

The Watchman and Southron.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11, 1895.

On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Ground.

Far to the northwest, beginning ten days' journey beyond Great Slave Lake and running down to the Arctic ocean, with Hudson Bay as its eastern and Great Bear Lake and the Coppermine River as its western boundaries, lies the most complete and extended desolation on earth.

There are two seasons and only two methods of penetrating this great lone land of the North—by canoe, when the watercourses are free of ice, and on snow-shoes during the frozen period, which occupies nearly nine of the year's twelve months.

Arthur Heming, the artist, and I found ourselves, December 27, 1894, at Edmonton, the end of the railroad. We had traveled on the Canadian Pacific via Winnipeg and Calgary, and through the land of the Crees, Blackfeet and Sarcee Indians, without seeing anything so picturesque in the way of costuming as the Winnipeg dragoon and a Sarcee young woman resplendent in beads and glittering tinsel.

The success of the Northwest Mounted Police may be accredited to its system of distribution throughout the guarded territory. Unlike our army, it does not mass its force in forts adjacent to Indian reservations.

A NEW YEAR'S DANCE IN THE NORTH-WEST.

Half-breeds—French and Cree—constitute the larger share of population at La Biche, if I may class as its population those scattered over the immediately surrounding country, and where the settlement consists of just three cabins besides the Hudson Bay Company's.

After what I had seen the night before of the preliminaries to the annual feast day, I did not expect on New Year's to be able to make any preparation for our further progress.

floor. I doubt if I ever saw outside of some of the Chinese dens in San Francisco, so many crowded into the same space. I lacked the heart to talk business with Gairdner, who, I divined from some of his remarks, had not accomplished, in the way of making ready of our dog brigade, all I had expected of him.

In front of the fort's stockade were gossipping groups that grew with each fresh arrival, while scattered all about the enclosure, just where their drivers had left them, were the dog trains of the Indians who had come to fill Gairdner's house and eat the Hudson Bay Company's meat.

When we returned to the house the dance was still on; it was always "on" during the first thirty-six hours of our stay at LaBiche. Formerly the Hudson Bay Company officers merely "received" on New Year's day; but as the Indians have a custom between sexes of kissing on meeting, and as it did not become an impartial officer to distinguish in this respect between old women and young, unattractive and attractive, the feast was substituted: so now the women are fed and danced instead of being kissed.

I hope that New-Year's night will not be recorded against me. Those Indians danced until four o'clock in the morning, and they danced to my utter demoralization. We sat around and watched the "gymnastics" and pretended we enjoyed them until about one o'clock; then we retired.

Any person who will obtain six new subscribers to the Watchman and Southron at \$2.00 per year, will be given a leather bound Webster's Unabridged Dictionary. For ten new subscribers the Dictionary and a year's subscription to the Watchman and Southron will be given.

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