

# SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE

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## THE NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE OF CANADA

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In 1873 the Dominion of Canada had a serious problem to face. It had bought Rupert's Land from the Hudson Bay Company four years previously. The establishment of the Province of Manitoba had required the Wolseley expedition of 1870, and the maintenance of a garrison at Winnipeg, which was just springing up round the wooden



palisades of old Fort Garry. But all beyond the Red River was practically unknown, and 30,000 Indians held the plains over which the buffalo herds then roamed. An army of regular troops seemed necessary to take and keep possession. This was done by a force of three hundred men, which for years practically ruled a region as large as France and Germany, dealt with unruly populations and most exacting conditions, and really brought about the civilizing of this vast district by personal bravery, judgment, and character. This paper proposes to tell something of the story epitomized in the badge and motto of the Northwest Mounted Police, whose scarlet tunic is the symbol of law and order from the Red River to the Rocky Mountains, and from the United States border to Peace River and the Saskatchewan.

Though organized when the late Hon. Alexander Mackenzie was Premier, the Mounted Police were one of Sir John Macdonald's inspirations, and after his return to power, in 1878, they always remained under his own eye. The red coat was no mere concession to historic sentiment, but his crafty appeal to Indian tradition of the good faith and fighting qualities of the "King George's Man," whose ally their brethren in the East had been, and to whom even the great Hudson Bay Company owned allegiance.

The nucleus of the force was got together in Manitoba, in the autumn of 1873, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel French, of the Royal Artillery, who had done Canada good service in organizing her artillery schools, and who, after winning fresh distinction in Australia, recently retired from the Imperial Army as a Major-General. The rest, making the strength only three hundred in all, went from Toronto to Fargo by rail, in June, 1874, and had a foretaste of their work in a march of 160 miles to Dufferin, on the

southern frontier of Manitoba. Weeding out the weaklings, and leaving a few good men to form a depot and send a detachment to Fort Ellice, on the Assiniboine, the Mounted

Police began their record and scored from the outset. With two field-guns and two mortars, and relying on their own transport train for supplies, they marked 800 miles westward through an unknown country inhabited by 30,000 Indians and a few score white desperadoes, till the Rocky Mountains were in sight. Leaving Colonel Macleod, the Assistant Commissioner, to build a fort in the very heart of the country of the terrible Blackfeet, where no white man's life was then safe, and sending another detachment north to Edmonton among the Assiniboines and Wood Crees, the main column turned back. They crossed the plains northward by way of Qu'Appelle to Fort Pelly, but finding their intended headquarters were not ready they returned to Dufferin. The thermometer, which had stood at 100 degrees F. in the shade when they marched out, marked 30 degrees below zero on their return. In four months, to a day, they travelled 1,959 miles, besides the distances covered by detachments on special service. Once beyond the rich prairies of Manitoba, hard work in the gravel drifts of the Missouri Coteau and among the broken gullies of Wood Mountain and the Cypress Hills told heavily on their animals. Many good horses lived through want of water and food in the acrid plains where cactus and sage-brush are the only vegetation round the alkaline lakes, to die from the effect of unaccustomed forage, or from the bitter cold that came on early in the autumn, though officers and men gave up their blankets to shelter their chargers. But the three hundred police accomplished without losing a life, what had seemed work for an army – the taking possession of the Great Lone Land.

One object of the expedition was to drive out the gangs of whiskey traders, outlaws of the worst kind from the Western States, who kept the Indians in a chronic state of deviltry, and only the year before had committed a number of murders and outrages on their own account. The forts in which they were reported to be entrenched, at the junction of the Bow and Belly Rivers, proved to be merely trading posts, built of logs, and the inmates had taken themselves off without giving the police a chance to fire a shot. Another object was to establish friendly relations with the Indians. This was soon accomplished, and their confidence in the police has lasted from that day to this. Their suspicions quickly wore away, and they became outspoken in their expressions of gratitude to the Government for sending them such protectors. As one chief told Colonel Macleod, "Before you came the Indian crept along, now he is not afraid to walk erect." They were given a general idea of the laws, told that those would be the same for white man and Indian alike, and that they need not fear punishment except for doing what they knew to be wrong. They were promised that their lands would not be taken from them but that fair treaties would be made in solemn council – promises the faithful fulfillment of which has saved Canada from Indian wars. Before the end of 1874 Colonel Macleod was able to report that the whiskey trade was completely suppressed, that an unarmed man could ride safely over what had been the battle-ground of those hereditary enemies the Blackfeet and Crees, and that the only Indian difficulty to be apprehended was the meeting of war parties from different tribes. The best result of the expedition was the immediate establishment of a prestige which has served the Police in good stead in many a "tight" place since, and has enabled them to disregard immeasurable odds against them.

Colonel Macleod succeeded to the command upon Colonel French's resignation after completing the work of organization. During the next two years the Police were busy building themselves posts, establishing supply farms, and exploring the country. Those were the golden days of the force; the life was one of constant excitement and adventure, and the duties were almost purely military, for no settlers then went beyond Manitoba. The great herds of buffalo still ranged the prairies, and it is strange now to read in the old order-books prohibitions from shooting more animals than could be used as food. The grizzly bear had not beat his final retreat to the mountains, and there were antelope in abundance. The Indians often came into conflict over encroachments upon each other's hunting-grounds, and were quick to appeal to the red-coats as arbiters and protectors. At that time the Police had the whole management of the Indians on their shoulders. They had to reconcile them to the coming of the whites, and to protect the surveyors, who had already begun parcelling out the country and exploring the route of the railway. Their abilities as diplomats were evidenced by the readiness with which the Indians entered into the treaties concluded between 1875 and 1877, and their soldierly qualities by the bearing of the detachments that escorted the commissioners. Convoying the large sums of money and stores of supplies required for the annual payments to each head of a family was a perilous duty. The distribution of them required firmness, tact, and insight into the mysteries of Indian character. But these are qualities the Police have always shown in a marked degree.



Badge of the Northwest Mounted Police.

In 1877 nearly the whole of the little force was concentrated on the south-western frontier to watch and check the 6,000 Sioux who sought refuge in Canada after their defeat of Custer on the Little Big Horn. Fort Walsh, in the Cypress Hills, was made headquarters instead of Fort Pelly; a post commanding the trails from the Upper Missouri was established at Wood Mountain to the eastward, and the garrison of Fort Macleod was increased. A time of great anxiety ensued. The Canadian Indians, especially the Blackfeet, were strongly opposed to the presence of the Sioux – the more so as it was already apparent that the buffalo would be extinct in a few years. The temptation was great to smoke the tobacco sent them by Sioux runners, and thus bind themselves to join in an effort to sweep out once and for all the white men, whose numbers seemed so scanty. But – chiefly under Crowfoot's influence – it was resisted, and they helped the Police by refraining from hostilities, and affording information as to the doings of the new-comers. Sitting Bull and his warriors were met with a quiet resolution that astonished them, and won their immediate respect. They were told that so long as they observed the law they would be protected, but could expect nothing

more, and would not be allowed to settle permanently in Canada, and they were finally induced to surrender peacefully to the United States authorities in 1880-81.

The coolness and pluck of the Police during that critical period was amazing. Their confidence in themselves is curiously evidenced by a report from the officer in command at Wood Mountain, recommending that at least 50 men should be stationed there, as there were about 5,000 Sioux camped in the vicinity! On one occasion an attempt by the Sioux warriors to rescue by force one of their number who had been arrested was faced and stopped by 28 troopers. Such exploits were frequent. In 1877 Inspector Walsh, with Doctor Kittson, a guide, and 15 constables charged down at daybreak one morning on a war camp of 200 Assiniboines, who, after ill-using and firing at some Saulteaux camped near by, had threatened to serve the Police in the same way if they came. Surrounding the war lodge erected in the centre of the camp, he arrested and took away the head chief, Crow's Dance, and 19 of the principal warriors. Then assembling the remainder of the chiefs in council, he warned them of the results setting the law at defiance and ordered them to let the Saulteaux go in peace.

On one occasion a settler struck an Indian, whose comrades, some 500 in all, not understanding how such an insult could be atoned for by a fine, promptly proceeded to destroy the settler's property. Getting worked up into wild excitement they soon began firing indiscriminately, and threatening to take the lives of all white men. Colonel Irvine and his adjutant, Captain Cotton, happened to be near by. Though unarmed they rode straight into the infuriated band. Rifles were levelled at them from all sides, but their coolness told, and the Indians sullenly obeyed the order to disperse. Incidents like this, however, could be told of every officer who has served in the Mounted Police, nor have the rank and file been behind their officers in daring and firmness. It was then, as it is now, an every-day matter of duty for a single constable to enter an Indian camp and make an arrest. Momentary indecision, or the



DRAWN BY FREDERIC REMINGTON.

ENGRAVED BY G. W. CHADWICK.

Officer of the Mounted Police in Full-dress.

display of temper would have often meant not only failure but certain death.

In 1880 Colonel Irvine, who had been Assistant Commissioner for some years, succeeded Colonel Macleod in the command, the latter becoming Stipendiary Magistrate, and eventually being appointed a judge when the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories was organized in 1886. Their names will always be associated with the rapid and successful development of the country, and a record of the distinguished services which both began as Canadian officers in Lord Wolseley's Red River Expedition of 1870, would itself be the history of the Northwest.

The modern era of that history began with the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The rapid progress of this was largely due to the services of the Police in preventing annoyance and attacks on working parties by the Indians, maintaining law and order among the thousands of navvies employed, and preventing entirely the introduction of liquor. An army of camp-followers – gamblers, thieves, and the scum of the Western border States – flocked in for their expected harvest, but were kept in perfect order. The Police did good work too, in quelling strikes, which at times threatened to become serious disturbances. Mr. Van Horne, the President of the Company, has borne the most telling testimony to their services in these words written to the Commissioner: "Without the assistance of the officers and men of the splendid force under your command it would have been impossible to accomplish as much work as we did. On no great work, within my knowledge, where so many men have been employed, has such perfect order prevailed."

Till then the Police had mainly their own safety to consider. With the rapid influx of settlers came responsibility for lives and property scattered over an area of 375,000 square miles. Trading-posts developed into towns, new centres of population sprang up like magic, the cattle-ranchers occupied the region at the base of the mountains, and the whole face of the country was changed. Simultaneously with the coming of the white men the buffalo became extinct,



Street Dress of the Mounted Police.

and the Indians, reduced at once to poverty, and no longer masters of the plains, felt their position bitterly. Among the thousands of immigrants there was naturally a large proportion of the roughest class, and the thought that a settler's taunt or hasty action might precipitate an Indian outbreak added largely to the cares of the Police. On the other hand, the Indians, accustomed all their lives to look upon other men's horses and cattle as lawful plunder, found in horse-stealing and cattle-killing substitutes for the excitement of the war-party and the chase, and serious encounters were frequent. Another instance out of many, which I wish there were space to give, will further show the coolness and determination with which the Police always act. It happened in 1882, but is typical of any time in their history. A sub-chief of the Blackfeet, named Bull Elk, stole some beef from a white man and fired at him. Inspector Dickens – a son of the novelist by the way – ordered his arrest. Sergeant Howe and two constables went with the Inspector to the reserve and took their prisoner through a mob. Though they were knocked down and the Indians began firing, they stuck to their man, while the Inspector kept the Indians back with his revolver, until the rest of the men quartered there – only ten of a reinforcement – came to their rescue.

The prisoner was to be sent to Macleod for trial, but 700 Blackfeet warriors, armed with Winchesters, surrounded the post, taunted the sentries, and tried to excite the Police to fire on them, which, of course, would have ended everything with the little detachment. On Crowfoot's intercession and promise to go bail, the prisoner was allowed to go for a time. This happened on January 2d, it was reported at Macleod, 100 miles away, by Sergeant Howe, on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and by the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> Major Crozier, with every available man, was at the Blackfeet Reserve, having ordered the field-guns to be ready if wanted. The post was hurriedly fortified by eleven the next morning, and the prisoner was sent for. Crowfoot asked if they meant to fight. The reply was, "Certainly not, unless you commence." Crowfoot was then in turn asked whether he meant to do his duty as a chief, assist the Police in their duty, and make a speech to his people, saying the Superintendent had done right. The Indians were evidently greatly impressed, and after a vigorous harangue from Crowfoot endorsing the action taken, Bull Elk was sentenced and marched off to prison. The policy of separating the tribes, settling them on reserves, and teaching them to farm, was distasteful in the extreme to these born rovers; but by great tact the Crees and Assiniboines were persuaded to move north from the Cypress Hills to the Qu'Appelle Valley and the Saskatchewan, guarded by the Police from the attacks of their old enemies the Bloods, whose war-parties were on the alert to seize such a chance. They did not all go quietly, however, for Big Bear, so notorious afterward in the rebellion of 1885, and another worthy named Pie-a-Pot, gave much trouble. The former led 150 braves to sack Fort Walsh, but the sight of 100 red-coats, and two mountain guns on its wooden bastions, changed his mind and kept him civil for a time, though soon afterward Colonel Irvine, with one officer and 22 men, had to take their lives in their hands by riding into his camp of 500 lodges to enforce the surrender of some horses stolen from Montana Territory.



The Canadian Pacific Railway made such unexpected progress that in 1882 definite plans could be made for the permanent stations of the force, which was then raised to a strength of 500. Regina, the capital of the Territories, was chosen as headquarters, and Fort Walsh and Wood Mountain were abandoned, though the latter, from its commanding situation, has since been re-established as a permanent outpost. Substantial barracks began to replace the original quarters that the troopers had built for themselves of cotton-wood pickets, roofed with poles and thatched with grass and clay. Comforts were provided in the shape of libraries, recreation-rooms, and canteens for the supply of small luxuries and the beverage known from the authorized strength as "four percent beer," and the Police settled down to their new and ever-increasing duties as a permanent garrison. All seemed to be going well for three years, and then came "the psychological moment" in the history of the Northwest.

Had the warnings of the Police been heeded the rebellion of the half-breeds under Louis Riel would have been impossible. The actual outbreak found them ready, but though the strength at the northern posts had been increased to 200, all decisive action depended on orders from Ottawa, 2,000 miles away. At a day's notice Colonel Irvine, with 4 officers and 86 men, all the force available, left Regina, and marching 291 miles in seven days in the depth of a Northwest winter, passed right through the district held by the insurgents, outflanking them by his quickness and upsetting Riel's plans to seize Prince Albert, the key of the situation. Twenty-four hours were occupied in organizing the defences of Prince Albert, and before daybreak Colonel Irvine, hoping to quash the rising by a prompt and decided movement, was on the way to reinforce Fort Carlton. Unfortunately, that very day Major Crozier had sent out a party to secure provisions and ammunition at Duck Lake from falling into the insurgents' hands.



Resistance was made, and he went out himself, with, all told, 99 Police and Prince Albert volunteers, and fell into a trap skilfully planned by the rebels, when he had no reason to think were in force. They were between 300 and 400 strong, however, and almost surrounded him. Crozier's men made a splendid stand, though fighting in deep snow which made their one field-gun almost useless, and with no better cover than their sleighs, while the enemy were concealed in thick bush. After losing 12 killed and 12 wounded they retired as steadily and coolly as they had fought, bringing off their wounded and the gun, and got back to Fort Carlton just as Colonel Irvine arrived there. It was the only check the Police have ever experienced.

That they would have retrieved the situation by themselves no one who knows them has ever doubted. But they never had a free hand. General Middleton, the Imperial officer in command of the Canadian militia, was on his way to Winnipeg to direct a campaign; they were already placed under his orders and "the ceremonies of the wars must be kept."

"What are the Police doing?" was the question on every lip for anxious weeks. Their enforced inaction, and the consequent loss of prestige that had so often enabled a handful of troopers to disperse hundreds of armed warriors, emboldened whole bands of Indians to join the insurgents and heartened them to a determined resistance that cost many brave lives to overcome. All that was soon known; but until the inner history of that sharp little campaign is written the injustice and misrepresentation will not be revealed which they were made to hear that others might make sure of reaping all the glory and reward. It is impossible even to outline here the events of 1885. The records and the graves on the prairie tell what the Police did whenever and wherever they got their chance. Their indispensable and invaluable aid has been frankly acknowledged by commanders in whom selfishness did not mar personal bravery, and their soldier-comrades were the first to testify that they did their full share, and more, of marching, hard work, and fighting. But no man in the force wears the medal that decorates many a volunteer who never was within 300 miles of the front, and saw all his active service at the base of supplies or in the Home Guard of his own settlement. And why? Let red-tapedom answer for itself: "The Mounted Police were doing their ordinary duty." A prouder distinction it would be hard to invent.

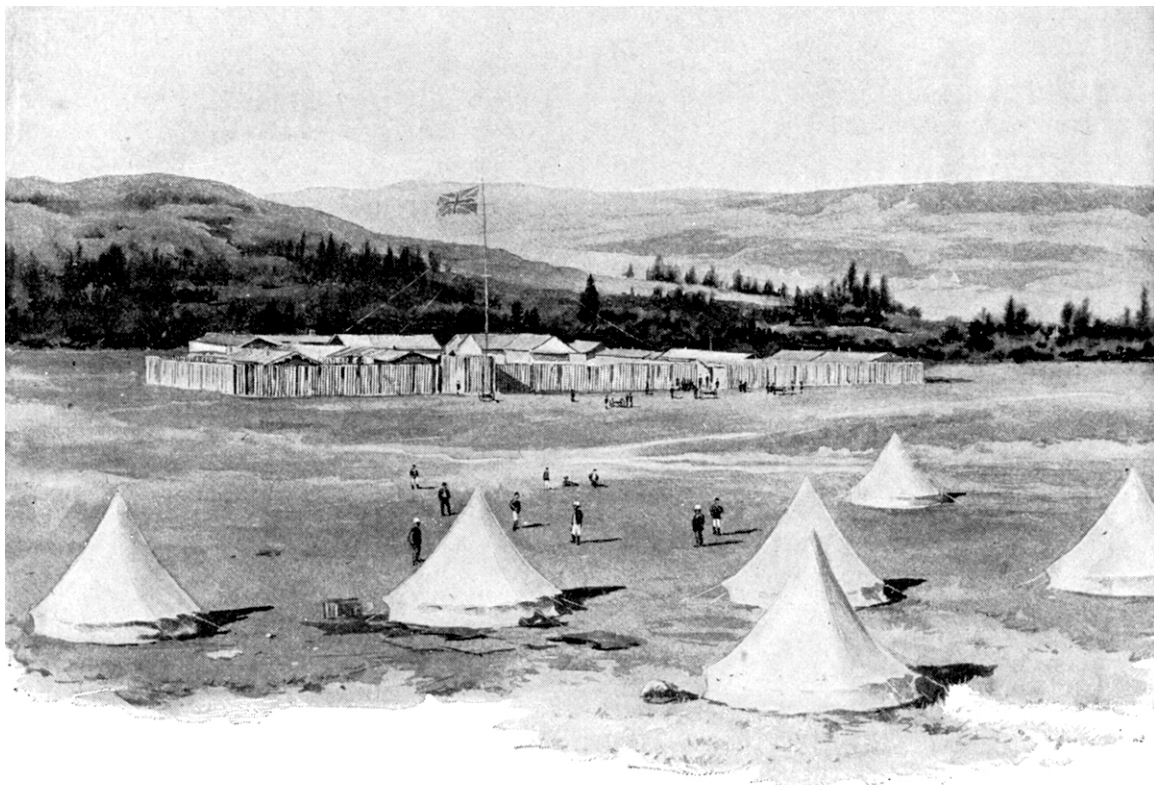
The duty done so well was not confined to those who were with the three columns in the field. Those left behind had heavy work and responsibility. The firm front shown and the preparations for defence at all the posts undoubtedly checked a general rising of the Indians. At Macleod in particular, the tact and personal influence of the officer in command, Major Cotton, aided by the same qualities in his former chief, Colonel Macleod, and backed up by the admirable conduct of the rank and file, kept the Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegiens from disregarding the loyal counsels of old Crowfoot and joining Riel. Had they done so, every Indian in the Territories would have risen, their friends from across the border would have joined them, and there would have been massacre and raping throughout the whole Northwest.

Immediately after the outbreak the strength of the Police was increased to 1,000, their present number. In 1886 Colonel Irvine resigned, and was succeeded by the present commandant, Colonel Lawrence Herchmer. And now it is time to say something of the composition and routine work of the force.



The Northwest Mounted Police, like the Royal Irish Constabulary, on which it was modelled, is, in the eye of the law, a purely civil body; its officers are magistrates, the men are constables. But so far as circumstances will allow, its organization, internal economy, and drill are those of a cavalry regiment, and when on active service in a military capacity, the officers have army rank. The Queen's Regulations do not apply to it, however, and discipline, as strict as in the army, is enforced under a concise and comprehensive enactment which provides a maximum penalty of a year's imprisonment and a fine of one month's pay, leaving it to the discretion of the officers to make the punishment fit the crime. Even the same C. O.'s views naturally vary, and if this provision were made a little more definite so that the defaulter, whose military "crime" consists in buttons insufficiently burnished, or in miscalculation of the time available to see his sweetheart home before "last post" sounds, might meet a more uniform fate, a grievance would be removed.

The affairs of the force are managed by a distinct department of the Government at Ottawa, under the political supervision of one of the Cabinet Ministers, at present the President of the Privy Council. Mr. Frederick White, formerly Sir John Macdonald's Secretary, has for many years been the Controller of the Department, its permanent civil head. The executive command is held by an officer styled the Commissioner, and ranking as lieutenant-colonel. The Assistant-Commissioner ranks with a major, and after three years' service with a lieutenant-colonel. Ten Superintendents, with captain's rank, command the divisions, with about thirty-five Inspectors as sub-alterns who



Old Fort Walsh, now abandoned.  
(From a photograph by Notman, Montreal.)

correspond to lieutenants. Paymaster's and quartermaster's duties are done by the officers of each division, and the Superintendent of the depot division acts as regimental adjutant, an inspector performing similar duty for each of the individual divisions. The medical staff consists of a Surgeon, five Assistant-Surgeons and two veterinary

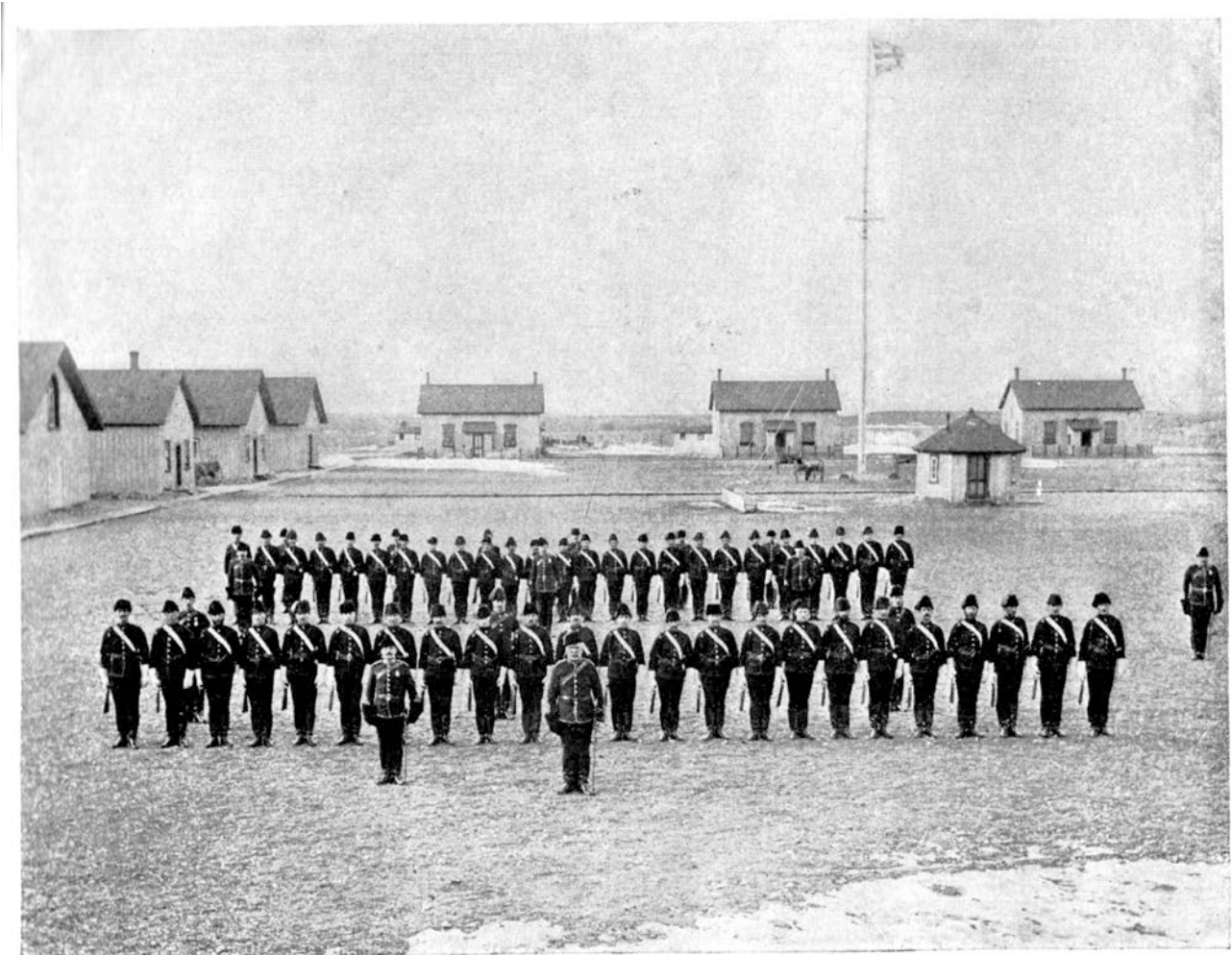
Surgeons, the small number of the latter being supplemented by veterinary staff-sergeants. The non-commissioned officers are, as in the army, sergeant-majors, staff-sergeants of various sorts, sergeants, and corporals, while the troopers are called constables.

The officers' pay is not large. The Commissioner receives \$2,400; the Assistant Commissioner, \$1,600; the Superintendents and Surgeon, \$1,400; the Inspectors, \$1,000 a year, with, of course free quarters, rations, light, fuel, and forage. But promotion is very slow, and these are the rates of twenty years ago when the force was small, the duties far less numerous and exacting, and the life far more attractive. The men, however, are well paid, and without the vexatious deductions which in the army reduce Tommy Atkin's pocket-money to a mere pittance. The non-commissioned officers get from a dollar to a dollar and a half a day; the constables fifty cents, with an addition of five cents good-conduct pay for each year, and an allowance of twenty-five cents when employed as clerks or artificers. Both officers and men are provided with liberal pensions, graded according to length of service, and attainable after ten years. Rations are of excellent quality and large quantity, and can be supplemented very cheaply with little luxuries from the canteen, which is now a feature of every division post. At most places, especially in the north, there is a fair supply of small game in the season. The Macleod and Calgary districts abound with fine trout.

The rank and file are not surpassed by any picked corps in any service. A recruit must be between twenty-two and forty-five years old, of good character, able to read and write English or French, active, well-built, and of sound constitution. He is also supposed to be able to ride, and a man who knows something of horses is preferred, but these two requirements are broadly interpreted. The physique is very fine, the average of the whole thousand being five feet nine and a half inches in height and thirty-eight and a half inches round the chest. There has always been an unusual proportion of men of good family and education. Lots of young Englishmen who come out to try their hand at farming in Manitoba, or ranching in Alberta, eventually drift into the Police, as do also many well-connected young Canadians. Farmers' sons from Ontario, clerks tired of city life and poor prospects, immigrants who have not found their El Dorado, waifs and strays from everywhere and of every calling, are to be found in the ranks. The roll-call would show many defaulters if no man answered to any name but his own. There was, and still may be, at least one Lord in the force; several of the men are entitled to more than the plain regimental number as a handle to their names, and many are university graduates. In these days of short service discharged soldiers are glad to take the Queen's shilling again, so that medals won in England's continual little wars at the other end of the world are not unusual and not a few officers who have borne Her Majesty's commission now serve as simple troopers. In the adventurous infancy of the force these elements were even more numerous than nowadays, and many an odd *rencontre* has occurred between men who had last met at the mess-table of some crack regiment, in a swell London Club, or an English country-house. The term of enlistment is five years, but many of the men "take on" again, especially since the establishment of the pension system. Discharge may be obtained by purchase, but the small number allowed to avail themselves of this privilege, only three a month, and the long delay in getting a release – often useless unless available at once – constitute a serious grievance and an easily suppressible cause of desertion. Hardships and monotony,

especially to those unused to work and discipline, proximity to the border, the inducements of high wages in civilian life and dread of punishment for some offence – unpremeditated perhaps and trivial enough in anyone but a soldier – frequently make deserters. But they are usually a good riddance to their comrades, whose good record is not spoiled by the inevitable black sheep.

After passing the doctor and taking the oath of allegiance, the recruit goes to head-quarters for training. His life there is that of a cavalry soldier all the world over. He undergoes in the riding-school that refined torture which results in a military seat, and incidentally learns much of the peculiarities of the Western broncho. After a trial of Mounted Infantry drill, the force has returned to the regular cavalry system, in the simpler movements of which it is thoroughly exercised, and field-artillery drill has also to be learned. Rifle and revolver practice, mounted and dismounted, and instruction in police duties complete the professional training. There is plenty to do in the way of parades, stables, guard mounting, orderly duty, escorts, and “fatigues.” He also learns to drive a transport wagon and a buckboard – two vehicles constantly in use for prairie-travel – so that merely as a soldier he has to master the work of all arms of the service, besides those of a police constable.



Foot Parade of D and H Divisions, Mounted Police.

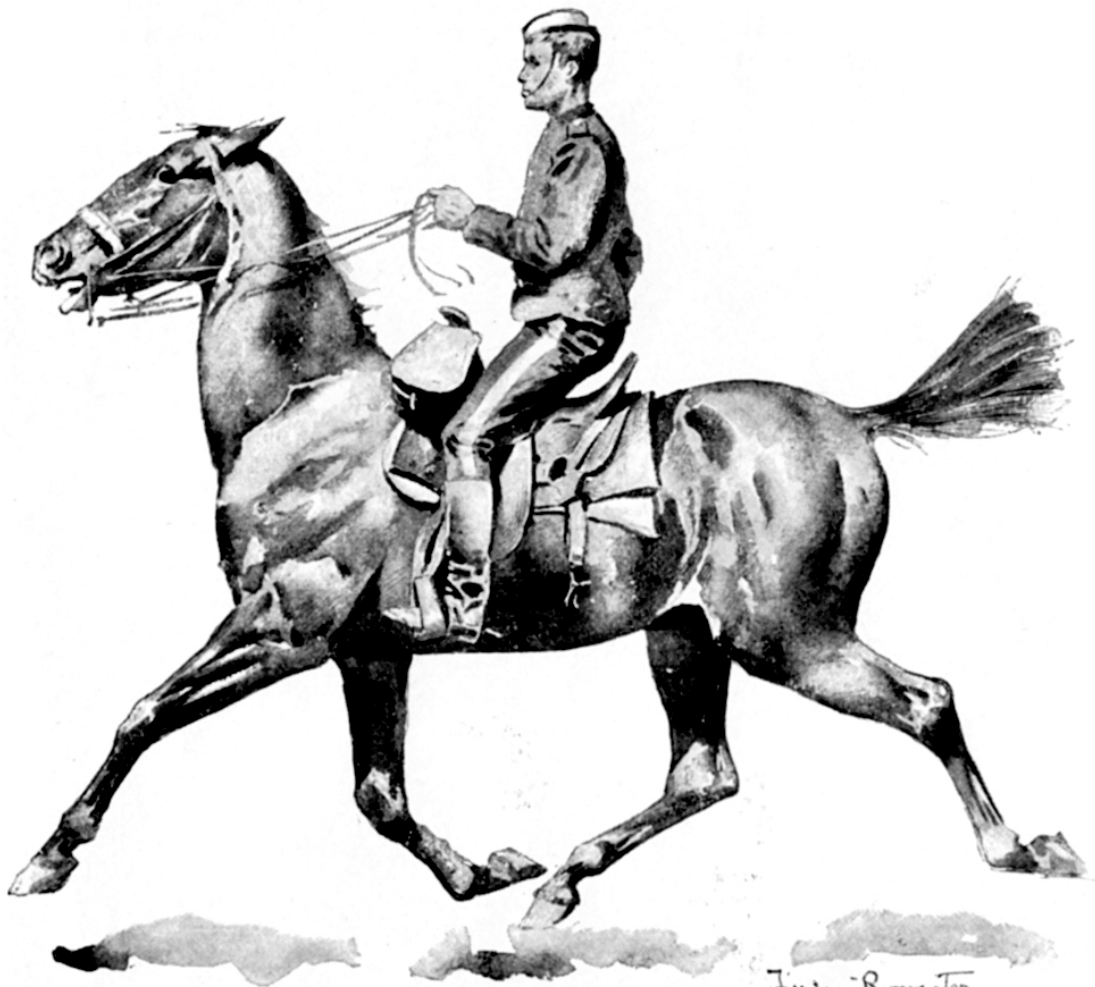
(From a photograph taken by Steele & Co., of Winnipeg, at Macleod, Northwest Territory, December 18, 1890.)

The uniform is very like that of an English dragoon, the full dress consisting of scarlet tunic braided with yellow, dark blue breeches with a broad yellow stripe down the side, riding-boots and spurs faultlessly polished, and white helmet with glittering brass spike. In undress, with his tight-fitting jacket, round forage-cap perched on three hairs, and silver-mounted whip, as he swaggers down the street of some little Northwest town, there is not a crack cavalry regiment in Her Majesty's service that can show a smarter trooper. Only the officers and sergeants wear swords; the rank and file are armed with Winchester carbines and Enfield revolvers, the cartridges for which are carried in brown leather bandoleers and waist-belts. The Policeman's kit is of excellent quality and unusually varied in description, to meet many varieties of climate and duty. Besides uniform, a liberal supply of warm underclothing, the usual toilet necessities, brushes and cleaning apparatus for himself and his horse, blankets and bedding on a liberal scale, and table necessities, there are such items as fur cap, buckskin mitts, moose-hide moccasins, and long woollen stockings to wear with them, a water-proof sheet, a rug, and a red worsted *tuque*, the picturesque and piratical-looking winter head-dress of the French Canadian *habitant*. A long blue cavalry cloak and cape serve well enough at ordinary times, but for out-door duty in the bitter frost of the Northwest, a coat of back Russian lambskin is the best substitute that has yet been found for the old-time buffalo coat, which is now as scarce and valuable as one of its original wearers. Duck clothing is provided for the not less trying summer heat, and stout pea-jackets for spring and autumn. On patrol and at the outposts the cowboy's comfortable felt hat is a frequent substitute for the stiff helmet and shadeless forage cap. Experienced officers advocate a "prairie suit" of neutral color, keeping the present uniform for parade use; and now that the red-coat has served its purpose so effectually it might well make way for a more suitable working-dress.

The Depot Division and another of the ten into which the force is divided, about two hundred strong, are stationed at head-quarters, three miles from Regina, and form a little prairie town of themselves on the banks of the Wascana. The English of this euphonious name, which hardly compensates for absence of water in summer and intense muddiness at all seasons, is Pile-of-Bones Creek, so called from the stacks of buffalo bones once upon a time stored there to be carried away by rail and converted into fertilizers, so that Eastern cattle in their turn might benefit by the elements of the rich prairie grasses. The barracks, a number of wooden buildings – many of them merely portable houses - grouped round a parade-ground, do not make an imposing display of architecture. On one side the officers' quarters form a row of detached cottages; barrack-rooms, sergeants' quarters, orderly-room, guard-house, prison, canteen, recreation-rooms, stables, and storehouses complete the square, and the Union Jack flies from a flagstaff over all. Outside are the hospital, more storehouses, a fine riding-school, and a small cluster of married men's quarters, but wedlock is an institution not favored by the authorities. All round is the open prairie, reaching to the horizon in long undulations unbroken except by Government House near by, the distant roofs of Regina, and the straight line of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the north. The aspect is peculiarly bare, even in summer when the tough clay soil, in which trees will not grow, yields its abundant harvest of wheat.

The other Divisional Posts, scattered as they are through such an extent of country, vary much in situation and local color, but all have the same family likeness.

Times have changed much since the Police first came into the Great Lone Land. Towns and villages and farm-houses stand where only the tepees of passing Indians broke the horizon line. Wagon trails sear the plains with broad brown bands, but the creaking "bull train," drawn by long teams of oxen, wincing under the resounding crack of long whips plied by wild-looking drivers volleying strange oaths from under the canvas-tops of the "prairie schooners" that slowly dragged out mile after mile, is almost extinct. Only blanched skulls and the deep furrows worn by countless thousands following each other in single file, remain to tell of the buffalo; and the great "fall hunt," in which the half-breeds laid up store of robes for "the Company," is now a legend. The "Sun Dance" is no longer a mystic rite to test the would-be warrior's fortitude, but a means of extracting a little money from tourists and the youthful Indian slaves at pothooks and hangers in the school at the Reserve. The glamour of the early days is gone. Yet the endless prairie is never far from the barrack-gate, and whether it be bright and sweet with its summer carpet of flowers, brown and bleak in spring and autumn, or blinding in brilliance of winter whiteness, its deep silence, broken neither by the cool breeze, sweet to man and horse after the scorching heat of a summer-day, nor by the deadly rush of the icy blizzard, strikes deep into the soul.



Police Recruit Acquiring a Military Seat.

Fort McLeod, the oldest post of all, in the heart of the rich ranching country of southern Alberta, commanding the southern passes through the Rockies, and separating the Blackfeet from the Bloods and Piegiens, as well as keeping watch over the Montana border, has always been an important place, and two divisions are stationed there. A typical Western frontier town has grown up around it, and the southern extension of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway, by bridging the hundred miles that separated it from the Canadian Pacific line, has added still more to its popularity as a station. Lethbridge, 50 miles to the eastward, which replaces old Fort Walsh, now quite deserted and in ruins, is a flourishing mining town, and the present terminus of the Alberta Railway and Coal Company's line, which, under lease to the Canadian Pacific Railway, is now being extended through Macleod and the Crow's Nest Pass. It is the headquarters of an important district just to the northward of the Indian tribes across the border. Maple Creek and Calgary form, with Regina, a line on the Canadian Pacific Railway, intermediate between the frontier and the northern posts. Maple Creek, but for the railway passing through it, is still an isolated prairie post, while Calgary, at the gate of the Bow River Pass, has in a decade developed into an enterprising little city of brick and stone, with churches, banks, theatres, electric lighting and electric street railway. Its Gaelic name, "the river of clear water," was Colonel Macleod's apt christening of its beautiful site at the junction of two mountain streams. Calgary and Macleod have always been coveted stations; the beautiful region in the foothills of the Rockies and the mildness of the short winter, which is tempered by the warm Chinook winds from the Pacific, causing them to be known as "God's country" to the men stationed in the eastern portion of the Territories. Prince Albert, Battleford, and Fort Saskatchewan, the remaining three divisional head-quarters, are far to the northward on the banks of the North Saskatchewan, in a region where broad stretches of rich, long grass are broken by copses of poplar and birch, with numerous lakes and "sloughs." Beyond the great river is the southern border of the forest which separates the wheat-growing plains of the south from the rocky, moss-covered, "barren lands" within the Arctic Circle. Prince Albert, the easternmost of the three, originally a half-breed settlement, is now a thriving town and the centre of a flourishing district. Within the last two years the railway has stretched out a long arm to it, and cut off the tedious journey across the Salt Plains and the long round by river steamer from Lake Winnipeg. Battleford, midway between the other two, is now the only post still dependent on the buckboard, the Red River cart, and the prairie schooner for its means of communication with civilization when the water is too low for the semi-occasional steamer to pass the shallow bars. Fort Saskatchewan is only twenty miles from Edmonton, which is connected with Calgary by rail, and in that country it is an every-day affair to ride that far to make an afternoon call.

Each divisional post is the focus of a system of outposts, some of which are maintained in summer only, or as occasion requires. These vary from an inspector's command to a solitary constable, but most of them consist of a few men under a non-commissioned officer. These isolated detachments are housed very variously; some are stationed in the small towns along the C.P.R.; others, on duty on the southern border of Manitoba, find quarters in snug farm-houses; but most of them have to put up with rough "shacks," otherwise log-huts, and many, even in winter, are under canvas. By degrees, however, comfortable quarters are being built at the principal points commanding the main trails. A continuous chain of patrols is kept up all summer, those

of one division connecting with the next, so that the whole country is thoroughly examined. On the United States boundary alone the line of patrols extends seven hundred miles from west to east, and the map showing the routes travelled looks like a spider's web. A sharp lookout is kept for smugglers, horse-thieves, criminals, wandering Indians, and other "vagrom men." Strangers are asked their business; note is taken of settlers' complaints, the state of the crops, and the movements of cattle; strayed horses are looked up and restored to their owners, with every now and then a sharp ride for perhaps a hundred miles or more in pursuit of horse-thieves; prairie fires are watched for and put out if possible; the Indian Reserves are visited, and note taken of the doings there. Each patrol makes a written report, which, with the diary kept at the outpost, is sent in weekly to the Divisional Head-quarters. In this way a general supervision is maintained; the Police know all the ins and outs of the district, and are in constant touch with the people. It is trying work though; hard rides in all weathers, from daylight to dark; fording dangerous rivers, for ferries and bridges are luxuries yet to come in most parts of the Northwest; a scorching sun and the incessant plague of mosquitoes in the summer months; and often enough a night's lodging on the open prairie, with a tiny fire of twigs to cook the supper, and a turn at guarding the horses.



Police and Trailer Following a Criminal.

The statutory duty of the Mounted Police is to carry out in the Northwest Territories, and if required so to do, in every province of Canada, the criminal and other laws of the Dominion. Something of what this phrase means may have been gathered from what has already been said. There is hardly anything they have not to turn their hands to in the varied circumstances of the vast country through which they are scattered. It has been truly said that their life is one continual campaign. Offenders are arrested and tried before the officers, who sit in conjunction with local magistrates if

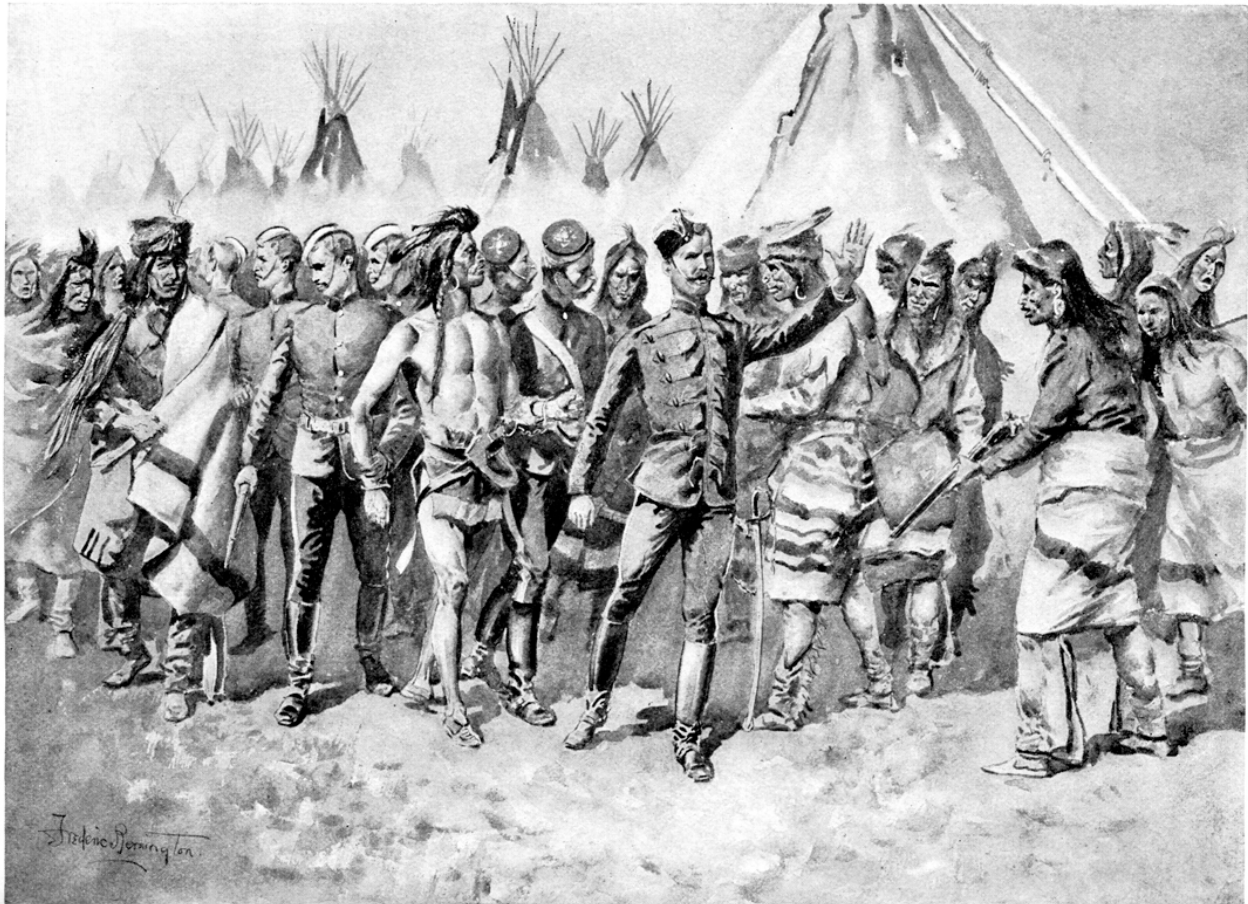


possible. Prisoners for short terms are guarded in the cells of the post, those sentenced to over two years have to be escorted to the Manitoba Penitentiary, a duty which, before the railway was built, involved rides of many hundreds of miles. The enforcement of the prohibitory liquor law, under which nobody could have intoxicants in his possession without a special "permit," gave a great deal of work. Every vehicle was examined, and many a traveller on the Canadian Pacific has waked in wonder at the red-coated apparition clanking through the sleeping-car. Bibles and prayer-books contrived for spirituous refreshment; eggs filled with whiskey; coal-oil barrels built round kegs of fire-water; canned tomatoes with one tin in a dozen of very potent quality; and clump-soled boots that must have been water-proof – they held so much pure alcohol – are only a few specimens of the ruses resorted to. The Police had a perfect genius for detecting them, and with the imperturbability bred of discipline, spilled ruthlessly a fluid so precious that thirsty souls have been known to scrape up the mud thus compounded. It says much for the *morale* of the men that this unpopular and uncongenial duty was so faithfully carried out. A constable has been known to refuse \$1,000, offered him merely to be conveniently absent on leave.

The duties of inspection under the license system adopted in 1892, when the Territorial Legislature was given a free hand to deal with the liquor questions, are hardly less arduous, and make the Police unpopular with certain classes in towns and villages, though unpopularity is the very last attribute of the force generally. Their influence and assistance is still indispensable for the agents and instructors who now watch over the red man, teach him to farm, and educate his children. Horses are always getting astray in the Northwest, and the settler has a firm conviction that the Police are bound to find them for him, though he is not always as grateful as he might be when their voluntary efforts to help him are unsuccessful. Horse-stealing gives the Police plenty of work, many an exciting chase, and not seldom an interchange of shots before a capture is effected. White men from across the border are the principal marauders in this line, but their short-lived satisfaction at finding Judge Lynch and the nearest cottonwood bough replaced by a formal trial with the chance of escape on a technical flaw in the evidence, was soon exchanged for consternation at the efficiency of Police methods and the rigors of a long term in penitentiary on the British system.

It took some time to convince the Indians that cattle are not, like the buffalo, the property of the slayer, and even now a vigilant eye has to be kept on the ranches. Prairie fires are a constant source of anxiety and hard work, and keeping order along the lines of railway occupies a number of men. Some of the miscellaneous tasks the Police have to look after in unorganized districts are the collection of Customs and Inland Revenue duties, escorting the mail, acting as postmasters, and taking the place of every branch of the administrative service. Besides all this they do most of the work of building barracks and outposts, herd their horses, manage the farms which are established at most posts, repair their own wagons, saddlery, and harness, and make many of the articles they use. Nor are their abilities shown on land only. For some years past a sail-boat has patrolled Lake Winnipeg to look after the fisheries. Long journeys by canoe in summer, and dog-train in winter, are necessary to visit the Indians in the North, the Police supervision reaching as far as York Factory on Hudson's Bay, while all the northern posts make much use of boats on the Saskatchewan. In 1887 the Kootenay Indians at the head of the Columbia River having given a good deal of

trouble, "D" Division, under Superintendent Steele, after marching from Macleod to Swift Current, were taken to Golden City by rail, and thence made their way by trail along the Columbia to the Kootenay country, where they built themselves a post and established outposts. They soon put down the disorders, and in the following summer marched through the Crow's Nest Pass, over the mountains, 200 miles back to Macleod, repairing the rough pack trail and making bridges by the way. In fact, as was said of the Police in 1880, when they first furnished an escort for a Governor-General, "with the discipline of regular soldiers they are as hardy as sailors."



DRAWN BY FREDERIC REMINGTON.

Daring Arrest of Bull Elk—Attempted Rescue by a Mob of Blackfeet.—Page 404.

Horses, as well as men, to stand such work must be of the best. It was soon found that Eastern horses took too long to acclimatize and did not equal the native bronchos in endurance and hardiness. All those used now are bought in the country, except a few for driving-teams. The best come from the Alberta ranches, where the original broncho stock has been greatly improved by thorough-bred blood. They are tough, wiry animals, standing about fifteen hands, with good heads, sound feet, and short backs, and well up to the weight they carry. They frequently have to travel 50 miles a day for a week at a time, and in the South want of water often compels this rate to be exceeded. Lord Lorne's escort travelled 2,071 miles, at an average of 35 miles a day. An officer on his staff said that a month of such work would break up his regiment, a crack English cavalry corps. In 1879 one troop marched 2,100 miles within four months, but many of the men had done much more individually, and one of them had 7,000 miles to his credit during the year. On downright duty in 1889, not including exercise or drills, 376 horses of four divisions travelled the amazing distance of 646,805

miles, an average for each horse of 1,720 miles during the year. In 1886 "F" Division had to go from Battleford to Regina, marching at night on account of the heat, and spending thirteen hours out of each twenty-four in the saddle, and they covered the 240 miles in five days and a half. A patrol of 80 mounted men without any spare horses, and with 12 heavily loaded teams travelled 650 miles in 22 days, on two of which they marched 40 and 42 miles without water. As may be supposed, great care and judgment is shown in the treatment of the horses; all that can be spared are turned out to shift for themselves in winter after native fashion, and profit greatly by the long rest. The saddle used is of the California pattern, and sore backs are of rare occurrence.

It may be said that such instances represent work done under special conditions and in the most favorable circumstances. On the contrary, they are taken at random from official reports of ordinary duty. In the rebellion of 1885 a detachment under Major Perry marched 928 miles in 38 days, an average of 24 miles a day, hauling a gun weighing 38 hundred-weight over prairie trails nearly impassable from the mud, fording rapid rivers swollen by the spring freshets, and crossing lakes and deep morasses, without losing a horse. The divisional orders of Major-General Strange attest that that gun was mainly instrumental in demoralizing Big Bear's band in the engagement at Frenchman's Butte. The same detachment scouting between Battleford and Fort Pitt covered 130 miles in 36 hours without a horse giving out.

My testimony may savor of gratitude for kindness and hospitality received from commandant down to the solitary trooper who has shared his supper with me and given up his bed. The Mounted Police have come under the notice and invariably won the admiration of many much more qualified judges. They have escorted princes of the blood, general officers, and Governors-General, and this is what Lord Lorne told them when bidding them good-by at Fort Shaw, Montana. The first words allude to the compliment paid him and them by the parade of the United States troops in their honor.

"That good fellowship which exists between soldiers is always to the fullest extent shown between you and our kind friends. This perfect understanding is to be expected, for both our empires – unlike some others, send out to their distant frontier posts not their worst, but some of their very best men. I have asked for this parade this morning to take leave of you, and to express my entire satisfaction at the manner in which your duties have been performed. You have been subjected to some searching criticism, for on my staff are officers who have served in the cavalry, artillery, and infantry. Their unanimous verdict is to the effect that they have never seen work better, more willingly, or more smartly done while under circumstances of some difficulty caused by bad weather or otherwise. Your appearance on parade was always as clean and bright and soldier-like as possible. Your force is often spoken of in Canada as one of which Canada is justly proud. It is well that this pride is so fully justified, for your duties are most important and varied. The perfect confidence in the maintenance of the authority of the law prevailing over these vast Territories, a confidence most necessary with the settlement now proceeding, shows how thoroughly you have done your work.

*J. G. A. Creighton, 1893*