

The Arctic Prairies

Ernest Thompson Seton

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The Arctic Prairies

A Canoe-Journey

OF 2,000 MILES IN SEARCH OF THE CARIBOU

BEING THE ACCOUNT OF A VOYAGE TO THE REGION NORTH OF AYLMER LAKE

By Ernest Thompson Seton

Author of "Wild Animals I Have Known", "Life Histories", Etc.

DEDICATED

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR WILFRID LAURIER, G. C. M. G.
PREMIER OF CANADA

PREFACE

What young man of our race would not gladly give a year of his life to roll backward the scroll of time for five decades and live that year in the romantic bygone-days of the Wild West; to see the great Missouri while the Buffalo pastured on its banks, while big game teemed in sight and the red man roamed and hunted, unchecked by fence or hint of white man's rule; or, when that rule was represented only by scattered trading-posts, hundreds of miles apart, and at best the traders could exchange the news by horse or canoe and months of lonely travel?

I for one, would have rejoiced in tenfold payment for the privilege of this backward look in our age, and had reached the middle life before I realised that, at a much less heavy cost, the miracle was possible today.

For the uncivilised Indian still roams the far reaches of absolutely unchanged, unbroken forest and prairie leagues, and has knowledge of white men only in bartering furs at the scattered trading-posts, where locomotive and telegraph are unknown; still the wild Buffalo elude the hunters, fight the Wolves, wallow, wander, and breed; and still there is hoofed game by the million to be found where the Saxon is as seldom seen as on the Missouri in the times of Lewis and Clarke. Only we must seek it all, not in the West, but in the far North-west; and for "Missouri and Mississippi" read "Peace and Mackenzie Rivers," those noble streams that northward roll their mile-wide turbid floods a thousand leagues to the silent Arctic Sea.

This was the thought which spurred me to a six months' journey by canoe. And I found what I went in search of, but found, also, abundant and better rewards that were not in mind, even as Saul, the son of Kish, went seeking asses and found for himself a crown and a great kingdom.

Four years have gone by since I lived through these experiences. Such a lapse of time may have made my news grow stale, but it has also given the opportunity for the working up of specimens and scientific records. The results, for the most part, will be found in the Appendices, and three of these, as indicated--namely, the sections on Plants, Mammals, and Birds--are the joint work of my assistant, Mr. Edward A. Preble, and myself.

My thanks are due here to the Right Honourable Lord Strathcona, G. C. M. G., Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, for giving me access to the records of the Company whenever I needed them for historical purposes; to the Honourable Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, Canada, for the necessary papers and permits to facilitate scientific collection, and also to Clarence C. Chipman, Esq., of Winnipeg, the Hudson's Bay Company's Commissioner, for practical help in preparing my outfit, and for letters of introduction to the many officers of the Company, whose kind help was so often a Godsend.

ERNEST THOMPSON SETON.

CHAPTER I

DEPARTURE FOR THE NORTH

In 1907 I set out to journey by canoe down the Athabaska and adjoining waters to the sole remaining forest wilds--the far north-west of Canada--and the yet more desert Arctic Plains, where still, it was said, were to be seen the Caribou in their primitive condition.

My only companion was Edward A. Preble, of Washington, D. C., a trained naturalist,--an expert canoeist and traveller, and a man of three seasons' experience in the Hudson's Bay Territory and the Mackenzie Valley. While my chief object was to see the Caribou, and prove their continued abundance, I was prepared incidentally to gather natural-history material of all kinds, and to complete the shore line of the ambiguous lake called "Aylmer," as well as explore its sister, the better-known Clinton-Colden.

I went for my own pleasure at my own expense, and yet I could not persuade my Hudson's Bay Company friends that I was not sent by some government, museum or society for some secret purpose.

On the night of May 5 we left Winnipeg, and our observations began with the day at Brandon.

From that point westward to Regina we saw abundant evidence that last year had been a "rabbit year," that is, a year in which the ever-fluctuating population of Northern Hares (Snowshoe-rabbits or White-rabbits) had reached its maximum, for nine-tenths of the bushes in sight from the train had been barked at the snow level. But the fact that we saw not one Rabbit shows that "the plague" had appeared, had run its usual drastic course, and nearly exterminated the species in this particular region.

Early next morning at Kininvie (40 miles west of Medicine Hat, Alberta) we saw a band of 4 Antelope south of the track; later we saw others all along as far as Gleichen. All were south of the track. The bands contained as follows: 4, 14, 18, 8, 12, 8, 4, 1, 4, 5, 4, 6, 4, 18, 2, 6, 34, 6, 3, 1, 10, 25, 16, 3, 7, 9 (almost never 2, probably because this species does not pair), or 232 Antelope in 26 bands along 70 miles of track; but all were on the south side; not one was noted on the north.

The case is simple. During the past winter, while the Antelope were gone southward, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had fenced its track. In spring the migrants, returning, found themselves cut off from their summer feeding-grounds by those impassable barb-wires, and so were gathered against the barrier. One band of 8, at a stopping place, ran off when they saw passengers alighting, but at half a mile they turned, and again came up against the fence, showing how strong is the northward impulse.

Unless they learn some way of mastering the difficulty, it means extermination for the Antelope of the north Saskatchewan.

From Calgary we went by train to Edmonton. This is the point of leaving the railway, the beginning of hard travel, and here we waited a few days to gather together our various shipments of food and equipment, and to await notice that the river was open.

In the north the grand event of the year is the opening of the rivers. The day when the ice goes out is the official first day of spring, the beginning of the season; and is eagerly looked for, as every day's delay means serious loss to the traders, whose men are idle, but drawing pay as though at work.

On May 11, having learned that the Athabaska was open, we left Edmonton in a livery rig, and drove 94 miles northward through a most promising, half-settled country, and late the next day arrived at Athabaska Landing, on the great east tributary of the Mackenzie, whose waters were to bear us onward for so many weeks.

Athabaska Landing is a typical frontier town. These are hard words, but justified. We put up at the principal hotel; the other lodgers told me it was considered the worst hotel in the world. I thought I knew of two worse, but next morning accepted the prevailing view.

Our canoe and provisions arrived, but the great convoy of scows that were to take the annual supplies of trade stuff for the far north was not ready, and we needed the help and guidance of its men, so must needs wait for four days.

This gave us the opportunity to study the local natural history and do a little collecting, the results of which appear later.

The great size of the timber here impressed me. I measured a typical black poplar (*P. balsamifera*), 100 feet to the top, 8 feet 2 inches in circumference, at 18 inches from the ground, and I saw many thicker, but none taller.

At the hotel, also awaiting the scows, was a body of four (dis-)Mounted Police, bound like ourselves for the far north. The

officer in charge turned out to be an old friend from Toronto, Major A. M. Jarvis. I also met John Schott, the gigantic half-breed, who went to the Barren Grounds with Caspar Whitney in 1895. He seemed to have great respect for Whitney as a tramp, and talked much of the trip, evidently having forgotten his own shortcomings of the time. While I sketched his portrait, he regaled me with memories of his early days on Red River, where he was born in 1841. I did not fail to make what notes I could of those now historic times. His accounts of the Antelope on White Horse Plain, in 1855, and Buffalo about the site of Carberry, Manitoba, in 1852, were new and valuable light on the ancient ranges of these passing creatures.

All travellers who had preceded me into the Barren Grounds had relied on the abundant game, and in consequence suffered dreadful hardships; in some cases even starved to death. I proposed to rely on no game, but to take plenty of groceries, the best I could buy in Winnipeg, which means the best in the world; and, as will be seen later, the game, because I was not relying on it, walked into camp every day.

But one canoe could not carry all these provisions, so most of it I shipped on the Hudson's Bay Company scows, taking with us, in the canoe, food for not more than a week, which with camp outfit was just enough for ballast.

Of course I was in close touch with the Hudson's Bay people. Although nominally that great trading company parted with its autocratic power and exclusive franchise in 1870, it is still the sovereign of the north. And here let me correct an error that is sometimes found even in respectable print--the Company has at all times been ready to assist scientists to the utmost of its very ample power. Although jealous of its trading rights, every one is free to enter the territory without taking count of the Company, but there has not yet been a successful scientific expedition into the region without its active co-operation.

The Hudson's Bay Company has always been the guardian angel of the north.

I suppose that there never yet was another purely commercial concern that so fully realized the moral obligations of its great power, or that has so uniformly done its best for the people it ruled.

At all times it has stood for peace, and one hears over and over again that such and such tribes were deadly enemies, but the Company insisted on their smoking the peace pipe. The Sioux and Ojibway, Black-Foot and Assiniboine., Dog-Rib and Copper-Knife, Beaver and Chipewyan, all offer historic illustrations in point, and many others could be found for the list.

The name Peace River itself is the monument of a successful effort on the part of the Company to bring about a better understanding between the Crees and the Beavers.

Besides human foes, the Company has saved the Indian from famine and plague. Many a hunger-stricken tribe owes its continued existence to the fatherly care of the Company, not simply general and indiscriminate, but minute and personal, carried into the details of their lives. For instance, when bots so pestered the Caribou of

one region as to render their hides useless to the natives, the Company brought in hides from a district where they still were good.

The Chipewyans were each spring the victims of snow-blindness until the Company brought and succeeded in popularizing their present ugly but effectual and universal peaked hats. When their train-dogs were running down in physique, the Company brought in a strain of pure Huskies or Eskimo. When the Albany River Indians were starving and unable to hunt, the Company gave the order for 5,000 lodge poles. Then, not knowing how else to turn them to account, commissioned the Indians to work them into a picket garden-fence. At all times the native found a father in the Company, and it was the worst thing that ever happened the region when the irresponsible free-traders with their demoralizing methods were allowed to enter and traffic where or how they pleased.

CHAPTER II

DOWN THE NOISY RIVER WITH THE VOYAGEURS

At Athabaska Landing, on May 18, 1907, 10.15 A. M., we boarded the superb Peterborough canoe that I had christened the Ann Seton. The Athabaska River was a-flood and clear of ice; 13 scows of freight, with 60 half-breeds and Indians to man them, left at the same time, and in spite of a strong headwind we drifted northward fully 31 miles an hour.

The leading scow, where I spent some time, was in charge of John MacDonald himself, and his passengers comprised the Hudson's Bay Company officials, going to their posts or on tours of inspection. They were a jolly crowd, like a lot of rollicking schoolboys, full of fun and good-humour, chaffing and joking all day; but when a question of business came up, the serious businessman appeared in each, and the Company's interest was cared for with their best powers. The bottle was not entirely absent in these scow fraternities, but I saw no one the worse for liquor on the trip.

The men of mixed blood jabbered in French, Cree, and Chipewyan chiefly, but when they wanted to swear, they felt the inadequacy of these mellifluous or lisping tongues, and fell back on virile Saxon, whose tang, projectivity, and wealth of vile epithet evidently supplied a long-felt want in the Great Lone Land of the Dog and Canoe.

In the afternoon Preble and I pushed on in our boat, far in advance of the brigade. As we made early supper I received for the twentieth time a lesson in photography. A cock Partridge or Ruffed Grouse came and drummed on a log in open view, full sunlight, fifty feet away. I went quietly to the place. He walked off, but little alarmed. I set the camera eight feet from the log, with twenty-five feet of tubing, and retired to a good hiding-place. But alas! I put the tube on the left-hand pump, not knowing that that was a dummy. The Grouse came back in three minutes, drumming in a superb pose

squarely in front of the camera. I used the pump, but saw that it failed to operate; on going forward the Grouse skimmed away and returned no more. Preble said, "Never mind; there will be another every hundred yards all the way down the river, later on." I could only reply, "The chance never comes but once," and so it proved. We heard Grouse drumming many times afterward, but the sun was low, or the places densely shaded, or the mosquitoes made conditions impossible for silent watching; the perfect chance came but once, as it always does, and I lost it.

About twenty miles below the Landing we found the abandoned winter hut of a trapper; on the roof were the dried up bodies of 1 Skunk, 2 Foxes, and 30 Lynxes, besides the bones of 2 Moose, showing the nature of the wild life about.

That night, as the river was brimming and safe, we tied up to the scows and drifted, making 30 more miles, or 60 since embarking.

In the early morning, I was much struck by the lifelessness of the scene. The great river stretched away northward, the hills rose abruptly from the water's edge, everywhere extended the superb spruce forest, here fortunately unburnt; but there seemed no sign of living creature outside of our own numerous, noisy, and picturesque party. River, hills, and woods were calm and silent. It was impressive, if disappointing; and, when at last the fir stillness was broken by a succession of trumpet notes from the Great Pileated Woodpecker, the sound went rolling on and on, in reverberating echoes that might well have alarmed the bird himself.

The white spruce forest along the banks is most inspiring, magnificent here. Down the terraced slopes and right to the water's edge on the alluvial soil it stands in ranks. Each year, of course, the floods undercut the banks, and more trees fall, to become at last the flotsam of the shore a thousand miles away.

There is something sad about these stately trees, densely packed, all a-row, unflinching, hopelessly awaiting the onset of the inexorable, invincible river. One group, somewhat isolated and formal, was a forest life parallel to Lady Butler's famous "Roll Call of the Grenadiers."

At night we reached the Indian village of Pelican Portage, and landed by climbing over huge blocks of ice that were piled along the shore. The adult male inhabitants came down to our camp, so that the village was deserted, except for the children and a few women.

As I walked down the crooked trail along which straggle the cabins, I saw something white in a tree at the far end. Supposing it to be a White-rabbit in a snare, I went near and found, to my surprise, first that it was a dead house-cat, a rare species here; second, under it, eyeing it and me alternately, was a hungry-looking Lynx. I had a camera, for it was near sundown, and in the woods, so I went back to the boat and returned with a gun. There was the Lynx still prowling, but now farther from the village. I do not believe he would have harmed the children, but a Lynx is game. I fired, and he fell without a quiver or a sound. This was the first time I had used a gun in many years, and was the only time on the trip. I felt rather guilty, but the carcass was a godsend to two old

Indians who were sickening on a long diet of salt pork, and that Lynx furnished them tender meat for three days afterward; while its skin and skull went to the American Museum.

On the night of May 20, we camped just above Grand Rapids--Preble and I alone, for the first time, under canvas, and glad indeed to get away from the noisy rabble of the boatmen, though now they were but a quarter mile off. At first I had found them amusing and picturesque, but their many unpleasant habits, their distinct aversion to strangers, their greediness to get all they could out of one, and do nothing in return, combined finally with their habit of gambling all night to the loud beating of a tin pan, made me thankful to quit their company for a time.

At Grand Rapids the scows were unloaded, the goods shipped over a quarter-mile hand tramway, on an island, the scows taken down a side channel, one by one, and reloaded. This meant a delay of three or four days, during which we camped on the island and gathered specimens.

Being the organizer, equipper, geographer, artist, head, and tail of the expedition, I was, perforce, also its doctor. Equipped with a "pill-kit," an abundance of blisters and bandages and some "potent purgatives," I had prepared myself to render first and last aid to the hurt in my own party. In taking instructions from our family physician, I had learned the value of a profound air of great gravity, a noble reticence, and a total absence of doubt, when I did speak. I compressed his creed into a single phrase: "In case of doubt, look wise and work on his 'bowels.'" This simple equipment soon gave me a surprisingly high standing among the men. I was a medicine man of repute, and soon had a larger practice than I desired, as it was entirely gratuitous.

The various boatmen, Indians and half-breeds, came with their troubles, and, thanks chiefly to their faith, were cured. But one day John MacDonald, the chief pilot and a mighty man on the river, came to my tent on Grand Island. John complained that he couldn't hold anything on his stomach; he was a total peristaltic wreck indeed (my words; his were more simple and more vivid, but less sonorous and professional). He said he had been going down hill for two weeks, and was so bad now that he was "no better than a couple of ordinary men."

"Exactly so," I said. "Now you take these pills and you'll be all right in the morning." Next morning John was back, and complained that my pills had no effect; he wanted to feel something take hold of him. Hadn't 1 any pepper-juice or brandy?

I do not take liquor on an expedition, but at the last moment a Winnipeg friend had given me a pint flask of pure brandy--"for emergencies." An emergency had come.

"John! you shall have some extra fine brandy, nicely thinned with pepper-juice." I poured half an inch of brandy into a tin cup, then added half an inch of "pain-killer."

"Here, take this, and if you don't feel it, it means your insides are dead, and you may as well order your coffin."

John took it at a gulp. His insides were not dead; but I might have been, had I been one of his boatmen.

He doubled up, rolled around, and danced for five minutes. He did not squeal--John never squeals--but he suffered some, and an hour later announced that he was about cured.

Next day he came to say he was all right, and would soon again be as good as half a dozen men.

At this same camp in Grand Rapids another cure on a much larger scale was added to my list. An Indian had "the bones of his foot broken," crushed by a heavy weight, and was badly crippled. He came leaning on a friend's shoulder. His foot was blackened and much swollen, but I soon satisfied myself that no bones were broken, because he could wriggle all the toes and move the foot in any direction.

"You'll be better in three days and all right in a week," I said, with calm assurance. Then I began with massage. It seemed necessary in the Indian environment to hum some tune, and I found that the "Koochy-Koochy" lent itself best to the motion, so it became my medicine song.

With many "Koochy-Koochy"-ings and much ice-cold water he was nearly cured in three days, and sound again in a week. But in the north folk have a habit (not known elsewhere) of improving the incident. Very soon it was known all along the river that the Indian's leg was broken, and I had set and healed it in three days. In a year or two, I doubt not, it will be his neck that was broken, not once, but in several places.

Grand Island yielded a great many Deermice of the arctic form, a few Red-backed Voles, and any number of small birds migrant.

As we floated down the river the eye was continually held by tall and prominent spruce trees that had been cut into peculiar forms as below. These were known as "lob-sticks," or "lop-sticks," and are usually the monuments of some distinguished visitor in the country or records of some heroic achievement. Thus, one would be pointed out as Commissioner Wrigley's lob-stick, another as John MacDonald's the time he saved the scow.

The inauguration of a lob-stick is quite a ceremony. Some person in camp has impressed all with his importance or other claim to notice. The men, having talked it over, announce that they have decided on giving him a lob-stick. "Will he make choice of some prominent tree in view?" The visitor usually selects one back from the water's edge, often on some far hilltop, the more prominent the better; then an active young fellow is sent up with an axe to trim

the tree. The more embellishment the higher the honor. On the trunk they then inscribe the name of the stranger, and he is supposed to give each of the men a plug of tobacco and a drink of whiskey. Thus they celebrate the man and his monument, and ever afterwards it is pointed out as "So-and-so's lob-stick."

It was two months before my men judged that I was entitled to a lob-stick. We were then on Great Slave Lake where the timber was

small, but the best they could get on a small island was chosen and trimmed into a monument. They were disappointed however, to find that I would by no means give whiskey to natives, and my treat had to take a wholly different form.

Grand Rapids, with its multiplicity of perfectly round pot-hole boulders, was passed in four days, and then, again in company with the boats, we entered the real canyon of the river.

Down Athabaska's boiling flood
Of seething, leaping, coiling mud.

CHAPTER III

HUMAN NATURE ON THE RIVER

Sunday morning, 26th of May, there was something like a strike among the sixty half-breeds and Indians that composed the crews. They were strict Sabbatarians (when it suited them); they believed that they should do no work, but give up the day to gambling and drinking. Old John, the chief pilot, wished to take advantage of the fine flood on the changing river, and drift down at least to the head of the Boiler Rapids, twenty miles away. The breeds maintained, with many white swear words, for lack of strong talk in Indian, that they never yet knew Sunday work to end in anything but disaster, and they sullenly scattered among the trees, produced their cards, and proceeded to gamble away their property, next year's pay, clothes, families, anything, and otherwise show their respect for the Lord's Day and defiance of old John MacDonald. John made no reply to their arguments; he merely boarded the cook's boat, and pushed off into the swift stream with the cooks and all the grub. In five minutes the strikers were on the twelve big boats doing their best to live up to orders. John said nothing, and grinned at me only with his eyes.

The breeds took their defeat in good part after the first minute, and their commander rose higher in their respect.

At noon we camped above the Boiler Rapids. In the evening I climbed the 400- or 500-foot hill behind camp and sketched the canyon looking northward. The spring birds were now beginning to arrive, but were said to be a month late this year. The ground was everywhere marked with moose sign; prospects, were brightening.

The mania for killing that is seen in many white men is evidently a relic of savagery, for all of these Indians and half-breeds are full of it. Each carries a rifle, and every living thing that appears on the banks or on the water is fusilladed with Winchesters until it is dead or out of sight. This explains why we see so little from the scows. One should be at least a day ahead of them to meet with wild life on the river.

This morning two Bears appeared on the high bank--and there was the usual uproar and fusillading; so far as could be learned without

any effect, except the expenditure of thirty or forty cartridges at five cents each.

On the 27th we came to the Cascade Rapids. The first or Little Cascade has about two feet fall, the second or Grand Cascade, a mile farther, is about a six foot sheer drop. These are considered very difficult to run, and the manner of doing it changes with every change in season or water level.

We therefore went through an important ceremony, always carried out in the same way. All 13 boats were beached, the 13 pilots went ahead on the bank to study the problem, they decided on the one safe place and manner, then returned, and each of the 13 boats was run over in 13 different places and manners. They always do this. You are supposed to have run the Cascades successfully if you cross them alive, but to have failed if you drown.. In this case all were successful.

Below the Cascades I had a sample of Indian gratitude that set me thinking. My success with John MacDonald and others had added the whole community to my medical practice, for those who were not sick thought they were. I cheerfully did my best for all, and was supposed to be persona grata. Just below the Cascade Rapids was a famous sucker pool, and after we had camped three Indians came, saying that the pool was full of suckers--would I lend them my canoe to get some?

Away they went, and from afar I was horrified to see them clubbing the fish with my beautiful thin-bladed maple paddles. They returned with a boat load of 3- and 4-pound Suckers (*Catostomus*) and 2 paddles broken. Each of their friends came and received one or two fine fish, for there were plenty. I, presumably part owner of the catch, since I owned the boat, selected one small one for myself, whereupon the Indian insolently demanded 25 cents for it; and these were the men I had been freely doctoring for two weeks! Not to speak of the loaned canoe and broken paddles! Then did I say a few things to all and sundry--stinging, biting things, ungainsayable and forcible things--and took possession of all the fish that were left, so the Indians slunk off in sullen silence.

Gratitude seems an unknown feeling among these folk; you may give presents and help and feed them all you like, the moment you want a slight favour of them they demand the uttermost cent. In attempting to analyse this I was confronted by the fact that among themselves they are kind and hospitable, and at length discovered that their attitude toward us is founded on the ideas that all white men are very rich, that the Indian has made them so by allowing them to come into this country, that the Indian is very poor because he never was properly compensated, and that therefore all he can get out of said white man is much less than the white man owes him.

As we rounded a point one day a Lynx appeared statuesque on a stranded cake of ice, a hundred yards off, and gazed at the approaching boats. True to their religion, the half-breeds seized their rifles, the bullets whistled harmlessly about the "Peeshoo"--whereupon he turned and walked calmly up the slope, stopping to look at each fresh volley, but finally waved his stumpy tail and walked unharmed over the ridge. Distance fifty yards.

On May 28 we reached Fort MacMurray.

Here I saw several interesting persons: Miss Christine Gordon, the postmaster; Joe Bird, a half-breed with all the advanced ideas of a progressive white man; and an American ex-patriot, G-----, a tall, raw-boned Yank from Illinois. He was a typical American of the kind, that knows little of America and nothing of Europe; but shrewd and successful in spite of these limitations. In appearance he was not unlike Abraham Lincoln. He was a rabid American, and why he stayed here was a question.

He had had no detailed tidings from home for years, and I never saw a man more keen for the news. On the banks of the river we sat for an hour while he plied me with questions, which I answered so far as I could. He hung on my lips; he interrupted only when there seemed a halt in the stream; he revelled in, all the details of wrecks by rail and sea. Roosevelt and the trusts--insurance scandals--the South the burnings in the West--massacres--murders--horrors--risings--these were his special gloats, and yet he kept me going with "Yes--yes--and then?" or "Yes, by golly--that's the way we're a-doing it. Go on."

Then, after I had robbed New York of \$100,000,000 a year, burnt 10 large towns and 45 small ones, wrecked 200 express trains, lynched 96 negroes in the South and murdered many men every night for 7 years in Chicago--he broke out:

"By golly, we are a-doing it. We are the people. We are a-moving things now; and I tell you I give the worst of them there European countries, the very worst of 'em, just 100 years to become Americanised."

Think of that, ye polished Frenchmen; ye refined, courteous Swedes; ye civilised Danes; you have 100 years to become truly Americanised!

All down the river route we came on relics of another class of wanderers--the Klondikers of 1898. Sometimes these were empty winter cabins; sometimes curious tools left at Hudson's Bay Posts, and in some cases expensive provisions; in all cases we heard weird tales of their madness.

There is, I am told, a shanty on the Mackenzie above Simpson, where four of them made a strange record. Cooped up for months in tight winter quarters, they soon quarrelled, and at length their partnership was dissolved. Each took the articles he had contributed, and those of common purchase they divided in four equal parts. The stove, the canoe, the lamp, the spade, were broken relentlessly and savagely into four parts--four piles of useless rubbish. The shanty was divided in four. One man had some candles of his own bringing. These he kept and carefully screened off his corner of the room so no chance rays might reach the others to comfort them; they spent the winter in darkness. None spoke to the other, and they parted, singly and silently, hatefully as ever, as soon as the springtime opened the way.

CHAPTER IV

DOWN THE SILENT RIVER WITH THE MOUNTED POLICE

At Fort MacMurray we learned that there was no telling when the steamer might arrive; Major Jarvis was under orders to proceed without delay to Smith Landing; so to solve all our difficulties I bought a 30-foot boat (sturgeon-head) of Joe Bird, and arranged to join forces with the police for the next part of the journey.

I had made several unsuccessful attempts to get an experienced native boatman to go northward with me. All seemed to fear the intending plunge into the unknown; so was agreeably surprised when a sturdy young fellow of Scottish and Cree parentage came and volunteered for the trip. A few inquiries proved him to bear a good reputation as a river-man and worker, so William C. Loutit was added to my expedition and served me faithfully throughout.

In time I learned that Billy was a famous traveller. Some years ago, when the flood had severed all communication between Athabaska Landing and Edmonton, Billy volunteered to carry some important despatches, and covered the 96 miles on foot in one and a half days, although much of the road was under water. On another occasion he went alone and afoot from House River up the Athabaska to Calling River, and across the Point to the Athabaska again, then up to the Landing-150 rough miles in four days. These exploits I had to find out for myself later on, but much more important to me at the time was the fact that he was a first-class cook, a steady, cheerful worker, and a capable guide as far as Great Slave Lake.

The Athabaska below Fort MacMurray is a noble stream, one-third of a mile wide, deep, steady, unmarred; the banks are covered with unbroken virginal forests of tall white poplar, balsam poplar, spruce, and birch. The fire has done no damage here as yet, the axe has left no trace, there are no houses, no sign of man except occasional teepee poles. I could fancy myself floating down the Ohio two hundred years ago.

These were bright days to be remembered, as we drifted down its placid tide in our ample and comfortable boat, with abundance of good things. Calm, lovely, spring weather; ducks all along the river; plenty of food, which is the northerner's idea of bliss; plenty of water, which is the river-man's notion of joy; plenty of leisure, which is an element in most men's heaven, for we had merely to float with the stream, three miles an hour, except when we landed to eat or sleep.

The woods were donning their vernal green and resounded with the calls of birds now. The mosquito plague of the region had not yet appeared, and there was little lacking to crown with a halo the memory of those days on the Missouri of the North.

Native quadrupeds seemed scarce, and we were all agog when one of the men saw a black fox trotting along the opposite bank. However, it turned out to be one of the many stray dogs of the country. He followed us a mile or more, stopping at times to leap at fish that showed near the shore. When we landed for lunch he swam the broad stream and hung about at a distance. As this was twenty miles from any settlement, he was doubtless hungry, so I left a bountiful

lunch for him, and when we moved away, he claimed his own.

At Fort McKay I saw a little half-breed boy shooting with a bow and displaying extraordinary marksmanship. At sixty feet he could hit the bottom of a tomato tin nearly every time; and even more surprising was the fact that he held the arrow with what is known as the Mediterranean hold. When, months later, I again stopped at this place, I saw another boy doing the very same. Some residents assured me that this was the style of all the Chipewyans as well as the Crees.

That night we camped far down the river and on the side opposite the Fort, for experience soon teaches one to give the dogs no chance of entering camp on marauding expeditions while you rest. About ten, as I was going to sleep, Preble put his head in and said: "Come out here if you want a new sensation."

In a moment I was standing with him under the tall spruce trees, looking over the river to the dark forest, a quarter mile away, and listening intently to a new and wonderful sound. Like the slow tolling of a soft but high-pitched bell, it came. Ting, ting, ting, ting, and on, rising and falling with the breeze, but still keeping on about two "tings" to the second; and on, dulling as with distance, but rising again and again.

It was unlike anything I had ever heard, but Preble knew it of old. "That", says he, "is the love-song of the Richardson Owl. She is sitting demurely in some spruce top while he sails around, singing on the wing, and when the sound seems distant, he is on the far side of the tree."

Ting, ting, ting, ting, it went on and on, this soft belling of his love, this amorous music of our northern bell-bird. .

Ting, TING, ting, ting, ting, TING, ting, ting, ting, TING, ting--oh, how could any lady owl resist such strains?--and on, with its ting, ting, ting, TING, ting, ting, ting, TING, the whole night air was vibrant. Then, as though by plan, a different note--the deep booming "Oho-oh-who-oh who hoo" of the Great Horned Owl--was heard singing a most appropriate bass.

But the little Owl went on and on; 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes at last had elapsed before I turned in again and left him. More than once that night I awoke to hear his "tinging" serenade upon the consecrated air of the piney woods.

Yet Preble said this one was an indifferent performer. On the Mackenzie he had heard far better singers of the kind; some that introduce many variations of the pitch and modulation. I thought it one of the most charming bird voices I had ever listened to--and felt that this was one of the things that make the journey worth while.

On June 1 the weather was so blustering and wet that we did not break camp. I put in the day examining the superb timber of this bottom-land. White spruce is the prevailing conifer and is here seen in perfection. A representative specimen was 118 feet high, 11 feet 2 inches in circumference, or 3 feet 6 1/2 inches in diameter 1 foot from the ground, i.e., above any root spread. There was

plenty of timber of similar height. Black spruce, a smaller kind, and tamarack are found farther up and back in the bog country. Jackpine of fair size abounds on the sandy and gravelly parts. Balsam poplar is the largest deciduous tree; its superb legions in upright ranks are crowded along all the river banks and on the islands not occupied by the spruce. The large trees of this kind often have deep holes; these are the nesting sites of the Whistler Duck, which is found in numbers here and as far north as this tree, but not farther. White poplar is plentiful also; the hillsides are beautifully clad with its purplish masses of twigs, through which its white stem gleam like marble columns. White birch is common and large enough for canoes. Two or three species of willow in impenetrable thickets make up the rest of the forest stretches.

At this camp I had the unique experience of showing all these seasoned Westerners that it was possible to make a fire by the friction of two sticks. This has long been a specialty of mine; I use a thong and a bow as the simplest way. Ordinarily I prefer balsam-fir or tamarack; in this case I used a balsam block and a spruce drill, and, although each kind failed when used with drill and block the same, I got the fire in half a minute.

On June 3 we left this camp of tall timber. As we floated down we sighted a Lynx on the bank looking contemplatively into the flood. One of the police boys seized a gun and with a charge of No. 6 killed the Lynx. Poor thing, it was in a starving condition, as indeed are most meat-eaters this year in the north. Though it was fully grown, it weighed but 15 pounds.

In its stomach was part of a sparrow (white-throat?) and a piece of rawhide an inch wide and 4 feet long, evidently a portion of a dog-harness picked up somewhere along the river. I wonder what he did with the bells.

That night we decided to drift, leaving one man on guard. Next day, as we neared Lake Athabaska, the shores got lower, and the spruce disappeared, giving way to dense thickets of low willow. Here the long expected steamer, Graham, passed, going upstream. We now began to get occasional glimpses of Lake Athabaska across uncertain marshes and sand bars. It was very necessary to make Fort Chipewyan while there was a calm, so we pushed on. After four hours' groping among blind channels and mud banks, we reached the lake at midnight--though of course there was no night, but a sort of gloaming even at the darkest--and it took us four hours' hard rowing to cover the ten miles that separated us from Chipewyan.

It sounds very easy and commonplace when one says "hard rowing," but it takes on more significance when one is reminded that those oars were 18 feet long, 5 inches through, and weighed about 20 pounds each; the boat was 30 feet long, a demasted schooner indeed, and rowing her through shallow muddy water, where the ground suction was excessive, made labour so heavy that 15 minute spells were all any one could do. We formed four relays, and all worked in turn all night through, arriving at Chipewyan. 4 A.M., blistered, sore, and completely tired out.

Fort Chipewyan (pronounced Chip-we-yan') was Billy Loutit's home, and here we met his father, mother, and numerous as well as interesting sisters. Meanwhile I called at the Roman Catholic Mission, under

Bishop Guard, and the rival establishment, under Reverend Roberts, good men all, and devoted to the cause, but loving not each other. The Hudson's Bay Company, however, was here, as everywhere in the north, the really important thing.

There was a long stretch of dead water before we could resume our downward drift, and, worse than that, there was such a flood on the Peace River that it was backing the Athabaska, that is, the tide of the latter was reversed on the Rocher River, which extends twenty-five miles between here and Peace mouth. To meet this, I hired Colin Fraser's steamer. We left Chipewyan at 6.15; at 11.15 camped below the Peace on Great Slave River, and bade farewell to the steamer.

The reader may well be puzzled by these numerous names; the fact is the Mackenzie, the Slave, the Peace, the Rocher, and the Unchaga are all one and the same river, but, unfortunately, the early explorers thought proper to give it a new name each time it did something, such as expand into a lake. By rights it should be the Unchaga or Unjiza, from the Rockies to the Arctic, with the Athabaska as its principal southern tributary.

The next day another Lynx was collected. In its stomach were remains of a Red squirrel, a Chipmunk, and a Bog-lemming. The last was important as it made a new record.

The Athabaska is a great river, the Peace is a greater, and the Slave, formed by their union, is worthy of its parents. Its placid flood is here nearly a mile wide, and its banks are covered with a great continuous forest of spruce trees of the largest size. How far back this extends I do not know, but the natives say the best timber is along the river.

More than once a Lynx was seen trotting by or staring at us from the bank, but no other large animal.

On the night of June 7 we reached Smith Landing.

CHAPTER V

A CONFERENCE WITH THE CHIEFS

A few bands of Buffalo are said to exist in the country east of Great Slave River. Among other matters, Major Jarvis had to report on these, find out how many were left, and exactly where they were. When he invited me to join his expedition, with these questions in view, I needed no pressing.

Our first business was to get guides, and now our troubles began.

Through the traders we found four natives who knew the Buffalo range--they were Kiya, Sousi, Kirma, and Peter Squirrel. However, they seemed in no way desirous of guiding any one into that country. They dodged and delayed and secured many postponements,

but the Royal Mounted Police and the Hudson's Bay Company are the two mighty powers of the land, so, urged by an officer of each, these worthies sullenly assembled to meet us in Sousi's cabin.

Sousi, by the way, is Chipewyan for Joseph, and this man's name was Joseph Beaulieu. Other northern travellers have warned all that came after them to beware of the tribe of Beaulieu, so we were on guard.

Sullen silence greeted us as we entered; we could feel their covert antagonism. Jarvis is one of those affable, good-tempered individuals that most persons take for "easy." In some ways he may be so, but I soon realised that he was a keen judge of men and their ways, and he whispered to me: "They mean to block us if possible." Sousi understood French and had some English, but the others professed ignorance of everything but Chipewyan. So it was necessary to call in an interpreter. How admirably he served us may be judged from the following sample secured later.

Q. Are the Buffalo near?

A. Wah-hay-was-ki busquow Kai-ah taw nip-ee-wat-chow-es-kee nee-moy-ah. Kee-as-o-win sugee-meesh i-mush-wa mus-tat-e-muck ne-mow-ah pe-muk-te-ok nemoy-ah dane-tay-tay-ah.

Interpreter. He say "no."

Q. How long would it take to get them?

A. Ne-moy-ah mis-chay-to-ok Way-hay-o ay-ow-ok-iman-kah-mus-to-ok. Mis-ta-hay cha-gowos-ki wah-hay-o musk-ee-see-seepi. Mas-kootch e-goot-ah-i-ow mas-kootch ne-moy-ah muk-eboy sak-te-muk mas-kootch gahk-sin-now ne-moy-ah gehk-kee-win-tay dam-foole-Inglis.

Interpreter. He say "don't know."

Q. Can you go with us as guide?

A. Kee-ya-wah-lee nas-bah a-lash-tay wah-lee-lee lan-day. (Answer literally) "Yes, I could go if I could leave the transport."

Interpreter's answer, "Mebby."

After a couple of hours of this bootless sort of thing we had made no headway toward getting a guide, nor could we get definite information about the Buffaloes or the Wolves. Finally the meeting suffered a sort of natural disintegration.

Next day we tried again, but again there were technical difficulties, grown up like mushrooms over night.

Kiya could not go or lend his horses, because it was mostly Squirrel's country, and he was afraid Squirrel would not like it. Squirrel could not go because it would be indelicate of him to butt in after negotiations had been opened with Kiya. Kirma was not well. Sousi could not go because his wife was sick, and it preyed on his mind so that he dare not trust himself away from the settlement; at least, not without much medicine to fortify him against rheumatism, home-sickness, and sadness.

Next day Kiya sent word that he had business of great moment, and could not meet us, but would see that early in the morning Squirrel was notified to come and do whatever we wished. In the morning Squirrel also had disappeared, leaving word that he had quite overlooked a most important engagement to "portage some flour across the rapids," not that he loved the tump line, but he had "promised," and to keep his word was very precious to him.

Jarvis and I talked it over and reviewed the information we had. At Ottawa it was reported that the Wolves were killing the calves, so the Buffalo did not increase. At Winnipeg the Wolves were so bad that they killed yearlings; at Edmonton the cows were not safe.

At Chipewyan the Wolves, reinforced by large bands from the Barren Grounds, were killing the young Buffalo, and later the cows and young bulls. At Smith's Landing the Wolves had even tackled an old bull whose head was found with the large bones. Horses and dogs were now being devoured. Terrible battles were taking place between the dark Wolves of Peace River and the White Wolves of the Barrens for possession of the Buffalo grounds. Of course the Buffalo were disappearing; about a hundred were all that were left.

But no one ever sees any of these terrible Wolves, the few men who know that country have plenty of pemmican, that is neither Moose nor Caribou, and the Major briefly summed up the situation: "The Wolves are indeed playing havoc with the Buffalo, and the ravenous leaders of the pack are called Sousi, Kiya, Kirma, and Squirrel."

Now of all the four, Sousi, being a Beaulieu and a half-breed, had the worst reputation, but of all the four he was the only one that had admitted a possibility of guiding us, and was to be found on the fifth morning. So his views were met, a substitute found to watch his fishing nets, groceries to keep his wife from pining during his absence, a present for himself, the regular rate of wages doubled, his horses hired, his rheumatism, home-sickness, and sadness provided against, a present of tobacco, some more presents, a promise of reward for every Buffalo shown, then another present, and we set out.

CHAPTER VI

OUT WITH SOUSI BEAULIEU

It's a fine thing to get started, however late in the day, and though it was 3.20 P. M. before everything was ready, we gladly set out--Sousi, Major Jarvis, and myself--all mounted, the native leading a packhorse with provisions.

And now we had a chance to study our guide. A man's real history begins, of course, about twenty years before he is born. In the middle of the last century was a notorious old ruffian named Beaulieu. Montreal was too slow for him, so he invaded the north-west with a chosen crew of congenial spirits. His history can be got from

any old resident of the north-west. I should not like to write it as it was told to me.

His alleged offspring are everywhere in the country, and most travellers on their return from this region, sound a note of warning: "Look out for every one of the name of Beaulieu. They are a queer lot." And now we had committed ourselves and our fortunes into the hands of Beaulieu's second or twenty-second son--I could not make sure which. He is a typical half-breed, of medium height, thin, swarthy, and very active, although he must be far past 60. Just how far is not known, whether 59 69 or 79, he himself seemed uncertain, but he knows there is a 9 in it. The women of Smith's Landing say 59, the men say 79 or 89.

He is clad in what might be the cast-off garments of a white tramp, except for his beaded moccasins. However sordid these people may be in other parts of their attire, I note that they always have some redeeming touch of color and beauty about the moccasins which cover their truly shapely feet. Sousi's rifle, a Winchester, also was clad in a native mode. An embroidered cover of moose leather protected it night and day, except when actually in use; of his weapons he took most scrupulous care. Unlike the founder of the family, Sousi has no children of his own. But he has reared a dozen waifs under prompting of his own kind heart. He is quite a character--does not drink or smoke, and I never heard him swear. This is not because he does not know how, for he is conversant with the vigor of all the five languages of the country, and the garment of his thought is like Joseph's coat--Ethnologically speaking, its breadth and substance are French, but it bears patches of English, with flowers and frills, strophes, and classical allusions of Cree and Chipewyan--the last being the language of his present "home circle."

There was one more peculiarity of our guide that struck me forcibly. He was forever considering his horse. Whenever the trail was very bad, and half of it was, Sousi dismounted and walked--the horse usually following freely, for the pair were close friends.

This, then, was the dark villain against whom we had been warned. How he lived up to his reputation will be seen later.

After four hours' march through a level, swampy country, forested with black and white spruce, black and white poplar, birch, willow, and tamarack, we came to Salt River, a clear, beautiful stream, but of weak, salty brine.

Not far away in the woods was a sweet spring, and here we camped for the night. Close by, on a place recently burnt over, I found the nest of a Green-winged Teal. All cover was gone and the nest much singed, but the down had protected the 10 eggs. The old one fluttered off, played lame, and tried to lead me away. I covered up the eggs and an hour later found she had returned and resumed her post.

That night, as I sat by the fire musing, I went over my life when I was a boy in Manitoba, just too late to see the Buffalo, recalling how I used to lie in some old Buffalo wallow and peer out over the prairie through the fringe of spring anemones and long to see the big brown forms on the plains. Once in those days I got a sensation,

for I did see them. They turned out to be a herd of common cattle, but still I got the thrill.

Now I was on a real Buffalo hunt, some twenty-five years too late. Will it come? Am I really to see the Wild Buffalo on its native plains? It is too good to be true; too much like tipping back the sands of time.

CHAPTER VII

THE BUFFALO HUNT

We left camp on Salt River at 7.45 in the morning and travelled till 11 o'clock, covering six miles. It was all through the same level country, in which willow swamps alternated with poplar and spruce ridges. At 11 it began to rain, so we camped on a slope under some fine, big white spruces till it cleared, and then continued westward. The country now undulated somewhat and was varied with openings.

Sousi says that when first he saw this region, 30 years ago, it was all open prairie, with timber only in hollows and about water. This is borne out by the facts that all the large trees are in such places, and that all the level open stretches are covered with sapling growths of aspen and fir. This will make a glorious settlement some day. In plants, trees, birds, soil, climate, and apparently all conditions, it is like Manitoba.

We found the skeleton of a cow Buffalo, apparently devoured by Wolves years ago, because all the big bones were there and the skull unbroken.

About two in the afternoon we came up a 200-foot rise to a beautiful upland country, in which the forests were diversified with open glades, and which everywhere showed a most singular feature. The ground is pitted all over with funnel-shaped holes, from 6 to 40 feet deep, and of equal width across the rim; none of them contained water. I saw one 100 feet across and about 50 feet deep; some expose limestone; in one place we saw granite.

At first I took these for extinct geysers, but later I learned that

the whole plateau called Salt Mountain is pitted over with them. Brine is running out of the mountain in great quantities, which means that the upper strata are being undermined as the salt washes out, and, as these crack, the funnels are formed no doubt by the loose deposits settling.

In the dry woods Bear tracks became extremely numerous; the whole country, indeed, was marked with the various signs. Practically every big tree has bearclaw markings on it, and every few yards there is evidence that the diet of the bears just now is chiefly berries of *Uva ursi*.

As we rode along Sousi prattled cheerfully in his various tongues; but his steady flow of conversation abruptly ended when, about 2 P. M., we came suddenly on some Buffalo tracks, days old, but still Buffalo tracks. All at once and completely he was the hunter. He leaped from his horse and led away like a hound.

Ere long, of course, the trail was crossed by two fresher ones; then we found some dry wallows and several very fresh tracks. We tied up the horses in an old funnel pit and set about an elaborate hunt. Jarvis minded the stock, I set out with Sousi, after he had tried the wind by tossing up some grass. But he stopped, drew a finger-nail sharply across my canvas coat, so that it gave a little shriek, and said "Va pa," which is "Cela ne va pas" reduced to its bony framework. I doffed the offending coat and we went forward as shown on the map. The horses were left at A; the wind was east. First we circled a little to eastward, tossing grass at intervals, but, finding plenty of new sign, went northerly and westward till most of the new sign was east of us. Sousi then led for C, telling me to step in his tracks and make no noise. I did so for long, but at length a stick cracked under my foot; he turned and looked reproachfully at me. Then a stick cracked under his foot; I gave him a poke in the ribs. When we got to the land between the lake at D, Sousi pointed and said, "They are here." We sneaked with the utmost caution that way--it was impossible to follow any one trail--and in 200 yards Sousi sank to the ground gasping out, "La! la! maintenant faites son portrait au taut que vous voudrez." I crawled forward and saw, not one, but half a dozen Buffalo. "I must be nearer," I said, and, lying flat on my breast, crawled, toes and elbows, up to a bush within 75 yards, where I made shot No. 1, and saw here that there were 8 or 9 Buffalo, one an immense bull.

Sousi now cocked his rifle-I said emphatically: "Stop! you must not fire." "No?" he said in astonished tones that were full of story and comment. "What did we come for?" Now I saw that by backing out and crawling to another bunch of herbage I could get within 50 yards.

"It is not possible," he gasped.

"Watch me and see," I replied. Gathering all the near vines and twisting them around my neck, I covered my head with leaves and creeping plants, then proceeded to show that it was possible, while Sousi followed. I reached the cover and found it was a bed of spring anemones on the far side of an old Buffalo wallow, and there in that wallow I lay for a moment revelling in the sight. All at once it came to me: Now, indeed, was fulfilled the long-deferred dream of my youth, for in shelter of those flowers of my youth, I was gazing on a herd of wild Buffalo. Then slowly I rose above the cover and took my second picture.

But the watchful creatures, more shy than Moose here, saw the rising mass of herbage, or may have caught the wind, rose lightly and went off. I noticed now, for the first time, a little red calf; ten Buffalo in all I counted. Sousi, standing up, counted 13. At the edge of the woods they stopped and looked around, but gave no third shot for the camera.

I shook Sousi's hand with all my heart, and he, good old fellow, said: "Ah! it was for this I prayed last night; without doubt it

was in answer to my prayer that the Good God has sent me this great happiness."

Then back at camp, 200 yards away, the old man's tongue was loosed, and he told me how the chiefs in conference, and every one at the Fort, had ridiculed him and his Englishmen--"who thought they could walk up to Buffalo and take their pictures."

We had not been long in camp when Sousi went off to get some water, but at once came running back, shouting excitedly, "My rifle, my rifle!" Jarvis handed it to him; he rushed off to the woods. I followed in time to see him shoot an old Bear and two cubs out of a tree. She fell, sobbing like a human being, "Oh! Oh! Oh-h-h-h!" It was too late to stop him, and he finished her as she lay helpless. The little ones were too small to live alone, so shared her fate.

It seems, as Sousi went to the water hole, he came on an old Bear and her two cubs. She gave a warning "koff, koff." The only enemies they knew about and feared, were Buffalo, Moose, and Wolves; from these a tree was a safe haven. The cubs scrambled up a tall poplar, then the mother followed. Sousi came shouting in apparent fear; I rushed to the place, thinking he was attacked by something, perhaps a Buffalo bull, but too late to stop the tragedy that followed.

That night he roasted one of the cubs, and as I watched the old cannibal chewing the hands off that little baby Bear it gave me a feeling of disgust for all flesh-eating that lasted for days. Major Jarvis felt much as I did, and old Sousi had exclusive joy in all his bear meat.

Next morning I was left at camp while Jarvis and Sousi went off to seek for more Buffalo. I had a presentiment that they would find none, so kept the camera and went off to the Lake a mile west, and there made drawings of some tracks, took photos, etc., and on the lake saw about twenty-five pairs of ducks, identified Whitewinged Scoter, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and Loon. I also watched the manoeuvres of a courting Peetweet. He approached the only lady with his feathers up and his wings raised; she paid no heed (apparently), but I noticed that when he flew away she followed. I saw a large garter snake striped black and green, and with 2 rows of red spots, one on each side. It was very fat and sluggish. I took it for a female about to lay. Later I learned from Sousi and others that this snake is quite common here, and the only kind found, but in the mountains that lie not far away in the west is another kind, much thicker, fatter, and more sluggish. Its bite is fearfully poisonous, often fatal; "but the Good God has marked the beast by putting a cloche (bell) in its tail."

About 10 I turned campward, but after tramping for nearly an hour I was not only not at home, I was in a totally strange kind of country, covered with a continuous poplar woods. I changed my course and tried a different direction, but soon was forced to the conclusion that (for the sixth or seventh time in my life) I was lost.

"Dear me," I said, "this is an interesting opportunity. It comes to me now that I once wrote an essay on 'What To Do and What Not

To Do When Lost In the Woods.' Now what in the world did I say in it, and which were the things not to do. Yes, I remember now, these were the pieces of advice:

"1st. 'Don't get frightened.' Well, I'm not; I am simply amused.

"2d. 'Wait for your friends to come.' Can't do that; I'm too busy; they wouldn't appear till night.

"3d. 'If you must travel, go back to a place where you were sure of the way.' That means back to the lake, which I know is due west of the camp and must be west of me now."

So back I went, carefully watching the sun for guidance, and soon realised that whenever I did not, I swung to the left. After nearly an hour's diligent travel I did get back to the lake, and followed my own track in the margin to the point of leaving it; then, with a careful corrected bearing, made for camp and arrived in 40 minutes, there to learn that on the first attempt I had swung so far to the left that I had missed camp by half a mile, and was half a mile beyond it before I knew I was wrong. (See map on p. 46.)

At noon Jarvis and Sousi came back jubilant; they had seen countless Buffalo trails, had followed a large bull and cow, but had left them to take the trail of a considerable Band; these they discovered in a lake. There were 4 big bulls, 4 little calves, 1 yearling, 3 2-year-olds, 8 cows. These allowed them to come openly within 60 yards. Then took alarm and galloped off. They also saw a Moose and a Marten--and 2 Buffalo skeletons. How I did curse my presentiment that prevented them having the camera and securing a really fine photograph!

At 2 P. M. Sousi prepared to break camp. He thought that by going back on our trail he might strike the trail of another herd off to the south-east of the mountain. Jarvis shrewdly suspected that our guide wanted to go home, having kept his promise, won the reward, and got a load of Bear meat. However, the native was the guide, we set out in a shower which continued more or less all day and into the night, so we camped in the rain.

Next day it was obvious, and Sousi no longer concealed the fact, that he was making for home as fast as he could go.

At Salt River I found the little Teal back on her eggs in the burnt ground. At 3.30 we reached Smith Landing, having been absent exactly 3 days, and having seen in that time 33 Buffalo, 4 of them calves of this year, 3 old Buffalo skeletons of ancient date, but not a track or sign of a Wolf, not a howl by night, or any evidence of their recent presence, for the buffalo skeletons found were obviously very old.

And our guide--the wicked one of evil ancestry and fame--he was kind, cheerful, and courteous through out; he did exactly as he promised, did it on time, and was well pleased with the pay we gave him. Speak as you find. If ever I revisit that country I shall be glad indeed to secure the services of good old Sousi, even if he is a Beaulieu.

CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS ANDERSON

We were now back at Smith Landing, and fired with a desire to make another Buffalo expedition on which we should have ampler time and cover more than a mere corner of the range. We aimed, indeed, to strike straight into the heart of the Buffalo country. The same trouble about guides arose. In this case it was less acute, because Sousi's account had inspired considerably more respect. Still it meant days of delay which, however, I aimed to make profitable by investigations near at hand.

After all, the most interesting of creatures is the two-legged one with the loose and changeable skin, and there was a goodly colony of the kind to choose from. Most prominent of them all was Thomas Anderson, the genial Hudson's Bay Company officer in charge of the Mackenzie River District. His headquarters are at Fort Smith, 16 miles down the river, but his present abode was Smith Landing, where all goods are landed for overland transport to avoid the long and dangerous navigation on the next 16 miles of the broad stream. Like most of his official brethren, he is a Scotchman; he was born in Nairn, Scotland, in 1848. At 19 he came to the north-west in service of the company, and his long and adventurous life, as he climbed to his present responsible position, may be thus skeletonised:

He spent six months at Fort Temiscamingue,
1 year at Grand Lac,
3 years at Kakabonga,
5 years at Hunter's Lodge, Chippeway,
10 years at Abitibi,
3 years at Dunvegan, Peace River,
1 year at Lesser Slave Lake,
2 months at Savanne, Fort William,
10 years at Nipigon House,
3 years at Isle a la Crosse,
4 years on the Mackenzie River, chiefly at Fort Simpson,
6 months at Fort Smith.

Which tells little to the ears of the big world, but if we say that he spent 5 years in Berlin, then was moved for 3 years to Gibraltar, 2 years to various posts on the Rhine, whence he went for 4 years to St. Petersburg; thence to relieve the officer in charge of Constantinople, and made several flying visits to Bombay and Pekin, we shall have some idea of his travels, for all were afoot, on dogsled, or by canoe.

What wonderful opportunities he had to learn new facts about the wood folk--man and beast--and how little he knew the value of the glimpses that he got! I made it my business to gather all I could of his memories, so far as they dwelt with the things of my world, and offer now a resume of his more interesting observations on hunter and hunted of the North. [Since these notes were made, Thomas

Anderson has "crossed the long portage."]

The following are among the interesting animal notes:

Cougar. Ogushen, the Indian trapper at Lac des Quinze, found tracks of a large cat at that place in the fall of 1879 (?). He saw them all winter on South Bay of that Lake. One day he came on the place where it had killed a Caribou. When he came back about March he saw it. It came toward him. It was evidently a cat longer than a Lynx and it had a very long tail, which swayed from side to side as it walked. He shot it dead, but feared to go near it believing it to be a Wendigo. It had a very bad smell. Anderson took it to be a Puma. It was unknown to the Indian. Ogushen was a first-class hunter and Anderson firmly believes he was telling the truth. Lac des Quinze is 15 miles north of Lake Temiscamingue.

Seals. In old days, he says, small seals were found in Lake Ashkeek. This is 50 miles north-east from Temiscamingue. It empties into Kippewa River, which empties into Temiscamingue. He never saw one, but the Indians of the vicinity told of it as a thing which commonly happened 50 or 60 years ago. Ashkeek is Ojibwa for seal. It is supposed that they wintered in the open water about the Rapids.

White Foxes, he says, were often taken at Cree Lake. Indeed one or two were captured each year. Cree Lake is 190 miles south-east of Fort Chipewyan. They are also taken at Fort Chipewyan from time to time. One was taken at Fondulac, east end of Lake Athabaska, and was traded at Smith Landing in 1906. They are found regularly at Fondulac, the east end of Great Slave Lake, each year.

In the winter of 1885-6 he was to be in charge of Nipigon House, but got orders beforehand to visit the posts on Albany River. He set out from Fort William on Lake Superior on his 1,200-mile trip through the snow with an Indian whose name was Joe Eskimo, from Manitoulin Island, 400 miles away. At Nipigon House he got another guide, but this one was in bad shape, spitting blood. After three days' travel the guide said: "I will go to the end if it kills me, because I have promised, unless I can get you a better guide. At Wayabimika (Lake Savanne) is an old man named Omeegi; he knows the road better than I do." When they got there, Omeegi, although very old and half-blind, was willing to go on condition that they should not walk too fast. Then they started for Osnaburgh House on Lake St. Joseph, 150 miles away. The old man led off well, evidently knew the way, but sometimes would stop, cover his eyes with his hands, look at the ground and then at the sky, and turn on a sharp angle. He proved a fine guide and brought the expedition there in good time.

Next winter at Wayabimika (where Charley de la Ronde [Count de la Ronde.] was in charge, but was leaving on a trip of 10 days) Omeegi came in and asked for a present--"a new shirt and a pair of pants." This is the usual outfit for a corpse. He explained that he was to die before Charley came back; that he would die "when the sun rose at that island" (a week ahead). He got the clothes, though every one laughed at him. A week later he put on the new garments and said: "To-day I die when the sun is over that island!" He went out, looking at the sun from time to time, placidly smoking. When the sun got to the right place he came in, lay down by the fire, and in a few minutes was dead.

We buried him in the ground, to his brother's great indignation when he heard of it. He said: "You white men live on things that come out of the ground, and are buried in the ground, and properly, but we Indians live on things that run above ground, and want to take our last sleep in the trees."

Another case of Indian clairvoyance ran thus: About 1879, when Anderson was at Abitibi, the winter packet used to leave Montreal, January 2, each year, and arrive at Abitibi January 19. This year it did not come. The men were much bothered as all plans were upset. After waiting about two weeks, some of the Indians and half-breeds advised Anderson to consult the conjuring woman, Mash-kou-tay Ish-quay (Prairie woman) a Flathead from Stuart Lake, B. C. He went and paid her some tobacco. She drummed and conjured all night. She came in the morning and told him: "The packet is at the foot of a rapid now, where there is open water; the snow is deep and the travelling heavy, but it will be here to-morrow when the sun is at that point."

Sure enough, it all fell out as she had told. This woman married a Hudson's Bay man named MacDonald, and he brought her to Lachine, where she bore him 3 sons; then he died of small-pox, and Sir George Simpson gave orders that she should be sent up to Abitibi and there pensioned for as long as she lived. She was about 75 at the time of the incident. She many times gave evidence of clairvoyant power. The priest said he "knew about it, and that she was helped by the devil."

A gruesome picture of Indian life is given in the following incident.

One winter, 40 or 50 years ago, a band of Algonquin Indians at Wayabimika all starved to death except one squaw and her baby; she fled from the camp, carrying the child, thinking to find friends and help at Nipigon House. She got as far as a small lake near Deer Lake, and there discovered a cache, probably in a tree. This contained one small bone fish-hook. She rigged up a line, but had no bait. The wailing of the baby spurred her to action. No bait, but she had a knife; a strip of flesh was quickly cut from her own leg, a hole made through the ice, and a fine jack-fish was the food that was sent to this devoted mother. She divided it with the child, saving only enough for bait. She stayed there living on fish until spring, then safely rejoined her people.

The boy grew up to be a strong man, but was cruel to his mother, leaving her finally to die of starvation. Anderson knew the woman; she showed him the sear where she cut the bait.

A piece of yet, more ancient history was supplied him in Northern Ontario, and related to me thus:

Anderson was going to Kakabonga in June, 1879, and camped one night on the east side of Birch Lake on the Ottawa, about 50 miles north-east of Grand Lake Post.

He and his outfit of two canoes met Pah-pah-tay, chief of the Grand Lake Indians, travelling with his family. He called Anderson's attention to the shape of the point which had one good landing-place, a little sandy bay, and told him the story he heard from his people

of a battle that was fought there with the Iroquois long, long ago.

Four or five Iroquois war-canoes, filled with warriors, came to this place on a foray for scalps. Their canoes were drawn up on the beach at night. They lighted fires and had a war-dance. Three Grand Lake Algonquins, forefathers of Pah-pah-tay, saw the dance from, hiding. They cached their canoe, one of them took a sharp flint--"we had no knives or axes then"--swam across to the canoes, and cut a great hole in the bottom of each.

The three then posted themselves at three different points in the bushes, and began whooping in as many different ways as possible. The Iroquois, thinking it a great war-party, rushed to their canoes and pushed off quickly. When they were in deep water the canoes sank and, as the warriors swam back ashore, the Algonquins killed them one by one, saving alive only one, whom they maltreated, and then let go with a supply of food, as a messenger to his people, and to carry the warning that this would be the fate of every Iroquois that entered the Algonquin country.

CHAPTER IX

MOSQUITOES

Reference to my Smith Landing Journal for June 17 shows the following:

"The Spring is now on in full flood, the grass is high, the trees are fully leaved, flowers are blooming, birds are nesting, and the mosquitoes are a terror to man and beast."

If I were to repeat all the entries in that last key, it would make dreary and painful reading; I shall rather say the worst right now, and henceforth avoid the subject.

Every traveller in the country agrees that the mosquitoes are a frightful curse. Captain Back, in 1833 (Journal, p. 117), said that the sand-flies and mosquitoes are the worst of the hardships to which the northern traveller is exposed.

T. Hutchins, over a hundred years ago, said that no one enters the Barren Grounds in the summer, because no man can stand the stinging insects. I had read these various statements, but did not grasp the idea until I was among them. At Smith Landing, June 7, mosquitoes began to be troublesome, quite as numerous as in the worst part of the New Jersey marshes. An estimate of those on the mosquito bar over my bed, showed 900 to 1,000 trying to get at me; day and night, without change, the air was ringing with their hum.

This was early in the season. On July 9, on Nyarling River, they were much worse, and my entry was as follows:

"On the back of Billy's coat, as he sat paddling before me, I counted a round 400 mosquitoes boring away; about as many were on the garments of his head and neck, a much less number on his arms

and legs. The air about was thick with them; at least as many more, fully 1,000, singing and stinging and filling the air with a droning hum. The rest of us were equally pestered.

"The Major, fresh, ruddy, full-blooded, far over 200 pounds in plumpness, is the best feeding ground for mosquitoes I (or they, probably) ever saw; he must be a great improvement on the smoke-dried Indians. No matter where they land on him they strike it rich, and at all times a dozen or more bloated bloodsuckers may be seen hanging like red currants on his face and neck. He maintains that they do not bother him, and scoffs at me for wearing a net. They certainly do not impair his health, good looks, or his perennial good humour, and I, for one, am thankful that his superior food-quality gives us a corresponding measure of immunity."

At Salt River one could kill 100 with a stroke of the palm and at times they obscured the colour of the horses. A little later they were much worse. On 6 square inches of my tent I counted 30 mosquitoes, and the whole surface was similarly supplied; that is, there were 24,000 on the tent and apparently as many more flying about the door. Most of those that bite us are killed but that makes not the slightest perceptible difference in their manners or numbers. They reminded me of the Klondike gold-seekers. Thousands go; great numbers must die a miserable death; not more than one in 10,000 can get away with a load of the coveted stuff, and yet each believes that he is to be that one, and pushes on.

Dr. L. O. Howard tells us that the mosquito rarely goes far from its birthplace. That must refer to the miserable degenerates they have in New Jersey, for these of the north offer endless evidence of power to travel, as well as to resist cold and wind.

On July 21, 1907, we camped on a small island on Great Slave Lake. It was about one-quarter mile long, several miles from mainland, at least half a mile from any other island, apparently all rock, and yet it was swarming with mosquitoes. Here, as elsewhere, they were mad for our blood; those we knocked off and maimed, would crawl up with sprained wings and twisted legs to sting as fiercely as ever, as long as the beak would work.

We thought the stinging pests of the Buffalo country as bad as possible, but they proved mild and scarce compared with those we yet had to meet on the Arctic Barrens of our ultimate goal.

Each day they got worse; soon it became clear that mere adjectives could not convey any idea of their terrors. Therefore I devised a mosquito gauge. I held up a bare hand for 5 seconds by the watch, then counted the number of borers on the back; there were 5 to 10. Each day added to the number, and when we got out to the Buffalo country, there were 15 to 25 on the one side of the hand and elsewhere in proportion. On the Nyarling, in early July, the number was increased, being now 20 to 40. On Great Slave Lake, later that month, there were 50 to 60. But when we reached the Barren Grounds, the land of open breezy plains and cold water lakes, the pests were so bad that the hand held up for 5 seconds often showed from 100 to 125 long-billed mosquitoes boring away into the flesh. It was possible to number them only by killing them and counting the corpses. What wonder that all men should avoid the open plains, that are the kingdom of such a scourge.

Yet it must not be thought that the whole country is similarly and evenly filled. There can be no doubt that they flock and fly to the big moving creatures they see or smell. Maybe we had gathered the whole mosquito product of many acres. This is shown by the facts that if one rushes through thick bushes for a distance, into a clear space, the mosquitoes seem absent at first. One must wait a minute or so to gather up another legion. When landing from a boat on the Northern Lakes there are comparatively few, but even in a high wind, a walk to the nearest hilltop results in one again moving in a cloud of tormentors. Does not this readiness to assemble at a bait suggest a possible means of destroying them?

Every one, even the seasoned natives, agree that they are a terror to man and beast; but, thanks to our flyproof tents, we sleep immune. During the day I wear my net and gloves, uncomfortably hot, but a blessed relief from the torment. It is easy to get used to those coverings; it is impossible to get used to the mosquitoes.

For July 10 I find this note: "The Mosquitoes are worse now than ever before; even Jarvis, Preble, and the Indians are wearing face protectors of some kind. The Major has borrowed Preble's closed net, much to the latter's discomfiture, as he himself would be glad to wear it."

This country has, for 6 months, the finest climate in the world, but 2 1/2 of these are ruined by the malignancy of the fly plague. Yet it is certain that knowledge will confer on man the power to wipe them out.

No doubt the first step in this direction is a thorough understanding of the creature's life-history. This understanding many able men are working for. But there is another line of thought that should not be forgotten, though it is negative--many animals are immune. Which are they? Our first business is to list them if we would learn the why of immunity.

Frogs are among the happy ones. One day early in June I took a wood-frog in my hand. The mosquitoes swarmed about. In a few seconds 30 were on my hand digging away; 10 were on my forefinger, 8 on my thumb; between these was the frog, a creature with many resemblances to man--red blood, a smooth, naked, soft skin, etc.--and yet not a mosquito attacked it. Scores had bled my hand before one alighted on the frog, and it leaped off again as though the creature were red hot. The experiment repeated with another frog gave the same result. Why? It can hardly be because the frog is cold-blooded, for many birds also seem, to be immune, and their blood is warmer than man's.

Next, I took a live frog and rubbed it on my hand over an area marked out with lead pencil; at first the place was wet, but in a few seconds dry and rather shiny. I held up my hand till 50 mosquitoes had alighted on it and begun to bore; of these, 4 alighted on the froggy place, 3 at once tumbled off in haste, but one, No. 32, did sting me there. I put my tongue to the frog's back; it was slightly bitter.

I took a black-gilled fungus from a manure pile to-day, rubbed a small area, and held my hand bare till 50 mosquitoes had settled

and begun to sting; 7 of these alighted on the fungus juice, but moved off at once, except the last; it stung, but at that time the juice was dry.

Many other creatures, including some birds, enjoy immunity, but I note that mosquitoes did attack a dead crane; also they swarmed onto a widgeon plucked while yet warm, and bored in deep; but I did not see any filling with blood.

There is another kind of immunity that is equally important and obscure. In the summer of 1904, Dr. Clinton L. Bagg, of New York, went to Newfoundland for a fishing trip. The Codroy country was, as usual, plagued with mosquitoes, but as soon as the party crossed into the Garnish River Valley, a land of woods and swamps like the other, the mosquitoes had disappeared. Dr. Bagg spent the month of August there, and found no use for nets, dopes, or other means of fighting winged pests; there were none. What the secret was no one at present knows, but it would be a priceless thing to find.

Now, lest I should do injustice to the Northland that will some day be an empire peopled with white men, let me say that there are three belts of mosquito country the Barren Grounds, where they are worst and endure for 2 1/2 months; the spruce forest, where they are bad and continue for 2 months, and the great arable region of wheat, that takes in Athabaska and Saskatchewan, where the flies are a nuisance for 6 or 7 weeks, but no more so than they were in Ontario, Michigan, Manitoba, and formerly England; and where the cultivation of the land will soon reduce them to insignificance, as it has invariably done in other similar regions. It is quite remarkable in the north-west that such plagues are most numerous in the more remote regions, and they disappear in proportion as the country is opened up and settled.

Finally, it is a relief to know that these mosquitoes convey no disease--even the far-spread malaria is unknown in the region.

Why did I not take a "dope" or "fly repellent," ask many of my friends.

In answer I can only say I have never before been where mosquitoes were bad enough to need one. I had had no experience with fly-dope. I had heard that they are not very effectual, and so did not add one to the outfit. I can say now it was a mistake to leave any means untried. Next time I carry "dope." The following recipe is highly recommended:

Pennyroyal, one part,
Oil of Tar, " "
Spirits of Camphor, " "
Sweet Oil, or else vaseline, three parts.

Their natural enemies are numerous; most small birds prey on them; dragon-flies also, and the latter alone inspire fear in the pests. When a dragon-fly comes buzzing about one's head the mosquitoes move away to the other side, but it makes no considerable difference.

On Buffalo River I saw a boatman or water-spider seize, and devour

a mosquito that fell within reach; which is encouraging, because, as a rule, the smaller the foe, the deadlier, and the only creature that really affects the whole mosquito nation is apparently a small red parasite that became more and more numerous as the season wore on. It appeared in red lumps on the bill and various parts of the stinger's body, and the victim became very sluggish. Specimens sent to Dr. L. O. Howard, the authority on mosquitoes, elicited the information that it was a fungus, probably new to science. But evidently it is deadly to the Culex. More power to it, and the cause it represents; we cannot pray too much for its increase.

Now to sum up: after considering the vastness of the region affected--three-quarters of the globe--and the number of diseases these insects communicate, one is inclined to say that it might be a greater boon to mankind to extirpate the mosquito than to stamp out tuberculosis. The latter means death to a considerable proportion of our race, the former means hopeless suffering to all mankind; one takes off each year its toll of the weaklings the other spares none, and in the far north at least has made a hell on earth of the land that for six months of each year might be a human Paradise.

CHAPTER X

A BAD CASE

My unsought fame as a medicine man continued to grow. One morning I heard a white voice outside asking, "Is the doctor in?" Billy replied: "Mr. Seton is inside." On going forth I met a young American who thus introduced himself: "My name is Y-----, from Michigan. I was a student at Ann Arbor when you lectured there in 1903. I don't suppose you remember me; I was one of the reception committee; but I'm mighty glad to meet you out here."

After cordial greetings he held up his arm to explain the call and said: "I'm in a pretty bad way."

"Let's see."

He unwound the bandage and showed a hand and arm swollen out of all shape, twice the natural size, and of a singular dropsical pallor.

"Have you any pain?"

"I can't sleep from the torture of it."

"Where does it hurt now?"

"In the hand."

"How did you get it?"

"It seemed to come on after a hard crossing of Lake Athabaska. We had to row all night."

I asked one or two more questions, really to hide my puzzlement. "What in the world is it?" I said to myself; "all so fat and puffy." I cudgelled my brain for a clue. As I examined the hand in silence to play for time and conceal my ignorance, he went on:

"What I'm afraid of is blood-poisoning. I couldn't get out to a doctor before a month, and by that time I'll be one-armed or dead. I know which I'd prefer."

Knowing, at all events, that nothing but evil could come of fear, I said: "Now see here. You can put that clean out of your mind. You never saw blood-poisoning that colour, did you?"

"That's so," and he seemed intensely relieved.

While I was thus keeping up an air of omniscience by saying nothing, Major Jarvis came up.

"Look at this, Jarvis," said I; "isn't it a bad one?"

"Phew," said the Major, "that's the worst felon I ever saw."

Like a gleam from heaven came the word felon. That's what it was, a felon or whitlow, and again I breathed freely. Turning to the patient with my most cock-sure professional air, I said:

"Now see, Y., you needn't worry; you've hurt your finger in rowing, and the injury was deep and has set up a felon. It is not yet headed up enough; as soon as it is I'll lance it, unless it bursts of itself (and inwardly I prayed it might burst). Can you get any linseed meal or bran?"

"Afraid not."

"Well, then, get some clean rags and keep the place covered with them dipped in water as hot as you can stand it, and we'll head it up in twenty-four hours; then in three days I'll have you in good shape to travel." The last sentence, delivered with the calm certainty of a man who knows all about it and never made a mistake, did so much good to the patient that I caught a reflex of it myself.

He gave me his good hand and said with emotion: "You don't know how much good you have done me. I don't mind being killed, but I don't want to go through life a cripple."

"You say you haven't slept?" I asked.

"Not for three nights; I've suffered too much."

"Then take these pills. Go to bed at ten o'clock and take a pill; if this does not put you to sleep, take another at 10.30. If you are still awake at 11, take the third; then you will certainly sleep."

He went off almost cheerfully.

Next morning he was back, looking brighter. "Well," I said, "you slept last night, all right."

"No," he replied, "I didn't; there's opium in those pills, isn't

there?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Here they are. I made up my mind I'd see this out in my sober senses, without any drugs."

"Good for you," I exclaimed in admiration. "They talk about Indian fortitude. If I had given one of those Indians some sleeping pills, he'd have taken them all and asked for more. But you are the real American stuff, the pluck that can't be licked, and I'll soon have you sound as a dollar."

Then he showed his immense bladder-like hand. "I'll have to make some preparation, and will operate in your shanty at 1 o'clock," I said, thinking how very professional it sounded.

The preparation consisted of whetting my penknife and, much more important, screwing up my nerves. And now I remembered my friend's brandy, put the flask in my pocket, and went to the execution.

He was ready. "Here," I said; "take a good pull at this brandy."

"I will not," was the reply. "I'm man enough to go through on my mettle."

"Oh! confound your mettle," I thought, for I wanted an excuse to take some myself, but could not for shame under the circumstances.

"Are you ready?"

He laid his pudding-y hand on the table.

"You better have your Indian friend hold that hand."

"I'll never budge," he replied, with set teeth, and motioned the Indian away. And I knew he would not flinch. He will never know (till he reads this, perhaps) what an effort it cost me. I knew only I must cut deep enough to reach the pus, not so deep as to touch the artery, and not across the tendons, and must do it firmly, at one clean stroke. I did.

It was a horrid success. He never quivered, but said: "Is that all? That's a pin-prick to what I've been through every minute for the last week."

I felt faint, went out behind the cabin, and--shall I confess it?--took a long swig of brandy. But I was as good as my promise: in three days he was well enough to travel, and soon as strong as ever.

I wonder if real doctors ever conceal, under an air of professional calm, just such doubts and fears as worried me.

CHAPTER XI

THE SECOND BUFFALO HUNT

Though so trifling, the success of our first Buffalo hunt gave us quite a social lift. The chiefs were equally surprised with the whites, and when we prepared for a second expedition, Kiya sent word that though he could not act as guide, I should ride his own trained hunter, a horse that could run a trail like a hound, and was without guile.

I am, always suspicious of a horse (or man) without guile. I wondered what was the particular weakness of this exceptionally trained, noble, and guileless creature. I have only one prejudice in horseflesh--I do not like a white one. So, of course, when the hunter arrived he was, white as marble, from mane to tail and hoofs; his very eyes were of a cheap china colour, suggestive of cataractine blindness. The only relief was a morbid tinge of faded shrimp pink in his nostrils and ears. But he proved better than he looked. He certainly did run tracks by nose like a hound, provided I let him choose the track. He was a lively walker and easy trotter, and would stay where the bridle was dropped, So I came to the conclusion that Kiya was not playing a joke on me, but really had lent me his best hunter, whose sepulchral whiteness I could see would be of great advantage in snow time when chiefly one is supposed to hunt.

Not only Kiya, but Pierre Squirrel, the head chief, seemed to harbour a more kindly spirit. He now suddenly acquired a smattering of English and a fair knowledge of French. He even agreed to lead us through his own hunting grounds to the big Buffalo range, stipulating that we be back by July 1, as that was Treaty Day, when all the tribe assembled to receive their treaty money, and his presence as head chief was absolutely necessary.

We were advised to start from Fort Smith, as the trail thence was through a dryer country; so on the morning of June 24, at 6.50, we left the Fort on our second Buffalo hunt.

Major A. M. Jarvis, Mr. E. A. Preble, Corporal Selig, Chief Pierre Squirrel, and myself, all mounted, plus two pack-horses, prepared for a week's campaign. Riding ahead in his yellow caftan and black burnoose was Pierre Squirrel on his spirited charger, looking most picturesque. But remembering that his yellow caftan was a mosquito net, his black burnoose a Hudson's Bay coat, and his charger an ornery Indian Cayuse, robbed the picture of most of its poetry.

We marched westerly 7 miles through fine, dry, jack-pine wood, then, 3 miles through mixed poplar, pine, and spruce, And came to the Slave River opposite Point Gravois. Thence we went a mile or so into similar woods, and after another stretch of muskegs. We camped for lunch at 11.45, having covered 12 miles.

At two we set out, and reached Salt River at three, but did not cross there. It is a magnificent stream, 200 feet wide, with hard banks and fine timber on each side; but its waters are brackish.

We travelled north-westerly, or northerly, along the east banks for an hour, but at length away from it on a wide prairie, a mile

or more across here, but evidently extending much farther behind interruptions of willow clumps. Probably these prairies join, with those we saw on the Beaulieu trip. They are wet now, though a horse can go anywhere, and the grass is good. We camped about six on a dry place back from the river. At night I was much interested to hear at intervals the familiar Kick-kick-kick-kick of the Yellow Rail in the adjoining swamps. This must be its northmost range; we did not actually see it.

Here I caught a garter-snake. Preble says it is the same form as that at Edmonton. Our guide was as much surprised to see me take it in my hands, as he was to see me let it go unharmed.

Next morning, after a short hour's travel, we came again to Salt River and proceeded to cross. Evidently Squirrel had selected the wrong place, for the sticky mud seemed bottomless, and we came near losing two of the horses.

After two hours we all got across and went on, but most of the horses had shown up poorly, as spiritless creatures, not yet recovered from the effects of a hard winter.

Our road now lay over the high upland of the Salt Mountain, among its dry and beautiful woods. The trip would have been glorious but for the awful things that I am not allowed to mention outside of Chapter IX.

Pierre proved a pleasant and intelligent companion; he did his best, but more than once shook his head and said: "Chevaux no good."

We covered 15 miles before night, and all day we got glimpses of some animal on our track, 300 yards behind in the woods. It might easily have been a Wolf, but at night he sneaked into camp a forlorn and starving Indian dog. Next day we reached the long looked-for Little Buffalo River. Several times of late Pierre had commented on the slowness of our horses and enlarged on the awful Muskega that covered the country west of the Little Buffalo. Now he spoke out frankly and said we had been 21 days coming 40 miles when the road was good; we were now coming to very bad roads and had to go as far again. These horses could not do it, and get him back to Fort Smith for July 1--and back at any price he must be.

He was willing to take the whole outfit half a day farther westward, or, if we preferred it, he would go afoot or on horseback with the pick of the men and horses for a hasty dash forward; but to take the whole outfit on to the Buffalo country and get back on time was not possible.

This was a bad shake. We held a council of war, and the things that were said of that Indian should have riled him if he understood. He preserved his calm demeanour; probably this was one of the convenient times when all his English forsook him. We were simply raging: to be half-way to our goal, with abundance of provisions, fine weather, good health and everything promising well, and then to be balked because our guide wanted to go back. I felt as savage as the others, but on calmer reflection pointed out that Pierre told us before starting that he must be back for Treaty Day, and even now he was ready to do his best.

Then in a calm of the storm (which he continued to ignore) Pierre turned to me and said: "Why don't you go back and try the canoe route? You can go down the Great River to Grand Detour, then portage 8 miles over to the Buffalo, go down this to the Nyarling, then up the Nyarling into the heart of the Buffalo country; 21 days will do it, and it will be easy, for there is plenty of water and no rapids," and he drew a fairly exact map which showed that he knew the country thoroughly.

There was nothing to be gained by going half a day farther.

To break up our party did not fit in at all with our plans, so, after another brief stormy debate in which the guide took no part, we turned without crossing the Little Buffalo, and silently, savagely, began the homeward journey; as also did the little Indian dog.

Next morning we crossed the Salt River at a lower place where was a fine, hard bottom. That afternoon we travelled for 6 miles through a beautiful and level country, covered with a forest of large poplars, not very thick; it will some day be an ideal cattle-range, for it had rank grass everywhere, and was varied by occasional belts of jack-pine. In one of these Preble found a nest with six eggs that proved to be those of the Bohemian Chatterer. These he secured, with photograph of the nest and old bird. It was the best find of the journey.

The eggs proved of different incubation--at least a week's difference--showing that the cool nights necessitated immediate setting.

We camped at Salt River mouth, and next afternoon were back at Fort Smith, having been out five days and seen nothing, though there were tracks of Moose and Bear in abundance.

Here our guide said good-bye to us, and so did the Indian dog.

CHAPTER XII

BEZKYA AND THE PILLS

During this journey I had successfully treated two of the men for slight ailments, and Squirrel had made mental note of the fact. A result of it was that in the morning an old, old, black-looking Indian came hobbling on a stick to my tent and, in husky Chipewyan, roughly translated by Billy, told me that he had pains in his head and his shoulder and his body, and his arms and his legs and his feet, and he couldn't hunt, couldn't fish, couldn't walk, couldn't eat, couldn't lie, couldn't sleep, and he wanted me to tackle the case. I hadn't the least idea of what ailed the old chap, but conveyed no hint of my darkness. I put on my very medical look and said: "Exactly so. Now you take these pills and you will find a wonderful difference in the morning." I had some rather fierce rhubarb pills; one was a dose but, recognising the necessity for eclat, I gave him two.

He gladly gulped them down in water. The Indian takes kindly to pills, it's so easy to swallow them, so obviously productive of results, and otherwise satisfactory. Then, the old man hobbled off to his lodge.

A few hours later he was back again, looking older and shakier than ever, his wet red eyes looking like plague spots in his ashy brown visage or like volcanic eruptions in a desert of dead lava, and in husky, clicking accents he told Billy to tell the Okimow that the pills were no good--not strong enough for him.

"Well," I said, "he shall surely have results this time." I gave him three big ones in a cup of hot tea. All the Indians love tea, and it seems to help them. Under its cheering power the old man's tongue was loosened. He talked more clearly, and Billy, whose knowledge of Chipewyan is fragmentary at best, suddenly said: "I'm afraid I made, a mistake. Bezkyia says the pills are too strong. Can't you give him something to stop them?"

"Goodness," I thought; "here's a predicament," but I didn't know what to do. I remembered a western adage, "When you don't know a thing to do, don't do a thing." I only said: "Tell Bezkyia to go home, go to bed, and stay there till to-morrow, then come here again."

Away went the Indian to his lodge. I felt rather uneasy that day and night, and the next morning looked with some eagerness for the return of Bezkyia. But he did not come and I began to grow unhappy. I wanted some evidence that I had not done him an injury. I wished to see him, but professional etiquette forbade me betraying myself by calling on him. Noon came and no Bezkyia; late afternoon, and then I sallied forth, not to seek him, but to pass near his lodge, as though I were going to the Hudson's Bay store. And there, to my horror, about the lodge I saw a group of squaws, with shawls over their heads, whispering, together. As I went by, all turned as one of them pointed at me, and again they whispered.

"Oh, heavens!" I thought; "I've killed the old man." But still I would not go in. That night I did not sleep for worrying about it. Next morning I was on the point of sending Billy to learn the state of affairs, when who should come staggering up but old Bezkyia. He was on two crutches now, his complexion was a dirty gray, and his feeble knees were shaking, but he told Billy--yes, unmistakably this time--to tell the Okimow that that was great medicine I had given him, and he wanted a dose just like it for his wife.

CHAPTER XIII

FORT SMITH AND THE SOCIAL QUEEN

Several times during our river journey I heard reference to an extraordinary woman in the lower country, one who gave herself great airs, put on style, who was so stuck up, indeed, that she had "two pots, one for tea, one for coffee." Such incredible pomposity

and arrogance naturally invited sarcastic comment from all the world, and I was told I should doubtless see this remarkable person at Fort Smith.

After the return from Buffalo hunt No. 2, and pending arrangements for hunt No. 3, I saw more of Fort Smith than I wished for, but endeavoured to turn the time to account by copying out interesting chapters from the rough semi-illegible, perishable manuscript accounts of northern life called "old-timers." The results of this library research work appear under the chapter heads to which they belong.

At each of these northern posts there were interesting experiences in store for me, as one who had read all the books of northern travel and dreamed for half a lifetime of the north; and that was--almost daily meeting with famous men. I suppose it would be similar if one of these men were to go to London or Washington and have some one tell him: that gentle old man there is Lord Roberts, or that meek, shy, retiring person is Speaker Cannon; this on the first bench is Lloyd-George, or that with the piercing eyes is Aldrich, the uncrowned King of America. So it was a frequent and delightful experience to meet with men whose names have figured in books of travel for a generation. This was Roderick MacFarlane, who founded Fort Anderson, discovered the MacFarlane Rabbit, etc.; here was John Schott, who guided Caspar Whitney; that was Hanbury's head man; here was Murdo McKay, who travelled with Warburton Pike in the Barrens and starved with him on Peace River; and so with many more.

Very few of these men had any idea of the interest attaching to their observations. Their notion of values centres chiefly on things remote from their daily life. It was very surprising to see how completely one may be outside of the country he lives in. Thus I once met a man who had lived sixteen years in northern Ontario, had had his chickens stolen every year by Foxes, and never in his life had seen a Fox. I know many men who live in Wolf country, and hear them at least every week, but have never seen one in twenty years' experience. Quite recently I saw a score of folk who had lived in the porcupiniest part of the Adirondacks for many summers and yet never saw a Porcupine, and did not know what it was when I brought one into their camp. So it was not surprising to me to find that although living in a country that swarmed with Moose, in a village which consumes at least a hundred Moose per annum, there were at Fort Smith several of the Hudson's Bay men that had lived on Moose meat all their lives and yet had never seen a live Moose. It sounds like a New Yorker saying he had never seen a stray cat. But I was simply dumfounded by a final development in the same line.

Quite the most abundant carpet in the forest here is the uva-ursi or bear-berry. Its beautiful evergreen leaves and bright red berries cover a quarter of the ground in dry woods and are found in great acre beds. It furnishes a staple of food to all wild things, birds and beasts, including Foxes, Martens, and Coyotes; it is one of the most abundant of the forest products, and not one hundred yards from the fort are solid patches as big as farms, and yet when I brought in a spray to sketch it one day several of the Hudson's Bay officers said: "Where in the world did you get that? It must be very rare, for I never yet saw it in this country." A similar remark was made about a phoebe-bird. "It was never before seen in the country"; and

yet there is a pair nesting every quarter of a mile from Athabaska Landing to Great Slave Lake.

Fort Smith, being the place of my longest stay, was the scene of my largest medical practice.

One of my distinguished patients here was Jacob McKay, a half-breed born on Red River in 1840. He left there in 1859 to live 3 years at Rat Portage. Then he went to Norway House, and after 3 years moved to Athabaska in 1865. In 1887 he headed a special government expedition into the Barren Grounds to get some baby Musk-ox skins. He left Fort Rae, April 25, 1887, and, travelling due north with Dogrib Indians some 65 miles, found Musk-ox on May 10, and later saw many hundreds. They killed 16 calves for their pelts, but no old ones. McKay had to use all his influence to keep the Indians from slaughtering wholesale; indeed, it was to restrain them that he was sent.

He now lives at Fort Resolution.

One morning the chief came and said he wanted me to doctor a sick woman in his lodge. I thought sick women a good place for an amateur to draw the line, but Squirrel did not. "Il faut venir; elle est bien malade."

At length I took my pill-kit and followed him. Around his lodge were a score of the huge sled dogs, valuable animals in winter, but useless, sullen, starving, noisy nuisances all summer. If you kick them out of your way, they respect you; if you pity them, they bite you. They respected us.

We entered the lodge, and there sitting by the fire were two squaws making moccasins. One was old and ugly as sin; the second, young and pretty as a brown fawn. I looked from one to the other in doubt, and said:

"Laquelle est la malade?"

Then the pretty one replied in perfect English: "You needn't talk French here; I speak English," which she certainly did. French is mostly used, but the few that speak English are very proud of it and are careful to let you know.

"Are you ill?" I asked.

"The chief thinks I am," was the somewhat impatient reply, and she broke down in a coughing fit.

"How long have you had that?" I said gravely.

"What?"

I tapped my chest for reply.

"Oh! since last spring."

"And you had it the spr