

# FLESHERTON ADVANCE.

"TRUTH BEFORE FAVOR"—"PRINCIPLES, NOT MEN."

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W. H. THURSTON, EDITOR & PROPRIETOR

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### KESO'S CRIME.

AN ADVENTURE IN NIPissing.

W. H. Thurston in "The Week."

The oldest and longest highway in Ontario is that which the early French *voyageurs* trod, or rather rowed, for many years during the early history of Canada. It was and still is paved with water; and the only vehicles used thereon were *batteaux* or *cheenau*, in the Iroquois language—large boats propelled by oarsmen, which carried immense quantities of merchandise for the fur traders, or lighter canoes carrying solitary travellers through the forest fastness by a silvery liquid path. Its course may still be traced from Montreal up the Ottawa river to its head waters, across Lake Nipissing, down the French river into the Georgian Bay and thence by way of Sault Ste. Marie and the north shore of Lake Superior to old Fort William. Onward it may be traced by many portages until Lake Winnipeg is reached, and thence up the Saskatchewan river across the rolling prairies, until the great chain of the Rocky Mountains bars its way.

To-day this natural highway is unchanged. Its course is the same that it was when Jacques Cartier first entered the St. Lawrence river in 1534. It is the same path by which Sir Alexander Mackenzie journeyed in 1792, when he pressed northward on his voyage of discovery and crossed this continent for the first time in the history of man. It is the same pathway by which civilization penetrated into the Dominion of Canada before the era of steam navigation or railways. This highway of commerce and civilization is still there, unchanged, but the travellers who travelled on it are no more. It has served its great purpose, and no longer echoes to the boatman's song or the sweep of his tireless oar. Along its course, however, the country is changing year by year. Towns are springing up where the pine, and birch, and hemlock once grew in luxuriant beauty, railways cross and recross it, and the bordering fields reward the husbandman with rich fields of golden grain.

It is only a comparatively few years since this ancient highway has fallen into disuse. Since railways have tapped the fertile plains of Manitoba and the Northwest, and made it possible to reach them in three days, where it once required as many months, the old and hardy *voyageur* has found his occupation gone, and himself but a memory.

Many are the stirring stories of adventure and endurance which have been told, connected with this route of travel, but still there are many which have never yet been related to the public. Rich and prolific is the field for him who accords it the attention which its fascination justifies.

The following marvellous case of suffering and endurance was related to me by a brother of the young men who figure in the narrative:—

Thirteen years ago the country bordering on Lake Nipissing had but recently been surveyed and opened up to settlement. It was a stock of hardy pioneers which first entered these northern solitudes to seek what proved in many instances to be a very precarious livelihood for the first few years of occupation. They found themselves surrounded by Indians and half-breeds—descendants, no doubt, of the *coureurs de bois* of earlier days, who had settled along the course of this once trans-continental highway. In many instances these neighbors proved to be kindly disposed toward the white settlers. There were, however, exceptions—selfish individuals who looked with displeasure upon the encroachments of civilization. Such was an Indian named Keso, who occupied a shanty five miles below Lake Nipissing on the French River. This Indian gained his livelihood by hunting, fishing and trapping, and occasionally assisting those who desired his services in navigating the treacherous waters of the river. He was taciturn and of a vicious dispo-

sition, as the sequel will show. Quick-tempered, greedy and overbearing, he was shunned even by his own people.

Two young men, named respectively Alfred and Wesley Wright, had at this time pushed their way into this new country and opened up a small general store at a point twelve miles south of Lake Nipissing, in what was then the nucleus of the present town of Commanda. All their stores and supplies had to be transported by canoe up the French River and across Lake Nipissing, thence by waggon trail twelve miles into the interior.

A building was erected wherein to transact business, and the window-sash purchased from the manufacturer, was left at Keso's cabin by the latter's consent for the Wrights to call for.

It was a beautiful morning in the early part of August when the two brothers arrived at Keso's cabin to claim their goods. The waters sparkled on their course in the early morning sunshine; the birds were making merry music, and nature was clothed in her most beautiful garb. Nothing spoke of pending catastrophe, and the brothers experienced an intoxication of spirits from imbibing the ethereal nectar of nature's brewing. Their canoe was a large one, capable of carrying a heavy cargo, and required their united efforts to portage it around the rapids.

Upon arrival at the shanty it was found to be deserted; at least no sign of its occupants could be seen, and the Wrights took their sash and loaded the canoe.

Pushing on up stream about four miles the last portage was reached, where the river debouches from Lake Nipissing by a long rapid. A landing was made on a huge flat rock at the lower end of the portage. The work of unloading had but just commenced when an Indian, paddling a small canoe, was seen approaching; he came swiftly up the river, and was very soon recognized as Keso, Malignant anger shone in his dark eyes. Jumping out upon the rock, with gun in hand, he demanded:—

"Why you take dose sash? You pay me tirty dollar rent for keeping him!"

Alfred Wright, the elder brother, calmly replied that thirty dollars was an exorbitant price to pay for storage, but they were willing to do what was right in the matter.

Quick as a flash, and without any more words, the Indian raised his gun and pointed it directly at Alfred's head. Wesley Wright, divining that murder was intended, jumped quickly forward and knocked the gun downward, but not in time to save his brother, for in the same instant a loud report rang out and Alfred fell groaning upon the rock. The charge had taken effect in his right leg about four inches below the hip joint, splintering the bone into fragments. Wesley immediately grappled with the infuriated Keso and endeavored to discharge the second barrel of his gun so that no further damage might be done, at the same time shouting to his wounded brother to shoot the rascal with his revolver. Thus the wily Indian prevented by holding Wesley between himself and the wounded man. Being a muscular person he was able to accomplish this with something of ease. In keeping Wesley in this position, however, he was not able to protect the gun, and the heroic young man succeeded in getting the second barrel discharged.

The struggle had reached its end. Keso tore himself away and vanished like a shadow among the undergrowth, leaving behind powder flask and canoe.

Wesley now turned his attention to his wounded brother and found him to be suffering intense pain. They were thirty-five miles from the nearest settlement of white people, and in order to convey the wounded man to that point a long portage must be made, and a trip of thirty miles across Lake Nipissing endured, and only one pair of shoulders to bear all this. Truly it was a terrible situation for the young men to be placed in. The large canoe could not be moved by

one man, therefore Wesley decided to take the Indian's smaller boat and convey his brother to where he would receive the attention required to save the life which had so narrowly escaped instant destruction. The canoe was carried across. The wounded man was carefully laid in it and Wesley took his place at the oars, when the horrifying discovery was made that the vessel was too small to hold both men. Here was what appeared to be an insurmountable difficulty. The day which had broken so full of promise was now dark with clouds of adversity. The sky of the young men's bright prospects was overcast with a cloud of sorrow from which they could discover no silver lining. Wesley's great fear was that his brother might die of exposure ere he could be taken to those who would care for him. What could be done under the circumstances? was the enigma that presented itself, and this is the manner in which it was finally solved:—

Thinking that possibly the Indian (Continued on last page.)

## LOOK! LOOK! Milk Cans!

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