of the sled is to carry the dead weight, the burdens of tent covers, blankets, food, and the like. The men run along with or behind the dogs, on snow-shoes, and when the dogs make better time than horses are able to, and will carry between 200 and 300 pounds over daily distances of from twenty to thirty-five miles, according to the condition of the ice or snow, and that many a journey of 1000 miles has been performed in this way, and some of 2000 miles, the test of human endurance is as great as that of canine grit.

Men travelling "light," with extra sleds for the freight, and men on short journeys often ride in the sleds, which in such cases are fitted up as "carioles" for the purpose. I have heard an unauthenticated account, by a Hudson Bay man, of men who drove themselves, disciplining refractory or lazy dogs by simply pulling them in beside or over the dash-board, and holding them down by the neck while they thrashed them. A story is told of a worthy bishop who complained of the

slow progress his sled was making, and was told that it was useless to complain, as the dogs would not work unless they were roundly and incessantly cursed.

performances of the drivers are the more wonderful. It was a white youth, son of a factor, who ran behind the bishop's dogs in the spurt of 40 miles by daylight that



HALT OF A YORK BOAT BRIGADE FOR THE NIGHT.

After a time the bishop gave his driver absolution for the profanity needed for the remainder of the journey, and thenceforth sped over the snow at a gallop, every stroke of the half-breed's long and cruel whip being sent home with a volley of wicked words, emphasized at times with peltings with sharp-edged bits of ice. Kane, the explorer, made an average of 57 miles a day behind these shaggy little brutes. Milton and Cheadle, in their book, mention instances where the dogs made 140 miles in less than 48 hours, and the Bishop of Rupert's Land told me he had covered 20 miles in a forenoon and 20 in the afternoon of the same day, without causing his dogs to exhibit evidence of fatigue. The best time is made on hard snow and ice, of course, and when the conditions suit, the drivers whip off their snow-shoes to trot behind the dogs more easily. In view of what they do, it is no wonder that many of the Northern Indians, upon first seeing horses, named them simply "big dog." But to me the per-

I mention. The men who do such work explain that the "lope" of the dogs is peculiarly suited to the dog-trot of a human being.

A picture of a factor on a round of his outposts, or of a chief factor racing through a great district, will now be intelligible. If he is riding, he fancies that princes and lords would envy him could they see his luxurious comfort. Fancy him in a dog-carriage of the best pattern—a little suggestive of a burial casket, to be sure, in its shape, but gaudily painted, and so full of soft warm furs that the man within is enveloped like a chrysalis in a cocoon. Perhaps there are Russian bells on the collars of the dogs, and their harness is "Frenchified" with bead-work and tassels. The air, which fans only his face, is crisp and invigorating, and before him the lake or stream over which he rides is a sheet of virgin snow—not nature's winding-sheet, as those who cannot love nature have said, but rather a robe of beautiful ermine fringed and embroidered with

dark evergreen, and that in turn flecked at every point with snow, as if bejewelled with pearls. If the factor chats with his driver, who falls behind at rough places to keep the sled from tipping over, their conversation is carried on at so high a tone as to startle the birds into flight, if there are any, and to shock the scene as by the greatest rudeness possible in that then vast silent land. If silence is kept, the factor reads the prints of game in the snow, of foxes' pads and deer hoofs, of wolf splotches, and the queer hieroglyphics of birds, or the dots and troughs of rabbit-trailing. To him these are as legible as the Morse alphabet to telegraphers, and as important as stock quotations to the pallid men of Wall Street.

Suddenly in the distance he sees a human figure. Time was that his predecessors would have stopped to discuss the situation and its dangers, for the sight of one Indian suggested the presence of more, and the question came, were these friendly or fierce? But now the sled hurries on. It is only an Indian or half-breed hunter minding his traps, of which he may have a sufficient number to give him a circuit of ten or more miles away from and back to his lodge or village. He is approached and hailed by the driver, and with some pretty name very often—one that may mean in English "hawk flying across the sky when the sun is setting," or "blazing sun," or whatever. On goes the sled, and perhaps a village is the next object of interest; not a village in our sense of the word, but now and then a tepee or a hut peeping above the brush beside the water, the eye being led to them by the signs of slothful disorder close by—the rotting canoe frame, the bones, the dirty tattered blankets, the twig-formed skeleton of a steam bath, such as Indians resort to when tired or sick or uncommonly dirty, the worn-out snowshoes hung on a tree, and the racks of frozen fish or dried meat here and there. A dog rushes down to the water-side, barking furiously—an Indian dog of the currish type of paupers' dogs the world around—and this stirs the village pack, and brings out the squaws, who are addressed, as the trapper up the stream was, by some poetic names, albeit poetic license is sometimes strained to form names not at all pretty to polite senses, "All Stomach" being that of one dusky princess, and serving to indicate the lengths to

which poesy may lead the untrammelled mind.

The sun sinks early, and if our traveller be journeying in the West and be a lover of nature, heaven send that his face be turned toward the sunset! Then, be the sky anything but completely storm-draped, he will see a sight so glorious that eloquence becomes a naked suppliant for alms beyond the gift of language when set to describe it. A few clouds are necessary to its perfection, and then they take on celestial dyes, and one sees, above the vanished sun, a blaze of golden yellow thinned into a tone that is luminous crystal. This is flanked by belts and breasts of salmon and ruby red, and all melt toward the zenith into a rose tone that has body at the base, but pales at top into a mere blush. This I have seen night after night on the lakes and the plains and on the mountains. But as the glory of it beckons the traveller ever toward itself, so the farther he follows, the more brilliant and gaudy will be his reward. Beyond the mountains the valleys and waters are more and more enriched, until, at the Pacific, even San Francisco's shabby sand hills stir poetry and reverence in the soul by their borrowed magnificence.

The travellers soon stop to camp for the night, and while the "breed" falls to at the laborious but quick and simple work, the factor either helps or smokes his pipe. A sight-seer or sportsman would have set his man to bobbing for jackfish or lake trout, or would have stopped awhile to bag a partridge, or might have bought whatever of this sort the trapper or Indian village boasted, but, ten to one, this meal would be of bacon and bread or dried meat, and perhaps some flapjacks, such as would bring coin to a doctor in the city, but which seem ethereal and delicious in the wilderness, particularly if made half an inch thick, saturated with grease, well browned, and eaten while at the temperature and consistency of molten lava.

The sled is pulled up by the bank, the ground is cleared for a fire, wood and brush are cut, and the deft laborer starts the flame in a tent-like pyramid of kindlings no higher or broader than a teacup. This tiny fire he spreads by adding fuel until he has constructed and led up to a conflagration of logs as thick as his thighs, cleverly planned with a backlog

and glowing fire-bed, and a sapling bent over the hottest part to hold a pendent kettle on its tip. The dogs will have needed disciplining long before this, and if the driver be like many of his kind, and works himself into a fury, he will not hesitate to seize one and send his teeth together through its hide after he has beaten it until he is tired. The point of order having thus been raised and carried, the shaggy, often handsome, animals will be minded to forget their private grudges and quarrels, and, seated on their haunches, with their intelligent faces toward the fire, will watch the cooking intently. The pocket knives or sheath knives of the men will be apt to be the only table implement in use at the meal. Canada had reached the possession of seigniorial mansions of great character before any other knife was brought to table, though the ladies used costly blades set in precious and beautiful handles. To-day the axe ranks the knife in the wilderness, but he who has a knife can make and furnish his own table—and his house also, for that matter.

Supper over, and a glass of grog having been put down, with water from the hole in the ice whence the liquid for the inevitable tea was gotten, the night's rest is begun. The method for this varies. As good men as ever walked have asked nothing more cozy than a snug warm trough in the snow and a blanket or a robe; but perhaps this traveller will call for a shake-down of balsam boughs, with all the furs out of the sled for his covering. If nicer yet, he may order a low hollow chamber of three sides of banked snow, and a superstructure of crotched sticks and cross-poles, with canvas thrown over it. Every man to his quality, of course, and that of the servant calls for simply a blanket. With that he sleeps as soundly as if he were Santa Claus and only stirred once a year. Then will fall upon what seems the whole world the mighty hush of the wilderness, broken only occasionally by the hoot of an owl, the cry of a wolf, the deep thug of the straining ice on the lake, or the snoring of the men and dogs. But if the earth seems asleep, not so the sky. The magic shuttle of the aurora borealis is oftentimes at work up over that North country, sending its shifting lights weaving across the firmament with a tremulous brilliancy and energy we in this country get but

pale hints of when we see the phenomenon at all. Flashing and palpitating incessantly, the rose-tinted waves and luminous white bars leap across the sky or dart up and down it in manner so fantastic and so forceful, even despite their shadowy thinness, that travellers have fancied themselves deaf to some seraphic sound that they believed such commotion must produce.

An incident of this typical journey I am describing would, at more than one season, be a meeting with some band of Indians going to a post with furs for barter. Though the bulk of these hunters fetch their quarry in the spring and early summer, some may come at any time. The procession may be only that of a family or of the two or more families that live together or as neighbors. The man, if there is but one group, is certain to be stalking ahead, carrying nothing but his gun. Then come the women, laden like pack-horses. They may have a sled packed with the furs and drawn by a dog or two, and an extra dog may bear a balanced load on his back, but the squaw is certain to have a spine-warping burden of meat and a battered kettle and a pappoose, and whatever personal property of any and every sort she and her liege lord own. Children who can walk have to do so, but it sometimes happens that a baby a year and a half or two years old is on her back, while a new-born infant, swaddled in blanket stuff, and bagged and tied like a Bologna sausage, surmounts the load on the sled. A more tatterdemalion outfit than a band of these pauperized savages form it would be difficult to imagine. On the plains they will have horses dragging travois, dogs with travois, women and children loaded with impedimenta, a colt or two running loose, the lordly men riding free, straggling curs a plenty, babies in arms, babies swaddled, and toddlers afoot, and the whole battalion presenting at its exposed points exhibits of torn blankets, raw meat, distorted pots and pans, tent, poles, and rusty traps, in all eloquently suggestive of an eviction in the slums of a great city.

I speak thus of these people not willingly, but out of the necessity of truth-telling. The Indian east of the Rocky Mountains is to me the subject of an admiration which is the stronger the more nearly I find him as he was in his prime.

It is not his fault that most of his race have degenerated. It is not our fault that we have better uses for the continent than those to which he put it. But it is our fault that he is, as I have seen him, shivering in a cotton tepee full of holes, and turning around and around before a fire of wet wood to keep from freezing to death; furnished meat if he has been fierce enough to make us fear him, left to starve if he has been docile; taught, ay, forced to beg, mocked at by a religion he cannot understand, from the mouths of men who apparently will not understand him; debauched with rum, despoiled by the lust of white men in every form that lust can take. Ah, it is a sickening story. Not in Canada, do you say? Why, in the northern wilds of Canada are districts peopled by beggars who have been in such pitiful stress for food and covering that the Hudson Bay Company has kept them alive with advances of provisions and blankets winter after winter. They are Indians who in their strength never gave the government the concern it now fails to show for their weakness. The great fur company has thus added generosity to its long career of just dealing with these poor adult children; for it is a fact that though the company has made what profit it might, it has not, in a century at least, cheated the Indians, or made false representations to them, or lost their good-will and respect by any feature of its policy toward them. Its relation to them has been paternal, and they owe none of their degradation to it.

I have spoken of the visits of the natives to the posts. There are two other arrivals of great consequence—the coming of the supplies, and of the winter mail or packet. I have seen the provisions and trade goods being put up in bales in the great mercantile storehouse of the company in Winnipeg—a store like a combination of a Sixth Avenue ladies' bazar and one of our wholesale grocer's shops—and I have seen such weights of canned vegetables and canned plum-pudding and bottled ale and other luxuries that I am sure that in some posts there is good living on high days and holidays if not always. The stores are packed in parcels averaging sixty pounds (and sometimes one hundred), to make them convenient for handling on the portages—"for packing them over the carries," as our traders used to say. It is in following these sup-

plies that we become most keenly sensible of the changes time has wrought in the methods of the company. The day was, away back in the era of the Northwest Company, that the goods for the posts went up the Ottawa from Montreal in great canoes manned by hardy *voyageurs* in picturesque costumes, wielding scarlet paddles, and stirring the forests with their happy songs. The scene shifted, the companies blended, and the centre of the trade moved from old Fort William, close to where Port Arthur now is on Lake Superior, up to Winnipeg, on the Red River of the North. Then the Canadians and their cousins, the half-breeds, more picturesque than ever, and manning the great York boats of the Hudson Bay Company, swept in a long train through Lake Winnipeg to Norway House, and thence by a marvellous water route all the way to the Rockies and the Arctic, sending off freight for side districts at fixed points along the course. The main factories on this line, maintained as such for more than a century, bear names whose very mention stirs the blood of one who knows the romantic, picturesque, and poetic history and atmosphere of the old company when it was the landlord (in part, and in part monopolist) of a territory that cut into our Northwest and Alaska, and swept from Labrador to Vancouver Island. Northward and westward, by waters emptying into Hudson Bay, the brigade of great boats worked through a region embroidered with sheets and ways of water. The system that was next entered, and which bore more nearly due west, bends and bulges with lakes and straits like a ribbon all curved and knotted. Thus, at a great portage, the divide was reached and crossed; and so the waters flowing to the Arctic, and one—the Peace River—rising beyond the Rockies, were met and travelled. This was the way and the method until after the Canadian Pacific Railway was built, but now the Winnipeg route is of subordinate importance, and feeds only the region near the west side of Hudson Bay. The Northern supplies now go by rail from Calgary, in Alberta, over the plains by the new Edmonton railroad. From Edmonton the goods go by cart to Athabasca Landing, there to be laden on a steamboat, which takes them northward until some rapids are met, and avoided by the use of a singular combination of ba-

teaux and tramway rails. After a slow progress of fifteen miles another steamboat is met, and thence they follow the Athabasca, through Athabasca Lake, and so on up to a second rapids, on the Great Slave River this time, where oxen and carts carry them across a sixteen-mile portage to a screw steamer, which finishes the three-thousand-mile journey to the North. Of course the shorter branch routes, distributing the goods on either side of the main track, are still traversed by canoes and hardy fellows in the old way, but with shabby accessories of costume and spirit. These boatmen, when they come to a portage, produce their tompines, and "pack" the goods to the next waterway. By means of these "lines" they carry great weights, resting on their backs, but supported from their skulls, over which the strong straps are passed.

The winter mail-packet, starting from Winnipeg in the depth of the season, goes to all the posts by dog train. The letters and papers are packed in great boxes and strapped to the sleds, beside or behind

which the drivers trot along, cracking their lashes and pelting and cursing the dogs. A more direct course than the old Lake Winnipeg way has usually been followed by this packet; but it is thought that the route *via* Edmonton and Athabasca Landing will serve better yet, so that another change may be made. This is a small exhibition as compared with the brigade that takes the supplies, or those others that come plashing down the streams and across the country with the furs every year. But only fancy how eagerly this solitary semiannual mail is waited for! It is a little speck on the snow-wrapped upper end of all North America. It cuts a tiny trail, and here and there lesser black dots move off from it to cut still slenderer threads, zigzagging to the side factories and lesser posts; but we may be sure that if human eyes could see so far, all those of the white men in all that vast tangled system of trading centres would be watching the little caravan, until at last each pair fell upon the expected missives from the throbbing world this side of the border.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

BY HORATIO BRIDGE

Third Paper.

XII.

IMEDIATELY after General Pierce's election to the Presidency, in 1852, he offered Hawthorne the Liverpool consulate, an office then considered the most lucrative of all the foreign appointments in the Presidential gift, and soon after his inauguration he gave him that place.

In July, 1853, Hawthorne and his family sailed for England.

A few of his letters are here given, which speak of some of his annoyances at the prospect of his official emoluments being decreased by legislation, and of some other matters of public and private concern.

LIVERPOOL, March 30, 1854.

MY DEAR BRIDGE.—You are welcome home, and I heartily wish I could see Mrs. Bridge and yourself and little Marian by our English fireside.

I like my office well enough, but any official duties and obligations are irksome to me beyond expression. Nevertheless, the emoluments will be a sufficient inducement to keep

me here, though they are not above a quarter part what some people suppose them.

It sickens me to look back to America. I am sick to death of the continual fuss and tumult and excitement and bad blood which we keep up about political topics. If it were not for my children I should probably never return, but—after quitting office—should go to Italy, and live and die there. If Mrs. Bridge and you would go too, we might form a little colony amongst ourselves, and see our children grow up together. But it will never do to deprive them of their native land, which I hope will be a more comfortable and happy residence in their day than it has been in ours. In my opinion, we are the most miserable people on earth.

I wish you would send me the most minute particulars about Pierce—how he looks and behaves when you meet him, how his health and spirits are—and above all what the public really thinks of him. A point which I am utterly unable to get at through the newspapers. Give him my best regards, and ask him whether he finds his post any more comfortable than I prophesied it would be.

I have a great deal more to say, but defer it to future letters. Mrs. Hawthorne sends her