

The SPELL of the ARCTIC HOLDS THEM

By James Montagnes

WHETHER you talk to fur trappers, Mounted Police, missionaries, prospectors, mining engineers, anywhere in Canada, they all tell you the same thing: "The Arctic gets you." They all claim that once you have been north, you cannot stay away. And they back up their claims by staying just long enough out of the Canadian northland to become bored with the loneliness of modern urban civilization. Then they are off again for somewhere north of the railway line.

There's John Firth, white-bearded patriarch of the Arctic. He went to the Canadian northland when he was 19, fresh from Scotland, to take a post with the Hudson Bay Company. That was in 1872. Add it up. He had been there 64 years. And once he thought he would like to see his native Scotland again.

With his Indian wife of a lifetime he started out, said goodbye to all his children and grandchildren. By boat they went to Edmonton. There he saw his first automobiles, his first moving pictures, modern buildings. A modern train took him as far east as Winnipeg. It was necessary to wait there three



Hector Pitchforth, "loneliest man in the world," was isolated on Baffin Island when supplies failed to come through. Next spring, Mounties found him frozen to death. . . . Above, one reason why trappers lead lonely lives in the Arctic—a marten caught in a trap.



Bill Seymour, trapper, is as much at home in the North as the Eskimos. He hasn't seen a city for 40 years.

Or look at Bill Seymour, trapper of the Coronation Gulf region, weather-beaten, used to living in igloos, wearing a parka most of the year, as much at home on the sea ice of Coronation Gulf as the Eskimos who spend the winter seal fishing there. Go out to the city to live? Not Bill Seymour. It's more than 40 years since he saw a city. You can't pry him away from the Arctic Circle.

YOU can find plenty of white men somewhere in Canada's far north, isolated from the outside world, practically hermits, and some of them living so remotely as to be hermits.

Some of them see other white men once in a while. Some live year in year out at or near a fur post. Others like to be even farther away from their fellow-men. The loneliness of the Arctic has gripped them.

A few years ago the Mounties on their annual spring patrol of Baffin Island found the frozen body of Hector Pitchforth, called the loneliest man in the world.

A veteran of the World War, he had been gassed, shell-shocked. He obtained a job with a small trading company. They shipped him off to remote Cape Kater on Baffin Island.

Annually a supply ship came. He took his supplies, put them in the hovel he had built from packing cases. He somehow stored his coal, for there are no trees for firewood on Baffin Island. He picked up all the driftwood he could find for miles about. And the years went on. He could have gone back to London, but he was satisfied. He had found peace and contentment. But his eyesight was failing.

His company sent him a young man as assistant. Pitchforth sent him back. There was not room in his meager

dwelling for two. There was not enough business. His eyesight became worse.

Next summer the supply ship did not show up. He never knew the company had failed.

There were no more supplies, but he had a stock of furs. He had to eat. The natives who passed the post came once in a while with seal meat, with bear meat. Pitchforth lived. Soon the natives came less often.

When the following spring the Mounties patrolled his remote stretch of Baffin Island shore, they found him in his tiny shack, frozen to death.

The shores of Great Bear Lake are now becoming populated. It was not always that way. In fact, when D'Arcy Arden first settled on the lake there were only Dogrib Indians.

He gave them their first trading store. He lived with them for many years as trader and adviser, married one of their daughters, the belle of Great Bear Lake. They have a fine family, Kathleen, Sonny, Hugh and Jim.

IT was adventure that sent D'Arcy Arden from England at the age of 25, from the aristocratic public school and the home of his titled ancestors. He has not seen them since. He headed for the Yukon, land of fabulous gold strikes. There he met the Hon. Frank Oliver, Canadian statesman of the past generation. Oliver advised him to go to Great Bear Lake, remote, uninhabited, hard to get at, but virgin country.

He was not long a trader when he became a guide for a Mountie patrol on the trail of the Eskimo killers of two priests in the country north and east of Great Bear Lake. He saved the food supplies of that patrol on the storm-tossed lake by his skillful handling of a canoe.

For a time he left the shores of Great Bear Lake to act as game warden in the 17,000-square-mile Wood Buffalo Park on the border of the North West Territories and Alberta, where the Canadian government had established a buffalo preserve, and was shipping excess buffalo.

Then when the radium and silver strikes were being made on the shores of his former lake territory, he hied back there. And at the log cabin metropolis of Cameron Bay on Great Bear Lake his Dogrib Indians located him two years ago, with great excitement.

They could lead their former adviser to a lake to the south where there was the same smell in the rock which had made the white men come to Great Bear Lake. Pitchblende, the ore which contains radium and some silver, is supposed to have a peculiar smell. The Indians knew of another lake where this smell was predominant. Would D'Arcy go? He did not waste any time, and saying goodbye to Ardenmore, his wife, and their children, he went with his Dogribs up the Bear River and by little-treveled waterways to Hottah Lake, 150 miles south of Cameron Bay.

They led him to the spot where they had found the pitchblende smell. It was there. And staking all he could under the North West Territories mining regulations, he hurried back to the recorder at Cameron Bay. There financiers who come and go all year by air heard of his find, paid him \$40,000 as an option.

D'Arcy flew out to taste city life. He bought supplies, bought clothes for his family, was introduced to Edmonton society, proved that the Arctic had not changed his English public school background, appeared well groomed wherever he went, and then after 10 days decided civilization was not for him.

He shared his money with the Dogrib Indians, had a \$3000 house built for his family at Cameron Bay, and began prospecting in earnest on the shores of the Arctic lakes he had so often traveled at his travels.

hours before taking the train to Montreal to the ocean liners sailing for Scotland.

But John Firth never took that train to Montreal. He took the first train back to Edmonton, the first boat back to Fort McPherson. Not for the octogenarian was modern civilization. He could not get back fast enough to his home in the Arctic.