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## Canadian History In The Making Treaty Negotiations Commenced Thirty-five Years Ago At Last Completed.

By a VERNON THOMAS.

Copyright by Publishers' Press. With few exceptions the Dominion government has lived on the best possible terms with its Indian wards. It may be true that the original owners of the soil of Canada have been dispossessed and that nowadays the making of a treaty between the government and a band of Indians is, in one sense, only a pleasing ceremony. On the other hand the actual treatment of the natives by the government ever



ROBERT FIDDLER, Chief of the Deer's Lake Indians.

since confederation, has been both just and generous. The promises made to the Indians at the different treaty-making have been honorably kept and in their circumscribed way the Indian tribes have been happy, some of them even prosperous.

During the past summer the last of the treaties with the Indians in the huge area to the north of the province of Manitoba have been made. Three treaties were negotiated by which nearly 600 Indians became wards of the government. The huge area just mentioned, which is known at Ottawa as treaty No. 5, will shortly be added to the province of Manitoba, or to speak more correctly 180,000 square miles of its 233,000 square miles will be so included.

It is thirty-five years since the Indians of this enormous area were first treated with. At that time, viz., the year 1875, steamboat traffic was beginning to develop on Lake Winnipeg and the government considered it desirable to obtain an undisputed title to the shores of the lake and to the mouths of the rivers which empty into it. Accordingly, treaties were concluded in 1875 at Norway House at the head of the lake, at the mouth of the Berens river on the east side of the lake, at the Grand Rapids of the Saskatchewan a few miles up the mouth of that river and at the Island of Lake Winnipeg. The commissioners of the government at that time were the Hon. Alexander Morris, then lieutenant-governor of the North-West Territories, and the Hon. James McKay, then chief-factor of the Hudson Bay company.

That summer for many years. Latterly, moved by the activities of miners and other explorers in the northern territory and above all by the possibility of the early building of the Hudson Bay railway, the Dominion government deemed it wise to extend the treaty of 1875 to the remaining Indian bands in the large treaty area. In 1908 adhesions to the treaty were negotiated by Commissioner John Semmens, of Winnipeg, of the department of Indian affairs, with the Indian bands residing at Cross Lake and Split Lake on the Nelson river, with the Nelson House Indians on the Burnwood river and with the Fraser River Indians residing on the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg. Last year, Commissioner Semmens continued the work by negotiating similar adhesions to the 1875 treaty with the Island Lake and Oxford House Indians residing in the heart of Keewatin.

There remained this summer but three Indian bands to be treated with in the whole of treaty No. 5, viz., the Deer's Lake band living on the shores of Deer's Lake, on the Upper Severn waters, the York Factory Indians living at the mouth of the Hayes river, on the shore of Hudson Bay and finally the Fort Churchill Indians, residing at the mouth of the Churchill river. Commissioner Semmens, who in former years was a missionary to the Indians of the northland and who spent a half a lifetime amongst them, was

again chosen by the Dominion government to make these, the last, treaties. With three other white men, of whom the writer was one, and nine Indians, the commissioner visited these three bands and took them into treaty, thus concluding the work begun in 1875, by the Hon. Alexander Morris and the Hon. James McKay. The treaty-party travelled for three and a half months in the north, covering three thousand miles in canoes, steamer and Hudson Bay coast boat.

Blanketed as Pagan Indians. Shut off from the busy world of Western Canada by the interminable rapids and falls of the Berens river and by the mountainous height of land between the waters of the Berens and the Severn, have lived these many years the Deer's Lake Indians. Some hundred in number they are probably as close to the savage state as those of any band in the Dominion of Canada. Until quite recently, the band ranked as pagan Indians, indifferent and even hostile to the advances of missionaries, and other white men and not particularly desirous of fraternizing even with their Indian neighbors.

Although the distance from Winnipeg to Deer's Lake, as the crow flies, is only about two hundred and fifty miles, it would take you twelve days' travel, one by steamer to the mouth of the Berens river and the rest by canoe and portages, including one height of land, to reach this secluded handful of human beings. To reach the settlement by a land route would be out of the question, for no path to Deer's Lake has ever been beaten through the virgin forest. The Deer's Lake Indians would receive you kindly although they would look upon you with some astonishment, as the white men who have visited the band at any time are probably less than a score. No Indian from Deer's Lake has ever emerged from the hinterland to see a Canadian town or city, or even vic-



CHIEF AND COUNCILLORS ELECT AT FORT CHURCHILL.

lage. The furthest he has ever gone is to the Hudson Bay company's post at Little Grand Rapids to the east, or to the Island Lake post to the west, about 150 miles in either direction. The party of Commissioner Semmens arrived at Deer's Lake on June the 9th with the Union Jack flying from the bow of the commissioner's canoe. Word had been sent to the band beforehand through the Hudson Bay company, of the commissioner's coming and thus we were expected. When our canoes rounded the last angle of Deer's Lake and the tents of the Indians came into sight, a volley from many ancient muskets went forth into the air, such a salute being customary when a government officer approaches an Indian settlement. On the shore were seen the Deer's Lake Indians eagerly watching our progress. As soon as we had disembarked from the canoes everyone of us, including our own Indians, was constrained to shake hands with each member of the band. It was, however, only in their smiles and in their evident anxiety to greet us, that we could read a welcome, for we white men, could not exchange a single word with them. Even the

commissioner, who speaks Cree fluently, was stumped, for the Deer's Lake Indians are Saulteaux, a branch of the Ojibwas.

A space had been cleared for us running from the lake some distance up the shore and fenced around with substantial stakes. Evidently the Indians had gone to considerable trouble and naturally there was no choice but to occupy this space by our tents. Soon after our arrival at the top of the clearing, the women of the band approached diffidently and in single file from the Indian village, which was concealed from view by a rise in the ground. In a vague way they were aware that something important was about to take place and that it would be proper to greet the white strangers. At first they looked at us blankly and almost stupidly, but when we patted their babies' cheeks and tickled their little ragged children they relaxed and smiled.

These people were to become wards of the Dominion government. It was the commissioner's duty to explain to them what wardship entailed, to make to them on behalf of the government certain promises and to receive from them in return a clear title to their land. In a general way they knew what wardship meant. When a similar treaty was made in the summer of 1909 with the Island Lake Indians, a few of the Deer Lake Indians were present, being on a visit to the Hudson Bay company's store. They saw the treaty made with the Island Lake Indians and after its consummation they saw the Island Lake Indians receive ten dollars as a perpetual annuity and five dollars as a treaty bonus. Not only that but they saw the Island Lake Indians given a free meal in the king's name and, what perhaps appealed to them most of all, they were invited as guests to share this meal. As soon as these Deer's Lake Indians returned home, they told their comrades all about the treaty-making at Island



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Lake and after discussing the matter they were unanimously decided that the best thing the Deer's Lake band could do was to go in for treaty likewise. Thus the treaty party found the Indians all of one mind and the treaty was forthwith made, if not in the grand manner of former days, at any rate with due solemnity. Standing beneath an awning improvised out of a Hudson Bay sail, but none the less an effective shield against the hot sun, the commissioner explained to the band the proposed deal between themselves and the Dominion government. He talked to them much as a man talks to children, and indeed it was the only possible way in which to make them understand. He greeted the Deer's Lake Indians in the name of the white king, who wished them well and sent them a message of good-will. The king wished to see his Indian subjects prosper and improve their condition. To every Indian, man, woman and child, the king would pay five dollars per annum as long as the grass grew, the sun shone or water flowed. The king would also pay them five dollars apiece as a bonus on coming into treaty. They would receive a reserve of five and on the reserve the king would provide a school. The sale of intoxicating liquor to any member of the band would be forbidden under penalty.

Every year the king would send them five hundred dollars' worth of fishing trawls, powder, shot and gun caps. He would give the band once and for all a variety of field implements and woodcutting tools. Further the king would send them potato and other vegetable seeds, seed grain, cows, oxen and agricultural implements as and when they were in a position to use them advantageously. At treaty-paying time each year the king would give them a free meal of bacon, flour and tea and furthermore a quantity of the same things would be left in charge of the chief to be given to the band's destitute members. In return the Indians would make a full surrender of their rights in land other than their reserve, which latter would be absolutely their own. They would act a child to whom the king would pay a salary of twenty dollars per annum, giving him also an official suit, a silver medal and a British flag.

(Continued on Page 11.)



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