











# **The Living Legend**

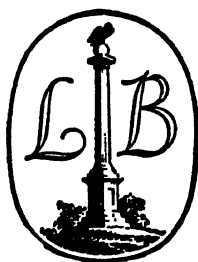


# THE Living Legend

*The Story of the  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

by

**Alan Phillips**



BOSTON • Little, Brown and Company • TORONTO

COPYRIGHT, ©, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, BY ALAN PHILLIPS  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NO PART OF THIS BOOK IN EXCESS OF FIVE  
HUNDRED WORDS MAY BE REPRODUCED IN ANY FORM WITHOUT  
PERMISSION IN WRITING FROM THE PUBLISHER

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO. 57-7842

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*To those officers and men of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who helped so much with the researching of this book*

*A sense of duty presupposes a free and real self.*

**KANT**

## Contents

<i>Book I</i>	The Hero	3
<i>Book II</i>	The Crucible	39
<i>Book III</i>	The Secret War	85
<i>Book IV</i>	The Investigator	115
<i>Book V</i>	The Frontier	265





*Book I*

# **The Hero**

*Failure or weakness on our part is not, in the present unhappy state of world affairs, simply a local matter; it has a much wider implication.*

**RCMP Commissioner L. H. Nicholson, speaking to the 1953 conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, at Detroit.**



# 1

**O**N THE Montreal side of the Jacques Cartier Bridge a policeman stepped out of a patrol car, a young blond man in a trim brown uniform. Rolling toward him across the bridge was a blue coupé with two men in it. In his pocket was a wire from police in Boston, Massachusetts. Two safeblowers in a blue coupé were fleeing in his direction: gunmen, armed and desperate.

The policeman strode to the side of the road — erect, almost stiff, deliberate. He raised his hand. The coupé stopped. He bent and looked in the window.

“Sergeant Brakefield-Moore, Royal Canadian Mounted Police,” he announced pleasantly. “Let’s not have a scene. I’d like to talk to you.”

“Okay, Mountie,” the driver said.

“Let’s go downtown to my office.”

“Sure,” the gunmen agreed.

In the RCMP divisional office in downtown Montreal, the sergeant informed the safeblowers that they were under arrest. They could save him a great deal of trouble if they’d cooperate — ? Fine. Now perhaps they wouldn’t mind handing over the loot? Excellent. Then, casually, a seeming afterthought as they left for jail: “Oh yes, and you’d better give me your guns.”

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Two days later, in Montreal's Union Station, a lone Mountie handed over the prisoners to a heavily armed posse from Boston. Somewhat disconcerted, the Boston policemen may reasonably have felt that this rather offhand method of handling a dangerous arrest was unnecessarily risky, perhaps even not very smart.

It is certainly uncommon. And, typical of the Mounties, undramatic. No roadblock. No drawn guns cocked for the split-second shot. The Mountie does not even raise his voice. Alone, his revolver in his holster, he walks up and arrests two men who, by flexing a nervous finger, can kill him and drive off.

It seems foolhardy, on the face of it. Yet Brakefield-Moore, a graduate in law, was neither unimaginative nor given to heroics. He was well aware of the weight of psychology on his side. As one of the gunmen said later in an attempt to explain why he had let himself be arrested: "He just walked up to us all alone. It takes a guy off balance."

Brakefield-Moore had assurance. He had the confidence that comes with belief in a code of conduct. He was bolstered by the authority of a great name. Behind him was a tradition: of countless crises surmounted, of gallant deeds magnified into legend. In a very real sense he was *not* alone. In that critical moment when he first approached the coupé, the men who had served before him, who had set his standard of conduct, reinforced him with the aura of their deeds; he personified the fame of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the continuing tradition, the living legend.

2

**T**HE DIRECTOR of Canada's Travel Bureau, D. Leo Dolan, is a shrewd publicity man who once, in all seriousness, outlined to his government a plan whereby retired Mounties (still relatively young men) would be displayed strategically across Canada to enliven the tourist season by singing arias from *Rose-Marie*. "Americans are very emotional about the RCMP," Mr. Dolan explained in Canada's House of Commons.

The politicians were not enthusiastic. The top brass of the Mounties pretended the plan had never been broached. Its conception is nevertheless a somewhat astonishing monument to the fame of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

For three quarters of a century books and magazines have extolled them, first as the North-West Mounted, the "Riders of the Plains," then, after 1920, as a modern federal force. Hollywood has arrayed such high-priced purveyors of romance as Nelson Eddy, Gary Cooper and Alan Ladd in the famous crimson tunic and the blue gold-striped breeches. The United States comic-book press has exported the daily adventures of such stalwarts as King of the Royal Mounted, Renfrew of the same, and Sergeant Preston of the Yukon. Television and radio, in their ceaseless search for glamour, dispatch yearly expeditions deep into the RCMP files. There's scarcely a red-blooded boy from Bristol to Bangkok who doesn't recognize "Get your man!" as the

## THE LIVING LEGEND

slogan of the Mounties, the famous force that never fails, at least in literature.

The Mounties inspire such widespread faith that a lad from Dunmanway, Cork, once sent off a letter addressed to:

Santa Claus,  
c/o The Mounties,  
Canada

The Commissioner's office obligingly sent the boy a reply signed "Santa."

At the World's Fair in San Francisco, a "real live Mountie" stole at least part of the show. He stood stiffly at attention outside the Canadian pavilion, the pink-faced perspiring focus for a bevy of teen-age girls who enveloped him in giggles, had their pictures snapped beside him and plied him with such highly personal questions as "Are you married?" "How old are you?" "How many men have you killed?"

Even in his homeland the Mountie is a hero. When Princess Elizabeth toured Canada just before she became Queen, Bert Marsh of the United Press came into the Charlottetown Hotel and spotted a small boy sitting in the lobby, obviously embarrassed but determinedly sticking it out.

"Waiting for the Princess, son?" asked Marsh.

"Naw. I've seen her."

"The Duke, maybe?"

"Naw. Seen him too."

Marsh was curious now. "Anything I can do?"

Out it came: "I want to meet a Mountie!" And, thanks to Marsh, he did.

## THE HERO

The Charlottetown lad's ambition is shared by women all over the world. In England, one Brenda Willis wrote to her local paper, "Dear Editor: I wonder if you would be so kind as to print my request. I would like to marry a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman." From Boston, four girls wrote to Canada's Travel Bureau to say that they were planning a trip to Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and would like to have four Mounties, "one for each of us." In Jasper, Alberta, while filming *The Far Country*, Hollywood's Ruth Roman turned down hundreds of escorts for the opening dance at the Jasper Park Lodge to appear on the arm of the local Mountie, Constable Cyril Barry.

The Mounties rival Niagara Falls as a national tourist attraction and in reluctant deference to this the RCMP, in summer, has its men patrol the mountain resorts of Jasper and Banff clad in hot, heavy, red serge dress uniforms. One red-coated constable, guarding the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, unflinchingly faced eight hundred cameras in one day.

Their status is unquestioned, as the story of Bruno shows. Bruno was a bear, a pet that belonged to a Mountie in Banff, Sergeant "Casey" Oliver. About 3 A.M. one warm night Bruno took French leave of the sergeant and wandered into a downtown hotel. The night clerk was dozing. Bruno strolled upstairs. He padded down the corridor and through a guest's open door.

The guest, awakening suddenly, screamed and reached for the telephone. "Help!" he cried. "Quick! A bear in my room! Quick! Help!"

"Come now, sir," said the night clerk as Bruno, upset

## THE LIVING LEGEND

by such stridency, was trying to force his great bulk under the bed. "I'm afraid you've had too much to drink."

The bed collapsed with a crash. The night clerk hastily called the Mounties. Sergeant Oliver, resplendent in red serge, arrived on the double to find the hotel in an uproar. From behind every door, terrified but curious tourists peeped out as he stalked past and into the room with the bear.

"You!" they heard him bellow. "What are you doing here? How dare you come in this hotel? Get out!"

A large black bear came cowering out of the room and slunk downstairs. The sergeant followed, straight-backed, stern, indomitable. As he marched off, an astounded guest exclaimed: "Isn't that wonderful? Think of it! Even the wild beasts obey the Royal Canadian Mounted Police."

The whole world knows the Mountie. He's a bachelor, handsome, young and six feet tall. At the drop of a clue he will leap on his horse or hitch up his huskies and hit the trail to rescue the heroine. He fights his way over mountain passes through avalanches of snow with only his Boy Scout hat to protect him against the elements. Singlehanded, he tracks down gangs of fur poachers, rustlers and hijackers. And he never shoots unless the bad guys fire first. He's fair and square, the clean-cut protector of the young, the aged, the innocent and all beautiful damsels in distress. As a lover, it's true he's a bit on the backward side (partly modesty and partly all those rules and regulations), but not since the days of King Arthur has there been such a chivalrous character.



## 3

**I**NSPECTOR Francis Dickens of the North-West Mounted Police, third son of the great English novelist, was a taciturn, morose man known to his family as "Chickenstalker." Asked why he didn't write books like his father, Chickenstalker morosely replied that the only book he would ever write would be about the prohibition-dry Northwest Territories. He would call it *Thirty Years without Beer*. In other words, life could be arid even in the Mounties; the glamour was in the eye of the beholder. Dickens's remark — made in the good old days of the 1870's — suggests that already legend and fact were heading in different directions.

The distance they had traveled apart by the mid-twentieth century has been high-lighted by the shenanigans of an American citizen, one Clifford Dixon Lancaster. A carnival pitchman by trade, Mr. Lancaster decided that the field of education held greater rewards. Accordingly, he bought a pair of riding boots, blue gold-striped breeches, a crimson coat and a Stetson hat. Then as "Constable King of the Royal Mounted" he toured Midwestern schopls recounting how he tracked his man across the trackless tundra.

The children were fascinated — all but one, a Canadian boy attending school at Royal Oak, Michigan. His amusement lasted all the way home, where he shared it with his parents. They laughed and called the FBI, who attended

## THE LIVING LEGEND

King's performance. They, too, were captivated — but not for as long as Mr. Lancaster.

The ending is not as surprising as our carnival pitchman's success. He had never seen a Mountie. He had never been north of Dakota. Yet he hoodwinked hundreds of teachers and state educators for two months. Where had he done his research? At the movies. His impersonation was drawn entirely from Hollywood's conception of a Mountie in the days of *Sitting Bull*.

Movies to the contrary, it has been years since a red-coated Mountie went galloping after a criminal. No Mountie rides a horse in the line of duty any more, unless he's assigned to the Musical Ride. When the King and Queen came to Windsor in 1939 the RCMP detachment who paraded in their honor had to borrow their mounts from Detroit's city police. The celebrated red coats are brought out today only to brighten ceremonies, courtrooms and tourist resorts. The Mounties chase their criminals in a tunic of chocolate brown, in a black-and-white patrol car with siren, spotlight and radiotelephone.

Individually, they are not all lithe six-footers. The popular impression of the tall, broad-shouldered Mountie is a leftover from the days when he had to be able to kick down a bolted door and break up a barroom brawl. By taking only big men the RCMP found they were getting too much brawn and too few brains. They consulted an anthropologist on the height of the average Canadian. "Just under five feet, eight inches," he reported. So five feet, eight inches became the minimum height required to enter the RCMP. They're the smallest police in the Western world.

## THE HERO

Neither are they all young and handsome. Many reach middle age and look it. They ride too much in cars and do too little walking. Unless they are careful their chests slip gradually downward to form what is sometimes called "Milwaukee goiter" or "police muscle."

They worry. Often they lie awake at night wondering what to do on a case. Stress raises their blood pressure. An uncommonly large number die in their forties and fifties from the Mounted Policeman's occupational illness, heart disease.

They're not supermen. They don't always "get their man." That isn't their motto, and never was. And although they've acquired a world-wide reputation as manhunters, the North hasn't seen a true manhunt since 1932, when Albert Johnson, "the Mad Trapper of Rat River," was tracked across the divide between the Yukon and the Northwest Territories where the Bishop of the Yukon, Isaac Stringer, staved off starvation thirty years before by eating his boots.

This was the most sensational hunt in the history of the North. It illuminates the gap between reality and legend, for this wasn't a lone Mountie chasing a dozen badmen but a lone badman chased by a Mountie-led posse of eleven.

4

**I**T WAS a hot July day in 1931 when the man called Albert Johnson came floating out of the Yukon down Peel River to Fort McPherson.

He beached his raft and strode along the steep earthbank to the settlement, a cluster of whitewashed cabins and a log trading post. To the northeast stretched the flat, spruce-green delta of the Mackenzie, a malevolent maze of channels writhing toward the Arctic sea. Westward rose the foothills of the continent's northernmost mountains, and beyond them the ice-crowned peaks veined red with iron through which he was soon to lead the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Canada's most widely publicized manhunt.

On three continents newspaper readers would marvel day by day at the fortitude of this ruthless adventurer. No one knows his real name but he will live in memory by the name the papers gave him, the Mad Trapper of Rat River — though trapping was only an incidental skill and he wasn't mad, except in the sense of harboring hatred. On the contrary, he was as shrewd, resourceful and resolute a killer as the North has ever known.

He came into the trading post at Fort McPherson, brusquely shouldering past lounging Indians — a medium-sized man, thirty-five to forty, slightly stoopshouldered, sun-reddened, flybitten — a most unlikely hero for an epic. Bill Douglas, the factor, sized him up as a "loner." He had ob-

## THE HERO

viously lived alone in the wilderness for months; yet he curtly parried questions, keeping his tension bottled inside him. He spoke only to order supplies.

In the next ten days he spent fourteen hundred dollars with Douglas. He said he was getting an outfit together to trap in Rat River country. He was carrying several thousand dollars — strange, since a trapper usually sends his money outside. And his outfit wasn't that of a man who intends to winter in one place.

He had nearly completed his outfitting when a very tall lean man in a khaki shirt and stiff-brimmed Stetson came paddling into the post. Constable Edgar Millen, widely known as "Newt," was on a routine patrol from Arctic Red River, an RCMP detachment thirty miles southeast. Douglas was glad to see him; the thirty-year-old Mountie was held in high regard for his bushcraft, common sense and good humor.

Millen had heard of the stranger from wandering Loucheux Indians. He wanted Douglas to tell him more. In the Arctic, as Douglas knew, a man's life often depends on the knowledge the Mounties have of his habits and movements.

"He's bought a nine-foot canoe from an Indian," Douglas said. "The questions he asked me, I figure he's going up Rat River, over the mountains at White Pass, down the Bell, down the Eagle and onto the Porcupine. Another reason I figure it that way, Newt — some Loucheux passed him up-river. He asked them where he was. When they said he was on the Peel he was pretty annoyed."

Millen digested this information. The headwaters of the Peel and of the Porcupine are in the Yukon, only a few miles

## THE LIVING LEGEND

apart. A man could easily mistake one for the other. But the Peel flows into the Territories, the Porcupine into Alaska.

"I'd better talk to him," Millen said. "He doesn't know the Rat."

Millen found Johnson down on the steamboat landing assembling his gear. The Mountie introduced himself. Johnson shook hands reluctantly.

"Anything I can do for you?" Millen asked.

"No, no," Johnson said hurriedly. "I'm just pulling out." From his accent Millen tabbed him as a Swede from the northern States. He had an upturned nose in a broad flat face and his features were curiously stiff, as if he were constantly struggling to mask his hostility.

"How'd you come in?" Millen asked.

"Mackenzie River. I been working all last winter on the prairies."

Millen knew that was a lie; the Loucheux had seen the stranger upriver. He let it pass. "Going to stay around here long?"

"Maybe. I don't know yet."

"If you want to trap, I can give you a license now. It'll save you a trip into Arctic Red River."

"I haven't made up my mind," Johnson said evasively. "I may go over Rat River Portage."

"Alone?"

Johnson scowled. He made no answer.

"You ought to hire a guide," Millen said evenly.

Anger flooded into Johnson's face. It was as if the thought had triggered some mental thermostat. "No!" he told Millen violently. "I don't want people bothering me. I like to live

## THE HERO

alone. You police just cause me trouble. I don't want nothing to do with you." He recovered himself and a hint of shrewdness came into his voice. "You want to know all about me? All right. I'm not staying here. If I'm not staying here you don't have to know all about me, eh?" He met Millen's suddenly sharpened gaze for the first time.

Millen had been trying to tell him that one man alone could not get up Rat Rapids. But Johnson's blue eyes, pale as sea ice, were filled with unreasoning hate. Millen shrugged and walked away.

Just before Christmas the big snows came and the Loucheux, a nomadic tribe, came straggling into Arctic Red River to celebrate Yuletide. The Indians were frightened and incensed. The strange white man called Albert Johnson had failed to get up Rat Rapids. He was wintering at the mouth of Rat Canyon. He had built his cabin near a trap line used by the Loucheux for centuries and was springing their traps, flinging them into trees, sometimes substituting his own. When they went to his cabin to reason with him, the Indians told Millen, Johnson had threatened them with a rifle.

"You'd better go up and see what it's all about, Bunce," Millen told A. W. King, second constable at the RCMP detachment.

King set out by dog team the day after Christmas. He was a powerful, hearty man, still in his twenties, with a red, round, puckish face. With him went Joe Bernard, an Indian employed by the police. They knew the cabin site. During the Yukon gold rush, hundreds of prospectors, shipwrecked on Rat Rapids, had wintered there and died of scurvy. They had named the place Destruction City.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

On the third afternoon, with eighty miles behind them, and the hills on both sides narrowing to Rat Canyon, they rounded a bend in the frozen river and sighted Johnson's cabin. It stood in a clump of willow and spruce on the snow-covered flats of the left bank, square and squat — only three or four logs showed above the drifted snow. In the gray half-light of the Arctic day it seemed oddly sinister.

The Mountie left Bernard with the dogs in the shelter of the riverbank and walked on his snowshoes through twenty feet of brush to the cabin. Beside the door stood a pair of homemade snowshoes, strips of caribou hide strung on bent willow frames.

King rapped. "Mr. Johnson!" he called.

Smoke plumed up from the stovepipe but there was no reply. He walked around the cabin. About eight by ten, he judged. It seemed to be sunk three or four feet into the gravel bank, a strange thing when ordinarily a man's first concern is warmth. The roof was of poles reinforced with sod frozen nearly as hard as concrete. There was sod between the heavy logs of the walls. Then he noticed the holes. They were at every corner, driven through the frozen sod just above the drifted snow: rifle loopholes, commanding all approaches.

King peered in the tiny half-frosted window, then jerked back. Out of the gloom, a few inches away, a wild-eyed face was glaring.

King knocked again, shouting his name and business. The man inside was silent. The Mountie cursed. They would have to trek to Aklavik and back, one hundred and sixty miles, to get a search warrant from Alex Eames, the inspector in charge of the subdivision.



## THE HERO

It was midmorning, December 31, when King once more pulled up his dogs on the bare river ice below Johnson's cabin. Inspector Eames had at first been angry at all this needless work. He had sobered as King described the cabin, and he detailed two trustworthy men to accompany King and Bernard back: Constable R. G. McDowell, a handsome, quiet twenty-two-year-old, and a tall pleasant-faced Loucheux, Lazarus Sittichiulis. They'd been driving hard: King was impatient to settle this business in time to get to Bill Douglas's New Year's party at Fort McPherson.

"You stay with the dogs, Joe," King told Bernard. "Lazarus, you scout around to the back." He turned to McDowell. "Cover me, will you, Mac?" McDowell edged behind a riverbank spruce.

King strode toward the cabin. The wind was rising, whipping away the smoke that still came from the chimney. He hammered hard on the door. "Are you there, Mr. Johnson?"

He thought he heard movement inside. "Mr. Johnson!" he called again, testing the door with his shoulder. "I have a search warrant. Open up or I'll have to break the door down.

There was no answer. Again he bunted the door. It gave a little. Then he felt himself hurled to the snow by a smashing blow in the chest; he heard a shot — it seemed to come from very far away. Bullets came splintering through the door and went whining overhead. He heard McDowell calling, "King! Can you crawl? Crawl away from the cabin!"

Now King heard McDowell's rifle and got to his feet, staggered into the brush and collapsed. McDowell was still shooting, drawing the fire of the man inside. King began to crawl. Then Lazarus was helping him down the bank.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

His head cleared as they bandaged his bleeding side, fumbling, hurried by the 45°-below-zero cold. They bundled him in eiderdowns and lashed him to the toboggan.

"You want me to go back and shoot 'um now?" Lazarus asked.

McDowell shook his head. "We'll get Bunce fixed up first." McDowell was trying hard to be reassuring. But the bullet had smashed through King's ribs, a blizzard was coming up, the dogs were already weary from the long trip out and they had eighty miles to travel.

Through swirling groundstorms, McDowell and the two Indians broke trail most of the day and night, easing King's heavy body down the portages. Their thighs were numb as they carried the wounded Mountie into Aklavik's Anglican mission hospital.

"The bullet's pierced his stomach," the resident doctor, J. A. Urquhart, said. "It missed his heart by an inch and his lungs by less." Peritonitis, the doctor said, had been avoided only by King's fine condition and empty stomach, for in his hurry to get through work before the New Year's party, King had stopped only once the day before for food. Luck, and the record twenty-hour run, had saved his life.

The news of King's shooting spread quickly through Aklavik, then a town of some two hundred natives and thirty whites. Inspector Eames, a forceful official of forty-five, had no trouble picking a posse: himself, McDowell, Sittichiulis, Bernard, and three trappers in town for New Year's: Ernest Sutherland, Karl Gardlund and Knut Lang. Johnson, they figured, was more likely to give himself up to a party that in-

## THE HERO

cluded some of his own kind; they still thought of the man as a bush-crazy trapper.

As soon as the RCMP dogs had recuperated they set out, packing dynamite to breach the walls of the cabin which King had described — imaginatively, they thought — as a fortress. Camping at the mouth of the Rat they were joined by Newt Millen; he had picked up a radio message from UZK Aklavik, "Voice of the Northern Lights," an amateur station run by Army signalers.

Inspector Eames decided that the winding willow-fringed Rat offered Johnson too many chances for ambush; he hired an Indian guide to take them overland. In darkness and storm the Indian overshot the trail to Rat Rapids. They were eight days out, with only two days' dog food left, when they worked down the rim of Rat Canyon onto the flats below.

It was noon but the light was gray as dawn. The storm raged less furiously here. Eames strung out his men behind the chest-high riverbank that bent around the cabin on two sides. They crouched, listening, the sweat from their morning's march congealing clammily inside their parkas.

A clatter of kitchen utensils came to them clearly on the wind. Eames lifted his voice in a drill-square bellow: "Johnson! This is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Come out. There's no serious charge against you. The man you shot isn't dead."

There was no sound but the wail of the wind.

"Come out!" Eames shouted again. "You may as well give up. There's eight of us here — three trappers. Don't make it tough for yourself."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

No answer came from the lightless cabin squatting among the trees.

Eames passed the word to the crouching men. They clambered up over the bank. Gunfire streaked from the cabin loopholes. The police party dropped to the snow, inching forward from bush to tree, firing at the loopholes that continued to spit flame. Two men got to the door, half smashing it in with their rifle butts. A fusillade drove them back.

They huddled behind the riverbank. Eames tried persuasion again. Johnson answered with a shot. The inspector knew now, by a fleeting glimpse when his men had broken the door, that Johnson was lying shielded by a double barrier of logs sunk at least three feet in the frozen earth.

The police party were shooting in woolen gloves, their outer mitts dangling by thongs from their necks; some had their hands frostbitten. Leaving two men on watch, Eames withdrew down the river, put up tents and kindled fires. "Let's get the dynamite thawed out," he said. "We'll throw in a few small charges and try and open a hole in the wall. Not too big — we don't want to kill him."

The dynamite, exploding in the open, had no effect. At midnight Knut Lang said, "Maybe if I could get up on the roof I could stun him with a big charge." Eames agreed.

Running a gauntlet of fire, Lang made the roof, scrambled up, lit the fuse, flattened out for the blast — then kneeled and peered down the jagged hole. Through a swirl of acrid smoke he saw Johnson crouched on the floor, a sawed-off shotgun in one hand, a pistol in the other. Their eyes met and held. Then Johnson snapped a shot. Lang jumped back and dodged to the riverbank. Now they knew

## THE HERO

the extent of Johnson's arsenal: a shotgun, a revolver, and two rifles Millen had noted, a .22 and a .30-30 Savage.

They threw flares. In the flickering light they tried to glimpse Johnson between logs where the chinking had been blasted out by the dynamite. Johnson stayed out of sight. Eames had the posse fake a rush while Millen moved stealthily in. The crunch of his snowshoes gave him away and Johnson's guns forced him back.

At 3 A.M. Eames hurled the last of his dynamite against the front of the cabin. In the aftermath of its violence he ran for the half-shattered door, Gardlund running beside him holding a flashlight to spot the target. A few yards from the door Gardlund switched on the light. It was smashed from his hand by a bullet from Johnson's rifle. Johnson had the advantage of what little light there was. They retired to the riverbank.

The inspector studied the drawn bearded faces of his posse. It was fifty degrees below zero. The faces of some of the men showed dead-white patches of frostbite. Cold and spasmodic excitement had drained their strength. They needed rest and food and Eames had only one day's supplies left.

The inspector hurried his angry, frustrated posse back to Aklavik, where he arranged for more supplies and men. Two ingenious Army signalmen, Sergeants Frank Riddell and "Heps" Hersey, fashioned crude gunpowder grenades and homemade gas bombs — beer bottles filled with sulfur and gunpowder. Eames still intended to take Johnson alive if possible but he no longer thought him a half-crazed hermit. Either he was a fugitive or a man with a haunted conscience.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

The amateur radio station alerted all trappers. Far to the south, newspapers were headlining the story of the unknown gunman, the Mad Trapper of Rat River, who from his Arctic fortress had successfully defied the famous Mounted Police.

Constable Millen and Karl Gardlund returned to the battleground ahead of Eames's main party. Hoarfrost lay unbroken over the trampled snow and upon the half-smashed door. The cabin was unmistakably deserted.

They opened the door and stared down in amazement. The floor was a series of bunkers, exactly body-size, hacked from the glass-hard gravel in front of each loophole. They were lined with spruce boughs and fires had been built against the wall at the rear to reflect heat into them.

A careful search revealed no furs, no papers. There was only a litter of empty shells, some half-raw caribou scraps. Outside, the waning windstorm had swept the river ice clear of tracks.

Eames and his posse arrived two days later, January 17. They had set up base camp at the mouth of Rat River. They agreed that Johnson would not go far in such weather. He had no dogs to pack supplies; he would have to hunt or trap as he traveled. Somewhere in the snow-laden brush of the canyon floor above, half a mile wide with walls rising six hundred feet in places, somewhere along the willow-lined creeks that gullied out from the canyon, he would be hiding.

They combed the canyon for four days. Johnson had vanished. Eames withdrew the bulk of his men so that he could leave nine days' rations with Constable Millen and three of the best shots and bushmen, trappers Karl Gardlund and

## THE HERO

Noel Verville and Army Signals Sergeant Frank Riddell.

In pairs the quartet stalked their quarry through the scrub of the creekbeds. Half circling, working ever deeper into high country, they prowled tensely through thickets that might shelter hare and ptarmigan, the game Johnson needed to stay alive. They found two caches of caribou that Johnson had killed in the fall and watched them for several days through field glasses. Johnson did not return.

Occasionally, in a creek bottom, they picked up his trail in deep snow, lost it, cut across a ridge and found it again. His technique was clear. He traveled the glare ice along the creeks and along the high, hardpacked, windswept ridges between. At night he would trek up a streambed, pick a campsite, circle around it, backtrack, and bed down just off his trail, where he could ambush his pursuers. Slowly but surely he was heading for the divide. And beyond the mountains, across the narrow neck of the Yukon, little more than a hundred miles away, lay Alaska.

January 28 was windless. Riddell picked up the week-old trail, lost it as usual, and was laboring over a ridge when he sighted a faint blue haze rising out of the gorge beyond, the only sign of life in a landscape as cold and dead as the moon. Excitedly he signaled to Verville a couple of ridges away and the two men crawled to the cliff edge and gazed down.

Fifty feet below in a thicket of brush a man sat tending a campfire. Little trails ran out from his fire like spokes in a wheel but no tracks led in or out of the thicket. "He snares what he needs right there," Verville whispered.

Riddell was mystified by one trail; it led behind the gravel-clotted roots of an upturned spruce. He raised his rifle,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

sighted, then lowered it. "I don't think we could place our shots in this light," he said. "We might kill him if we shoot."

"I don't want to be brought up on a manslaughter charge," Verville said. "We're not policemen. Eames didn't swear us in. We'd better go back and get Newt."

Next morning the four men gazed from the rim of the gorge on a smoldering fire. Johnson was not in sight. "He must be sleeping," Riddell said. "I wonder why the trail behind those roots?"

"I don't like it," Millen muttered, strangely preoccupied. The others glanced at each other. This was not like Millen, whose greatest fault was a tendency to recklessness.

The mood passed. "Frank," Millen said to Riddell, "you and Karl circle the ridge, get down in those willows — just behind him there on the creekbank. As soon as Noel and I see you're set, we'll slide down in front." To their left the sheer drop eased off into a slope. "If he comes out and starts shooting at us, you guys pick him off. If he doesn't lift his gun he won't get hurt."

From their screen of willows Riddell and Gardlund stared down their gun barrels into the tiny campsite only twenty yards away. They heard the Mountie and Verville come crashing down the slope, breaking bushes, talking loudly. They caught a blurred glimpse of Johnson as he flung himself into the snow trench that led behind the roots of the up-turned spruce. Too late to warn Millen, they realized that the gravel-matted roots formed a natural barricade. Johnson had picked his second battleground.

In the frosty silence they heard Johnson cough and check his rifle. Then Millen's voice:



## THE HERO

"Johnson! Cut out the shooting. You can't get away. Put down that rifle before you kill someone."

Johnson said nothing. They glimpsed Millen and Verville edging forward, then Johnson's gun cracked twice. Gardlund, waiting, fired at the stabs of flame.

The silence settled again. "I think maybe I hit him," Gardlund whispered. Riddell crawled over to join Millen. They listened, then climbed the bank.

Slowly they waded through waist-high snow toward the barricade. Something was wrong, Riddell thought. What looked like a stick protruding through the roots of the barricade caught the light and gleamed metallicly. "Look out!" Riddell yelled and dodged behind a poplar.

A shot ripped bark from the trunk, stung his cheek. He leaped for the bank and slid over in a blinding flurry of snow as Johnson fired twice more and Millen answered.

Riddell looked back up. Millen was kneeling, coolly aiming toward the blue-black gun barrel that jutted through the barricade. The gun barrel flamed. Slowly, Millen rose, spun, and fell face down in the snow.

Riddell fired at the rifle barrel and Johnson jerked it back. "Are you hurt bad, Newt?" called Riddell. Millen lay motionless.

Gardlund and Verville came crawling over. They all climbed the bank. Riddell and Verville opened fire and Gardlund slithered through the snow to where Millen lay. He unfastened Millen's moccasin laces, tied them to make a handle, and dragged Millen back over the bank.

Millen's face was gray, the eyes open, staring. A small stain darkened the khaki parka over his heart. The body had

## THE LIVING LEGEND

already begun to freeze. They checked Millen's rifle. "Look at this!" Riddell said. A missing screw had caused it to jam.

Night was falling. They huddled around the corpse beneath the bank in the gathering dusk and debated what to do. A few yards away they heard the killer coughing. This was no longer an adventure. The finality of death had sobered them. It seemed incredible that Millen was dead.

They could see no way of capturing Johnson. They tied spruce branches over Millen's face to keep ravens from pecking his eyes and hoisted the body up on the bank where the weasels were less likely to molest it. Gardlund and Verville agreed to watch Johnson while Riddell went back to tell Eames.

Millen's murder, broadcast over UZK, brought angry trappers into Aklavik from all over the delta. On February 4, Inspector Eames and a posse of ten picked men surrounded the scene of Millen's death.

They were met by Gardlund. "Johnson slipped away in the night," he told them ruefully. "We haven't a clue which way he went. The only place he left tracks is where he looked at Millen's body."

For three days Johnson eluded them, backtracking cleverly, sometimes reversing his snowshoes. Eames was once more low on supplies when he heard a distant drone and a ski-equipped monoplane came swooping low over the camp, waggled its wings and made a perilous landing a few miles west high on a mountainside.

The flyer was the superb bush pilot "Wop" May, the World War I ace who dueled till his guns jammed with the

## THE HERO

great German ace von Richthofen, whom May then decoyed to his death by a fellow Canadian, Roy Brown. Now, summoned by Eames from Edmonton, thirteen hundred miles south, May became the first pilot to give direct aid in a man-hunt.

At great risk, since the wind swirled snow a thousand feet in the air, May solved the problem of supply that plagues all Arctic police work. On February 11 the sky cleared for an hour and May, scouting far in advance, saw where Johnson had climbed a high spur, studied the cloud-wreathed crags ahead, then struck out unerringly for Bell Pass. He had made his break. He was heading for Alaska, traveling fast and straight at last.

The Indian trackers in Eames's posse were certain that no man could cross the divide alone on foot in a storm — certainly, no man ever had. Johnson was fighting the wind-swept eastern face of the continent's largest and least-known mountain range. He had no dogs; he was backpacking a kit heavy with guns and ammunition. He had no food and no way to warm himself, for above the treeline was neither game nor wood. They would find him dead, the Indians said.

At nightfall, Constable Sidney May\* from the lonely RCMP detachment at Old Crow, near Alaska, munched in with an Indian guide. He handed Eames a letter from the trader at La Pierre House on the other side of the mountains. Indians hunting moose had seen strange tracks, big snowshoes with a queer twist to one frame, short-spaced tracks as

\* No relation to Wop.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

if the man who made them was tired. They were heading down Bell River and they were fresh. Johnson had crossed the divide.

Next day, February 13, pilot Wop May landed Inspector Eames, Sergeant Riddell and trapper Karl Gardlund on the deep snow of Bell River in front of La Pierre House. The following afternoon May managed, despite fog, to get aloft for an hour's reconnaissance.

On these windless western slopes the snow lay deep and soft; Johnson's tracks were in plain sight along the Bell. At the mouth of the Eagle River they disappeared. He had taken his snowshoes off and stepped along in the maze of tracks left by a herd of migrating caribou.

By the fifteenth, when Constable May and the eight other volunteers reached La Pierre House by dog team, Johnson had four days' start. But a huge white-haired trapper, an old-timer named Frank Jackson, led the posse over portages that took them fifteen miles down the Eagle by the evening of February 16. Here they picked up Johnson's trail where it left the caribou herd. It was now no more than thirty-six hours old.

At twelve o'clock on the following day, with snowclouds thick overhead, they were strung out along the Eagle, between steep winding banks. As Signalman Heps Hersey, one-time Olympic boxer, urged his lead team round a bend, he saw a man walking toward him. It was Johnson, backtracking.

Both men stopped, astonished. Johnson stooped, drew on snowshoes, and ran to one side out of sight. Hersey snatched the rifle off his toboggan and dashed ahead for a clear view.

## THE HERO

Johnson was trying to climb the steep south bank, trying to make the shelter of the tangled brush at the top.

Hersey dropped to one knee and fired. Verville fired from behind him. Johnson whirled and snapped a shot. Hersey toppled over.

Verville ran to Hersey's side. The others were coming up now, spreading out along both banks, passing back word to Eames and Riddell far in the rear, "It's Johnson! Johnson's up ahead!"

Johnson, unable to climb the south bank, was running back up his trail toward an easier slope on the north bank, stopping to fire, reloading as he ran. He was drawing away from the posse, who were shooting and calling, "Surrender!" when he stumbled as if hit in the leg. He wriggled out of his pack, flattened out in the snow behind it and opened rapid fire.

All around him now was the posse, working into position. They stared through their gunsights at him from the deep snow of mid-river, from the thick brush of the banks alongside and above him.

"Johnson!" Eames shouted. "This is your last chance to give up!"

Eames's voice rolled emptily out across the frozen white stream. A trapper shifted position and Johnson fired. Grimly the posse poured in a volley.

Johnson squirmed as the bullets struck. At ten past twelve he was still, a scrap of black in a waste of snow.

Constable May approached warily. "He's dead!" he called to the others. A bullet had severed Johnson's spine in the act of reloading his rifle. Five other bullets had hit him but

## THE LIVING LEGEND

he had uttered no cry. From beginning to end the renegade of Rat River had kept his silence.

The plane had appeared in the sky as Johnson died. It taxied to within a few yards of where Hersey lay writhing, cursing a shattered elbow. Johnson's bullet had ripped across his left knee, entered his elbow, had come out his upper arm, smashed two ribs and pierced his lungs. He had not yet realized that he was shot in the chest and was hemorrhaging steadily.

Wop May gave him a sedative and they lifted him into the plane. Riddell and Jack Bowen, the plane's mechanic, held him still. May took off into scudding mist. Flying at treetop height he roared full speed down the twisting river, sliced through the buffeting winds of Bell Pass and rocketed down the canyons, wingtips almost shaving the walls. In less than two hours from the shooting, Dr. Urquhart in Aklavik was tying off Hersey's broken arteries.

"You got here just in time," he told May. "He'll live."

Back on the river the posse gathered round the corpse in the snow, the husk of the man called Albert Johnson. For weeks their lives had centered in this elusive figure. He had loomed in epic stature in their minds, a man whose fierce unyielding self-destructive tenacity was to pass into folk tale and folk song.

Lying limp in the snow he was far from heroic. The seven-week chase had drawn all surplus fat from his body, never large. His head already resembled a skull, its contours shaped by wisps of sweat-soaked hair. His pale eyes stared from caverns dug by fatigue. The fury that had sustained his

## THE HERO

will had remained with him to the end, stretching his lips away from his teeth in a wolfish smile of hate.

Eames and Constable May laid out the contents of his pack: razor, comb, mirror, needle, thread, oily rag, fish hooks, wax, matches, nails, ax, pocket compass, 119 shells, a knife made from an old trap spring — all in neatly sewn moosehide cases; five freshwater pearls, some gold dust, \$2410 in bills, and two pieces of gold bridgework, not his own.

“I wonder whose mouth they came out of,” a trapper mused darkly.

The question was never answered, though the RCMP received letters from several hundred people in Europe, the United States and Canada declaring that they knew who Johnson was: an escaped convict called the Blueberry Kid, a murderer from Michigan, a World War I sniper, an ex-provincial policeman. Women claimed him as husband, father, brother, son.

The Mounties investigated each claim. They sent the dead killer's fingerprints and photograph to police identification bureaus in Washington, Stockholm and London. They traced his weapons and banknotes; all leads came to a dead end — all except one.

In 1925, a man who called himself Arthur Nelson was trapping the Nelson River in British Columbia. He moved northward into the Yukon. Here he vanished. The man called Albert Johnson appears. His description, skills and temperament tally with Nelson's. Indians see him with another white man around Peel River headwaters. Then, a hundred miles

## THE LIVING LEGEND

downriver, they see him alone. The Indians dub him Albert Johnson, after a man who once trapped on the Peel. No more is known except that Arthur Nelson once described himself as a Swedish-American farmboy from North Dakota.

The myth makers moved into the vacuum. They said that Johnson had knowledge of a secret mine that kept his pockets filled with gold. They said that the death of a beautiful Eskimo bride had driven him wild with grief. They said that he was a big-city gangster who had cached his loot in the Arctic, and in 1934 a band of treasure hunters searched the Rat River region without luck.

A less fanciful supposition is that the man called Albert Johnson killed his Yukon partner — the owner of the gold teeth — and feared that the Mounties suspected him. But no one will ever know for sure what dark and guilty knowledge set this man apart from his fellow men and impelled him upon his infamous Odyssey.

## 5

**T**HE Mad Trapper had his revenge. His last stand sold newspaper extras in three languages, and several commented caustically on the time it had taken the Mounties to get their man. "It is clear now why the Mounties wear those Boy Scout hats with the pinched crowns," one French-language paper declaimed. "It is to cover up their pointed heads." Being a legend in one's own time has its drawbacks.



## THE HERO

When a highly touted performer fails to live up to his billing, a disillusioned public is apt to be nasty.

It does seem an unromantic story. The hero is the scrawny, flybitten, balding criminal. And the Mountie with the main role, Newt Millen, gets himself killed.

For eighty years the disillusioning facts have been reported with reasonable accuracy. There was Almighty Voice, a dauntless young Cree born thirty years too late, who escaped from the Mounties at Duck Lake Barracks in 1895. He killed a sergeant, eluded capture for eighteen months; then, entrenched on a wooded hill, supported by two companions who shared his nostalgia for the past, he held a hundred men at bay till the Mounties brought up cannon.

And there was Kid Cashel, the icy-nerved gun-toting twenty-year-old who modeled his life on the violent career of fast-drawing Jesse James and wouldn't admit that times had changed. On the eve of his execution he gave the Mounties the slip and sent them mocking postcards till they finally cornered him by using every man in district. Long after they hanged him the redcoats were redfaced.

Yet the legend endures. Despite error, despite modern efficiency, it glitters as brightly as ever. It cannot be punctured. It does not tarnish. Only one conclusion is possible. It is neither hollow nor false. It lasts because, in one way, it is true. Reality may prove legend false on the surface, but there is another, deeper, truth.

A legend is folk art, created by people out of a need to believe. They seize promising material like a scarlet-coated horseman and create a hero simply by believing him to be so. They believe him to be so because they want him to be so;

## THE LIVING LEGEND

it is how they themselves would like to be. The Mountie of the legend is a creature shaped by a vast underground current of aspiration.

Like all young careerists, this legendary figure was concerned overmuch with appearance in the beginning; he did not dare appear without proper attire. But with success and acceptance, concern with the surface has waned. The Mounties can hang up their red coats and belief is undisturbed. Belief, overgrown with fact and fancy, remains intact at the core. It dwells no longer in surface facts but in their significance, in the kind of man the Mountie stands for.

In this light, and considering the details, the story of the Mad Trapper is no longer disillusioning. We see why it did the legend no real damage. People do not really believe that the Mounties are supermen. The superman concept is part of the surface, not part of the inner belief.

Indeed, if the trappers who helped track Johnson had thought the Mounties were supermen, they would scarcely have felt any need to volunteer. They would more than likely have said, "If they're so good, let them bloody well do it alone." But they left their trap lines, a costly decision, and risked their lives to help. Inspector Eames, we realize, must have had their respect. He must have been a man of character.

And Millen? What of Constable Millen, who knelt in the snow in plain sight with only the barrel of the killer's rifle to aim at? Why didn't Millen play it safe? Why did he not shoot Johnson from above, from the canyon rim? Why did he risk his life simply to see if Johnson would give up?

Millen, assuredly, was no superman. But from others in

## THE HERO

that posse we know that he felt he was Johnson's match, either in bushcraft or with a gun. So it was pride. But only in part, for there was also his job.

Millen's view of his job was clear. He knew that it was more difficult than simply killing a man. His job was to bring Johnson to justice. That was the way he was taught and he died fulfilling this unwritten law.

These are the moments that make up the tradition, not the lives of a few outstanding men but the moments of many — moments of crisis, moments of decision, when man shows who he is and what he believes. And these are also the moments that make up the legend, when the man of flesh and blood measures up to the ideal. In these moments, tradition and legend are one, fiction is welded to truth, belief is confirmed, and we understand what the legend symbolizes: faith that man *can* live up to his aspirations.

What these aspirations are — the kind of man our society in its wishdreams wants to be — is revealed in the character of the force, in the acts and ideals that keep the legend alive.



*Book II*

# **The Crucible**

*As police executives have we made it clear to our men that they have an inherent and individual responsibility . . . they are not blind servants of the state. . . .*

**RCMP Commissioner L. H. Nicholson, speaking to the 1953 conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, at Detroit.**



# 1

**T**HE RCMP is often compared with the FBI. It is not a very enlightening comparison. All great police forces resemble one another, but each is also unique. Like nations, each has its individual character arising out of its situation.

The Canadian people are curiously situated. A few big modern cities are strung like beads on the lines of two east-west railroads. Between the cities, the towns and farms are scattered over a very long but narrow fertile belt. A few hours south of this populated strip, across a border so loosely guarded that criminals flit back and forth like ghosts, is the world's greatest industrial civilization. A few hours north lies the frontier, as wide and wild as ever.

It is a situation that calls for four kinds of police: federal, provincial (rural), municipal and frontier. The Mounties are all four. Right across the country they enforce some fifty-five laws that concern chiefly the federal government (narcotics, smuggling, counterfeiting). They have contracts with every province except Ontario and Quebec to act as provincial police. By request, they police one hundred and twenty-five small cities and towns. And across the vast and lonely North they are the only law. No other police force has such scope. Out of it comes their unparalleled range of duties.

The Mounties are the Secret Service, the G men, the T

## THE LIVING LEGEND

men, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Texas Rangers and Scotland Yard rolled into one. Like the Secret Service, the FBI and the U.S. Treasury agents, they track down counterfeiters, spies and drug peddlers. Like the Coast Guard, their converted minesweepers chase smugglers and aid disabled vessels. On the prairies, where rustling still goes on, they've a role like the Texas Rangers. And like Scotland Yard in London, they walk a city beat.

These far-flung operations have their nerve center in a building designed as a Catholic seminary, a five-story gray stone structure in a quiet suburb of Ottawa. The Mounties bought it in 1954 and, oddly enough, it makes an appropriate headquarters with its clean square lines, its solid austerity.

Within this honeycomb of offices some 380 uniformed bureaucrats try to keep the great machine running smoothly. They are aided by 500-odd civilians — mathematicians, doctors, engineers, chemists, handwriting experts, linguists, tailors, telephone operators, dieticians, cooks, stewards, stenographers and clerks.

On the first floor, the Number 1 Mountie, Commissioner Leonard Nicholson, compact, graying, keen, forthright, a man with few affectations, consults with his top brass on policy and strategy. In the basement, the records section patrols long corridors of green filing cabinets. The supply branch sees that the men are fed, clothed, sheltered and mobile (at last count, 29 ships, 11 aircraft, 1185 motor cars, 92 trucks, 76 motorcycles, 6 snowmobiles and 199 horses — for basic training only). The fingerprint bureau, the section that registers firearms, the crime-index section (which classifies



## THE CRUCIBLE

criminals by traits) and the monthly *RCMP Gazette*, which publishes pictures of Canada's most-wanted crooks, are quietly busy servicing police forces all across the country.

On the second floor, readers of the Criminal Investigation Branch are studying reports on arson, murder, robbery and fraud. One floor up, Superintendent Henry Larsen of Northwest Passage fame manages affairs in the North. The very hush-hush Special (counterespionage) Branch trades reports of enemy aliens with other intelligence services, translates the published news from behind the Iron Curtain, and relates it to the findings of their undercover men. The atmosphere throughout the building is semi-military. All men stand a little more erect when they speak to superiors, even though they may be arguing the merits of their favorite hockey teams.

Linked to this governing center by teletype lines are the lesser hierarchies: fourteen divisional headquarters, each with its task force of specialists in crime and administration. Then the lines fan out to thirty-two subdivisions, each the hub for a network of detachments — combination police stations, jails and barracks. In the cities, a detachment may quarter several dozen field men; at some country crossroads, a solitary Mountie.

It is in these one-man detachments that we most clearly see the fundamental quality of the Mountie. In British Columbia, the Maritimes and the prairie provinces, he's a game warden, fisheries inspector, shipping registrar and census taker. In the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, where public officials are few and far apart, he's a magistrate, post-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

master, coroner and sheriff, customs collector, measuring surveyor, immigration inspector and tax collector. He issues licenses for dogs, cars, game, furs, timber and mining claims. He reports on the weather, pays Family Allowance checks and performs marriages.

The small-detachment Mountie stretches the word "police" to its limits. When a farmer committed suicide near Wetaskiwin, Alberta, a Mountie had to inventory the dead man's holdings — three sections of wheatland, sixty head of cattle, ninety-two hogs and fourteen horses — hire three men to thresh the grain, haul it in to the elevator, fatten the stock, sell it as it became marketable and turn the money over to the public administrator, meanwhile investigating the death and locating a brother in Norway. When a lion escaped from a traveling circus in Rycroft, Alberta, and began to prowl the main street, the Spirit River detachment had to stalk it and shoot it down. When the Mounties evacuated some families during the Red River flood and babies were howling with hunger, a sergeant invaded a cattle car stalled on a nearby track and returned with the wherewithal in hand. And when a Saskatchewan citizen, arrested for carnal knowledge of a girl under fourteen years of age, wanted to make the young mother a bride, his two RCMP custodians arranged for a baby sitter, loaned him a ring, and, while one Mountie stood up as best man, the other acted as bridesmaid.

Obviously, the Mountie is a man of parts and, as such, a slightly old-fashioned figure. For the modern trend, as knowledge advances and work grows more complex, is toward specialization. True, the Mounties have their specialists, good ones and indispensable, but they do not elevate

## THE CRUCIBLE

them. They resist the trend; the small-detachment man is their standard model.

It is a standard rooted in necessity. The Mounties have only 5370-odd men — far less than some large European and United States cities — to police 3,600,000 square miles. They are forced to hold to a precept formed in the infancy of the force: never send ten men when one will do. And this one man must be versatile, for you cannot police a frontier, a land of far horizons, with a group of specialists. Out of this central fact, out of their past, their unique scope, their gamut of duties, an archtype has evolved — the all-around man, self-reliant, complete in himself, an individual, in essence an aristocrat, a man who can act on his own authority. Yet, paradoxically, from the moment a man joins the force, he is pressured to conform, to obey, to submit to authority.

## 2

**W**HEREVER one sees a Mountie — on the street, in his patrol car — he seldom stands out as an individual. He resembles the figure in a current advertisement, wherein a great world banking house suggests its reliability by the picture of a uniformed man standing as if rooted to his background of rugged country. The figure, unmistakably a Mountie, is faceless. And it is a curious feature of most RCMP tales that the heroes seem interchangeable, peculiarly alike. They all seem typical.

This is something more than impression. The Mounties do

## THE LIVING LEGEND

run to type. They're usually trim, seldom huge, never small. Sitting, standing or walking, they hold themselves so erect they appear stiff. Their uniforms are immaculate, their speech is direct. Their features are controlled to the point of immobility. Their personalities seem strangely muted, overlaid — at least in public — with reserve.

How do they get that way? How does the RCMP take men from farms and cities four thousand miles apart and stamp them with characteristics in common?

The process begins with the kind of men they select. The RCMP is easy to get out of but hard to get into. Before World War II the force wouldn't even advertise for recruits. But the armed services stripped them of men and after the war, reluctantly, they placed with local newspapers these few lines of terse, restrained prose:

**WEAR THIS BADGE AND UPHOLD TRADITIONS OF RCMP**  
If you are 5'8" in height, unmarried, between 18 and 30, and are interested in a career in the RCMP you may apply for engagement immediately.

These ads attracted some 2500 applicants a year, but the force rejected more than 90 per cent. The figures do not include casual inquiries, or such off-beat applications as this:

Dear Sir: I would like a job at detective work. I have plans that are my own in the line of detective plans. . . . I couldn't tell you how I will work but . . . I have some plans that has never been done before. I can pick out the guilty one every time, no foolin'.

## THE CRUCIBLE

This sort of an applicant, as a rule, hastily screens himself after reading a pamphlet the RCMP sends him. It is called *A Career In Scarlet* and it informs the would-be Mountie that he must sign on for five years and that during this period he can't marry (to keep part of the force mobile), can't take up a spare-time trade, can't publicly smoke or drink in uniform. It warns him bluntly of hardship, risk and hard work before it mentions starting pay (\$203 a month, with free uniforms, medical and dental service), leave (21 days a year — if a man can be spared), chances for travel and special training.

The first serious hurdle is a medical examination. If the applicant passes, he's cleared for character. A Mountie visits the applicant's home town or neighborhood, talks to his schoolteachers, former employers, minister or priest, and two references which the applicant must supply. A fingerprint check is made. Sometimes it turns up a criminal record that automatically washes the applicant out.

The next obstacle is an educational test on such subjects as mathematics, history and current affairs. It excludes applicants who answer like this:

Q. What is your reason for joining the Force?

A. I like to travel around the country from place to place.

Q. Who is the Chief Justice of Canada?

A. Don't know him, never had the opportunity of being in court.

Q. What is the difference between prorogation and dissolution of Parliament?

A. It's all the same to me . . .

## THE LIVING LEGEND

This is a Grade 10 test but an applicant can get by with a Grade 8 certificate. The reason, explains Superintendent Frank Spalding, who served several years as chief personnel officer, is that "In certain areas there may be good potential policemen who don't have the chance to finish their education for many reasons — poverty, sickness in the family, they're needed to help at home or on the farm. We don't want to exclude them, but they have to be exceptional." The educational test is judged together with an intelligence test that weeds out the so-called "educated fools."

Wrong motives for joining eliminate others. The RCMP isn't interested in the glamour-seekers who write in saying: "I saw the movie *Saskatchewan* last week. I sure go for those red coats and black horses." They don't want the exhibitionist who proclaims: "I would like to devote my life to fighting crime." One man wanted to join "because I look good in uniform." The force does consider how a man would look in uniform, but it's scarcely a main prerequisite.

The motive the Mounties are looking for is the wish to be of service. Says Superintendent Spalding, "You'd be surprised at the number of letters that begin, 'I'd like the chance to serve Canada . . .'" The desire for adventure and romance is fine, but it has to be balanced by maturity."

After the written tests comes the crucial trial: a soul-searching interview with the personnel officer at the nearest RCMP divisional headquarters. This man was promoted after years in the field. He's been schooled in the latest personnel techniques. He sets the applicant at his ease and encourages him to talk, noting perhaps, that his shoes have not

## THE CRUCIBLE

been polished, that his hands show too much tension, while his manner is too casual.

The applicant states his ambitions. "How about pay?" he asks. "If I went to work in the factory at home I could make sixty a week. How's that stack up with the Mounted Police?"

The officer decides that the applicant thinks too well of himself. The cause might be frustration. "Got any hobbies?" he asks.

The applicant has collected stamps for six months. Then his interest veered to photography. Now he's taking a fling at the trumpet. The officer suspects he may lack persistence.

"Any girl friends?" he asks.

"No."

"But you like to go out with girls?"

"No, not much." Another danger signal. Girls should be a major preoccupation at this man's age. Perhaps he doesn't like to compete.

"Sports?" the officer prods.

The applicant mentions a few sports, none of which involve bodily contact.

"No hockey?" asks the officer. "No football?" He is bearing down now to extract an essential point: the applicant dislikes physical violence. The policeman takes over the conversation. He tells the applicant about men who get roaring drunk on Saturday night and try to beat up the Mountie, about the times policemen have been shot at. The applicant agrees another profession might be more suitable.

"Quite a few back out when they find what police work really is," says Superintendent Spalding. "Some have taken a correspondence course in detection. They thought they'd be

## THE LIVING LEGEND

natty white-collar detectives. A big bruiser in uniform would handle anything nasty. They'd just work with their brains."

Some of the men the personnel officer turns down seem, on the surface, likely prospects. One applicant, for example, was a highly intelligent youth. He had been a cadet, an outstanding Boy Scout, and captain of his town's baseball team. But when he clashed with the coach over how the team should be run he had quit. "In my opinion, this man is a risk," the personnel officer reported. "He resents discipline."

The personnel officer's conclusions cap a month or more of checking for honesty, knowledge, common sense and intelligence. His recommendation amounts to a seal of approval. He selects a man that he thinks is ambitious, proud and aggressive. But these qualities are balanced by what the officer calls "maturity," a stability vaguely defined in a sense of service.

Now the applicant must pass a final medical inspection that probes for every hidden defect. He is told to pack a suitcase and report to a training center. He has one more gauntlet to run: one of the world's toughest training courses.

### 3

**U**PPERMOST in the mind of the man who reports to the training base is the knowledge that he is not yet a Mountie. Every day for the next nine months he will have to prove himself. Serious injury, illness, lack of coordination or nerve can wash him out.



## THE CRUCIBLE

He's called a "recruit" now. He signs on at one of three training centers: Ottawa, Regina or Vancouver. His first days are spent collecting his kit: brown knee-high riding boots, low black boots, duty uniform (slacks and tunic of RCMP brown), a Stetson hat for summer wear, a blue peaked forage cap with a yellow crown band for patrols, a "Klondike pattern" muskrat hat for below-zero temperatures, and two pairs of blue overalls. He picks a bed in the barrack room and prepares to earn the right to wear the famous scarlet and gold, the dress uniform with which he has not yet been issued.

The training routine follows the army pattern — with extras. The recruit is assigned to a thirty-man squad. From reveille at 6 A.M. to parade at five in the evening, he's marched in and out of barracks, drill hall, classrooms and gym. He spends many hours on the shooting range, lying on his stomach, squinting along the barrel of a .303 rifle. Standing erect, he raises a .38 service revolver eye level and blazes away at a body target. "Group your shots," the instructor shouts. "Don't stiffen up." The recruit's clumsy draw smooths out, his fire becomes accurate.

In the gym, he practices backflips over the vaulting horse. He punches another recruit in the boxing ring. He learns judo, more commonly called "police holds." "Hit me!" the instructor calls. "Hit me as hard as you can." The big recruit takes a hefty swing, feels a sudden yank on his arm and finds himself lying flat on his back. Slowly, he gets to his feet. His face is pale. It's a tough grind for an older man. A recruit is typically young, eighteen or nineteen.

He is taught how to handle himself in dozens of dangerous

## THE LIVING LEGEND

situations; he learns how to empty water out of a capsized canoe, how thick ice should be before he can safely drive his car on it (four inches). He learns to swim — the odds are good it will save his life and possibly someone else's. He learns to type — he'll have to report in quintuplicate on every case he investigates. He learns to use a camera, read a map, survey land and give first aid.

He takes short courses (from one to fifty-five hours) in more than a hundred subjects. He sits with his squad in a classroom for a lecture on observation. The instructor addresses them bluntly: "You think that seeing's believing? I say you don't know what you see! What do you say to that?"

A couple of cocksure recruits give him an argument. As they talk a workman walks in and proceeds to scrub out the classroom.

"You can't clean here now," the instructor protests. "Take your mop and pail and scoot. There's a lecture going on here."

"I got orders to mop here," the man says stubbornly.

Another workman walks in. "Hey, Joe!" he says to the scrubber, "you got the wrong room." He pulls at Joe. Joe resists. The two men fight. The recruits join in. The classroom is a shambles.

The instructor watches, amused, then sharply he shouts, "Break it up! Break it up!" The class sits down again. The two workmen — members of the training staff — have vanished.

"Now tell me," the instructor asks a recruit, "exactly what happened? How did the fight start? What did the men say?"

## THE CRUCIBLE

Describe them." The thirty-man squad gives him thirty different versions of the incident.

"This will teach you two things," the instructor tells the squad. "First — you can have six witnesses to a crime and get six different stories. Few people know what they see. They witness an accident and come away with a general impression. When you pin them down, their imagination fills in the blank spots, facts that never existed. Second — keep your wits about you. Stay calm. Notice details."

A lecture on questioning witnesses gets decorously underway. Suddenly a man runs in shouting, "Fire in the auditorium!" The recruits half-rise, jabbering excitedly: ". . . Weren't we in there last? . . . Do you think a cigarette could have started it? . . ." Only gradually do they become aware that the instructor is questioning the man. "Who discovered the fire?" he is asking him calmly.

"I did," the man says. The class falls silent.

"Is it still burning?"

"No, I put it out."

"Where was it?"

"In the wastepaper basket."

The recruits emit an embarrassed laugh.

"I hope this will teach you not to go off half cocked," the instructor tells them. "Get the facts. And remember how confused you felt just now. A lot of the people you question are going to feel just that way."

The entire squad takes part in realistic games of cops and robbers. An outbuilding that simulates a general store is robbed. A recruit playing a Mountie collars another recruit whom he suspects of being the thief. He takes the thief's fin-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

gerprints. He compares them with the prints found on a car the thief has escaped in (a bit of improvisation not in the script) and then abandoned. The fingerprints match.

The thief is taken before the magistrate, played by the training officer. A recruit is detailed to be the prosecutor, another to handle the defense. The fingerprints are the main evidence.

"When did you take these fingerprints?" the defense lawyer asks the Mountie.

The Mountie tells him.

"Was there any charge against the accused at the time? Was he under arrest?"

"No, sir. I couldn't be sure he was guilty until I compared the fingerprints."

The defense lawyer turns to the magistrate. "Your Honor, I submit that these prints are not admissible evidence. According to the Identification of Criminals Act, fingerprints may not be taken unless a suspect is under arrest."

The magistrate upholds the "defense lawyer." He explains the circumstances under which fingerprints may be taken. The "thief" goes free though the "mountie" is morally certain he had the right man. "Everyone makes mistakes when they start," the instructor explains. "This is the proper place to make them." He turns to the "thief." "That car you swiped belongs to the sergeant major and if I were you I'd get it back before he misses it."

The recruit is drilled in the Criminal Code, customs and excise laws, banking procedures and Indians' rights. He's harangued on the causes of juvenile delinquency. He's taught to classify different types of grain, wood and cattle brands.

## THE CRUCIBLE

He's instructed in the intricacies of counterfeiting and handwriting. His tutors enlighten him in the science of cultivating informers, shadowing suspects, organizing a search party, throwing a gas bomb and using a mine detector (for finding such things as hidden weapons). He comes fresh from a lecture on public relations and is detailed off to scrub out the barrack block on his hands and knees.

Every week, the officer commanding the spick-and-span training school inspects the quarters of his trainees. Once, in Regina, a recruit finished scrubbing out for inspection and decided he had time to take a shower. He was in the middle of it when the OC stalked in. A thorough man, he pulled back the shower curtains. The naked recruit snapped to attention and presented the startled OC with the smartest, wettest, soapiest salute in RCMP memory.

If the OC spots one bed unmade he may confine the entire squad to barracks for a month. "Right from the start," says Leonard Nicholson, the one-time farm hand who made the climb from constable to commissioner, "the young man learns it's a disciplined force he's in."

This lesson is driven home over and over in the drill hall. The drill sergeant soon becomes an ogre with supernatural powers. He brings his squad to rigid attention, then turns his back upon them, apparently to dash tears of disgust from his eyes. Moments pass — a recruit decides to ease his aching back. With infallible timing the drill sergeant wheels and withers the lad with a blast from his highly colored vocabulary.

In between learning the lore of bloodstains, poisons and burglary techniques, it's drill, drill, drill. The recruit is

## THE LIVING LEGEND

shouted at until he's dazed. He's told to stand up straight, to say "Sir," to salute. His first plunge into RCMP life is so confusing that a new recruit once summed it up in a now classic remark: "Everything that moves is saluted. Everything that stands still is painted white." \*

In addition to six months of this the recruit gets three months of equitation. Horses are part of the RCMP tradition. A placard at Regina barracks quotes Winston Churchill:

Don't give your son money. Give him horses. No man ever came to grief — except honorable grief — through riding.

If the recruit graduates, the odds are against his riding anything more lively than a motorcycle. The Mounties now keep only as many horses as they need for basic training (about 200). If the recruit lacks fortitude, the horse will bring it out. "They're good hardening," says Commissioner Nicholson. "They knock a man about in a way that's hard to duplicate unless we go to an assault course."

The recruits ride about four hours a day. The rest of the time, from dawn to dusk, they're cleaning the stables, polishing their saddles, feeding and watering the horses. There's a saying that a man who grooms his horse properly needs no other exercise. Three times a day the recruits groom their mounts. "Lean on that currycomb," the sergeant shouts. "You won't push him over." A recruit rakes the tin comb too harshly across his horse's tender belly. The animal's long neck swivels and its yellow teeth raise an ugly welt on his

\* Also claimed by Army and Navy.

## THE CRUCIBLE

arm. The irate sergeant's reaction (according to recruits): "Get that clumsy clown out of here and check that poor horse for injuries."

On Monday morning, after a week-end's rest, the horses are at their best, or — from a recruit's view — their worst. A mare kicks the boards of the riding hall and the others follow suit till the hall reverberates like a giant drum. The recruits' nerves tighten. The instructor, a hard-bitten sergeant, walks them around the hall in single file. A horse clamps the bit in his teeth and bolts. "Hold him!" shouts the instructor. It is useless. Rising in his stirrups, the instructor calls, "Send me a postcard when you get there."

Sometimes the willful mood of one horse sweeps contagiously over the others. They sunfish and they crowhop; trainees fly in all directions. Around the hall in a pall of dust the riderless horses gallop while the frightened bruised recruits scramble for safety. Following one such melee in Regina the riding instructor lined up his squad and found that he had one empty saddle. After a prolonged search the missing recruit was found perched on a stanchion high overhead, most reluctant to come down. A sorely tried instructor once came back to his office, laid down his riding crop, took off his cap and sank to his knees. "O Lord," he cried, "how long? How long?"

The order "Cross stirrups" will bring the most recalcitrant class to heel. The stirrups are folded over the horse's withers; the recruit can no longer "post" — lift in his stirrups with the movement of his mount. Half an hour of trotting without stirrups and his leg muscles are screaming. It's especially rough on the stocky, bulky, round-legged man.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

One trainee, after two and a half hours, toppled off his horse in a dead faint. "It's like having a bad case of arthritis in both legs," says one recruit. "As far as I'm concerned it's the toughest training you can get." Few recruits disagree.

When the budding Mounties have got the feel of their horses, the instructor takes them outside to a worn path called "Suicide Lane." Here, five or six poles have been set up on trestles some thirty feet apart. "Put a knot in your reins," the instructor orders. "Cross stirrups, fold your arms, and line up to jump."

Single file, holding on only with knees and thighs, the recruits go thundering down the lane. A horse balks. The unlucky recruit goes on over his head. In a recent class there were two broken collarbones, a broken arm, two ruptured appendixes and numerous sprains. No one was washed out. "They have to learn to forget about being hurt," an instructor explains. "A good man enjoys the rough-and-tumble."

All this time the recruit is watched for flaws. His alertness, temper, tact, patience and perseverance is noted. Later, he may be tapped for the crime lab or the Special (counter-espionage) Branch. He may be marked as a likely type for the CIB, the Criminal Investigation Branch. He may make a seaman-Mountie on a Marine Division coastal craft, or his temperament may seem suited to a lonely arctic post. He may display the patience of a dogmaster. He may even be sent to a university, for the force has usually four or five men working for degrees in chemistry, physics, commerce and law. By the time sixteen instructors have appraised a recruit, the RCMP has a fairly shrewd opinion as to what kind of policeman he will make.



## THE CRUCIBLE

And all the while he is toughening up. His intellect is sharpening. He's absorbing the history of the force. Above all, he is learning obedience.

Three out of the thirty-man squad, on an average, will flunk the course, and for them there'll be no second chance. The others will don, for the first time, the famous red serge tunic and "pass out" on parade before the Officer Commanding, while the RCMP band plays and the flag snaps in the breeze, and parents try to pick out their sons from a row of facsimiles.

### 4

**T**HE young Mountie begins his career "on detachment." It may be a big city detachment. It may, more typically, be some rural center. Now that he has been hammered into a cog in a great machine, an obedient automaton, the recruit, now a "rookie," will be posted to an area that demands of its policemen the utmost flexibility.

Rural detachment work is tough and exacting. The telephone jangles incessantly with minor complaints: thefts, assaults, accidents, drunkenness, juvenile delinquency. The rookie is broken in gradually. For a few weeks he is coupled with an experienced corporal or sergeant. The rookie watches him issue gun permits, check on amusement taxes, interview people who want to adopt a child, prosecute a case in court, hand out relief, and inoculate dogs for rabies. He learns to handle a drunk, a mental patient, a traffic offender,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

even, perhaps, a safe blower carrying a package of nitroglycerine. If the rookie is impressed by the older policeman he may copy not only his methods but his manner.

The rookie's first job alone will be routine: desk clerk or telephone orderly. Or he may start out on night highway patrol, by escorting prisoners, or by accompanying a social service worker. Nevertheless, from the moment he walks alone in uniform, this very young man assumes responsibility.

One Saturday night in Lloydminster, Alberta, young Constable Joseph McCarthy had just completed one of the dull-est of RCMP chores — "polishing doorknobs" on a town beat — and was having a bedtime snack in the National Café when a man hurried in to tell him there was trouble up at the pool hall.

The pool hall was locked but some men were clustered outside.

"What's the trouble?" McCarthy asked.

No one answered. He did not learn until afterward that the pool hall had been robbed, but he could sense that the men were frightened. They would not meet his gaze. Looking them over sharply he recognized an ex-convict, a man called Donald Graves.

Graves evaded his questions, grew belligerent. The Mountie started to search him. Graves suddenly whipped out a knife with an open blade. McCarthy managed to knock it out of his hand. Graves jumped back, reached under his coat, pulled out a stockless rifle, leveled it at the constable's belt and swore he'd "fill him full of lead."

The men looking on were too frightened to come to the

## THE CRUCIBLE

young Mountie's aid. McCarthy, talking calmly, placatingly, edged closer to Graves. But the ex-convict, backing away, went on mouthing threats, nerving himself to shoot. Suddenly the Mountie lunged, knocking the gun barrel upward.

Then the ex-con reached in his pocket, snarling, "A thirty-eight will do as well." McCarthy spun him around, twisting his left arm behind him. The walking arsenal pulled another open-bladed knife and began to slash at McCarthy over his shoulder. By the time the other detachment men had been summoned by a spectator Graves's knife was cutting vicious but impotent arcs in the air as the Mountie dragged him slowly off to cells.

In all communities men such as Graves are a threat to every citizen — to his property, his rights and his safety. These are the policeman's responsibilities. To fulfill them he may be called on to risk his life.

The call came one week before Christmas to Constables Bill Pooler and Douglas Winn at Quesnel, British Columbia. At twenty minutes past midnight the detachment telephone rang. Pooler's sleepiness vanished as he listened. The Bank of Commerce at Williams Lake had been robbed. The robber, a big, heavy-set, scarfaced man in a gray suit, had shot the manager and escaped.

Pooler phoned ahead for a roadblock, roused Constables Winn and George Mohr. They piled in a deputy sheriff's car and sped down the Cariboo Trail, stopping every car they met to check it. It was 4 A.M. by the time they reached Williams Lake, and they had been joined by Constable Jack Groves.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

A search party was waiting. Snow had begun to fall, obscuring the robber's tracks. They led east, on and off the highway as the night traffic forced him to hide. He was trying to lose his pursuers; they could see where he had back-tracked, and in places he had walked along fence rails. The Mounties had no way of knowing that this was Ziggy Seguin, a murderer wanted in Ontario, an ex-soldier who boasted that he never missed with a gun. But they knew he was an outdoorsman, experienced and armed.

Working together, the four Mounties trailed the robber into timbered uplands. Mohr went back to inform the main search party. Pooler, Winn and Groves tracked for another five miles. At 9:40 A.M. the trail led them out on the rim of a creekbed. Scrambling down the gravel bank, Pooler, in the lead, glimpsed clothing below in the bush.

"This is it!" he tossed back to Winn. And even as he said it his angle of vision shifted; out of the creek bottom's tangle brush there emerged a man's face and hand. Pooler, no more than twenty feet away, could see that hand with a startling, yet detached, clarity. It was holding an automatic, the pistol was cocked, and the hand was absolutely steady.

"Drop them!" the man commanded.

Pooler leaped to the right, throwing his rifle forward, and heard the click of his trigger as it fell on the empty breach. Behind him, as the gunman fired, Winn had fallen flat and was sliding headfirst down the bank, firing as he slid.

The robber dropped back into the brush. There was silence.

"Drop your gun!" Pooler called.

"I'm hit," the robber said.

## THE CRUCIBLE

“Drop your gun!”

“Cover me,” Pooler said to Winn. He skidded the rest of the way down the bank and picked up the robber’s gun. The man had been shot in the breast. He was bleeding badly. While Groves went for a doctor, Winn and Pooler built a fire, bandaged the wound and covered the man with their pea jackets. Fifty minutes later Groves returned with a doctor. The robber, murderer Ziggy Seguin, survived, only to poison himself one hour before he was to hang.

A heavy responsibility rests with police in a manhunt. The lives of the men in the posse, the civilian volunteers, are more important than capturing the criminal, and these lives will often depend on the Mountie’s quickness of thought. But a manhunt, though not uncommon, is scarcely routine. The hunter is supported by a sense of urgency. He is buoyed up by the spine-tingling suspense, the exhilaration of pitting his wits against another human. He acts in concert with others, seldom alone. And though the crisis brings risk of death, he has time to prepare himself for it.

It is not so much death as fear of failure that haunts the young policeman as he strolls down his placid beat. And perhaps less fear of failure than of the unknown, within and without. He is dealing in human emotion — elemental, unpredictable. It may erupt without warning as he turns a familiar corner. And the rookie wonders how he’ll react, how he will measure up.

He may be walking home for lunch like Constable Alex Gamman one fine May day in Montreal. As he walked by a branch of the Bank of Toronto the door burst open. A man with a gun in his hand came rushing out. Gamman seized

## THE LIVING LEGEND

him, they grappled, the robber fired three shots and left Gamman dying on the pavement. The killer, Thomas Rossler, was captured months later in Montana. He hadn't meant to kill the Mountie, he said before he was hanged. He had been emotionally upset, he said. "I was drinking too much. Whiskey and guns don't mix."

The Mountie never knows when some bit of ordinary life, some petty task that he has performed a hundred times, will twist suddenly from his grasp, charged with emotion, magnified in an instant into a nightmare and only his instincts will stand between him and ridicule, failure, or death.

It was, for example, a strictly routine call that came into the Eskasoni detachment in Nova Scotia one chilly March day. Two Indian brothers, John and Stephen Marshall, were drunkenly abusing some of the local citizenry. Constable Arthur Walsh sighed and drove out to the Indian reserve. As he pulled up at Stephen's house, the Indian came reeling down the road. The Mountie waited, opened the car door and told Stephen to get in.

The Indian said he wanted to get his hat and coat first. His mood seemed reasonable. The Mountie agreed. He followed Stephen into the house. John Marshall was slumped on a couch, drunk, a jug of home brew beside him.

Together, the brothers turned quarrelsome. Stephen seized Constable Walsh by the tunic. "No goddammed Mountie," he said, "is taking me off the reserve."

The constable talked him out of it.

"To hell with this," John said, "I'm going home." He put on his coat and went outside. The Mountie took his arm and led him toward the police car.

## THE CRUCIBLE

A stunning blow suddenly knocked him down. Stephen had crept up behind him. Now the brothers began to kick him into unconsciousness. Through a red fog the constable heard Stephen tell his brother to get an ax and finish him off. Dimly he saw John Marshall hand Stephen a double-bladed ax. He felt its cold steel on his Adam's apple as Stephen, straddling him, prepared to cut his throat. With a desperate effort he knocked the ax away, struggled upright, and staggered toward the police car. John Marshall grabbed him. The Mountie fought him off and managed to get inside the car. With Stephen battering the car door, Walsh got the engine started and zigzagged away. Reinforced by some local residents, he came back and subdued the Indians.

A Mountie's life has many emergencies. He seldom has opportunity or time to ask for instructions. Every day his responsibilities force him to act on his own. Before long he is confident of his ability to meet most situations.

There's a danger, of course, that he may have too much luck. If he never comes up against anything too big for him to handle he may begin to think himself superior. Pride may delude him. Confidence may become cockiness. His aggressiveness, unchecked, may lead him into arrogance and finally into brutality. But a small-detachment Mountie has three chastening influences: the law, the public and his force.

## 5

**T**HE LAW gives a Mounted Policeman almost unlimited responsibility, but it places some sharp restraints on his authority. A Mountie sees a man running down the street. The man may be a thief escaping. He may be running to keep a date with his wife. If the Mountie, by passing him up, lets a thief escape, he'll be reprimanded. But if he arrests him wrongly, *he* — not the force, not the Crown — is liable. Any damages for false arrest will come out of the Mountie's pocket.

The rookie must learn to add facts fast. Impressions are meaningless. He cannot bring a man before a magistrate and say, "I arrested this man because he was drunk." The magistrate will rebuke him for presenting opinion, not fact. The facts might be that the man had been uttering loud indecent language while walking unsteadily. The policeman has a duty to observe and present these facts, clearly, concisely, accurately and impartially. The man may be drunk or he may have been hit by a car; the policeman has no right to judge.

In truth, the policeman has little more power than any other citizen. According to the Criminal Code of Canada, "*Any person* may arrest without warrant any one who is found committing any of the offences mentioned . . ." And the list of offenses that follows is not a great deal shorter than those for which a policeman may make an arrest.

The Mountie, then, has authority as an ordinary citizen to



## THE CRUCIBLE

perform most of the duties for which he is paid as a policeman. He is, in fact, as Commissioner Leonard Nicholson points out, "a citizen acting on behalf of fellow citizens."

It is not an easy role. He has little more right than anyone else to use force. Specifically, the code states: "Everyone authorized by law to use force is criminally responsible for any excess . . ." The Mountie, as a policeman, is impeded by the same law that safeguards his privileges as a citizen: that everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

A noted Mountie, Assistant Commissioner Melville F. E. Anthony, who upon retirement became chief of police in Edmonton, illustrates the policeman's dilemma and his need to make quick decisions with an episode that happened in Winnipeg. A bank messenger was waylaid and robbed of several thousand dollars. The only lead was his statement that the robbers escaped in "a large black car." All border detachments were alerted. Shortly afterward, two policemen, cruising the southbound highway some four miles from the border, saw a large black car bearing down upon them at ninety miles an hour. They flagged it but it didn't slacken speed. They had a second or so to decide what to do. Should they use their submachine gun? Suppose it wasn't the robbers. How much force were they justified in using to halt the car? They decided not to open fire, gave chase instead, and were stopped a mile from the border by a handful of roofing nails flung from the car ahead.

In less than a minute the U.S. police were faced with the same decision. They, too, decided to follow the speeding car. Their gas tank was full and they figured the other car, sooner or later, would have to stop for gas. One hour later

## THE LIVING LEGEND

the fleeing car did stop. It braked abruptly to a halt, two men with machine guns jumped out, centered the U.S. police car in a crossfire, smashed the windshield, ripped open the radiator, and drilled holes in the clothing of the policemen, though miraculously no one was killed. Then the bank robbers forced the police to lie face down in the ditch while they drove off — and they were never caught.

“The policeman,” Anthony says, “must mentally weigh the facts and act instantly. If it comes to court and he has used too much force or made a mistake — and we all do — the defense counsel will have had three months to prepare his case and it’s easy to blast the policeman. The judge, if he was uncertain, has looked up the point in his law books. The policeman himself, on reflection, can often think of a better way that the situation could have been handled. But he can’t walk away and consider what he should do.”

The policeman cannot put off his decisions as most people can. He cannot dodge a situation too big for him to handle. The gall of frequent failure leads him to self-examination; he discovers his limitations. Success restores his confidence, frees him from self-concern. Between success and failure, like a guncrew straddling a target, he defines his abilities. He begins to know and accept himself, to know and accept the law. Its restraints become his principles. It serves him as a guide. It protects him from his best instincts as well as his worst.

In a typical case, an RCMP sergeant, patrolling the bush, came across a deerskin, still green. The sergeant traced the out-of-season slaying to an unemployed logger with a sick wife and four small children. He was sympathetic; neverthe-

## THE CRUCIBLE

less he brought in the logger and arraigned him before the justice of the peace, a local farmer. He presented the facts, then concluded, "Your Honor, this man can't afford a fine."

"I'll have to fine him," the j.p. said, "but I'll give him six weeks to pay. In the meantime, I'll ask the attorney general to let him off."

"The other way," this Mountie says, "is to close your eyes. But that's not right. Where do you stop? The first thing you know a drunk drives by and instead of recognizing that the man is a bloody menace to the community, you say, 'That's only old Joe, he's just had one drink too many.'"

## 6

**T**HE PUBLIC has subtle curbs to a Mountie's conduct. People are quick to take a new man's measure. If he thinks himself superior he finds them indifferent to his problems. If he struts down the streets as though he were on parade, a few bars of *Rose-Marie* whistled behind his back will take the edge off his pride. If they think he exceeds his authority they complain to his superior.

In a backwoods detachment a storekeeper called up the Mountie, a zealous, hard-working young constable, Lloyd Bingham, and charged that a farmer had stolen his car. Bingham investigated. The storekeeper, he found, had traded his car to the farmer for some potatoes. The farmer had picked

## THE LIVING LEGEND

up the car right away but the merchant had let a month pass before he asked the farmer to make delivery. The farmer, busy then, had asked him to wait another week. But during that week, potato prices had tumbled and the storekeeper felt that he had been cheated.

The Mountie told the storekeeper that he couldn't lay a charge. "There must be intent to steal," he said. "This is a civil matter."

The storekeeper drove eighty miles to town, saw a magistrate, and came back with a summons for Bingham to serve on the farmer. Bingham served it, studied the facts, and in court presented the case as well as he could for the prosecution. But when he had finished he said, "Your Worship, I don't think we have a case. It's really too bad to waste your time like this." And the charge was dismissed.

Three weeks later, while escorting a prisoner to jail, the Mountie stopped off at a neighboring detachment. "I've something to show you," the sergeant in charge said. An elderly friend of the storekeeper, a chronic trouble-maker with a Harvard education, had written a three-page complaint studded with long legal terms, accusing the farmer of making home brew and claiming that Constable Bingham, "a disgrace to the uniform," had refused to prosecute.

The sergeant knew the writer's reputation. Nevertheless, he investigated thoroughly. The charge, he reported, was groundless. Again the man wrote to the RCMP divisional headquarters, insisting that the sergeant had "whitewashed" Bingham. An officer from the subdivision investigated. A third complaint brought a third investigation by a disciplinarian patrol sergeant from headquarters. Each time Bing-

## THE CRUCIBLE

ham was cleared. But each time-wasting investigation added fuel to his burning indignation.

On his next trip to headquarters, Bingham requested to see the OC, the top-ranking Mountie in the province. The veteran listened benevolently to his story. "Well, my boy," he said, "always remember this. If there's one reason this force has a reputation, it's because we take action on complaints. Go back and forget it. There's never been a good Mounted Policeman that hasn't been investigated three or four times. Incidentally, we've found out you're doing a lot of work." The constable went on working, became Superintendent Bingham, adjutant of the force.

The public will bully the Mountie. In a characteristic case, a sergeant stopped a prominent businessman who was driving his car in a manner that left no doubt he had been drinking.

"Do you know who I am?" the man demanded.

"Yes, sir," the sergeant said. "Will you come with me, please?"

The man broke into a tirade of abuse. He had influential friends. He would speak to his M.P. He'd break the blank-blank Mountie.

The sergeant listened patiently until he was through. "If you've nothing more to say," he asked, "would you mind coming with me?"

"This is a common occurrence," says an RCMP officer. "You catch a man breaking the law. He's embarrassed, humiliated. He fights against it, and you're the person he takes his resentment out on. A policeman must understand this and not take it personally. You can't look the other way when

## THE LIVING LEGEND

you see this man again and think, "This man doesn't like me.' You have to take the objective view of everything."

The public will let the Mountie down. On an isolated lake north of the railroad in Saskatchewan, a fisheries officer caught a fisherman using nets so fine that the fish in the lake would soon have been depleted. The fisherman chased the officer off with a murderous-looking ice chisel and threatened a violent end to anyone else who tried to stop him. The officer told the nearest Mountie, who set out by dog team intending to pick up a posse enroute. The Mountie describes the experience in his report:

At each stop sincere sympathy was extended and many citizens regretted that urgent business prevented their rendering personal physical aid. The reputation of the accused for violence also grew by leaps and bounds as the patrol neared the objective.

When the writer actually set out on foot to cover the last few miles and effect the arrest, he was accompanied by some five "volunteers." However, as the accused was sighted across a bay carrying on his fishing operations, it turned out that all but one of them had actually volunteered to be near enough to see the arrest made. The remaining member of the "support" party stayed with me until we were within rifle range. He then felt that it was important to cover what he thought would be the most likely escape route, although it seemed to me that there were quite a few escape routes on a lake covered with three feet or more of ice.

The actual arrest was a great anticlimax. The accused willingly surrendered himself and showed a great desire to prove himself a most co-operative member of society.

## THE CRUCIBLE

Often the Mountie will put in many miles and long hours only to have the complainant refuse to go through with the process of law. One householder, for example, complained that his garden hose had been stolen. But when a Mountie discovered that a neighbor was the thief, the owner backed out of laying a charge. In another instance, a gypsy girl from a traveling fair led a farmer on, then picked his pockets of five hundred dollars. A Mountie located the girl and asked the farmer to lay a charge.

"No, I just want my money back," said the farmer.

"The only way you can get your money back is to lay a charge."

"No, no," the farmer said, "I couldn't do that. How do I know what that girl might say about me?"

The public will pass the young policeman through a cynical stage. It will try to bulldoze him, badger him. It will try to seduce him with popularity, gifts, friendship, flattery. The public is a woman with a persecution complex, a reformer who wants a movie banned, a farmer who asks for advice in a problem of civil law that would tax a Supreme Court judge, a lady out on the fourth concession who isn't feeling well and would like the Mountie to drop in a packet of pink pills on his way past.

But the Mountie cannot wash his hands of the public. He cannot solve the most trivial case unless people answer his questions. "That's common sense," says a sergeant who topped his class at police college, an advanced RCMP training course for experienced men. "'Well, George,' you say, 'what do you know about this case?' But if George doesn't like your looks you don't get anywhere. You've got to learn

## THE LIVING LEGEND

to size up people. You've got to get to know them. Once you know them you start to appreciate them and that's one of the things that makes the job worthwhile."

The young Mountie looking for information learns that a farmer in the slack season will not respond to a brisk hurry-up approach, but at harvest time will resent wasting time on chitchat. Writes Corporal John Mitchell in the *RCMP Quarterly*, "Every policeman has something to sell — himself. Never let a shadow of irritation show in your face or speech because your lunch has been interrupted for the third time — even though it was just to sell another muskrat permit." Once an unwanted caller dropped a casual remark to Mitchell that led to a thousand-dollar seizure of illegal furs and cleared up a long-standing thorn in the side of the game warden.

## 7

**T**HE PUBLIC and the law, though salutary disciplines, are far from infallible. A policeman can shirk his duty and the public will think he's a "good guy." He can get around the law — suppress facts, fake evidence, ignore a suspect's rights. But he can seldom fool the men he works with for long. The attitude of the force is the first and foremost influence in almost every Mounted Policeman's career.

In a year or so most Mounties think they're as hot as Perry Mason, a conceit which a veteran NCO knows how to deflate before it leads the young man into arrogance. A mur-



## THE CRUCIBLE

der occurs which the young constable thinks only he can solve. "Here, my lad," says the NCO, "you can handle this common assault. Constable Brown here will take charge of the murder."

The rules and attitudes of the force, based on law and tradition, act as a brake on a Mountie's aggressiveness. He knows that he cannot bring in a suspect wounded or beaten up and blandly explain that the man resisted arrest. The force would sooner see a minor criminal get away than run the risk of killing him with a shot. The Mountie is taught that his gun is a dangerous weapon, not a convenient tool for subduing or capturing criminals. The RCMP brass believe that any police policy of "playing it safe" by firing first when the criminal is armed leads only to a similar policy among criminals. "I really believe," Commissioner Nicholson says, "that we'd have lost far more men in our history if we'd shot it out at any provocation. And we might be in trouble now if we had." The figures seem to bear him out. Of an average one hundred and seventy thousand investigations a year — from killing a deer out of season to breaking a counterfeit ring — gunfire is exchanged in two or three.

This attitude has given birth to the flattering but foolish fiction that a Mountie must let the criminal fire first. Standing orders state that a gun may be used against an armed man, to defend a building, or when in grave danger. But, as Assistant Commissioner C. W. "Slim" Harvison, a distinguished policeman, points out, "You just can't pinpoint when you should use a gun. We usually say, 'When you're in fear for your life.' But you can't say you mustn't shoot a man if he's getting away. What if he's a convicted murderer?"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

And it's even more wrong to say you must shoot. Most offenses don't warrant risking a man's life. You have to judge each case separately."

The use of the third degree — torture or threats to extract a confession — is still in clandestine favor with many police forces and is harder to curb because it takes place in secret. The RCMP, for this reason, is uncompromisingly strict. A Mountie, only a couple of years out of training, caught a man with a cache of liquor. He took the man, an ex-convict, to his office for questioning. The man opposed every question with insolence. The constable lost his temper, slapped him twice on the face with his glove. The ex-convict filed a complaint and the constable was dismissed. He had an excellent record, an aptitude for police work, every prospect of making a fine career in the force. Quite possibly, some brutality slips by undetected. But such consequences do not encourage it.

The force lays down a clear-cut procedure for questioning. "You don't bluster," Assistant Commissioner Harvison says. "You don't raise your voice. You don't raise the prisoner's hopes. You don't say, 'You'll feel better if you tell,' or 'It'll be smart to tell what you know.' You give the prisoner this warning: 'You need not say anything. You have nothing to hope from any promise or favor and nothing to fear from any threat, whether or not you say anything. Anything you *do* say may be used as evidence at your trial.' You say, 'Do you understand this?' If not, you explain it. If English isn't the prisoner's language you get an interpreter. You lean over backward to be impartial. And after all this you still have a tough job to get the statement into court."

## THE CRUCIBLE

Canadian courts refuse consistently to admit evidence suspected of having been obtained by third-degree methods. And defense lawyers try to rouse sympathy for their clients and doubt of their guilt by seizing any pretext to accuse the police of brutality. Indeed, it is often the only defense. This is one practical reason why Commissioner Nicholson says, "A forced confession is no more than a confession of poor police work. We're more anxious to avoid brutality than the people watching us to see we don't do it [i.e., the press]."

The most insidious police oppressions are, of course, mental. In Vancouver, a youthful Mountie arrested a citizen for drunken driving, a charge that carries a mandatory jail sentence. Since the man was a first offender, a respectable citizen, the attorney general's office suggested the charge be changed to "driving while faculties are impaired." The young Mountie would not agree to the change. His inspector argued with him. The constable stubbornly stood fast. The inspector, though embarrassed, admired this young man, who he thought was standing firm and alone on a matter of principle. In a further conversation, however, the constable revealed a deep-rooted aversion to alcohol. What the inspector took for principle had been prejudice. The constable was transferred and warned that another such incident would result in his being discharged.

Even the appearance of oppression is avoided. The commissioner prior to Nicholson was Stuart Taylor Wood, son of an RCMP assistant commissioner and great-grandson of U.S. President Zachary Taylor. When a U.S. correspondent asked him why he didn't use bloodhounds instead of German shepherds for tracking, Wood admitted that blood-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

hounds might be more efficient, "but in the eyes of the world they are symbols of oppression. They conjure up visions of masters tracking down slaves. We have no masters or slaves in Canada, and I want no symbols of oppression in Canada's Mounted Police."

The Mountie must come to terms with the rules. He learns to bend his will to the will of his officers, not in blind agreement but in acceptance of authority. In return he gains the knowledge that he does not stand alone and this knowledge is a main source of strength. If a constable is right he knows the force will back him up.

A classic case occurred a few years ago. A Mountie patrolling the wooded outskirts of a small town heard a shot from the direction of the river. He hurried down and saw a man in a motorboat holding a rifle, about to retrieve the wild duck he had killed. The constable knew at once that his own position was delicate. The hunter was one of the district's leading citizens.

"You know you're not supposed to shoot ducks out of season, don't you, sir?" he asked.

The hunter said he hadn't known of any closed season on this kind of duck. He apologized at some length.

The constable hesitated. He didn't want to offend such a prominent man but his duty was clear cut. "I'm sorry, sir," he said, "I'll have to prefer charges against you."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," the hunter suggested. "I'll drop a line to the chief game warden and explain what I've done. How's that?"

The Mountie was glad to agree. Back in his office he typed out a full report. His commanding officer notified the chief

## THE CRUCIBLE

game warden that he could expect a letter from the hunter. Weeks went by. The letter did not arrive.

The constable and the hunter had made a gentleman's agreement. The hunter had broken it. The subdivision OC had a summons issued. The hunter was charged with shooting a duck out of season.

The prominent citizen was outraged. "Intolerable and preposterous!" he stormed. The RCMP had no evidence, only a constable's word against his. His attorney fought the case and won an acquittal.

Now the Mounties were outraged. They appealed the case and won. The hunter was ordered to pay a \$10 fine. With righteous indignation he refused. He would carry the case right through to the Supreme Court, he declared.

The RCMP now began to investigate the man to find out what sort of hunter he was. Unexpectedly, the hunter decided not to appeal. The RCMP immediately sent a Mountie to his home to collect the \$10 fine. The big house was dark. The Mountie peered in a window. The furniture was gone. The hunter and his family, the Mountie learned, had left town the night before.

Now the Mounties began a thorough investigation. They found that the hunter's house was heavily mortgaged; payments were overdue. He had lost a great deal of money in a factory that went bankrupt. They located a widow who told of having given this man \$30,000 to invest for her. She had written him about it, she said, but had not received an answer.

The RCMP tried to trace the hunter but he had left the country. It was not until many months later in a distant

## THE LIVING LEGEND

province that they picked him up and brought him back for trial on a charge of fraud. Once again he was acquitted. But, at the end of the trial, a Mountie served him a court order. It stated that he owed the government \$10. This time, the prominent citizen paid.

He paid too late. The Mounties had found fresh evidence: another woman who claimed that she had been swindled by this man. She said she had given him \$80,000. Again he was arrested, and now the case was airtight. The man who had thought himself too big to be fined for shooting a duck was sentenced to five years for fraud.

No wise man pulls weight on a Mountie. Every constable is conscious of the tradition he upholds. He may gripe about the pay, the work, the promotion he didn't get, but he seldom lets an outsider hear him. The unwritten law for all ranks is "Don't let the force down."

At the ceremonial opening of the Alaska Highway, a column of Mounties stood on parade. It was twenty degrees below zero and General O'Connor, head of the U.S. Army engineers, told the column they could leave their parkas on. "Wouldn't think of it, sir," the RCMP officer in charge said, and the Mounties stood unflinchingly at attention throughout the ceremony, clad only in scarlet serge. A U.S. politician who had noticed the byplay remarked: "I thought only the U.S. Marines felt that way about their uniform."

## 8

**A** STENOGRAPHER at RCMP headquarters once compared her employers to nuns. The simile is rather surprising but apt. The Mountie has the nun's air of detachment, a somewhat austere impersonal anonymity.

The RCMP, like the Catholic Church, has reconciled two apparent contradictions: a hierarchy and individuality, a rigid discipline and personal initiative. The emphasis on discipline is a military heritage. The encouragement of initiative stems from the need for flexibility, from the scope of their work, from the range of their duties, from all the responsibilities of a small-detachment Mountie in a land not far removed in time and space from the frontier.

Responsibility draws forth his strength and weakness, draws him onward into maturity. If he has what it takes he moves upward through the hierarchy — to corporal, sergeant, staff sergeant; then, if he is lucky, the big jump to commissioned rank, to the top three per cent — subinspector, inspector, superintendent, assistant commissioner, deputy commissioner, commissioner. And, with each step, as responsibilities mount, discipline tightens.

The Mountie must continually yield to discipline, to the rules and authority of his force, to the public, and to law, the abstract reason that governs free men. There is no end to discipline, for discipline is reality and no man can resist the nature of things. He can only resent or accept.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

In the act of acceptance, as in the act of faith, the Mountie becomes part of that which he accepts. He grows a little impersonal, a little detached, for his pride and his loyalty are in part given outside himself. Through service he strengthens the feeling that he has found his place. His consciousness enlarges. His sense of duty deepens. He sees what should be done and does it; he does not need to be told. The obedient cog in the big machine has become a thinking man, an individual. Compulsion is dissolved in self-control.

And this is the aim of RCMP discipline — to give a man the stability he needs to act on his own, to free him from the illusions, the anxieties, the aggressions, all the lonely tensions of pride; to build character on the bedrock of reality.

An excellent example occurred one morning at Green Lake, Saskatchewan. The young constable on detachment, Clifford Rodriguez, was awakened just before dawn by a telephone call from a woman resident. She was pregnant and asked to be rushed to the nearest hospital, thirty-five miles away in Meadow Lake.

Apprehensively, the Mountie suggested a midwife; his training course had not covered this situation. "No," the lady insisted, "the baby's premature. I'm afraid of complications."

It was still much too early to rouse anyone else to drive her. The Mountie dutifully dressed, got in his car and picked up the woman. Sixteen miles out of Meadow Lake she told him the baby was coming. He pulled off the road, examined her and found that she was right.

She had also been right about complications. It developed into a breech birth, which the young man had to cope with



## THE CRUCIBLE

from his knowledge of first aid and the sole aid of a razor blade. When the situation was under control he finished the trip to the hospital and handed over mother and child, both completely normal, except that the baby's umbilical cord was tied with the constable's shoelace.

For this impressive feat Commissioner Nicholson himself commended Constable Rodriguez. But when the incident was told in the *RCMP Quarterly*, the constable was not mentioned by name. The somewhat untypical story illustrates the "typical" Mountie: steady, resourceful and slightly anonymous.



*Book III*

# **The Secret War**

*We should always, I suggest, be conscious of the basic principles which distinguish us from the police of a dictatorship.*

**RCMP Commissioner L. H. Nicholson, speaking to the 1953 conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, at Detroit.**

## THE LIVING LEGEND

was urging the defeat of the revolutionary Red army and the Allies had expeditionary forces in Russia. Among the Canadian force was a volunteer cavalry unit of Royal Northwest Mounted Police.

The pressure of the labor movement in all Allied countries overrode Churchill that same year and Canada's force was sent home. The RNWMP had done no more than make a few patrols out of Vladivostok. They were gratified, nevertheless, to see a crowd on the Vancouver wharf carrying banners that said: WELCOME HOME RETURNING HEROES.

As they stepped down the gangplank a man tossed a brick, the signal for a barrage of stones. The crowd, the Mounties learned later, were longshoremen. They had read in the newspapers that the RNWMP had been sent home to suppress strikes in western Canada. The welcome signs, it turned out, were for the Seaforth Highlanders, who had just come back from France.

The episode was a portent of things to come. Labor unions in the West were hotbeds of discontent. A depression was shaping up, magnifying legitimate grievances. Soldiers were coming home to swell the ranks of the unemployed. The Russian Revolution, now a success, was held up as a shining example by radicals everywhere. In every labor hall from Vancouver to Winnipeg, left-wingers flung fiery words of revolution into an inflammatory situation.

At a Calgary convention early in 1919, rebels from the Trades and Labor Council launched the One Big Union. Their intention was to take over the craft unions (carpenters', machinists', and so forth) and to raise upon their defunct bodies one single colossus. Then, by means of a gen-

## THE SECRET WAR

eral strike, they could gain control of the country and set up a "Proletarian Dictatorship" patterned after Russia.

The Royal Northwest Mounted Police was a federal force, responsible for the peace of the prairies and the Northwest. (Next year, as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, they would serve all Canada.) To find out if the One Big Union plotted violence they planted undercover men in almost every local.

Corporal (later Assistant Commissioner) Frank Zaneth was a typist for a leader of the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg. An organizer from the Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary U.S. union, visited strike headquarters to check on progress. "What's wrong with your Canadian intelligence?" he asked. "Don't they ever bother you?"

"No," said Zaneth's boss, "they're half asleep."

The great strike effort in Winnipeg failed in June 1919, and Zaneth's testimony helped convict seven leaders of sedition. An OBU leader then went to Moscow to try to get support from the newly formed Communist International. His failure was to doom the OBU to insignificance and its place on labor's far-left flank was seized by a group with more taste and talent for conspiracy.

In 1921, in a barn near Guelph, Ontario, a meeting of left-wing socialists, including OBU leaders, was arranged by a Latvian using the name of Charles Scott. Scott was one of the three men who composed the Pan American Bureau, voice of the Communist International in North America. That night, with three thousand dollars he had brought for the purpose, he founded the Canadian Communist Party.

It was the great misfortune of the party that two years

## THE LIVING LEGEND

earlier John Leopold had joined the Mounted Police. Leopold was an Austrian emigrant, a homesteader from Peace River who spoke four languages. No Mountie ever looked less the romantic figure of fiction than this swarthy hook-nosed man with the melancholy brown eyes. He was so short he would not have been accepted in the force if he had not been volunteering for Siberian service with the RNWMP cavalry unit. Just before he was to sail, his inspector called him in and told him he had been picked — because of his background — to carry out an undercover mission. He was to penetrate the OBU in Regina.

Constable Leopold vanished from the police barracks. He reappeared as Jack Esselwein, a house painter, a man with a little income from a Peace River farm, an occasional lucky dabbler in grain futures. He joined the Painters' Union. He seemed an ardent, eloquent, willing socialist. Soon he was prominent in the OBU.

Shortly after the Communist party was formed, Jack Esselwein, in Regina, received a letter.

Dear Comrade:

The urgent need in Canada for a militant Worker's party which would unite the working masses . . . so as to lead towards the overthrow of the capitalist system, and the establishment of the workers republic has long been apparent . . .

You, Comrade, as an active worker in the class struggle, have, we are certain, felt this need. You have wished that such a party be established . . . so that you could throw all your energies into the work. Now, such a party is actually here in Canada. . . .

## THE SECRET WAR

The letter was signed M. (Mike) Popovich on behalf of the Provisional Organization Committee. It went on to say that "Comrade Jack Macdonald, one of the best speakers in the east" would be coming West to organize the party. Would Esselwein hire a hall, arrange and advertise the meetings?

It was a priceless opportunity. The Mountie became the party's first secretary in Regina. He chaired meetings, recruited members, sold pamphlets. He was campaign manager for a Regina alderman who became the first Communist elected to office in North America. For a time — the worst time — Leopold acted as bodyguard for the Moscow agent, Charles Scott. They shared the same bed, the policeman constantly fearful of talking in his sleep.

Soon he reported to his RCMP superiors that the party was really two groups, A and Z. A group was the Workers' Party. It was the legal front; it did the recruiting. Z group contained the leaders. It did the plotting, mainly plans to infiltrate unions and widen their membership.

Leopold was a Z. The inner circle held no secrets from him. He corresponded with national secretary Jack Macdonald and drank with him or Tim Buck, another Communist bigwig, whenever they came to town. Twice a week, through an undercover contact, he would send the RCMP his notes, party pamphlets and copies of personal correspondence. Jack Esselwein became a well-known radical, a marked man with the western police. Only four or five RCMP officers — the direct chain of command from Leopold's Regina inspector to the commissioner in Ottawa — knew Esselwein's real identity. His non-Communist friends

## THE LIVING LEGEND

forsook him. His bewildered fiancée, a Saskatchewan school-teacher, tried to persuade him to quit Communism. Leopold could not tell her who he was and eventually she married another man. (Leopold never married.)

With party members and leaders he was popular. He gave his money generously. Once a month a messenger brought him his Mounted Police pay in cash. If party funds were tight he would pay his own way to eastern conventions. At dawn, hours after the other delegates had gone to bed, Leopold would sit up scribbling his notes. In Ottawa, a great mass of material was collecting in the secret files marked "Agent 30."

For eight years Leopold led this amazing double life. In 1924 the Workers' Party boldly merged with Z group as the Communist Party of Canada. In the spring of 1926 Leopold went to Winnipeg, then moved on to Toronto. He held no official position but he was a trusted confidant of all party leaders. Once he was arrested for taking part in a demonstration in front of the U.S. Embassy.

His exposure came by chance and well offstage. In the autumn of 1927 a Communist organizer, Malcolm Bruce, formerly of Regina, was working in California. At a party one night he got into a conversation on spies with another ex-Regina resident. This man mentioned a Mountie who vanished one day from barracks and later turned up as Jack Esselwein.

"Where did you hear that story?" Bruce exclaimed incredulously. "Why, Jack Esselwein's one of my best friends. He painted my house. He's been in the party longer than I have."



## THE SECRET WAR

The story had come from an ex-Mountie now living in California, a suitor of the informant's daughter. The ex-Mountie confirmed it when Bruce talked to him. Badly upset, Bruce wrote to party leader Jack Macdonald in Toronto. As Macdonald later recalled the letter, Bruce stated the facts, then added: "Jack has been like a brother to me. I have never had the least cause to suspect his sincerity. But an investigation should be made either to clear Esselwein of suspicion or to clear the party of Esselwein."

Macdonald, a shrewd black-browed Scot, also doubted the story. But Leopold, from then on, was under observation. For six months nothing confirmed their suspicions. Leopold continued to attend meetings, to drop into headquarters and help wrap bundles of the Communist weekly, *The Worker*.

Then came his second piece of bad luck. An immigrant from Austria — we will call him Karl, though that is not his name — visited Leopold in Toronto. Karl was neither a Communist nor an old friend, merely a mechanic who had worked on Leopold's car for a brief time in Regina. He was in Toronto to try to sell an invention; he had no money, and he gave Leopold a hard-luck story. Leopold offered to let him share his apartment for a few days.

Only Karl and Leopold know what happened. It is possible that Karl had suspected Leopold in Regina. It is certain he searched Leopold's apartment during his stay, which stretched into weeks. In any case, in May 1928, Leopold asked him to leave. Karl countered with a veiled threat of blackmail and Leopold departed for a union convention with the matter still unsettled.

Macdonald and several comrades had gone to the station

## THE LIVING LEGEND

to see him off. They noticed that he was troubled and preoccupied. Karl ran up as they came out of the station. "Has Jack left?" he asked excitedly.

"He's gone," Macdonald said. "What's wrong? You both seem upset."

Karl evaded the question. Next day he approached Macdonald and nervously asked to see him alone.

They talked in Leopold's apartment. Karl said he had a secret worth thousands of dollars to Russia. No, it was not an invention, it was information. He was very mysterious.

Finally Macdonald said, bluffing: "You can't sell me anything. I already know. Jack Esselwein is a government agent."

Karl's expression showed that he had guessed right. "I've known for a long time," said Macdonald, "but we can't get anything on him."

"Then I help you," Karl said. He opened Leopold's trunk and showed Macdonald several papers: reports on the Communist party, the deed of a Peace River farm in the name of John Leopold, a bank draft receipt for 3000 crowns sent to Mrs. M. Leopold, his mother, in Europe, and a letter of introduction from a prominent Regina citizen to R. B. Bennett, Conservative leader in Ottawa, saying that "Jack Esselwein" was doing work of which any patriot should be proud.

Macdonald called a meeting of the party's political bureau. A few days later, by letter, Leopold was expelled. As Communists wrapped the following week's *Worker* they joked that Jack should be there to wrap the issue carrying his picture. Communist papers all over North America warned workers to watch for this "government stoolpigeon," to let

## THE SECRET WAR

his picture "sink deeply into your minds . . . and if you ever run into this bird . . . treat him accordingly."

Leopold's revelations made Communist aims and methods clear from the outset to both the Canadian and U. S. governments. His personal knowledge of party leaders gave the RCMP a tactical advantage in the long cold war that was entering a critical phase. Whenever it was necessary to arrest or identify Communists, his mass of evidence made it possible.

But this came later. In 1928 Leopard received many threatening letters and Commissioner Cortlandt Starnes thought it wise to send him north to Fort Simpson. The following year Jack Macdonald, in turn, was expelled from the party — for disagreeing with Moscow-made policy. Tim Buck, who had trained in Moscow, took his place. Depression struck, and the Communists' great chance came. They organized strikes, kindling violence where they could, creating bitterness, a proper state of mind for revolution.

The bloody riot they sparked at Stratford, Ontario, in July 1931 snapped the patience of Ontario's Attorney General William Price. On August 11 he ordered a raid on Tim Buck's house and headquarters. Nine leaders were charged with seditious conspiracy and Leopold was recalled from the north.

In Leopold's strange career there is no more dramatic moment than his entrance into the courtroom in Toronto. The silence was broken only by the tinkling of his spurs as he took his place as the Crown's chief witness. In the red serge dress uniform of an RCMP sergeant he sat for three days facing the men who had been his closest friends.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

The defense tried to show that the grievances which led to strikes arose from the capitalist system, that the Communists did not create them. "We [only] seek to organize the workers to resist grievances," Tim Buck testified. Violence, if it came, would come from capitalist resistance.

Leopold identified documents linking the party in Canada to Moscow's International. He identified letters sent by the International that clearly defined its aims:

This conquest does not mean peacefully capturing the ready-made bourgeois state machinery by means of a parliamentary majority . . . [it means] the violent overthrow of bourgeois power, the destruction of the Capitalist State apparatus, bourgeois armies, police, and judiciary, parliaments, etc.

Leopold also threw light on Communist methods. One party pamphlet plainly spelled out the use of codes, ciphers, secret inks, couriers ("the party must make use of the connections which they have with post and telegraph and railway servants") and defense corps trained in street fighting. "Our comrades," the pamphlet's author complained, "don't know how to throw stones. It is not enough to pick up a stone and throw it, it is important that the stone should hit its target, and not merely hit its target but that some effect should be seen from the blow." Communists, the pamphlet suggested, should practice stone throwing after work.

The jury, mostly working men, took only two hours to find all eight Communists guilty of what the judge called "a species of treason." They went to Portsmouth Penitentiary for two to five years. But the party was never legally

## THE SECRET WAR

outlawed. The very next month, August 1931, four organizers from the Workers' Unity League, all card-holding Communists, were stirring up trouble among striking miners in the open-pit coal mines at Estevan, Saskatchewan.

The Estevan town council had banned any strike demonstrations. An undercover agent tipped off the RCMP that the strikers planned to parade in defiance of the edict. A parade would give the Communists a chance to rouse mob action. The Regina division dispatched one squad of thirty men to the mines and one of twelve to the town some miles away.

The Communists outgeneraled them. The larger squad arrived at the mines as the strikers were entering town in a mile-long motorcade of cars and trucks. The strikers were in holiday mood, waving at the women who came to the doors to watch them pass. But, for a peaceful "parade," they were strangely equipped: ax handles, crowbars, bricks, stones, flails of electric cable strung with barbed wire and weighted with lead babbitts.

The twelve Mounties and two town police blocked the main street in a thin line. The leading truck, a red flag waving from it, darted down a side street to come in from behind. A guffaw went up from the strikers and their families, who had dismounted.

Suddenly a second truck speeded up and crashed the police line. Men jumped out and came running back, led by an organizer, Martin Day. "Come on, boys!" Day shouted. "Into them!"

Estevan's police chief, Alex McCutcheon, stood his ground. "Get out of town before you start trouble," he said.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Day hit him with a piece of wood. A Mountie grabbed Day. The fight was on.

The jeering mob of some five hundred strikers forced the fourteen policemen back along the wide flat main street. Occasionally the crowd would press in and surround one policeman till the others, flailing out with their batons, rescued him. With their guns still holstered the Mounties fell back to the town hall.

Here they formed a semicircle, trying with their batons to hold the mob at bay. Slowly they were forced back against the town hall wall. One Mountie's arm was shattered by a blow from a flail. A flying brick fractured another's skull. As he fell the strikers pulled him out of the line and began to kick him. The nearest Mounties dragged him back. There were only eight Mounties still standing, tunics in tatters. Flying missiles filled the air and the mob was closing in.

Staff Sergeant Walter Mortimer, his left arm dangling uselessly from a blow by a giant iron washer, looked down his line of bleeding men and told them to draw their guns. "Go back!" he yelled at the mob. "Don't be fools." A woman laughed hysterically. "Shoot me!" she cried, throwing up her hands. A striker pulled a revolver from his pocket and fired at the Mounties.

"Fire over their heads!" Mortimer shouted. Ten shots, all high, were fired. The strikers fell back at once. No one was hit.

In the meantime the Estevan fire truck had pulled up. Firemen began unreeling their hose to turn it on the crowd. A group of strikers rushed the truck; one jumped on the

## THE SECRET WAR

driver's seat. A revolver cracked and he toppled over dead. Several more shots were fired. The provincial enquiry that followed did not determine who had fired them.

When the second RCMP squad arrived it was over. At the sight of the .303 rifles the mob that remained melted away. The fighting had lasted forty-five minutes. Twelve people were in hospital, including two bystanders — a music teacher and a visitor from England — both wounded by stray bullets. The music teacher swore a striker had shot him. Two miners were dead and another was to die later in hospital. The responsibility for their deaths could not be fixed.

An editorial in the *St. Catherines Standard* declared: "The strikers gained nothing by their attempted parade except two funerals — not a very fruitful day's work for the agitators." The editorial was only half right. The strikers had gained nothing but the Communists had three martyrs. Every year thereafter they commemorated the "murders" by parading from the mines to Estevan. They made skillful use of the tragedy in their long-term campaign to undermine public confidence in the Mounties. As far west as Vancouver they organized the workers and unemployed in protest meetings against "the brutal and unwarranted attack by Royal Mounted Police on a peaceful miners' motor car parade."

For the next few years the most fertile field for Communist activity was the relief camps set up by Prime Minister R. B. Bennett. One of the sharpest skirmishes took place in the Saskatoon camp, a huge converted grandstand outside the city. During April 1933 there was sporadic trou-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

ble. Camp officials were terrorized. Downtown store windows were smashed. Two city policemen were beaten up. Near the end of the month the Saskatchewan government called in the Mounties.

The RCMP had been expecting the call; they had undercover men in the camp keeping tabs on their old adversaries, the Red agitators. For several weeks a troop of thirty-two men had been drilling their mounts in combat tactics on the prairies.

The Mounties stood guard in shifts in front of the main camp building, where the government stores were kept. Every day an agitator would gather a crowd round the Mountie. "Who's getting rich on your sweat?" he would yell. "Who's getting rich while your families can't get enough to eat? Prime Minister Bennett — Iron Heel Bennett! And who's protecting Bennett and his crowd?" The agitator would lean forward until his face and the Mountie's were no more than six inches apart. "This yellow-striped bastard!"

The Mountie would turn away stiffly as if he hadn't heard. But afterward one constable said, "I had to steel myself. We were under strict orders to take it. But I tell you, it makes your guts turn over."

On the seventh of May, Inspector Lorne Sampson planned to move fifty men, including the agitators, from the overcrowded Saskatoon camp to a camp near Regina. His undercover men warned him the move would be resisted; the Communists had men collecting stones, bricks and broken cement. Sampson and G. M. Donald, Saskatoon police chief, decided to use surprise; they would pick up the



## THE SECRET WAR

fifty men at noon next day in the dining hall. In case of trouble, Mounties on horseback would cover the men on foot.

In the stables that morning Sampson inspected his men. "Remove steel helmets," he said tersely. "Replace with Stetsons. I don't wish to leave any impression of militarism with the public." He inspected their sidearms. "Now take the ammunition out of your guns and put it in your left breast pocket. If your life's in danger use your gun — if you can load it in time."

The troop rode through the camp's main gate to the end of the camp grounds, then wheeled. They could see a crowd in front of the dining hall. Policemen came out with the men they were trying to move. Suddenly they were swallowed up by the crowd.

Inspector Sampson raised his hand and his troop galloped down the field. A hail of missiles met them. Sampson's horse was struck on the head. Half blind with blood, the horse reared up, throwing Sampson backwards. One foot caught in a stirrup. The horse bolted. Sampson's body went bumping along behind. Two of his troop raced after him but before they could catch the horse, Sampson's head hit a telephone pole. He died on the way to the hospital.

The Mounties on horseback scattered the crowd but the fighting continued, guerrilla-style, all over the buildings and grounds until 11:30 that night. Though dozens of men were injured the Mounties had suffered the only fatality.

All through 1934 the Communists spread leaflets through the relief camps. By next spring RCMP undercover agents were reporting what Defense Minister Grote

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Stirling publicly called "a widespread and well-organized plot [to] . . . attempt destruction of camps throughout Canada."

Two months later nine hundred men — including RCMP secret agents — marched out of a camp in British Columbia. They briefly occupied the Vancouver post office, then headed east for Ottawa by commandeering freight trains. They stopped at Kamloops, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Swift Current and Moose Jaw. Other relief camps emptied to join them. The railways were afraid to resist and most citizens were sympathetic.

At Regina's exhibition grounds, meals and shelter awaited the marchers. The Saskatchewan government wanted to pass them through the province quickly. Nor did the federal government wish to antagonize them. But the RCMP commissioner, Major General James MacBrien, former chief of Canada's general staff, warned his minister that the Communists were raising an army of camp-workers, unemployed, and small-time criminals to reinforce the marchers at Winnipeg. The same pattern was planned for eastern cities. This, MacBrien stated, was the prelude to revolution.

Two cabinet ministers came to Regina to reason with Arthur "Slim" Evans, the tall, gaunt, dour but persuasive ex-miner who led the march. Evans would not agree to billet his men in temporary camps till a government commission examined relief camp conditions. He and seven other leaders were taken by Pullman to Ottawa to discuss terms with Prime Minister Bennett.

The last thing Evans wanted was a peaceful settlement.

## THE SECRET WAR

Repeatedly he called Bennett a liar. The millionaire Prime Minister, losing his temper, reminded Evans that he was a "jailbird," convicted of embezzling union funds at Drumheller. Retorted Evans: "You aren't fit to be Prime Minister of a Hottentot village." In a foregone conclusion Bennett ordered Commissioner MacBrien to stop the march at Regina.

Evans, back in Regina, swore he was going on to Ottawa in spite of all "Bennett's bloody Cossacks" (the Mounties). His force had now swelled to two thousand men, divided into divisions of about five hundred each. The divisions were broken into companies of twenty-five, each with a leader. They marched in fours like an army. The Communists — officials of a front group called the Relief Camp Workers' Union — had complete control.

Evan's next move was to order a mass Dominion Day meeting in Regina's Market Square. Undercover reports to the RCMP told of piles of stones being cached in alleys. Elevator operators were taking bricks to the roofs of buildings bordering the square. The camp workers were arming themselves with clubs, knives and flails, a few guns.

Saskatchewan's top-ranking Mountie, Assistant Commissioner S. T. Wood, asked the camp leaders to call off the meeting. Evans was adamant. Wood and the city police decided to seize all the leaders on the day before the meeting. But Evans and his lieutenants, wise strategists of intrigue, had disappeared from their usual haunts and remained hidden till the meeting.

Wood, hastily switching plans, sent plainclothes Mounties and city detectives to mingle with the crowd in the square.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Nearly a thousand people clustered around a raised platform on which stood Evans and several other leaders. The evening was warm and the sun had not yet gone down. A speaker began to talk. At 8:17 a police whistle shrilled. Eighteen detectives pushed toward the men on the platform. Vans drove up and unloaded seventy-five Mounties in uniform. They walked toward the crowd to protect the detectives.

Immediately, from the roofs and windows above, from all sides, iron, cement, bricks and stones rained upon the police. Lengths of pipe appeared from under coats. A truck drove up, unloaded more missiles and moved off. From the direction of the railway tracks another body of rioters moved in and attacked with clubs.

The uniformed men cleared a path through the crowd and the plainclothes squad shoved their prisoners into the vans. Driving to the RCMP's downtown station, five blocks away, they passed three troops of RCMP horsemen moving up. A plainclothes man leaned out of a van and shouted, "Hurry up!"

Little pockets of rioting were breaking out along a mile of streets. The rioters overturned cars, used them for barricades; some of the Mounted Police had to jump their horses over them. Women with razor blades on long sticks slashed at the horses. The riders' boots were cut to ribbons. One animal's eye hung from its socket. The Mounties threw gas bombs; some new recruits threw theirs too soon and rioters scooped them up and threw them back.

The first mounted troop to reach the square turned the tide of battle. More leaders were arrested and driven away.

## THE SECRET WAR

From a roof a radio commentator, describing the scene below, was bringing thousands of curious citizens into the streets and now the strikers could heave their bricks and duck back into the crowd. Two Mounted Policemen were shot.

A little after nine o'clock a mob, wielding fence posts, assaulted a group of city policemen in Market Square. Charles Millar, a detective with a silver plate in his head, was clubbed and died instantly. The other city policemen fired at the mob and wounded several.

By 11:30 the streets had been cleared. The rioters had been herded back to the exhibition grounds. Eighty men were in custody. Later, twenty-four were tried on charges that ranged from rioting to wounding, and nine were convicted.

In the *Ukrainian Labor News* the following week the headlines read: POLICE IN REGINA HAVE STAGED A BLOODY BATTLE. "Bennett's bloody butchers!" cried another Communist paper. In all Red accounts, the RCMP fired first.

An inflamed public opinion forced the provincial government to set up a royal commission. After hearing 359 witnesses it placed the blame squarely on the Communists. It found that only one Mountie, a sergeant, had fired a shot — over the heads of a mob that had stormed the RCMP station in a futile attempt to release the prisoners. The others had not even carried ammunition — although Wood had had reports that some rioters were armed. But the muted report of a royal commission long after the event could scarcely offset the propaganda victory scored by the Reds.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

That year, 1935, after long and violent opposition to all other left-wing groups, the Communist party made common cause with all liberals against Fascism. This was Moscow's so-called "united front." It gave the Reds a lasting influence in many noncommunist groups and, in 1940, when Canada outlawed the party, it was easy to convince many loyal liberals that the RCMP were Red baiters. Later, the Communists claimed that the RCMP had been "hounding" them and paying little attention to fascists.

This was true, in a sense. The Mounties had undercover agents in every subversive party but the Reds were by far the more efficient enemy. On the first day of World War II RCMP agents broke the German-financed Canadian fascist group *Deutsche Arbeits Front*, interning four hundred Nazis. The German fifth column was so completely demoralized that not one case of sabotage was traced to a Nazi agent. But the Communists, from the day Russia and Germany signed their pact, constantly and effectively sabotaged the war effort mentally with such published statements as this:

It is a lie that this war is a war against Fascism! It is a lie that the defeat of Germany by Britain and the Dominion will benefit the people! IT IS A CHEAP LIE THAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR "DEMOCRACY"! WITHDRAW CANADA FROM THE IMPERIALIST WAR!

More than one hundred Communists were interned at Hull, Quebec. The leaders went underground so far they were of little practical use to the party. When Russia entered the war they emerged with their line abruptly changed

## THE SECRET WAR

("As Canadians, it is our duty to support the battle of democracy against Fascism"). As a sign of sincerity Russia pretended to disband the International. The Communist Party of Canada changed its name to the Labour-Progressive Party. Under the surface, however, activity intensified and in 1945 the cover of secrecy was lifted for a clear look at the apparatus beneath.

In the evening of September 5 in the capital city of Ottawa, cipher clerk Igor Gouzenko pinned some documents under his shirt and walked out of the steel-shuttered Russian Embassy. He was disillusioned with Russia after two years in Canada and he knew that his chief, Colonel Nicolai Zabotin, suspected his feelings. Like the porters and the chauffeur, Gouzenko was also a Red Army officer, trained in intelligence work. He had carefully selected the documents to prove that the embassy's rear wing was the center of a huge spy ring.

Gouzenko went first to the *Ottawa Journal*. The bewildered night editor looked at his papers, handwritten in Russian. "The proper place for you to go is the RCMP," he said. With the year's hottest news story under his shirt Gouzenko left the newsroom and walked home to the apartment where he lived with his wife and child. He believed he had only a few more hours before the papers were missed.

Next morning Gouzenko called at the Justice Building. His English was not very good. He was misdirected to the Identification Branch, where Inspector Henry Butchers, also misunderstanding, shuttled him to Crown Attorney Raoul Mercier. Mercier's secretary called Norman Robert-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

son, head of External Affairs. "Keep him waiting," Robertson said, and phoned the Prime Minister.

Mackenzie King was just hanging up his coat in the House of Commons, where the fall session was awaiting him to begin. His reaction was to send Gouzenko back to the embassy. He didn't know if the documents were genuine. It would not have been the first time that an *agent provocateur* had forged papers to create an international incident. As King told Parliament later with unconscious irony: "I do not think the government of Canada can take any action which would cause the Soviet Government to believe that we are prying into their affairs."

Discouraged and desperate, Gouzenko again returned home. He expected an attempt on his life that night. He told his story to a neighbor, who took the family into her apartment. Another neighbor called the city police. The police said they would stand guard outside. "Flick your bathroom light if you need us," they said.

No one knew that the RCMP had been shadowing Gouzenko since midafternoon. Inspector Butchers, by chance, had lunched that day with John Leopold, now an inspector in the Special (counterespionage) Branch. Butchers had mentioned the strange visitor who had called on him that morning and Leopold had detailed two plain-clothes men to watch Gouzenko.

At 11:30 that night, with the Mounties still watching outside the building, the city police saw a light go on and off. They ran upstairs. Four Russian Embassy members, all Red Army officers, were searching Gouzenko's closets. Peremptorily, they told the police to leave.



## THE SECRET WAR

"That door doesn't look like you opened it with a key," a policeman said. "We'll stick around until our inspector arrives." Angrily the Reds stamped out.

The incident lent weight to Gouzenko's story. The RCMP took over September 8. Gouzenko and his family were taken to headquarters.

Only four original cablegrams, which Gouzenko was supposed to have burned, could be checked immediately. They were enough. They showed that the Russians had details of matters that only Britain and Canada should have known.

The Mounties, under Superintendent Charles Rivett-Carnac, a one-time elephant driver in India who rose to be deputy commissioner, began to piece together the multitude of fragmentary clues contained in the documents. Some were copies of secret Canadian Government papers, re-copied by Gouzenko in Russian longhand. The originals could not be drawn from file without putting the spies on guard. Others, Gouzenko said, had been written by Colonel Zabolotin and Lieutenant Colonel Rogov, his assistant. RCMP experts later identified their handwriting from the guest book of a hunting lodge the diplomats had visited.

By September 17 an RCMP officer was able to brief Prime Minister King. It seemed likely, King was told, that a top-ranking scientist had given the Soviets all details of Canada's atomic energy program. The man was known only by his cover name of Alek but the evidence indicated he might be English. In fact, "Alek" was Dr. Allan Nunn May, the distinguished British nuclear physicist.

The Mountie read a cable, No. 241:

## THE LIVING LEGEND

To the Director [head of Russian intelligence in Moscow]:

Facts given by Alek . . . The output of uranium 235 amounts to 400 grams daily at the magnetic separation plant at Clinton. The output of "49" is likely two times greater, some graphite units are planned for 250 grams each day. . . . Alek handed over to us a platinum with 162 micrograms of uranium 233 in the form of oxide in a thin lamina.

GRANT [Colonel Zabolin]

The Prime Minister was stunned. He flew to London to talk with Prime Minister Attlee and Scotland Yard. Attlee flew with him to Washington where they talked with President Truman. And in Ottawa, Superintendent Rivett-Carnac and his men worked against time and in absolute secrecy to find out the extent of the damage, who the spies were and how they worked.

By February, King felt he could wait no longer. He appointed a royal commission headed by two Supreme Court judges to examine the evidence. On February 13 they recommended that the twelve people so far identified be arrested the following day.

In perhaps the most attentive session of Canada's Parliament the Prime Minister told MPs and reporters what he had done. It made sensational headlines around the world. But in Canada, some papers directed nearly as much indignation at the government and the Mounties for holding the prisoners incommunicado as at the prisoners and Russia for spying.

The RCMP and the government were worried. They had taken a drastic action. It would take a conviction to justify

## THE SECRET WAR

it. They had to get a confession or, as one Mountie put it, "we'd be the goats."

Two experienced interrogators, Inspectors Clifford Harvison and Melville Anthony, were flown to Ottawa to question the prisoners. Soon after he arrived Anthony drove out to Rockcliffe Barracks. It was a Sunday. He wasn't ready to start his questioning yet but he wanted to look his people over.

His half of the prisoners included Mrs. Emma Woikin, a Saskatchewan-born Doukhobor. Anthony knew the district she came from. He had her brought into the office he was to use for his interviews and they talked of her home and people.

Then, following his instinct, Anthony said: "Mrs. Woikin, I'm going to tell you some things I know about what you've been doing. You're a cipher clerk in External Affairs. You speak Russian. You like Russia. You wanted to help Russia. You told Major Sokolov in the Russian Embassy that you would like to go to Russia to work. He said you could help Russia more where you are. In your job you type out top-secret telegrams. You memorized and copied these telegrams, then you went to a dentist here in Ottawa and hid your copies in his washroom. A few minutes later, Colonel Zabotin's driver, Gourshkov, who also happens to be a Red Army captain, would visit that dentist and go to the washroom."

Anthony leaned forward. "Now, Mrs. Woikin, I know your people. I know they're not liars. I want you to think over what I've told you. I'll come and see you tomorrow. By then you may want to tell me the truth yourself."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Mrs. Woikin was silent a moment, then she raised her head. "Why do I have to wait till tomorrow?"

"I want you to realize what you're doing. This is a very serious business."

"I know. I want to tell the truth now."

"All right," Anthony said, "if that's what you want to do. I'll call a stenographer."

The case had broken. They had their confession. The Mounties were off the hook. (Of the ten Canadians later convicted and sent to jail, Mrs. Woikin's sentence was one of the shortest: three years.)

The espionage web that unraveled over the next four months was one of the most successful ever revealed. Colonel Zabotin worked through the Communist Party of Canada. Sam Carr, the party's national organizer, and Quebec organizer and Member of Parliament Fred Rose, would suggest potential agents to Zabotin. (Rose was also a link with U.S. and British rings.)

This was a military spy ring. Known as "the Net," it had given Russia every detail of antisubmarine devices; radar experiments; the Canadian-developed V-T fuse that knocked out the Japanese Air Force, a radio device set in the nose of a shell to explode on near-contact; the atomic energy program and many lesser developments. And "the Net" was only one of five Communist spy systems. "The Neighbors," cover name for the NKVD, the secret political police that spied on Canadian party members, was older and larger than Zabotin's military ring. The commercial system sent in reports on strategic industries. A political ring transmitted orders on policy. A naval intelligence ring

## THE SECRET WAR

was being formed. None of these last four organizations were broken.

The spy trials exposed the face of Communism. The Mounties had struck their most successful blow at their old archenemy. In a few years party membership shrunk from twelve to seven thousand. The only Communist gains were a few more propaganda licks. In reputable newspapers Communists described the dawn arrests as "a violation of civil liberties reminiscent of Fascist dictatorship" and the questioning as "third-degree methods."

Over the years, the Communists, in their smear campaigns, have tried to make people think that the Mounties hate them pathologically, persecute them, hound left-wingers out of innocuous jobs and oppress the labor movement. The Mounties cannot answer publicly. There is little they can say about the work of the Special Branch. But in private conversation they point to a few facts.

There are more than sixty thousand fellow travelers in Canada, judging by Communist votes in the 1953 elections. There are more than six thousand party members of which three thousand are active. The Mounties have 5376 men for every kind of police work. The number in the Special Branch is secret, but common sense indicates that it can be only a few hundred. "These men have plenty to do without 'hounding' harmless radicals," says a former Special Branch officer, Superintendent Robert MacNeil. "If they're really dangerous, we don't want to tip them off that they're being watched. If they're not dangerous, why sour them against the government, maybe turn them into active Communists?"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

It is a new kind of civil war and the Mounties are on the defensive. They can only watch the party haunts, shadow the most active members. They can only build up a counter-espionage network — undercover agents and strategically placed citizens — to ferret out the really dangerous Communists: the secret members, unlisted by the party, known only to their cell, outwardly respectable. They have almost certainly infiltrated important defense industries as potential saboteurs or spies. But if the underground struggle comes into the open again, the Mounties are ready. A secret order-in-council has been prepared. It needs only the signature of the Minister of Justice to allow the RCMP to arrest every known Communist.

Unseen, only half realized, the secret war continues between these curiously similar antagonists, each a rigidly disciplined hierarchy, each demanding so much from its members, each sustained by belief in an ideal called justice. The Communist ideal is a state where no man is exploited, where every man has his duty. Their goal is a crimeless Utopia and they justify crime for this end. For the Mounties, justice is less concrete. No Mountie explains it well; it can best be seen in their work, in the day-by-day job of combatting crime.

*Book IV*

# The Investigator

*What is more indicative of the health and progress of a country than the style of its laws, the manner in which they are observed and — this is where we come in — the manner in which they are enforced.*

RCMP Commissioner L. H. Nicholson, speaking to the 1953 conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, at Detroit.





# 1

**T**HE BIG SNOWS had come only that morning, Christmas Day. All along the Yukon River snow was steadily falling. It humped on the shoulders of the mountains. It shrouded the forest. It buried the tents along the gold-rich creeks to the north in the Klondike and was trampled to slush on the board walks of Dawson, that crowded, fevered center for the world's last great gold rush. It was the closing week of the nineteenth century.

In a low, log police post on the river trail south of Dawson, three men sat down to Christmas dinner, two woodchoppers and a corporal of the North-West Mounted Police. A fourth place had been set but it was empty.

The Mountie, Paddy Ryan, was a gay host. The men did not think of the missing guest again until nightfall, when a woodchopper, leaving, said, "I wonder what happened to Ole?"

The Mountie felt a momentary disquiet. The missing man, Lawrence "Ole" Olsen, was a close friend. Olsen was a repairman for the government telegraph line, a single wire strung from tree to tree along the river trail. He had stopped at Ryan's post at Hutchiku two days before and had promised to be back for Christmas dinner. Ryan shrugged

## THE LIVING LEGEND

away his apprehensions. "You know how it is. He probably started drinking up the line."

Two days later Constable Frank Bacon stamped into the post. He came from Five Fingers Rapids, eighteen miles south. "Paddy," he said, "where the devil is Ole? The line's down again."

"I guess he's nursing a hangover down at Minto," Ryan said. Minto lay fourteen miles north. "You can tell the Five Fingers operator I'm on my way to get him."

An hour out on the trail, Corporal Ryan and his dog driver stopped to swap news with two south-bound travelers. Ryan described the missing lineman, a burly good-natured Norwegian. The travelers had not seen him at Minto.

Ryan began to worry. A break in the line could be dangerous. The great gold camp drew desperados from all over the globe, and with the snow, miners and businessmen bound for outside would be traveling south from Dawson to the ocean port of Skagway, their pouches heavy with gold dust and cash. When the telegraph key fell silent it isolated the Mounted Police posts strung thinly along the six hundred miles of trail, left them in ignorance of passing thieves and crimes committed downriver. It was not like Olsen, a conscientious man, to neglect his job.

Ryan left his driver and the dogs on the river ice and began to search along the telegraph line. He labored up the steep bluffs, testing each snow-covered hummock. It was rough country. Olsen might have broken a leg. He could be lying frozen, drifted over with snow.

At dusk, six miles north of Hutchiku, they swung onto the Pork Trail, a cutoff that skirted several bends in the

## THE INVESTIGATOR

river. They wound through darkening forest, Ryan studying the trail.

"Hold it!" he said suddenly. He had caught an almost imperceptible sagging in the snow, a faint furrow running off at right angles into the woods.

With the darkness the cold had increased. The dog driver spat; it crackled. "We'd better get on into Minto," he said.

Ryan hesitated. "Let's see where this goes first."

The snowed-over trail led through willow thickets that gave way to tall spruce trees. Beyond them the silence was absolute, lifeless. No bird, no creature stirred in the underbrush. They broke into a clearing. Through the shadowless dusk they could make out the silhouette of a tent.

Coming closer, they saw that this was no overnight camp. The canvas roofed a rectangle of peeled logs. Frost glittered dimly in the dark empty interior.

Ryan peered in the stove. "Looks like someone was here a couple of days ago. I don't like it. Why would anyone camp out here, half a mile back in the bush?"

"He didn't want to be seen, that's sure," the dog driver said. "Maybe you can find out at Minto."

The roadhouse at Minto was run by a rawboned river pilot, Captain John Fussell. His wife doubled as hostess and cook. They were dismayed when Ryan announced that he was looking for Olsen.

"Why, Mr. Olsen left here Christmas morning at eight o'clock," Mrs. Fussell told him. "I asked him to stay and have turkey dinner with us but he was bound he'd spend Christmas with you. He had two nice American boys with him, Fred Clayson and Jim Relfe. They were going outside

## THE LIVING LEGEND

to see their folks and were anxious to get on. I do hope nothing's happened to them."

"They may have changed their minds and stayed at some woodchopper's camp," Captain Fussell said reassuringly.

"Maybe," Ryan said without conviction. Three men traveling together pretty well ruled out an accident. He knew Relfe, a quiet-spoken lad from Washington state; his father, a prominent judge, had recently died and young Relfe, who'd kept bar at Dawson's Monte Carlo saloon, had gone out on the diggings to win a stake for the family. Clayson was well known, a stout jolly balding man, head of F. H. Clayson & Company, prosperous Skagway merchants. None of the men were greenhorns; they wouldn't lose the trail. "Were they carrying much money?" Ryan asked the Captain.

"Clayson's poke was heavy. He's been up in the Klondike buying gold. Young Relfe was carrying cash, about twelve hundred dollars. But good lord, Paddy — broad daylight on Christmas morning? I'd say it's more likely they went through the ice."

"There's only two places the river's open between here and Hutchiku, and they're both off the trail," Ryan said. The image of the deserted tent clung disturbingly to his mind. "Sure you've seen no strangers hanging around, Captain?"

Captain Fussell was thoughtful. "Well . . . now you mention it. You know how the sun came out day before yesterday, first time in a long time? I came out front to watch it and I saw smoke from a campfire. It looked to be coming from somewhere near the Pork Trail."

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Early in the morning, Ryan and the dog driver went back down the Pork Trail through the woods to the clearing. No one had been back to the tent in the night. In the somber grayness of morning the tent seemed even more inexplicable, more real, more menacing.

They kindled a fire in the stove, made of two oil tins, and looked around. There were blankets on the double bunk. A rifle hung from the ridgepole. Cases of canned food were piled in one corner. Beneath a sack of spilled pilot biscuits Ryan found a pair of pliers. "My God!" he exclaimed. "Olsen had pliers like these!"

He examined the food. It looked like goods from McKay Brothers' cache, only a mile away. Several scows hauling merchandise had been caught in the ice at freeze-up. The goods had been cached, and although the Mounties had checked them regularly, several caches had been rifled. At Fort Selkirk, the first post north of Minto, Constable Alex Pennycuick was working on the case. Ryan wired him to come down. By now, another lineman had repaired the telegraph wire.

Pennycuick had been an Imperial Army officer and his trim figure still carried a touch of swagger. He talked little, seldom smiled, his gray eyes were cool and he held his head a little forward as if he was seeking something continually beyond him. He was only happy, he sometimes admitted, when working on a problem he could not solve.

Pennycuick examined the tent with Ryan on January 4. "I can swear to that stove," he told Ryan. "Never saw one with two draught holes before. The first hole wasn't big enough — somebody's punched a second one overtop. See

## THE LIVING LEGEND

how they overlap, like a figure eight? I saw that stove three weeks ago at a camp up my way. Two men who call themselves Miller and Ross and a big yellow St. Bernard dog. I caught them peddling supplies to the Beef Cache road-house. I checked my cache list afterward. Their stuff was stolen all right. When I got back with a warrant they were gone.”

“You figure they moved up here?”

“Whoever lived here was certainly hiding out. Did you notice the wire around that spruce at the back — very handy for fastening a dog chain, wouldn’t you say?” He fingered the edge of the canvas top. “Look, Paddy. This hasn’t been cut — it’s torn!”

Next day the two policemen fitted the torn piece of canvas to the edge of a bolt they dug from the ice at McKay Brothers’ cache. It matched.

“How do you size these two up?” Ryan asked.

“Ross is a cockney. Short. Long arms. Body thick as an ape. Miller’s the brains. Another Englishman, sorry to say. One of those chaps that thinks the world owes them a living. Around thirty, five-toot-ten, very sure of himself.”

“Do you think he’s a killer?”

“I wouldn’t say no. There’s a scar on his left little finger — I’ll wager he got it in a knife fight. The mail driver tells me in Dawson they think the boys went through the ice.”

“What do they know about it in Dawson?” Ryan said.

“I think you’re right,” said Pennycuick. “I think the tent ties in. We’d better wire in a description of Miller and Ross. This is January 5. Could be near Tagish by now.”

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Tagish was the last police post before the southbound trail crossed the border into Alaska, that strip of U.S. sea-coast fringing northern British Columbia. Strolling through the Tagish stables on January 6, Staff Sergeant George Graham stopped in front of two strange horses. Water dripped from their gleaming black flanks. Even under their blankets the horses were shivering.

A stranger passing through Tagish was police business. Graham walked across to the dog drivers' bunk house to make inquiries. Leaning against the wall near the door was an ice-sheathed sled. A huge yellow St. Bernard lay beside it. The dog growled as Graham took a close second look at the sled robe.

Inside the bunk house, beside the stove, a man in a plaid mackinaw was drying his socks. He was a big man, well built, very white-skinned. With a beard less shaggy he might have seemed pedantic. He had a high pale forehead, a broad fleshy face.

"Are those your blacks in the stable?" Graham asked.

The man regarded the staff sergeant with shrewd dark gray eyes. He showed neither alarm nor surprise. "My name's O'Brien," he said. His accent was English. "Those are my horses. Why?"

"Where'd you come from?"

"Dawson."

"How'd you go through the ice?"

"Crossing the river." The confidence of his manner verged on arrogance.

"Where?"

"At the Indian village." The man was growing angry.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"Why?" The Yukon Trail by-passed the Indian village half a mile north.

O'Brien said nothing.

"You wouldn't be trying to get around the police post through the woods?"

"Go to hell," O'Brien said. "I bought those blacks at Shoff's roadhouse. I got the receipt. Two hundred dollars."

"Where'd you buy that government robe on your sled?" Graham asked sharply.

O'Brien laughed. His anger evaporated. "I don't mind telling you," he said in a confidential manner. "I did time in Dawson. I got out last September and your men couldn't find my sled robe. They gave me a police robe instead."

"That's a good story," the staff sergeant said. "You can wait in the guardroom. We'll check it."

In an hour Dawson wired that O'Brien was telling the truth. The man was smug as Graham apologized. "I'll be pulling out as soon as my horses are rested," he told the staff sergeant.

Late that afternoon Dawson sent a second wire:

DESCRIPTION O'BRIEN CHECKS WITH MAN CALLED MILLER. HOLD ON CHARGE OF THEFT FROM CACHE NEAR SELKIRK. SUSPICION O'BRIEN IMPLICATED IN DISAPPEARANCE OF OLSEN CLAYSON AND RELFE MISSING SINCE XMAS. QUERY ON WHEREABOUTS OF PARTNER ROSS ALIAS LITTLE TOMMY GRAVES.

Graham hurriedly checked the stables. The black horses were still there. O'Brien, who could by now have been safe on his way to Alaska, had met an Indian girl and decided



## THE INVESTIGATOR

not to depart till morning. He was brought into the guard-room cursing.

"Search him," Graham said.

His pockets yielded less than a hundred dollars. In his German socks, folded between the leather sole and the cloth, were two \$100 bills. A gunny sack on his sled held two revolvers, .41-caliber Colts. He was carrying a .30-30 Winchester rifle and a carbine with the serial number filed off. He had also a pair of field glasses, a queer piece of trail equipment.

"What are they for?" Graham asked.

"Surveying," O'Brien said shortly. He laughed off the charges of cache robbery. He would not admit knowing Graves. He admitted nothing, then or afterward.

Five days later a brief thaw melted the ice on O'Brien's sled. On a slat near the tow a sharp-eyed Mountie noticed a stain like a grease spot. Analysis proved the stain to be human blood. Like the arsenal, it carried suspicion, but it was not evidence. There was no proof that murder had been committed.

A half-dozen Mounted Police under Inspector Billy Scarth were now tracing O'Brien's movements from the time he left Dawson Jail. He left Dawson with ten dollars in his pocket. He moved southward slowly, accompanied by Graves. At the roadhouses the two men cooked their own meals, slept on the floor, and told conflicting tales of their destination. They were seen together last on December 19 near Fussell's roadhouse.

Two days after Christmas, O'Brien reappeared. He had no partner now. He was no longer traveling slowly. He had

## THE LIVING LEGEND

money for meals and bed. On January 5, he stopped overnight at the *Nora*, a river steamer frozen in the ice, and offered to sell the caretaker some gold nuggets. Among the stones was a twin, a double nugget, very rare. Relfe had owned a similar piece of gold.

Inspector Scarth, collating this information at Dawson, thought O'Brien had regretted showing the nuggets, that this may have led him to try to slip around the police post at Tagish. Scarth was worried. The nuggets had disappeared. He was holding O'Brien on six charges of cache robbery, none of them easy to prove, for O'Brien had had his partner Graves do the stealing and Graves, too, had disappeared. O'Brien, with arrogant unconcern, was demanding a trial or release and public opinion supported him.

The disappearance of four men had created a stir in Dawson. Fred Clayson's brother, Will, had brought in a private detective, Philip McGuire, from Minneapolis. He lost his job when the mail driver came through with news that the missing men had been seen at a rich new strike at Big Salmon.

Inspector Scarth had no faith in this information. He was more than ever sure that this was a murder case when Scotland Yard, in February, sent him his suspects' records. Graves had once been employed by the Chinese Army to shoot deserters. O'Brien had served six years for shooting a Birmingham policeman who had caught him robbing a store.

Scarth put McGuire, a stout, stolid, methodical man, on his payroll and sent him to Hutchiku, where Ryan was shorthanded. The corporal put him out on the trail with

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Pennycuick, still systematically searching a tract of wilderness sixteen miles long and two and a half miles wide, wherein all clues lay buried in hip-deep snow.

Late in February, Pennycuick strode up a long rise in the Pork Trail. He was puzzling over the field glasses found on O'Brien. He could not get them out of his mind. They were too unusual; they had to be significant.

He paused for McGuire to catch up. From this height he could glimpse the river. His eye was caught by a gap in the cottonwood trees on the flats below.

McGuire, coming up, saw him frowning. "What's the matter?"

"Can you figure why anyone would be cutting cottonwoods down there?"

"The telegraph company, probably."

"Let's take a look," said Pennycuick. "I don't think they're that far down."

They plunged into the bush and emerged unexpectedly into a clearing. It was man-made. Pennycuick examined the stumps, then pushed riverward to the flats. Here they counted twenty-seven chopped-down cottonwoods.

"That's queer," said McGuire. "This isn't on the telegraph right-of-way."

Pennycuick scraped the weather stain from a stump. "They've been cut the same time as those trees up in the clearing. Not much more than a couple of months ago. And all cut by the same ax — devilish dull and three nicks in the blade. The same man felled them all, that's plain. Damned poor axman. Can't hit twice in the same place. Might as well chew a tree down."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

They climbed back to the clearing. It was high land. Through the gap left by the felled trees they could see far along the river. The Yukon, a mile wide, lay entombed in four feet of ice, wrapped in a winding sheet of snow flung between the spruce-covered hills, pure white except for the dark and dwindling thread of the trail. They could see where the river trail and the Pork Trail forked. The fork moved out of view as Pennycuick stepped to one side. He moved to the opposite side. Again the fork vanished.

It was suddenly clear why the cottonwoods below had been felled; they had blocked the line of sight to the fork in the trail. The role of the field glasses found on O'Brien was now obvious. The clearing was a lookout post. From here a watcher with field glasses could tell an hour in advance if a traveler intended to stay on the river or cut off up the Pork Trail.

They searched and found a snowed-over trail from the clearing. They traced it through a grove of leafless aspen till it forked deep in a copse of gaunt green spruce. One spur ran down to the river. The other led them parallel to the bank and came out on a cliff. It angled sharply down to an incision in the ice.

The two men stared at the dark, swift-flowing water. "That's got to be it," McGuire said. Pennycuick agreed. There was no other place for miles where the river was open.

They came back to the fork in the spruce copse. The trail running down to the river had been hacked with the same dull ax through a dense dark jungle of willow. It

## THE INVESTIGATOR

ended in a thicket on a low earth bank close to the river trail.

"A perfect point of ambush," Pennycuick said. "A man can see in both directions and not be seen himself."

"There's no doubt about it, this is the murder trail," McGuire said. "But how are we going to prove it?"

Proof came through one of those flukes called "breaks" that come to those who persist. It came after three weeks of crawling on hands and knees down the murder trail, probing the snow with pointed sticks.

It was March 18. The sun was rising briefly at midday now. Pennycuick was in Selkirk for the day. McGuire was driving his dogs down the murder trail when a husky balked. The detective marked the spot: about twenty feet from the riverbank.

As the huskies whimpered excitedly, he cleared away the snow. The old snowcrust glistened red in the sunlight. He uncovered another frozen pool of blood twenty feet farther on.

Pennycuick returned next day with Constable Bacon, Inspector Scarth and O'Brien's big yellow St. Bernard. The four men followed Pennycuick as he led the dog to the Pork Trail, then stepped into the drifts to one side. "Go home!" Pennycuick shouted.

The big dog hesitated.

"Go home, Bruce!"

The dog trotted down the trail. Without a pause he left the hard-packed Pork Trail and plunged up the faintly visible, snowed-over trail to the tent. They found him lying on the snow beside the wire-encircled spruce.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"We'll make it stronger," Pennycuick said. He shoveled away the top snow. The crust beneath was littered with yellow dog hairs.

"Good work," Scarth said. "I think we can link O'Brien to the tent. But we haven't tied him to the murder trail. We haven't even proved there *was* a murder. We've got no bodies, no witnesses. We need evidence. I want to know what happened Christmas Day."

During the next six weeks Constable Alexander Pennycuick and private detective Philip McGuire conducted one of the most remarkable searches for evidence in the records of crime detection. They burned the moss from the trees and found three bullet marks. They charted distances with a surveyor's chain. They examined every bush and from nicks on the branches plotted the course of the bullets.

They were working in cold so intense that about them the branches of trees would break with sounds like pistol shots. Sometimes exposing their bare hands to feel for the old trail surfaces, they shoveled from one to three feet of snow from half an acre of forest. Along the ambush trail and around the tent in the woods they rolled the winter back three months to Christmas.

Along the trail they found a garter, a comb, two coat buttons, three cigars, a whiskey bottle, a medicine label, a piece of copper ore, more blood, six revolver and rifle shells, a slice of skull and a piece of tooth imbedded in a bullet. In the ashes of the stove in the tent — some brass moccasin eyelets and charred fragments of clothing. Strewn around the tent — a dog chain, keys, wads of chewed-up paper that pieced together into roadhouse receipts, and a dull ax with

## THE INVESTIGATOR

three nicks in the blade. They tagged each item and sent it to Dawson. Inspector Scarth dispatched Mounties as far afield as California to find witnesses to identify these articles.

At April's end, with a thunderous roar, the river burst from its tomb. Broken ice swept seaward in a steady white discharge and between May 27 and June 30 the Yukon delivered its dead. Three bodies were found cast up on a sandbar near Selkirk. All were identified. One had a tooth stump that fitted exactly — even to two small decayed spots — the piece of tooth imbedded in the bullet found by Pennycuick. The evidence was now complete. The silent testimony of trees, bushes, blood, bullets and bodies told a clear, awful and indisputable story.

O'Brien and Graves had prepared their trap in December. Then, in their hideout, they waited for the snow. Watching from their lookout they saw that Olsen, Clayson and Relfe were continuing up the river trail. They hurried down their secret passageway to the ambush thicket.

In high good humor, the travelers came abreast of the thicket. Graves stepped out with leveled rifle. Then, from behind them, O'Brien appeared. With O'Brien backing up, keeping them covered in front, and Graves menacing them from behind, they were herded off the open river into the murder trail.

Clayson, in the lead, perhaps sensing something abnormal, bolted for sheltering timber fifty feet to his right. Before he had taken three steps O'Brien shot him through the body. O'Brien reloaded, stepped close to Relfe and fired. He must have been trembling with blood lust. He missed and

## THE LIVING LEGEND

fired again. Relfe fell. Olsen, running in frantic terror, was ten paces into the woods when O'Brien's bullet knocked him down.

O'Brien walked from one dying man to another and put a revolver bullet through each man's head. Olsen rose in his death throes and grappled with him. Graves had to smash the lineman's skull with a rifle.

The assassins stripped the parkas from the bodies, piled them on their sled and hauled them over their trail to the riverbank. One by one they slid them down and through the hole in the ice. Then — though this last is conjecture — O'Brien knocked Graves on the head, pushed him in after the others and returned to the tent to search his victims' clothing in comfort. Months afterward, a fourth body was found in the river, badly decomposed but bearing points of resemblance to Graves; and O'Brien, in jail, told a fellow prisoner, ex-U.S. Marshal George Scott, "You bet I fixed it so no one will give me away."

This enterprise had been conceived by O'Brien in Dawson Jail. Little Tommy Graves had thought that the proposition was sound, but two other prisoners had turned it down as too risky. One, a raucous thief and faro dealer named George "Kid" West, was located in Washington state penitentiary by S. H. Seeley, a Mounted Police secret agent.

Seeley arranged an unprecedented deal with the state government. West was taken secretly from the penitentiary at night, smuggled aboard the Skagway-bound steamer *Topeka*, and Corporal Ryan escorted him manacled over the Yukon Trail to testify in Dawson in June 1901.

Crowds packed the courtroom to see O'Brien. He sat lis-



## THE INVESTIGATOR

tening attentively, clad in a new blue suit, carefully manicured, cleanshaven, indifferent to the crowd, almost nonchalant except when he glanced at Pennycuick, for whom he did not try to conceal his hatred.

Never before in a frontier country had so much care or money been lavished on a trial. Inspector Scarth had mustered eighty witnesses. They identified some four hundred exhibits. But not until the end, when the colorful Kid West, reveling in his role as star witness, outlined the devilish scheme in detail, did O'Brien's composure lapse. The jury took only two hours to find him guilty.

In the death cell, awaiting the hangman, O'Brien feigned insanity; he pretended he was the Virgin Mary. When this failed to impress, he tried to kill himself. A Catholic, he would not see a priest; he refused to confess. In a letter to his sister in Birmingham, which the newspapers published, he proclaimed his innocence. But to Mrs. Belle Dormer, matron of the jail, he explained, "My people will feel better to know that I died protesting my innocence. I must make it as easy for them as I can." He died at eight in the morning, August 23, 1901, cursing Pennycuick of the North-West Mounted Police.

The Case of the Christmas Day Killer does not resemble the classic whodunit. But it is typical of the real-life crime. The killer was in plain sight from the start. What little mystery there was — how the murders had been committed — was revealed by thorough, hard, persistent work. The facts were sordid. The killer, locked in his cell, filled with conventional concern for his family, twisting and turning desper-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

ately to escape his inevitable end, had dwindled into a rather pathetic figure. There was no romance to stimulate the policemen's imaginations, no mounting suspense to tighten their tired nerves. The drama is less intense than fiction — but more significant.

O'Brien's trial was reported all over the world. In his matter-of-fact brutality, in the callousness that would kill on that one day when men approach brotherhood, O'Brien seemed to personify man's evil. And opposing him, refuting the evil as in a morality play — the police ideal. It could be seen in this case with uncommon clarity. Here were policemen applying the laws of evidence as they would be applied in London or New York. Here, at one of the ends of the earth, in the heart of a sub-Arctic wilderness, at the height of one of history's maddest scrambles for gold, men were applying the finest police methods known, embodying the highest standards of justice they knew.

This police ideal is perceptible in the image of Constable Pennycuik crawling on his hands and knees down an aisle in the snow-shrouded forest while he marshals his facts with all the imperturbable patience of a Scotland Yard inspector working in Piccadilly Circus. Patience is the policeman's cardinal virtue. Not the patience of that modern crusader, the amateur fiction sleuth. Not the patience of a longhaired Sherlock Holmes. It is not sustained primarily by intellectual curiosity, much less by desire to right a wrong. It is more akin to the patience of the hunter for whom the hunt matters more than the kill.

## 2

**L**ATE last century, an Italian scientist, Dr. Cesare Lombroso, won wide acceptance for his "theory of atavism." Criminals, he claimed, were inferior biologically. A policeman could recognize them by their features: close-set eyes, receding forehead, brutal jaw. The theory is often tested today on law students. They are shown a number of photographs and asked to pick out the criminals. Invariably they select an assortment of brutal-jawed clergymen and shifty-eyed college professors.

Many criminals hold a somewhat similar theory about policemen. You can always spot a dick, they claim, by his flat feet, burly build, brusque manner and air of stolid nosiness. This conviction, unlike Lombroso's, is based on experience, though it may seem outdated experience to the large number of criminals taken in by policemen posing as crooks.

In a big gray stone building on a bank of the Rideau River in suburban Ottawa, a man called the DOCI studies reports and dictates memos. There is nothing to distinguish his plainly furnished office except a row of photographs on the wall above his desk, portraits of RCMP commissioners. If the man at the desk is wearing civilian clothes, as he frequently is, he looks like any other bureaucrat. His reports, however, deal with murder, rape, robbery, arson, fraud, smuggling, extortion and drugs. The DOCI, an assistant

## THE LIVING LEGEND

commissioner, is the Mounties' top-ranking detective, Director of Criminal Investigation, a branch called the CIB.

RCMP crime reports funnel into this central bureau at the rate of 170,000 a year. Readers study them, tabulate them, note trends in crime. They check to be sure the Mountie has followed every lead, that his conduct has cast no discredit on the force. They telephone or write any federal government department concerned to let the department know how the case is developing. They observe that a batch of counterfeit bills turned up in a dozen cities, clearly the work of one gang. They supervise. They coordinate. They act as liaison officers. In effect, the DOCI is the Mounties' chief of staff in the ceaseless war against crime. Under him, placed strategically in cities across Canada, are some four hundred Mounties in plain clothes. On the street a few may reveal themselves by their cataloguing glance and a certain stiffness of bearing. But most of them look like any salesman, businessman, scholar or journalist.

The criminals' theory, nevertheless, has more substance than Lombroso's. Criminals far outnumber policemen: they come in bewildering variety, they embrace many trades; detectives have only one, and it has long been a common belief that a man's trade leaves its mark.

Outwardly, this is no longer as true as it was. Sherlock Holmes would find deduction tougher today. The book-keeper punching his adding machine no longer has ink-stained fingers. The invention of the power saw is shrinking the lumberjack's chest. Pushbutton production lines leave a man's contours unchanged.

Yet each profession is like no other in purpose. The

## THE INVESTIGATOR

methods peculiar to it develop unique combinations of talents. A postman and a plumber are guided by different codes of conduct. Each has his own way of looking at things. And the trade of the detective brands deeper than most, though the mark is seldom visible on the surface.

The Mountie is unlike all other detectives. In other forces, "detective" is a rank. The detective is of the elite, an aristocrat. Though the man in uniform walking his beat is the backbone of his force, the greatest known deterrent to crime, the detective sets the tone of the organization. His failure or success makes newspaper headlines. The publicity gives his job a romantic aura. The uniformed man looks forward to the day when, in plain clothes, he will step up from crime prevention to crime detection.

The uniformed Mountie is in a different position. Every Mounted Policeman, from the accountant in the supply branch to the man who plays the tuba in the band, has been trained as an all-round investigator. His first posting, usually bottom man in a large detachment, gives him a little experience in detection. He picks up more as he moves from low man to top man in smaller detachments. More than half his work is investigation: thefts, assaults, accidents, occasionally even a major crime. If he feels that a murder, for instance, needs a more experienced touch, or that it will take more time than his other duties allow, he calls his subdivision CIB officer, who details one of his plainclothes men to the case. Or the uniformed man may show skill in solving the murder himself, but his officers may be grooming him for command of a larger detachment or a desk job at divi-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

sional headquarters. Or he may be left where he is because he prefers to be his own boss, though at any time the needs of the force may override his preference and he will suddenly find himself in plain clothes. And just as unexpectedly he may find his work in plain clothes rewarded by a transfer back to uniform on detachment. The RCMP feels that every Mountie, the specialist excepted, is interchangeable.

Every Mountie's crime reports channel through the CIB. These reports never mention the word "detective." The force looks askance at any word that implies a difference in kind between the plainclothes and uniformed man. Crime detection takes so much of every Mountie's time that the word "detective" applied to the plainclothes man seems artificial and any remarks about the effect and nature of crime detection will apply to the RCMP as a whole.

### 3

**T**HE SURFACE of crime is mercurial. It mirrors the fluctuations in national production. It shifts with the rise and fall of the market, wavers with the weather, changes color with each advance in science and alters form with each new law.

The most dramatic example is the Prohibition Act, which forbade the making or selling of intoxicants in the U.S., thus flooding the country with contraband liquor from Canada. The strongest, smartest U.S. smugglers knocked off their rivals and merged. Their combined profits bought policemen,

## THE INVESTIGATOR

judges and politicians. They spread their protection umbrella over gambling and call houses. They branched into narcotics, sometimes car stealing and holdups. The huge reserves of capital that the Prohibition Act put into criminal hands gave birth to the modern crime syndicate with its tentacles in political parties, big business and labor unions.

With repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the flow of whiskey reversed. The Legs Diamond gang gained control of the Montreal market. Their fleet of power boats ran the lower St. Lawrence on moonless nights and their souped-up Cadillacs, driven by experts, crashed the Mounties' blockades on the border roads of backwoods Quebec, ran on their rims when the Mounties spiked the roads.

One night in 1936, through an undercover Mountie, the RCMP seized seven boats, jailed sixty runners and crippled smuggling on the St. Lawrence. The Legs Diamond gang followed the pattern of most corporate giants who cannot get their goods across the border profitably. They set up branch plants in Canada. They supplied Canadian bootleggers with engineers and workmen to build illegal whiskey factories. For 25 per cent of the net they leased them to local management, under the watchful eye of a U.S. business manager. Workers were paid scale rates with wages guaranteed while in jail. When the Legs Diamond agent reneged on his jail benefits, Montreal's bootleggers broke their contracts and signed with the Purple Gang.

One afternoon in Montreal, in 1936, a plainclothes Mountie spotted a man he knew to be a bootlegger leaving a closed-down lumber mill. From the upper floor of a biscuit factory across the street he watched the vine-covered building

## THE LIVING LEGEND

through field glasses. He noted men in the lumberyard piling boards as children stack matches, in triangles that blocked the view from the street. Trucks came and went. A sixty-foot chimney was put up. As soon as smoke was sighted fifteen Mounties surrounded the mill. No machinery was running but seven men were inside. Each swore that he was the janitor.

The Mounties searched the building from top to bottom. There was no sign of a still. Then a Mountie, poking around with a stick in a ground-floor closet, was startled by a shift in what had seemed a solid cement floor. Inspecting it on hands and knees he found a tiny hole. A nail shoved into it triggered a catch. The raiding squad dropped into an underground chamber. It held a gasoline pump and a hose. The hose smelled of whiskey. They smashed through a cement wall and broke into a concrete sewer tunnel. It led them down 150 feet to a big square room, where circular catwalks banked a huge round vat. Fans drew the fumes from the bubbling mash up the smokestack. A pipe led to the gasoline pump from which the trucks were filled. The boiler was an abandoned railway engine. The entire operation, a maze of vats, containers and pipes, was buried beneath 620 tons of concrete and earth.

Two Americans were listed as "engineer" and "manager"; a Canadian was "president." They drew a year in jail and a fine of \$2,000 — less than their profits for one day. It was a typical big-time operation. The Mounties seized similar stills in a chocolate factory, an oil refinery, a cheese plant and a bakery. They discovered liquor crossing the border by rail in drums marked "Insecticide." They found it in trucks car-



## THE INVESTIGATOR

rying crated earthenware. They arrested peddlers in all guises: a milkman who asked his customers if they wanted "white" or "dark" — a bottle of milk or a bottle of liquor; an old lady whose clients were served from a hot water bottle; a couple who sold it out of a baby's crib.

On the eastern seaboard the traffic was in rum. The price of fish in the thirties would scarcely pay for a boat's gasoline and every second fisherman turned to rum running. Backed by businessmen ashore, including prominent politicians, smuggling became the popular sport of the day. Mother ships steamed up from the Indies with thousands of gallons aboard and lay offshore while small boats towed fish nets filled with rum kegs into deserted coves for hiding. And the traffic was not confined to liquor. When the government placed a prewar duty on raw sugar, smugglers ran it from St. Pierre and Miquelon, a cluster of tiny islands off the south coast of Newfoundland, last remnant of the once great French empire in North America.

This new pattern in crime altered the structure of the Mounties. In 1932 they took over all customs and excise policing and formed their Marine Division. The rum runners switched from sailing schooners to fast power boats, guided by illegal radio stations ashore. The Mounties countered with radio-equipped aircraft for spotting, and fast cars to speed to the point of landing. Sometimes the smugglers would send out three fast ships, one carrying rum, and the Mounties would have to guess which one to follow — the old shell game. The Mounties would occasionally catch the smugglers off guard by appearing suddenly from behind the bulk of an outgoing ship. When the chase became too hot,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

the smugglers would lay down a smoke screen by injecting oil under pressure into their engine exhaust, a synthetic fog that not only blinded but half scalded their pursuers. There was only occasional shooting; it was mainly a game of wits. When one well-known Mountie, disguised by a wig, false eyebrows and mustache, posed as a buyer and picked off a rum-running ship's captain and his shore agent, Bill the Boat-Builder, the smugglers agreed that the joke was on them and the captain swore that, by God, if he could be fooled that easy he had better get out of the business, which he did.

One night in 1942, the smugglers' fastest ship, the *Henry Joe*, slipped lightless out of St. Pierre and headed across a calm sea, heavy with contraband. A French sloop flashed a challenge. The *Henry Joe* ignored it. The sloop opened fire with pom-poms. Like a broken bottle the *Henry Joe* went down. There were no survivors.

It was the end of an era, the romantic era of crime. By now, most Maritime smugglers and Marine Division Mounties had joined forces in the navy. "The only real seamen I've got," one naval officer told another at a conference on ships' personnel, "are the Mounties and the rummies they used to chase."

War brought new restrictive laws. Counterfeiters switched to ration books. Traffic in illegal permits, coupons and stamps became common. In Edmonton, the oil controller's staff would take used coupons to the basement for burning in the incinerator. The janitor would stand by, stoking the fire with sheets of paper. The heavy paper, falling flat on the blaze, dampened it. Left alone, the janitor would fish

## THE INVESTIGATOR

out the sheets of paper and retrieve the unsinged coupons sandwiched between them. But he showed less finesse in selecting his distributor, whose carelessness gave the game away.

In Ottawa, a flood of black market coupons led the Mounties to a Hull paper plant where used coupons were sent to be destroyed. Mounties disguised as workmen were placed in the plant. They watched the coupons being fed to machines with whirling knife blades that shredded waste paper for beating machines to mash into pulp. Amazed, they watched the machine tenders wade between the slashing blades, grope in the waist-high, pulpy, swirling mixture, and emerge with an armful of coupons. Twenty-one craftsmen — papermakers, millwrights, beaters, repairmen — had conspired to set the machines so the coupons — and the men — would not be pulped.

As in a chess game each government move is matched by racketeers. When the War Conservation Act banned the buying of U.S. slot machines, smugglers did a flourishing over-the-border trade. At war's end, when cloth was short and its price fixed, the Mounties caught some wholesalers collecting a "bonus" from tailors afraid they would not otherwise get enough cloth.

In 1946, when the United States lifted price controls, racketeers bought grain at Canada's ceiling prices and ran it across the Maine-Quebec border. In 1947, when Canada clamped down on U.S. imports in a "dollar-saving program," cars became the hottest item in smuggling circles and the Mounties and the FBI collared one stolen-car ring in the middle of Ambassador Bridge between Detroit and

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Windsor. The following year, Canada raised her tobacco tax, made American cigarettes the fashion in smuggling, and the Mounties stopped a funeral procession enroute from Detroit to Windsor, boarded a hearse and found that the coffin held nothing but cigarettes. In 1953, when the tax was eased, smuggling dropped.

In 1954, the RCMP reported that "the decline in beef prices discouraged cattle thefts to some extent, although there has been a trend toward the theft of hogs, which are bringing higher prices." The report also noted a drop in the number of prosecutions for drunkenness among British Columbia's Indians when the B.C. economy dipped slightly in 1954. At the same time the number of prosecutions rose in Alberta, where Indians drew more income from new oil wells on their land.

Crime follows national developments like a dark misshapen shadow, a perverse reflection of human progress. A new uranium strike will spark fevered activity in the bucket shops of Toronto and Montreal, where phony stockbrokers yearly swindle Canadians and Americans out of millions of dollars by mail and telephone. Floods, fires and hurricanes draw con men in their wake, to snatch at the victims' insurance.

Ancient con games are camouflaged with the latest jargon of science. In the summer of 1953 a cultivated old gentleman, Fred Hossell, opened a gadget shop on Winnipeg's Portage Avenue. Over the next twelve months he turned out an array of inventions: a radioactive flashlight that lasted twice as long as the ordinary battery torch; a radioactive machine for making gasoline from water; a mercury-pot for

## THE INVESTIGATOR

drawing gold from sand; and a radioactive machine that made gold pellets. The working models were so impressive that one factory owner retooled his entire second floor to produce the flashlight. Another built a thirty-foot trailer to house the gas-making machine. Other people invested their life's savings to put the machines on the market. Before the Mounties picked him up on a tip from one of his suckers, Hossell rooked fourteen people of \$31,000 in what is no more than a new twist on the venerable greengoods game.

The changing shape of crime defines the investigator's role. The government, which once winked at all but flagrant tax evasions, now calls in the Mounties ten thousand times a year. And several times every year they pile up the mountain of evidence needed to prove conspiracy under the Combines Act. Investigating bread making in 1947, they called at every bakery in Alberta. When the evidence showed that big bakeries from Winnipeg to Vancouver had put pressure on the small ones to keep prices high, Mounted Policemen seized thousands of company papers, helped the Combines Commission staff to sort them, held the papers in custody and four years later, after twelve companies were found guilty of conspiring to "unduly prevent or lessen competition," it was the Mounties' job to return the papers.

As laws grow more complex so does crime and crime detection. During the war, when beef was scarce, Canadian farmers were not allowed to export beef cattle. Canadian drovers and U.S. buyers teamed up to beat the law by shipping cows due to calf across the border as dairy cattle.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

They would milk them for a couple of months, then sell their beef on the black market. A Belleville veterinarian tipped off the Agriculture Department and a CIB corporal uncovered a dangerous racket. He found that cows untested for TB or Bang's disease were being smuggled into a tested area. A vet would draw blood from one healthy cow, fill twenty-five bottles, and send them to the government lab for analysis. Then, with a false certificate, the cows would be shipped to the United States. The RCMP corporal, CIB man Gordon Greaves, spent his first ten days on the case doing nothing but study the export rules and his evenings thereafter with veterinarian manuals.

## 4

**T**HE MOUNTIE has only one piece of standard equipment: a notebook. It signifies his approach to crime detection which breaks, roughly, into two parts — observation and information.

Murder and manslaughter, armed robbery, breaking and entry, thefts of all kinds, are usually solved by observing facts at the scene of the crime. The investigator's notebook connotes accuracy. He writes down every detail. He tape-measures all distances. Nothing is left to guesswork or memory. And though he himself is no scientist he knows all that science can do for him.

One October afternoon a bus came wheeling out of Saint

## THE INVESTIGATOR

John. The driver glanced casually through his side window, then jammed on his brakes. Sprawled in the ditch a young woman was bleeding to death.

The bus driver called an ambulance and the Mounties. Corporal Philip Hughes and a constable searched the blood-soaked ditch. They found nothing. The highway shoulder showed the skid of a swerving car but no tire marks that could be traced. In the grass beyond the ditch Hughes picked up a rear-vision mirror, the kind that clamps on a car door. Its bracket was sprung.

Hughes telephoned the hospital. The woman had died. She had been able to say only that a "big shiny car" had hit her. Hughes and his men checked every car, house and garage on the highway. They worked all night. But a "big shiny car" wasn't much to go on. It looked as if the hit-and-run driver had made a clean getaway.

Next day Hughes stopped on the street for a chat with a friend, who remarked that a mutual acquaintance of theirs had been hitting the bottle of late. Immediately alert, Hughes asked, "What kind of a car does he drive?"

"I don't know. A big car of some kind."

This was the slimmest of leads. Nevertheless Hughes sent a constable to the man's place of business on a side road outside town. "He's got a Buick," the constable telephoned back. "There's a dent in the front right-hand fender."

"Bring it in," Hughes said. "The owner too."

The owner admitted nothing. Inch by inch Hughes went over the Buick. Under the chrome trim he found a few twisted fibers; when he bunched them together they looked faintly brown, the color of the dead woman's coat. The rear-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

vision mirror was missing from the front door. And the door had a tiny dent that could have been made by the mirror bracket being forced back against the metal.

Hughes took off the car door and crated it. Separately, he packaged the rear-vision mirror, the fibers and the coat, and sent them all to the crime lab in Ottawa. The chemist could not say definitely that the fibers had come from the coat. But another lab expert, Staff Sergeant William Sutherland, comparing the dent on the car door with a dent that he made by striking the bracket against a sheet of lead, showed that both dents were identical and that the dent in the car door could only have been made by the bracket found at the scene of the crime.

This was the first conviction for motor manslaughter in New Brunswick and the Crown would not have had a case if the Mountie had not been alert, lucky, and experienced enough to know what a dent can mean. In another case, attempted arson, a Mountie noticed a cat hair on a felt wick used by the arsonist. The identification of this one hair led to the cat's owner's arrest.

With experience, some policemen develop perception into a knack. In the Niagara peninsula a couple of Mounties on highway patrol were driving behind a truck loaded with baled hay. One of them thought the truck was riding oddly. He checked the license by radio with the Ontario Provincial Police and found that the truck was registered in the name of a known smuggler. The Mounties stopped the truck and found nine hundred thousand smuggled cigarettes buried in the hay.

Minor crimes are usually the hardest to solve. A Mountie



## THE INVESTIGATOR

cannot muster all the resources of his force for an unimportant breach of the law. He must cope with the petty criminals as best he can alone and this often results in some of the neatest examples of detection.

There was, for instance, the unlucky thief who drove into a farm in Saskatchewan, loaded fifty bushels of oats onto his truck and drove off. No one saw him, the tire tracks weren't clear and the farmer had no suspicions.

A Mountie looked over the granary and observed that a swallow's nest had been dislodged from a rafter above the oat bin. He asked about oat purchases at all nearby elevators. One farmer's son, he discovered, had sold forty-eight bushels of oats the day after the theft. Sifting this grain the Mountie recovered some pieces of clay from the swallow's nest. Some of the pieces still carried the impression of the rafter. When the Mountie confronted the farmer's son with this evidence, he confessed.

And there was the prairie-town Mountie who was roused at 1:20 A.M. by the local hotel manager. A third-floor guest asleep in his room had been startled awake by robbers. One had smashed a bottle over his head and held him under the covers while the other located his money, a couple of hundred dollars. They had left him stunned. He couldn't describe their faces or their voices. He could only say that he thought there had been two men.

The Mountie pieced together the broken glass in the bed: a beer bottle. He checked the fire escape exits; they were all locked from the inside. He searched the linen closets, the lavatories, all the hiding places down to the basement. Since the manager was positive that no one had left by the stairs,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

the Mountie was reasonably sure that the robbers were guests in the hotel.

It was now 2:30. The manager did not want his guests disturbed. The Mountie could only listen outside the closed doors. A few doors down from the victim's room he heard two men's muffled voices. The manager agreed to open their door. Two men were in bed. Indignantly they protested this intrusion. They knew nothing of any robbery, they said. If the Mountie thought they were lying he was welcome to search their room.

Concealed in the wastebasket, the Mountie found the money. The two men said it wasn't theirs and they didn't know how it had got there. The Mountie had to prove they had put it there or he had no case.

He checked his facts. The robbers had hit their victim with a beer bottle. These men had been drinking the same brand of beer. He counted their empty bottles: seven. He counted the bottle caps: *eight*. It was enough to induce a confession.

No two cases break the same but there is a general pattern. The Mountie comes to a dead end. He lays out all the facts. Something in the picture seems out of place. It doesn't quite fit. He may deduce its meaning — usually after a good deal of work. But once in a while he seems to arrive at it almost intuitively.

In September 1951, Constable Robert Morris, on detachment in a small Alberta town, was called to the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Roe.\* While they had been away on a visit

\* All names in this story, except that of the Mountie, have been changed.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

to Calgary, a thief had broken into their bedroom and looted their piggy bank. Roe hadn't wanted to bother the Mountie with it but his wife had insisted it was their duty.

Morris checked the window for tool marks but it had not been locked. There was mud on the floor but no footprints clear enough to be of use. The piggy bank had no fingerprints on it.

The robbery seemed to be the work of a tramp. Morris questioned the neighbors but no one had seen any strangers. He came back to the bedroom. As he looked about, baffled, he became aware of the bed. It was slightly rumpled. A possibility suddenly formed in his mind.

"Did you make the bed before you left?" he asked Mrs. Roe.

"Certainly," she said.

"Has either of you lain down since you got back?"

Neither had.

"It looks a bit mussed," the Mountie said. "Maybe the thief slept in it." He did not want to alarm the couple needlessly. "Would you mind stripping it, please?"

They found nothing.

"Now let's lift the mattress," Morris persisted.

There, under the mattress, in the center of the bed-springs, wrapped in the pages of an illustrated weekly, were two flat boards with some brown granular stuff between them.

"Keep back!" the Mountie warned. He leaned over and sniffed it. "There's enough dynamite here to blow up this house. Whoever planted it wanted you to think that he was a sneakthief."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

James and Sara Roe were aghast. They couldn't think of anyone who hated them enough to try to blow them up in bed. Morris sent the deadly homemade bomb to the crime lab, which replied in a deadpan report that it could have been detonated by "pressure, friction, jarring or heat."

There are coal mines in that part of Alberta and Morris knew that miners have access to dynamite. The Mountie made the rounds of the local cafés and kept asking questions till he learned that Sara Roe had once spurned advances from a heavy-drinking miner named Alfred Kirwan who for days had brooded over it.

The Mountie picked up a warrant and searched Kirwan's house. He found part of an illustrated weekly. The missing pages corresponded with those wrapped around the bomb. At the bottom of a pile of boards Kirwan used for carpentry was a small piece of freshly sawn board that fitted exactly to a board in the dynamite package.

Kirwan confessed. He also confessed he had planted another bomb, a piece of drilled-out firewood filled with dynamite, in the woodpile in James Roe's woodshed.

The Mountie rushed with the miner to the Roe home. He evacuated the couple. Then, in the darkness of the shed, he stood behind Kirwan, flashing a light on the woodpile, very much aware that if the pile fell down they'd go up, while the miner searched till he found his lethal weapon.

Morris's close attention to what at first seemed a trifling matter probably saved two lives and got Kirwan four years. His starting point was the bed, a detail that seemed irrelevant. Some policemen would say he had broken the case on a hunch. But a hunch is no more than the mind relating

## THE INVESTIGATOR

facts unconsciously after being set in motion by hard thought.

The RCMP investigator has something in common with the army infantryman: no matter how his weapons improve, his techniques do not change. He depends first of all on his physical equipment: wide-open eyes and ears and a mind to match.

# 5

**S**ERGEANT Jerry Carroll is a chunky blue-eyed man with a fondness for mystery stories. He is one of a trio of plainclothes men stationed at Ottawa, a central squad of trouble-shooters who may be assigned to difficult cases anywhere in Canada. The trio includes a lawyer, an accountant and Carroll, who directs it. A quiet, diffident, almost self-conscious bachelor in his forties, he is one of the most experienced of RCMP investigators.

Carroll won his reputation in Saskatchewan. Two of his cases there — arson cases, the most difficult to solve since most of the evidence is burned — illustrate the second phase of investigation. It involves questioning anyone who can throw any light on the crime.

Carroll's questions are not the kind detectives usually ask in the stories he reads. They would make the hero seem far too simple, too unimaginative. But they show what policemen mean when they say that an investigator begins to be good when he knows what it is he is looking for.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

On the prairie at the edge of Saskatoon one summer's day a big deserted farmhouse was gutted by fire. The fire chief could find no reason for the blaze. He called the Saskatoon CIB and Carroll drove out.

He checked first with the power company. The electricity, they told him, had been cut at the pole when the last tenant moved (leaving some of his furniture). Neighbors had seen no children playing about. There had been no electrical storms. An accidental fire seemed unlikely.

The house was owned by the government, there was no insurance angle, no arson for profit motive. The Mountie's next question, self-directed: had someone tried to buy the farm and been turned down — arson for spite. He traced the former tenant and questioned him closely, noticing that the hair on the back of the man's hand had been singed (which later proved to be a coincidence). The man had not been trying to buy the property. He lacked any arson motive — unless he was a pyromaniac, a person who gets satisfaction from starting fires.

"What furniture did you leave in the house?" Carroll asked him.

The man listed some articles, among them a small radio. Carroll searched the ruins. The metal radio framework, which never burns, could not be found. The Mountie asked the tenant where he had bought the radio and got its serial number from the dealer. He was now fairly sure that the motive was to cover up a theft.

Questioning the neighbors again he learned that a naked man had been seen by day on the bank of the river about a mile from the farmhouse. Carroll sent for a police dog to

## THE INVESTIGATOR

search where the man had been seen. The dog unearthed a towel and a man's undershirt. At the crime lab, infra-red rays revealed the laundry mark. It was traced to a hospital night orderly. Carroll found the missing radio in his room. It was one of the few arson cases where the confession was superfluous.

The skillful investigator knows not only the questions to ask, but how to ask them. There are times to make people feel that whatever they say is already known, times to make them feel that whatever they say is important, times to be tough (within the law), times to be sympathetic.

One hot August afternoon when Carroll was stationed at Yorkton, he took a telephone call from Corporal Patrick Beach at Balcarres, a nearby prairie town. "Jerry?" said Beach. "Frank Catlack's house has burned down. There's a body in the ruins. I think it's Florence Brabant."

Catlack was a well-known farmer, thirty-seven years old. Florence Brabant, twenty and strikingly pretty, was a lively half-French, half-Indian girl. Catlack spent all his money on her clothes and entertainment. Almost every night they went partying in his new car.

At Balcarres, Carroll found that Beach had picked up Catlack in town. He was a big, muscular, darkskinned man, handsome in a faintly sinister fashion. His features were marred by several fresh scratches.

"Where's Florence, Frank?" Carroll asked him.

"I left her at home, Corporal." Catlack lived about ten miles out.

"When was that?"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"Around noon."

"Did you have any insurance on the house?"

"It's covered all right."

"Where do you keep your policies?"

"In the bank."

"Is that where they are now?" It was an obvious question, precisely the sort a more subtle man than Carroll might not have asked.

Catlack hesitated. "Well, no."

"Where are they then?"

"In my pocket," said Catlack reluctantly.

Carroll's voice sharpened. "How did you get the cuts on your face, Frank?"

"I don't know. I had a lot to drink last night. I must have hurt myself. I spent the night in the hotel here. There was blood on my pillow this morning when I woke up."

The hotel owner couldn't recall Catlack's face being scratched when he checked in. The Mountie was certain Catlack was lying. He wanted to keep him in town but he couldn't hold him without evidence. "You know, Frank," he told Catlack, "if Florence really died in that fire, people are liable to blame you. It might be safer for you to bunk in with us till we clear this up." To Carroll's relief, Catlack agreed.

The embers of the burned house were still smoldering that evening as the two Mounties shoveled a curled charred body into cartons. They shipped it by RCMP plane to a Saskatoon pathologist. In the morning they sifted the ashes but found no evidence.

Carroll spent the rest of the day asking questions. Neigh-



## THE INVESTIGATOR

boring farmers had seen Florence in Catlack's yard the morning of the fire. A section hand had seen Catlack walking toward the train stop, glancing back repeatedly in the direction of his house. Two hours later a farmer had sighted the first smoke. The conductor of the train in which Catlack rode to town recalled that Catlack's face was scratched when he got on.

The pathologist's report, on the third morning after the fire, established the victim's sex, build, approximate age and color of hair. The description fitted Florence and Florence was missing. It was adding up but it was far from enough to place a charge. Carroll needed a motive. He got it late that day in his third talk with the owner of the hotel.

The Mountie went back to Catlack. "Frank," he said, his manner no longer relaxed, "you've been lying. You're covering up. You were seen leaving the farm all scratched up around one forty-five. You were looking back. You were watching for smoke. You had the insurance policies in your pocket. You'd had a fight with Florence. Florence was going to leave you. She's a girl who likes a good time and you've spent all your money, Frank. You can't even keep up the payments on your car. She was going to work at the hotel, starting the end of the month. She was going to to leave you and you loved her. You loved her, didn't you, Frank?"

Tears began to roll down Catlack's face. "I may have something to tell you tomorrow," he said. Again he slept in the unlocked detachment cell. Carroll, in the next room, could hear him tossing and turning. In the morning he said, "If I tell the truth, will I get my wish, Corporal? Will you take me to Regina and hang me right away?"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"Sorry, Frank," said Carroll, "that's up to the court."

Catlack sat silent for a long time.

"Would you like me to write it for you, Frank?" Carroll prompted softly. He needed a confession; the case was far from airtight.

"I thought too much of her," Catlack blurted suddenly. "We were too jealous of each other. She always said that same thing. She said she was leaving me. After that I lost my head. I told her, if I can't have you no one else will, and I told her, I am going to kill you. She jumped up and scratched me." He stopped. The Mountie said nothing. Presently Catlack continued.

"This other part is hard. If I tell you, you're not going to jump me?"

"No," Carroll said quietly.

"So she ran in the kitchen." Catlack's face was working. "So I put my hands around her throat and choked her. I might as well tell you, I set the house on fire. I got nothing to lose."

Carroll had been writing this in his notebook. The case seemed open-and-shut now. But he knew he could still lose in court; confessions are almost always contested. At this point he showed the touch of the seasoned policeman.

"Frank," he said, "we didn't find Florence's watch or rings in the ruins. Do you want to tell us where they are?"

Catlack nodded mutely and led him to the spot where he had buried the jewelry. The investigation had ended; the double climax came later.

As Corporal Beach was escorting Catlack back from the coroner's hearing to his cell in the RCMP detachment, the

## THE INVESTIGATOR

big farmer suddenly went berserk with pent-up despair. Locked together, the two men fought savagely through the cell room, through the office and into the garden. The Mountie's wife, running frantically down from their quarters upstairs, snatched up a soft-drink bottle and struck Catlack on the head. It stopped the maddened man only momentarily. He was killing Beach, throttling him, banging his head on the ground, when two neighbors came running over and pulled him away.

In his death cell Catlack was given pills to enable him to sleep. He managed to save a handful, swallowed them all at once and died on the night before he was to hang. Behind him he left a note to Florence Brabant.

## 6

**A**CROSS the Mountie's desk flows a steady stream of facts, borne on a turbulent tide of humanity. This is his second source of information: the public. Troubled, anxious, fearful, suspicious, demanding, dutiful, the public tells the Mountie what it saw, heard, thinks and feels — a car parked overlong in an alley, a shot heard during the night, a feeling that the boy next door is the rapist sought by police. It is vital information but the vital facts must be winnowed from much that is trivial or meaningless.

In an incident typical of its kind a man came into the RCMP's Vancouver office and asked for police protection.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Someone had tried to gas him at his house in Victoria, he said.

"When was this?" asked an RCMP inspector.

"Last night. They tried last night while I was in bed."

"How do you know it was gas?"

"It was hissing."

"Did you get up to see where it was coming from?"

"Yes, but they're clever. I couldn't find it."

"Who do you think was trying to gas you?"

"That's your job to find out."

"But gas is very complicated," the Mounted Policeman said patiently. "It takes a lot of pipes and equipment. Wouldn't it be easier for them to push you off the ferry coming over from Victoria?"

"No. It's a gas they're using."

"Don't you think, if you couldn't find the gas pipe, it might have been the water faucet you heard?"

At this the man became highly indignant. He left the divisional office convinced that the Mountie was in on the plot. And the Mountie, from the first mention of "they," had been equally sure that the man was mentally ill.

One common "they" is "the radio gang," who try to kill their victim by transmitting a "voice" that tells him to walk into moving traffic. At one time so many complaints came into the Montreal office for action against the radio gang that a sergeant assigned himself to the "case." He sawed a lead pipe into three-inch lengths and placed them on his desk. Soon, a man came in and said, half-belligerently: "Now, I know you won't believe me, but the radio gang are out to get me."

## THE INVESTIGATOR

"Of course, I believe you," the sergeant said. "We know all about this gang. We've been after them for years. Now, *you* won't believe *me*, but our scientists have found a way to fool this gang. Take this. It looks just like a length of pipe. Put it under your pillow at night. Don't let it out of your sight. It will ground the reception from their transmitter." In Montreal, the radio gang is now under control.

People come into the Mountie's office with tales of foreign spies, Martian invasions and buried bodies. There was the veteran trapper, seventy-odd and eccentric, who mushed out of the bush in the winter of 1950 into the RCMP detachment at Flin Flon, a mining town in northern Manitoba. His name was Donald McLeod, he said, better known as "Skipper." His partner, Paddy Allen, was missing, drowned in a lake near their trap line. How did he know? He had dreamed he saw him breaking through the lake ice.

It was scarcely a story to which a logical man could give credence. Yet in the spring, after break-up, Allen's body was found on the shore of the lake McLeod had seen in his dream.

The following June, McLeod trekked in to see the Mounties again. He had had another dream, he explained. He had dreamed of a canoe abandoned in the narrows of Lake Athapuskow. Four days later a prospector reported that while flying over the narrows he had sighted a sunken canoe.

Searching the shore the Mounties found amongst a litter of wreckage a scarf belonging to Bertha Johnson, part-Indian wife of James Johnson, a young Flin Flon resident who had set out with Bertha the fall before in search of a

## THE LIVING LEGEND

sawmill job. Again the Mounties were visited by Skipper McLeod. He had been afraid to tell them all his dream, he said, for fear they would laugh at him. He had seen the canoe pulling up to shore, a couple getting out, the woman walking away ahead of the man, the man firing a rifle bullet through the woman's head, another through his own.

The Mounties organized a second search party. In from the lake several hundred yards were two bodies, half-eaten by wolves. Each skull had been bored by a bullet, one from the front, one from the back, and beside them lay the rifle.

McLeod's dreams are reminiscent of the famous Hayward case, wherein a sea captain went to bed at his home in Kent, England, one night in mid-September 1904, and dreamed he was in, yet not quite part of, a strange brooding land, a wilderness of rivers and woods unlike any he had seen. He woke, unaccountably frightened, laughed at himself and went back to sleep. Again the forbidding landscape unfolded before him, shadowed but startlingly clear in the light of a full moon. He saw a dying campfire and two men sleeping beside it. The moonlight shone on their faces and he recognized Edward, his brother, who was in the far Canadian Northwest. As he watched in gathering horror, the other dream figure stirred, crept from his blankets, lifted a rifle, and shot Edward twice through the head.

Next day, the captain jokingly described the dream to some friends. One of them told a newspaperman, who published a full account, dated a few days before a northern Cree chief named Moos Toos, six thousand miles away, paddled into a Mounted Police detachment on Lesser Slave

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Lake, far north of Edmonton, with a story almost as bizarre.

Moos Toos was grateful to the Mountie, Staff Sergeant Kristjan Anderson, for stopping two crooked white contractors from cutting trees on his reserve. He told the Mountie that two strange white men had camped three nights near his settlement. One was tall with a black beard, the other was short and brown-bearded. The tall man had said they were headed outside via Athabaska Landing. But when the short man left he was alone. He was leading four pack horses loaded with traps and a black collie dog. The dog would not obey him, which was queer. Visiting their campsite to salvage anything left behind, some squaws had found the ashes of a huge fire. The poplar leaves above it were filmed with fat.

At the campsite Anderson found a heap of ashes six feet long, three feet across and a foot high. Raking through them with his bare hands he extracted some charred bits of bone, some flesh, and what looked like a human heart. Anderson rode after the man with the brown beard.

He found him in Athabaska Landing waiting for a boat out, a mild, middle-aged ex-farmer from Utah named Charles King. The black-bearded man, said King, was a stranger who spent only one night with him, then passed on to Sturgeon Lake. A barge arrived from Sturgeon Lake next morning. Its skipper said no white man had arrived there. Anderson had no evidence, but King had sold his outfit and was obviously on his way back to the States. The Mountie took a long chance and arrested him for murder.

Back at the campsite, Moos Toos helped the Mountie

## THE LIVING LEGEND

screen the ashes while his half-naked tribesmen waded around in a nearby slough, waist-high in icy water, probing the slippery bottom with bare feet. In the slough they found a broken needle, a pair of boots, a gold pin, a watch and chain, and a gold sovereign case. The other half of the needle was found in the ashes.

Mounties now traced King and the missing man back to Edmonton, where the blackbeard was indentified as an E. Hayward. They mustered eighty witnesses to prove that the two men were partners, that Hayward had bought the outfit which King had sold, that the articles in the slough had belonged to Hayward, that the two men had quarreled repeatedly, that while camping on the reserve a pretty sqaw had visited Hayward at 2 A.M. on the morning that King departed alone, that King had been jealous, that two shots were heard that night, and that Hayward had never again been seen. The needle linked the slough to the fire and the flesh and bone in the ashes were identified by an eastern doctor as human.

But the star witness was a sea captain who had come all the way from England, Captain George Hayward, the victim's brother. Anderson had located him through the maker's name on the gold sovereign case. The captain said that the case had been a gift from his father to Edward. Captain Hayward's dream was not introduced as evidence. The chain of facts that began with the information given by Moos Toos, that dutiful citizen of the north woods, was enough to hang Charles King.

Every story brought in by the public must be evaluated; a policeman cannot take anything for granted. He must



## THE INVESTIGATOR

learn to distinguish between the mentally ill and the mentally disturbed. At teatime one February afternoon in 1947 a dark heavy-set stranger walked into Saskatchewan's Yorkton detachment.

"I'm Charles Martin," he said. "Give me a smoke and get me a priest. What I got to say will knock the heads off you guys." Then Martin recited a fantastic tale of murder.

In 1944, he said, at Mission, British Columbia, he had shot a man, encased his body in concrete and dropped it into the sea. Two years later, at a mine north of Lake Superior, he had gone hunting with the mine owner, Joseph Grant, and a miner. Carrying an ax and walking ahead, as he said they told him to, he had caught the click of a rifle bolt, whirled and threw his ax, cutting Grant down as the man was about to shoot him. Then, snatching up Grant's rifle, Martin had shot the other man.

"I know I'm putting my head in a noose," Charles Martin said. "You may think I'm nuts. But I wanted to get this all off my chest."

Investigation proved Martin's murder in Mission to be brain-spun. He was known there as a strange character, a consummate actor who wanted people to be afraid of him. He had drifted east to Montreal, then westward again, a sometime woods worker, trucker and railway hand. He had called at three other RCMP detachments in the past month telling of having been doped, waylaid, of knifing a man in a fight. All the stories were fabrications.

Martin was interviewed again. He admitted that he had spells of imagining things. He suffered from epilepsy, he said.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

But a wire from police at Fort William showed that one part of his story was true. The two men he said he had shot were missing. The Ontario Provincial Police dynamited a road through the bush to the mine, brought in bulldozers to clear the ground of snow, and found the bodies of Grant and the miner, both shot twice. The evidence showed that they had been hunting, as Martin said, and Martin *had* gone ahead. He had ambushed the two men, stolen their wallets, hidden his .303 rifle, and headed south for the highway in Grant's jeep. Then he remembered that just before they had set out on the hunt Grant had snapped his picture holding the rifle. He snowshoed back but he could not locate the camera.

All winter long that snapshot had haunted Martin. Did the police have it or not? Finally he could no longer stand the uncertainty. He determined to find out how much the police knew (nothing — a hunter named Emil Pilon had picked up the camera). But first Martin tried to establish a pattern of insanity, thinking that if the snapshot had not been found — if he was not wanted — he would be dismissed as a crackpot. It was a desperate scheme that cost him his life on the gallows.

## 7

**E**VERY Mountie cultivates a circle of special informants, his third and often his most important source of information. They might include a bank manager, a mail-

## THE INVESTIGATOR

man or a bookie. Even when he is not on a case a Mountie spends much of his time just building up his contacts, keeping in touch with what's going on.

One night in Port Alberni, B.C., a Mountie dropped into a hotel for a chat with the new desk clerk. The new man hadn't yet learned how his switchboard worked. The Mountie offered to show him. He put the headphones on just in time to hear a voice say, "We're out of rum, will whiskey do?" A few minutes later a bootlegging taxi driver delivered a bottle of whiskey right into the Mountie's waiting hands.

The most useful of these special informants are criminals, small-time crooks who doublecross their fraternal brothers for a drink, a loan, because the Mountie once gave them a break, because they expect another, because of fear, hatred, envy, or simply to earn some money. If their information leads to arrest and conviction, the RCMP may pay them from ten to several hundred dollars, depending on the importance of the case. The Mountie pays the informant himself, keeps his identity secret from even his own superior officer. In the crime report the informant's role is camouflaged by the phrase "from information received."

It was an informant's tip that broke the most sensational of all RCMP smuggling cases. In 1923, Montreal was a smuggler's paradise. A half-dozen smuggling rings were flooding the port with contraband. Black market sales were displacing legal sales in Canadian stores at the rate of fifty to one hundred million dollars a year.

None of the Mounties' regular informants knew how the goods came in. Staff Sergeant Ernest Salt, head of Montreal's

## THE LIVING LEGEND

plainclothes squad, met secretly with a prominent racketeer named Delane, who agreed for a consideration to leak word to the underworld that he was interested in buying drugs. At the same time Salt put two undercover Mounties on the job.

In two months Delane had contacted one ring. "They buy the stuff in Barcelona," he told Salt. "It's routed through Liverpool packed in trunks and comes in here with phony bills of lading."

"It's coming in here through customs?"

"That's the deal." Delane named a high customs official who he said was in the pay of seven different operators. "They wise him up when it's coming and his boys see it gets through the warehouse. The fix is a thousand bucks a trunk, four dollars a gallon for liquor."

This confirmed in detail what Salt had been told by one undercover Mountie, Sergeant Charlie Brown. Salt asked Delane who was behind the gang he was dickering with.

"I don't know," Delane said, "but I'll tell you who their front man is." The racketeer smiled in malicious anticipation of Salt's discomfort. "Don Miguel Maluquer y Salvador, the Spanish consul."

Salt's confidential report, passed on to headquarters, faced the commissioner with a delicate chore: breaking the news to the disbelieving heads of the Customs Branch, under whom came all customs and excise policing. At last, after hearing Brown testify, they agreed to cooperate.

And now there booked into the swank Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal a millionaire racketeer from Chicago. He gave his name as Robino. He was six-foot-four and broad,

## THE INVESTIGATOR

with a bold, hard, swarthy face. His manner was expansive. He had that unmistakable to-hell-with-the-consequences air of a born adventurer. This was Sergeant Charlie Brown.

Delane introduced "Mr. Robino" as his backer to Don Miguel, the Spanish consul, and the three men lunched together at the Ritz. The plump suave diplomat was impressed by Delane's backer and the sums he seemed prepared to spend.

"It will be a pleasure to do business with you, Mr. Robino," he said. "My friends in Barcelona can get you anything you wish. The merchandise — we refer to it as cognac — will be packed inside cases of olive oil."

"You mean that's supposed to get it through customs?" Brown said scornfully.

"No, no," Don Miguel assured him. "A friend of mine takes care of that. He is out of town at the moment. When he returns I will try to arrange a meeting."

Days passed before Don Miguel again appeared. With him was a man whom he introduced as Tey de Torrents, a small assured man with prematurely gray hair. He was one of Montreal's wealthiest importers. He questioned Brown so sharply, his bargaining was so shrewd, that the Mountie was convinced this man was the mastermind of the ring.

They reached an impasse when "Robino" refused to pay in advance. "You ask us to take all the risk, Mr. Robino," de Torrents said. "There is only one other way. You must yourself go to Spain. Don Miguel will give you a letter of introduction to our associate, Felix Martorell of Barcelona."

In Barcelona, Brown took a room at the Ritz. Then he waited for Staff Sergeant Salt, who was also enroute to Spain

## THE LIVING LEGEND

in the guise of an English army captain; he needed Salt's testimony to support his own evidence. Salt arrived on the next ship and Brown went to see Martorell.

Felix Martorell was a prosperous wine merchant and landowner, a pudgy, popeyed little man whose appearance masked an acute mind. His son, a youthful replica of his father, interpreted for him.

"You have come at a bad time, Señor Robino. We have just had a revolution, you know. We are under martial law. The soldiers search everyone on the street. The goods you want, we cannot get them at any price, not even to oblige our good friend Don Miguel. My father wishes me to say how exceedingly sorry he is that you have come so far for nothing."

Brown talked it over in private with Salt, then went back to Martorell. "If I can't get drugs," he said, "how about alcohol?"

Martorell's shrewd popeyes studied his face. "I can give you a good price on alcohol," he agreed at length. "How many cases would you require?"

Brown had no authority to spend government money on alcohol. He hesitated. "How about fifty?"

"Fifty!" Martorell exclaimed in astonishment. "Fifty cases? It is nothing!" Brown could see that he had suddenly grown wary. "My dear Mr. Robino, do you ask me to believe that you, an American millionaire, would come all the way to Spain for only fifty cases of alcohol?"

"Look," Brown said, "I might as well tell you the truth. I didn't expect to make money on this trip. I came here for two reasons — to contact you and to see if your friend de

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Torrents is telling the truth when he says he can get the stuff through customs. If he can I'm prepared to spend millions of dollars with you. But it's drugs I want, not alcohol. This is a test case. I don't intend to risk any more than I need to."

Martorell and his son conferred in rapid Spanish. A smile broke over the son's face. "Ah, Señor Robino, my father agrees. You are indeed a wise man. We will send your fifty cases in care of Señor Tey de Torrents. It will take us a month to get the proper receptacles. There is no need that you wait. Leave the money with our bank. They will pay us when we have made the shipment." Later, Martorell suggested that if their big deals went well he and Brown should form a world-wide drug syndicate. He had contacts, he said, in Central Europe and North Africa. "Robino" would head the North American branch.

Back in Montreal, Brown found de Torrents suspicious. "Robino" had been shadowed by one of Martorell's men, who had seen him in conversation with a certain Captain Parker (Salt), who could be an English secret service agent. Brown passed it off as two English-speaking people meeting by chance. But four months passed and the shipment did not arrive. Salt and Brown were worried. Not only was this their only hope of exposing the scandal in customs and of smashing the biggest smuggling ring in the city, but their very reputations were at stake, for an Ottawa customs official, in a letter to the commissioner, insinuated that Salt and Brown had fabricated the whole affair for a profitable holiday.

By December the conspirators were accusing each other

## THE LIVING LEGEND

of treachery. Then de Torrents received a cable from Martorell. The delay had been caused by a shortage of containers.

It was only the first of a comedy of errors. The ship that was to carry the alcohol caught fire and burned. Martorell canceled the next sailing, via New York, when he heard of a big drug seizure in that port. With the shipment due to arrive any day, Brown was called to Vancouver to testify in another case. He returned in time to hear that part of the shipment had been lost. The missing cans were found in Pittsburgh, damaged and leaking, as reported by the United States customs, "a liquid curiously thin for olive oil."

It passed the Montreal customs nevertheless, and "Robino" agreed to pay de Torrents \$3500 to bribe the customs officials. At this critical juncture, negotiations paused, suspended precariously, while the Mounties talked Ottawa customs officials out of their stubborn demand that Brown ask de Torrents for a receipt, a course tantamount to Brown showing the smuggler his badge.

On the day of the payoff de Torrents walked into a downtown bank. He gave his name to the teller who handed over "Robino's" check. De Torrents cashed it at once, receiving \$100 bills. He did not know that the bills were marked or that Mounties were shadowing him.

Meanwhile, Salt and two other Mounties were searching the Spanish consul's apartment while Don Miguel, white-faced and shaking, blustered, threatened and pleaded by turns. Salt was unperturbed. The consul had no diplomatic immunity.

"You can at least," Don Miguel said, "spare my country



## THE INVESTIGATOR

the embarrassment of escorting me through the streets like a common criminal.”

Salt agreed. He sent his two men ahead and he and the consul walked alone down the street toward the RCMP office. They met another Spaniard. Don Miguel stopped. Talking hurriedly in Spanish, paying no attention to Salt, he tried to pass some letters to his friend.

Salt took his arm. Don Miguel wrenched away. He lifted his cane in a threatening gesture and shoved Salt toward his friend. Salt sprang aside and the consul took a pratfall over a doorstep.

The scuffle, protested in London by the Spanish ambassador, had the makings of an international incident. But Salt could prove that the consul had been treated courteously. Don Miguel and de Torrents were jailed, the importer's license was canceled, Martorell was banned from ever again exporting to Canada, and an inquiry into the customs led to a royal commission report, a shakeup, and complete reform of the system.

Most narcotics cases are broken by tips. It seems a simple method but the Mountie must inspire confidence. He must be a man whom even the faithless will trust to keep faith.

## 8

**T**HE MOUNTIE at the scene of a crime leans heavily on routine. He turns frequently to what he calls the Ident (Identification) Branch, to a group of police methods

## THE LIVING LEGEND

so astonishingly successful that their use has become as automatic as using a cliché. And even as people who talk in clichés are sometimes considered dull, so the investigator is sometimes thought to be using routine as a substitute for judgment.

“Routine” is perhaps the weariest word in the lexicon of police terms. Yet it is based on one of the most mysterious facets of life: of the myriad creatures that burrow, crawl and walk this earth no two are exactly alike. Beneath its apparent solidity, all matter is constantly changing; in the very act of creation the womb is altered, the mold is broken, never again to create in precisely that form. Police routine, the methods of the Identification Branch, are founded on this birthright of singularity — of mind, skin, features and odor.

An alert Mountie keeps tab on the crooks in his district, including the itinerant professionals. He strolls down to the railway station to meet the incoming train, spots a familiar face and calls, “Hey, Joe! What are you doing in town?” Joe is a safecracker. They have a coffee together. “Don’t worry, pal,” the safecracker says, “I’m not stopping off this trip.”

If Joe does stop off, the Mountie makes sure he can find him if he wants him. He knows Joe’s hangouts. He knows Joe’s friends. If Joe decides to pull a job, the Mountie knows his methods.

Much of this intimate knowledge is lost when the Mountie transfers or retires. But some — by no means enough — is saved. From all over the country it trickles in

## THE INVESTIGATOR

to the Identification Branch to be broken down and filed in the crime index, a remarkable compilation of criminal folklore.

The index operates on the theory that criminals are human, by which it is meant that they have their petty faults, likes and dislikes. Like everyone else, they form habits, personal and professional. One burglar drinks all the liquor in the house he is robbing. Another always defiles it before he leaves. One forger cashes all his checks accompanied by a Pomeranian. Another bites his fingernails while he works.

In Winnipeg, in 1953, a city detective was called to the scene of a safeblowing. He noted the details, filled in a form, and mailed it to the RCMP crime index section, two big file-lined rooms supervised by a cheerful round-faced staff sergeant, D. H. "Cass" Cassidy. One of his staff of twenty-seven typed out a small card headed "Breaks safe, outside shot," and filed it in the MO (for method of operation) under "Unsolved crimes" in the safeblowing category. He also made out another card headed "Wears socks over shoes."

Over the next year a half-dozen cards were filed with this wording. The forms came in from diverse points in Manitoba. Several detectives suspected but could not prove that this MO was the trade mark of Mike Tokar, a well-known safeblower.

One rainy night in August 1954, a man broke a window at the back of the Co-op store in the little hamlet of Percival, Saskatchewan. He unlatched the window, climbed in, knelt beside the square box safe, rimmed the door with nitroglyc-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

erine, blew it open and disappeared with \$421. All this was apparent immediately to the Mounties, who investigated. Outside in the mud beneath the broken window they found footprints with a strange, fine-textured tread. It looked as if the safeblower had tried to disguise his shoe prints by pulling socks over his shoes.

They teletyped the MO to the crime index section which sent back Mike Tokar's name and photograph. The photograph was picked from a hundred others by a Co-op clerk, who had seen this man casing the store the day of the robbery. It was picked out again by a bus driver who had driven him east in the night. The man had paid his fare with a five-dollar bill. The Mounties asked to see the bill, noted a torn corner, examined all the floor sweepings in the Co-op's rubbish bins and found a matching corner. Mike Tokar was arrested three weeks later in Winnipeg and from the lead which his MO supplied he was put out of business for six years.

"In a case like this," says the index supervisor, Staff Sergeant Cassidy, "we forget about name — some of these guys have a dozen — and look under method. Crooks are like anyone else — they can make more money by specializing. They do what they can do best. Some have nerve. Some have wit. Others are smooth talkers. They find out from experience that a certain method works and they go on using it. A second-story man stays on the second story. Even if he's caught on the tenth offense, he figures it's a tough break and his specialty is still a good racket."

The method of operation, or *modus operandi*, is first broken down into types of crimes: Armed Robbery,

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Bigamy, Baby Farming. Armed Robbery is then broken down into Bank, Business place, etc. It's subdivided into the time of day or night the crime was committed, and it's subdivided again by the kind of weapon used, and so on for each crime.

The criminals themselves are filed by appearance, age, height, habits, even by conversation. Under DEFORMITIES are such headings as Gait, Hair, Teeth, Scars, Tattoos, Warts; and each of these headings is subdivided. Under HAIR, for example, is Dyed, Redheads and Bald (a huge file). Under HABITS are such items as: Wears monocle, Takes snuff, Scotchtapes fingerprints, Carries dynamite, Uses hypnotism. Under SPEAKS OF are Dieppe, Brother in U.S. Army, Girl friend, Operations. Criminals, too, have their conversational staples.

Sometimes an investigator writes in and says his only lead is a witness who heard one robber say to another: "Come on, Dusty, let's get out of here." This may be enough to break the case. The index holds hundreds of cards filed under such descriptive monickers as Boxcar Tony, Boom-Boom, Bread-Eyes, Flannelcoat, Flattop, Foxy, Georgie the Greek, Gentleman Jim and Howie the Rat.

Some of the queerest specimens in the human galaxy have their eccentricities listed in the index. There is the sadistic German with the three missing wives who, police are sure but cannot prove, tossed them into a red-hot furnace. There is Joseph Jacques of Hull, Quebec, greatest of lonely heart swindlers, a short, fat, bald-headed craftsman who extracted \$100,000 from four to five hundred ladies

## THE LIVING LEGEND

without leaving the shabby boardinghouse room wherein he composed his passionate letters.

The MO records the antics of such off-beat characters as le Marquis Joseph Charles Gouin de Fontenailles. This, at least, was the name he signed to the hotel register in Joliette, Quebec, early in 1947. The marquis at once contacted the town's officials and businessmen. He spread before them the blueprints for a large industry and captivated his listeners with his story of the benefits that the town would enjoy by the building of this factory.

The marquis was a scrawny man with a sallow bony face. His shirt looked as if he had slept in it. His brown suit was badly worn. His shoes were disreputable. Yet he had charm, indefinable style, he held his liquor well, his high forehead, beaked nose and keen eyes were aristocratic. He confided that he had a secret process for waterproofing cement blocks, invented when he was an engineer on France's Maginot Line. The Germans had confiscated his estates but before he went underground he had managed to transfer a few million dollars to a bank in Mexico City. This money would be arriving in Joliette soon.

In a few days the marquis was the town's biggest celebrity. Officials bustled in and out of his hotel room. He was given his choice of thirty-three lots to build his factory on. Soon his site was swarming with bulldozers, trucks and steamshovels. He hired several hundred workmen, skilled and unskilled. All Joliette's truck drivers left their jobs to work for the marquis and the town had no one to clean its streets.

At the week's end the hotel manager brought Gouin his

## THE INVESTIGATOR

bill, apologizing diffidently for troubling a busy man with such a trifling matter. The marquis's sensibilities were affronted. He demanded the hotel owner's name and began a forceful discussion of the conditions under which he would buy the hotel. The chastened manager took care not to again offend a man for whom he might soon be working.

Payday came for the workers. Gouin gave them post-dated checks that Joliette merchants were only too happy to honor. The marquis arranged to buy more land, he talked of a second factory, he shopped for a luxurious summer home. His workmen felt themselves lucky to be working for a nobleman who never stopped to count the cost. One prominent Joliette citizen gave the marquis his home to use as a temporary business headquarters, and he moved his family to Montreal to spare the great lord inconvenience.

It was not until the merchants presented the postdated checks at the bank that the truth broke like a thunderbolt over the town. The marquis had no money. He was unknown to the bank, though not, however, to the Mounties. The crime index file showed that in 1940 the U.S. legation in Ottawa had asked if it was true that Joseph Charles Gouin de Fontenailles would be Canada's next ambassador to Peru. He had, it seems, created similar though lesser commotions in New York and Washington, apparently for no motive other than making himself feel important. The Mounties, investigating, had found that he was a Montreal potwasher, a French Canadian farmer's son who had picked up some engineer's lingo.

"Le marquis" departed from Joliette in haste but not

## THE LIVING LEGEND

without style. He took a cab to Montreal, where he ditched the unpaid driver. He was picked up shortly afterward at a hotel in Quebec City. Characteristically, he was dicker-ing to buy the hotel.

The endless gradations of personality listed in the index, the countless gambits and gimmicks, cast across the surface of crime a constantly changing pattern of ingenu-ity. But the index also reveals with striking monotony the resistance of humans to change. Here are the cards of men caught year after year by the same idiosyncrasy, who find it more comfortable, more profitable, to remain in a rut. The Mountie cannot allow his respect for criminal clever-ness to blind him to criminal folly.

The crime index, more commonly called the MO, is the systemized experience of many policemen. It explains why the Mountie leans on routine so heavily. He is not inclined to desert proven tactics for the chimera of swift results by theory. He does not lightly plunge into the unknown. While he sometimes uses deduction, and occasionally intuition, he prefers to plod from fact to fact. His deliberation con-veys a deceitful impression of stolidity. Actually, an open mind is so much a habit with him that its openness seldom makes him uneasy. He does not feel impelled to close it by leaping to conclusions.

The oldest method of tracing criminals is still the most used: by the tented arches, whorls and loops of their finger-prints. The first-century Chinese mystery writer, Shi-nain-gan, mentions fingerprinting prisoners and by now almost everyone knows that his skin has an individual design.



## THE INVESTIGATOR

And yet, in the fingerprint bureau of the Identification Branch, twenty-four searchers check six or seven hundred prints a day. They come in from police forces all over Canada and the world. A surprising number are left at the scene of the crime by careless criminals. But the value in fingerprinting today lies less in proving guilt than establishing identity.

In 1917, for example, a man convicted for rape was sent to prison for fifteen years. In 1924 he got his ticket-of-leave, or parole. In 1930 he broke his parole. A warrant was issued for his arrest but he had disappeared. For twenty years nothing was heard of the man. Then, in 1950, a Toronto city policeman picked up a man for ringing a false fire alarm. Instead of paying a \$50 fine the man chose jail. In the usual manner his fingerprints were sent to be filed in the RCMP bureau in Ottawa. The Mounties, in their routine check, discovered that the prints were those of the missing parole breaker, who went back to the penitentiary for eight years, two months, and twenty-five days. A crook can change his name but not his prints, though a few have tried by plastic surgery, scarring their hands in a highly distinctive and futile fashion; for even the pores of the palms will produce an identifiable pattern.

In a less infallible sense than fingerprints every human feature can be identified. A novel example occurred during the 1954 trial of author Raymond Arthur Davies, accused of obtaining a passport by fraud.

The Crown had to prove that Davies's name had once been Rudolph Shohan, which Davies denied. RCMP inves-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

tigators dug up two photographs of the youthful Shohan and two fairly recent portraits of Davies. A corporal in the Identification Branch, Reginald Abbott, took these four odd-sized pictures and enlarged them to the same size on transparent film. Then he photographed each feature separately and made transparent film cut-outs.

In court, Abbott placed on the judge's stand a square boxlike viewer. He put a transparent picture of Rudolph Shohan in front of it. Opal light illuminated the features through a grid of numbered horizontal and vertical lines.

"You will notice the shape of the head," Abbott said. "The hairline . . . where the waves break in the hair . . . the angle at which the ears abut from the head . . ."

He superimposed the second picture of Rudolph Shohan, a side view, and pointed out the similarities: "The rims of the eyes have the same thickness . . . the eyebrows in both pictures suggest an abrupt break above the nose . . ." Then he did the same thing with his cut-outs of each separate feature. He compared the two pictures of the youth, the two pictures of the adult, and then — the conclusive comparison — one from each set.

The defense counsel contested every point. When Abbott dwelt on the individuality of ears, the lawyer protested, "Do you mean to tell me that there are a million different ears?"

"There are many times that number," Abbott said. "There's at least four parts of the ear that we can see at one time, the angle, size, surface contour and perimeter contour. Each of these have eight parts, the helix, anti-helix, fossa, and so forth. The number of combinations

## THE INVESTIGATOR

possible for identification is astronomical." Abbott's testimony, the first of its kind in Canadian courts, played a large part in convicting Davies.

Abbott, before he enlisted, was a tombstone cutter and a sculptor of store-window models. In 1949, he went to the head of his branch, Inspector Ralph Wonnacott, and said, "I'd like to sculpt a plaster likeness of you and the commissioner." The commissioner then was Stuart Taylor Wood, whose jutting jaw and gruff manner belied a forbearing nature.

When Wood saw the results he sent for Abbott. "I'll send you anywhere you want to go to study sculpture," he said. Abbott spent a year under Oronzio Malldarelli at Columbia University, then began his unique system of sculpting criminals by ear, that is, from verbal descriptions.

In 1950, when an unknown bank robber killed a Mountie in Montreal, Abbott spent a day questioning witnesses: "Did his cheekbones protrude? What shape were his lips? Did he seem like a nervous type?" After getting more than a hundred comparison points Abbott sculpted a plaster of Paris head in four hours.

He showed a photograph of it to the witnesses. "Would you say his jaw was round enough?" he asked. "Was the face longer?" He made changes, then photographed the finished bust for the monthly RCMP *Gazette*, which publishes pictures of "most-wanted criminals." As it happened, the bust did not help catch the robber, Thomas Rossler, but it might well have had he not been picked up first from another lead. "As soon as I saw that picture in the post office," Rossler said, "I knew that I was finished."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Artist-policemen have been capturing unknown crooks for years by the "speaking likeness" sketch, or *portrait parlé*, but this is the first development of the method into three dimensions. After seeing Abbott's bust of bank robber Leo Cahill, the Ontario Provincial Police wrote the RCMP: "Wonderful work . . . we're all for this system." It is very new yet, but Abbott, who carries around a photo of his bust of a still uncaught hatchet murderer, pats his wallet and says, "One of these days this will be in court."

It may seem paradoxical that in 1935, a year well into the age of modern science, a crime detection agency would return to a method used by police in ancient Rome. In 1935 the RCMP recruited regimental number K470, the first dog to become an official member of the force.

Since the turn of the century dogs have been trained in criminology, notably in Germany and Austria. But recognition has been slow. It was K470 himself, Dale of Caw-salta, and his owner, Sergeant John Cawsey, who finally convinced the Mounties.

Cawsey had trained Dale, a German shepherd, to track down thieves, an experiment that his superiors had been watching for several years. In the fall of 1935, while stationed at Calgary, Alberta, the sergeant tuned in a midnight newscast and heard an appeal for help. Two-year-old Eileen Simpson had strayed from her farm home some forty miles north early that afternoon and could not be found.

Cawsey and two constables drove north with Dale. It was raining heavily. Eight miles out they stopped to check a parked car. The man in the car could not explain the goods

## THE INVESTIGATOR

piled in the back seat — flashlights, purses, knives, pen and pencil sets — or why he was sitting there alone. Commanded to search, Dale led the Mounties through a water-soaked field to a man hidden in chest-high wheat. Near where the man was hidden the dog found more pens and pencils. The Mounties took the two men back to Calgary under arrest, set out again and arrived on the Simpson farm at dawn.

The farmyard had been trampled by more than a hundred men, still searching sodden fields and patches of woods. With all these conflicting scents, the smell of farm animals, the blanketing odor of manure and the steady downpour of rain, Dale seemed to have little chance of success. The parents, grateful for any hope, gave Cawsey one of their little girl's sweaters. Taking the scent, Dale sniffed the area, circling slowly for two hours. Suddenly he straightened out, running fast across the fields, and disappeared into four-foot grain. When Cawsey caught up with him, Dale was licking the little girl's face as she lay concealed by the tall wheat, mute with exhaustion. She recovered and the Humane Society awarded Dale a certificate. A Chicago magazine made him a member of the Legion of Honor of the Dog World of the United States, and the RCMP decided to enlist dogs for permanent duty.

The force has about fifteen dogs, mostly German shepherds, stationed from coast to coast. A half-dozen more are usually in training at Sydney, Nova Scotia. Some are bought, some are bred; in either case their pedigree matters much less than their character, which is carefully checked for bad habits such as chasing cars, and unsuita-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

ble traits such as nervousness. They must be big but not clumsy, strong yet quick, fierce but gentle.

Training starts at an easy pace when a pup is six months old. Each pup is assigned to a "dog-master" who feeds, grooms and trains it. With a special training collar he checks the pup's roughness, teaches it the meaning of "heel," "sit up," "fetch," "stop." When the dog has learned to instantly obey a word or gesture, his serious training begins. He learns to track someone he knows who has hidden, then to track a stranger, then to drop his nose on command and track any given scent. By following a veteran lead dog, or the lure of a tossed bone, he learns to scale a ten-foot wall, jump through a blazing window, leap a barbed-wire fence, creep along a narrow ledge and climb a ladder. He learns to crawl on his belly under rifle fire, to disarm a gunman by leaping at his gun arm, swinging the man's arm behind him with the force of the leap — the equivalent of a simple police hold. Most difficult, he learns to refuse food from a stranger, which some day may save him from poisoning by a criminal.

The "secret" of training an RCMP dog is patience and kindness. A dog-master never strikes his charge. When a dog is disobedient he makes it crawl a few yards on its belly — pride's antidote of humility. "When a dog does well he is patted and praised," a dog-master says. "A dog likes appreciation. If a trainer is kind a dog naturally wants to please him."

By the end of their twelve months' course the dogs have learned eighty different lessons and are fully responsible public servants. One dog, missing from his kennel in the

## THE INVESTIGATOR

evening, was located alone on the training field voluntarily rehearsing his lessons. And trainers like to recall the veteran police service dog who was sent back to school to take a refresher course. He was tracking in some bushes when a pup broke away from its handler and went yelping after him. All at once the yelping ceased and the veteran emerged from the bushes pulling the half-choked pup by its leash. He returned him to the dog-master, then trotted back to his job.

The dogs are used most frequently in excise cases, which has earned them the sobriquet of "booze hounds." They have an uncanny talent for ferreting out illicit liquor. Police dog Chief, given the order "Booze" on a farm in Saskatchewan, ran straight for a bush half a mile away where a 45-gallon barrel of mash had been buried in a pit. On another farm he dug into a foul-smelling garbage heap to uncover the copper coils of a still. Several times he discovered tightly corked bottles of moonshine buried under several inches of earth. Another fine booze hound, Egon, who worked in Nova Scotia, once located a hidden still, led the Mounties to a farmhouse, slipped in when the door was answered, circled a roomful of people, sniffing until he found his man, then sat down and stared at him so accusingly that the disconcerted moonshiner confessed. Egon had only one drawback. He acquired such a taste for the mash that he had to be followed closely to preserve the evidence.

The dogs have proved their worth in helping solve every kind of crime in which the criminal leaves a scent. When a British Columbia woodsman murdered a young girl and

## THE LIVING LEGEND

disappeared, police dog Cliffe dug him out of the hay in a barn the posse had just searched. When George Chupiuk clubbed a sixteen-year-old Saskatchewan girl to death, then denied being near the girl's home, dogs Tell and Ignatz disproved his statement by digging from fresh-fallen snow a blood-stained handkerchief and a box of cartridges that Chupiuk had discarded in his flight. When a housewife missed a gold watch just after a call by a fruit vendor and a search of the vendor failed to locate the watch, police dogs Sultan and Major turned it up in three minutes flat in a snowdrift thirty feet from the road, where the vendor had thrown it when he saw the Mounties closing in. And there was the clerk of a Manitoba trucking firm who reported to the Mounties that his cash box had been robbed. The investigators found an office back window broken, tracks in the alley below, but the dust on the inside window sill undisturbed. Police dog Sultan followed the tracks from the window around to the front door. Inside, he padded up to the clerk, bared his fangs and snarled. The clerk confessed. He had hoped to cover his theft by faking a burglary.

In 1955, police dog Silver tracked three bank robbers and recovered \$27,000, for which the bank presented him with an engraved silver collar and an 18-inch shank bone. The dogs have tracked down lunatics who tried to derail trains, safeblowers who tried to foil them by rubbing their boots with oil of mustard, escaped prisoners of war who sprinkled pepper along their trail. One dog dug a single button out of ten inches of snow, evidence that later convicted a man with a missing coat button. Another tracked a man from the scent on a spent cartridge.



## THE INVESTIGATOR

The dog-masters spend much time helping people in trouble. After walking home from shopping in town, an Alberta farmer's wife was dismayed to find that her purse was missing. It contained her husband's insurance, bond receipts and their harvest money, all they had to last them through the winter. For two days they searched the straw-littered two-mile route to town. Finally, in despair, the husband informed the RCMP. The Mounties sent for police dog Smoky. Nosing through the wheat stubble he caught the three-day-old scent and came trotting back to drop the purse in front of his master and the overjoyed farmer's wife.

Most gratifying for the dog-master is the finding of lost persons. And this is often a dog's hardest task, for he is seldom brought in until the scent is cold and the trail is fouled by searchers. In Peace River in mosquito season, Smoky found a three-year-old girl in an area already covered by a search party one hundred strong. In New Brunswick, Cliffe led a party through dense bush and pouring rain to the still-living body of a doctor who had wandered off while convalescing after a nervous breakdown. In Battleford, one black and bitter winter's night, Tell followed a runaway mental patient to where the man lay in the snow unconscious. In Nova Scotia, Perky tracked a woman lost several days to the edge of a lake, jumped in and located her body beneath the surface. In Halifax, Egon found and brought back a lost child whom he tracked along paved streets through traffic. In Manitoba, Sultan followed the trail of an 86-year-old woman lost for three days in the bush. When the searchers arrived she was cry-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

ing over and over "The dog is my savior," and holding Sultan around the neck so tightly he could not give voice, yet he had made no attempt to free himself.

No scientific device yet invented can match the nose of a dog. Once a small girl, whose family was on relief, lost the money her mother had given her to pay the family's relief bill of \$8.75. The little girl knew Dale, the original K470, better known as the "Silent Partner." Sobbing, she went to the house where he was boarded. Dale retraced her route, took the scent from the air, bounded off and came back with the money. He found three dollar bills that had blown out of an old lady's milk pail. He once darted after a dollar bill blowing across a vacant lot and at Sergeant Cawsey's command tracked its owner, a total stranger, and gave the astonished man his dollar back.

Before Dale was struck off force by a board of officers and retired with a small life pension, he had saved Cawsey's life by leading the sergeant to shelter when his car stalled in a storm on open prairie.\* He had tracked down the murderers of two Mounties near Canmore, Alberta, and solved a difficult arson case: the burning of a farmer's house when gasoline fumes exploded after someone had soaked the cellar walls. From the swab left near the cellar door, some gasoline-soaked underwear, Dale somehow picked up the scent and followed it through a choking dust storm to the home of the guilty man.

The police service dog at the scene of a crime is a

\* In 1956, Inspector David McCombe froze to death on a main Saskatchewan highway when his car iced up and stalled during a blizzard.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

model investigator. He is quiet unless he has something to say, gentle unless force is needed. With uncomplaining patience he moves along the trail in an unbroken line from fact to fact. He comes into a case with his instincts sharp, his senses well developed, and his mind uncluttered by any of the preconceived notions that blind both inner and outer sight.

### 9

**S**IR Arthur Conan Doyle was accurate in picturing the English police as laughing at Sherlock Holmes's use of a microscope. Conan Doyle, a medical man, was a first-rate prophet. Not only have the microscope and the newer scientific devices transformed the machinery of criminal investigation, but the very course of justice has been altered.

The impact of science can clearly be seen from the vantage point of Malta, a British colony, early in the 1700's. Judge Cambo, a prominent jurist, had risen early one morning. Glancing out of his window he saw two men struggling. One man drew a stiletto, stabbed the other and ran. The judge saw him plainly as he came running back for his hat and as he ran off again he threw away his stiletto sheath. Rooted to the window the judge saw a baker approach, pick up the sheath and pocket it, then, on sighting the body, take fright and run away.

The police on their rounds saw the baker running and chased after him. On the grounds that the murder weapon

## THE LIVING LEGEND

fitted the sheath in his pocket they committed him for trial before Judge Cambo. The judge said nothing of what he had seen. He felt that his ethics bound him to decide the baker's fate on the evidence presented to his court and that he should not allow his personal knowledge to influence his judgment.

There was not enough evidence to convict the baker. The judge accordingly ordered him tortured, a common legal method of extracting evidence. The baker broke down under torture and confessed. Judge Cambo now dutifully ordered him executed.

Judge Cambo's curious view of objectivity was revealed when the real assassin confessed and mentioned seeing the judge at the window. And since the judge was dismissed from his post it is only fair to assume that his viewpoint was not typical. It was, however, legal and it casts harsh light on legal methods and theory of that time. Any modern crime case will show how far we have come since then, but the contrast is especially sharp and the reason is manifest in the work of the RCMP's crime laboratories.

The Mounties have always used scientists to help solve crimes, but in 1937 the nearest thing they had to a lab was a bedroom beside the officers' mess in Regina. Here Dr. Maurice Powers, a medico-legal expert, made himself so indispensable with his microscopes and his test tubes that he was given his own laboratory, and four years later, in 1941, a second lab was set up in Ottawa — another reluctant concession to the age of the specialist.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

By 1956, forty-six specialists — nineteen with science degrees — were available to examine scenes of crime and evidence for RCMP and other investigators. Under their smocks twenty-eight of them wore a Mountie's brown work uniform; the others were civilian members of the force and civil servants. Their director, James Churchman, a strapping gray-haired superintendent who served for years on detachment before he became a disciple of Powers, speaks of their work with measured enthusiasm: "Last year we handled 1300 cases. We traveled 280,000 miles, about eleven times around the world, to present our evidence in court." Churchman holds seminars on such subjects as "The Extraction and Purification of Toxicologically Important Drugs with Emphasis on Alkaloids," and encourages experiments to improve such techniques as lifting ink off paper, collecting dust for evidence, and raising die impressions on metal.

Most lab work is concerned with identifications: linking or disassociating something found at the scene of a crime with some particular suspect. An investigator sends in a murdered woman's dress along with a single broken fiber and wants to know if the fiber came from the dress. He sends in seeds, strands of hair, samples of grain, paint scrapings from the bumper of a suspected hit-and-run car. When an airman at Goose Bay, Labrador, suspected of rape, said he hadn't been near the place the girl was assaulted, a density comparison of the soil at the scene of the crime with the soil in his pant cuffs proved he was lying. "When a man stole grain in the old days," says a former head of the CIB, "we might go as far as identifying it

## THE LIVING LEGEND

as No. 3 Northern. Now we can determine its water content and trace it back.”

In one case a farmer accused his next-door neighbor of maliciously shooting his cattle. A Mountie checked, found a cow with a hole in its leg, dug out the bullet and mailed it to the lab. Examination under a microscope showed the bullet had never been fired. It had been drawn from its case with pliers and scored with a knife. The farmer had cut the hole in the cow's leg himself and inserted the bullet to implicate his neighbor, whom he hated.

The microscope is the criminologist's right hand. Even dust is distinctive when highly magnified. It may contain particles of metal, glass, microbes, skin, feathers, larvae or vegetable matter. But the job takes skill. The expert must know how to contrast the background to bring out the detail — shape, marking and color. Often he must stain, bleach or dehydrate the exhibit. Sometimes he takes it down the hall to the chemist's bottle-lined lab and has it chemically fixed to keep it from shrinking.

The chemist is traditionally an expert on poisons. In an early lab case an Indian baby took ill and died. Neighbors said that the mother, a Mrs. Coooose, had poisoned the child. The investigator found that just before the baby's death the mother had induced it to drink some liquid from a sea shell, water in which a powder had been dissolved. A pinch of the powder was sent to the lab in Regina. Lab director Maurice Powers, B.A., M.D., C.M., Sc.D., was unable to identify the powder. But he had a friend, an Indian medicine man, who gave him samples of Indian remedies, including poisons. A comparative analysis showed that

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Mrs. Coocoose had given her baby a powder made from the root of the rattlesnake plant, a common Indian remedy for lowering a high temperature. Dr. Powers thus concluded that Mrs. Coocoose was telling the truth when she said that her baby had died from a natural illness.

The poison business has long been in a slump. As far back as the start of World War II the RCMP *Gazette* observed: "Murders by poison are becoming less frequent. The administration of secret and deadly poisons was a very elaborate science in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, and poisoners and distillers of dangerous draughts were a constant menace to human life in the Middle Ages . . . [but today] pathologists and police experts have so perfected their methods that the poison the criminal is able to obtain easily can infallibly be traced even long after the death of the victim."

Synthetic drugs, however, are making poison popular as a method of suicide, and with new drugs coming out every year their identification is difficult. Unless the chemist starts with a lead, he must run a long series of tests. Each test reduces the number of possibilities but it also destroys a bit of the evidence, and the evidence is sometimes exhausted first. It is a myth that the chemist can analyze anything in any quantity, but, as the following examples show, his position has been improved by a couple of recent innovations.

A man was found dead in the lavatory of a Winnipeg restaurant. The cause of death could not be determined so police sent the stomach and organs to the RCMP's Regina lab. The chemist ran off the distillates first to see if the

## THE LIVING LEGEND

man had been poisoned by drinking lemon extract, anti-freeze or alcohol. Then he put the solids through an ether wash and ended up with a puzzling smear of crystals in his beaker. He ground them, mounted a sample on a fiber, and placed it in the powder camera of what is called the X-ray diffraction unit. As the sample slowly revolved it was struck by X rays. The rays, reflecting off it onto a strip of sensitized film, created a highly distinctive pattern. This pattern was identified as one of the newer barbiturates.

In another typical case, a burglary, the telephone wires had been cut. A detective picked up a suspect who swore he hadn't been near the place. A knife was found in his pocket and sent to the lab. Its blade was faintly stained with bronze. An almost invisible speck of the substance was burned in the spectrograph, a large, delicate, \$15,000 machine. As it burned it emitted a pattern of light that was automatically photographed, then compared with the known light patterns of metals. It showed the pattern for copper and tin, an alloy in telephone wire, which completed the case against the burglar.

In both these examples the evidence was too meager to test chemically. And in a profession where speed is all important, the spectrograph can contract a two-day series of chemical tests to half a day.

A large number of investigations revolve around "documents," a loose term that includes forged checks, libelous letters and holdup notes ("This is a holdup. Give me big bills."). In 1953 a Mountie investigating fraud in the government sent the document examiners seven looseleaf notebooks, 1547 worksheets and 249 typewritten pages.



## THE INVESTIGATOR

Under a simple microscope they studied the characteristic slant, skips, spacing, pressure and proportion of the writing. They compared the distinctive defects of each typewriter used, the uneven wear of the type, the breaks in alignment. It took fourteen weeks of painstaking work to eliminate all the suspects except the guilty clerk.

Every year much money is burned, or claimed to be burned, in fires. Once fire broke out in a city treasurer's office just after the taxes had been collected. There were rumors that the treasurer had stolen the money, then started the fire to cover his theft. An investigator carefully collected the charred fragments of paper that remained in the treasurer's safe. The document experts placed them between two sensitized plates and kept them in darkness for two weeks. When the plates were developed they showed the inking of Bank of Canada notes, and when pieced together, accounted for the taxes that were missing. The treasurer was cleared and the bank replaced the money.

The physicist is fast expanding his role in criminology. In 1953, an army driver in the Maritimes crashed a Plymouth service car. He had skidded 72 feet on the highway, ploughed through a ditch, through 98 feet of swamp, smashed down a tree, then sailed through the air for another 32 feet — and he swore he had only been doing 45. It looked as though he'd be court-martialed till Ronald Rodgers, a young RCMP physicist, testified that the soldier, strange though it seemed, was telling the truth.

Rodgers had used calculus to find the speed required to throw the car 32 feet through the air. He'd reckoned the energy it would take to uproot the tree. He'd locked the

## THE LIVING LEGEND

brakes on a car of the same make and dragged it through swampy land back of the Ottawa crime lab to find the force needed to cross the swamp. The ditch was a problem of energy lost in falling. He had worked out the road skid and ended up with a speed of 46.5 miles per hour. The case against the soldier was dismissed.

The physicist is especially useful in cases that hinge on a bullet's angle of fire. During the summer of 1953 on a farm near Cobourg, a mother called her son, aged twenty, for tea. He didn't answer. She went outside to call him again and found him dead in the yard, shot through the chest. She called the Ontario Provincial Police. They recovered the bullet, a .22, then brought in all .22 rifles in the district for testing at the RCMP's Ottawa lab.

As the guns came in, Rodgers, the physicist, took them to the basement and fired them into a bullet-recovery tank designed by lab director Churchman. Back in his cubicle, Rodgers put the bullets under a microscope. Through the high-powered magnifying lens he could clearly see the tiny scratches and burrs left on the lead by the gun barrel. No two gun barrels in the world make the same marks. On his sixth test the markings were identical. Rodgers photographed the bullets through a microscope.

The gun belonged to a sixteen-year-old lad from a neighboring farm. The lad, frightened and grief-stricken, claimed that the dead boy had been his friend, that he had shot at a starling on a post in his own yard. Rodgers was asked to do a calculation on this statement.

At the inquest in a courthouse near Cobourg, Rodgers was called to the witness stand. "Did this bullet come from

## THE INVESTIGATOR

this gun?" asked the crown attorney, holding up the lad's .22.

"It did," Rodgers said. He showed his photographs of the bullets, enlarged about fifty times their actual size.

"Could this bullet reach from the spot this boy says he shot from to where the body was found?"

"Yes, sir. The bullet would reach that far if the gun barrel were elevated forty minutes, or two thirds of a degree above the line of sight. The elevation required to hit the bird would also be two thirds of a degree."

"And would the bullet still be traveling fast enough to cause death?"

"Yes, sir. When the bullet left the gun barrel it was traveling at fourteen hundred feet a second. By the time it traveled the entire distance, eight hundred feet, it was still traveling at eight hundred feet a second." Rodgers displayed a large chart illustrating the calculations he had used.

The jury foreman, an amateur ballistics student, interrupted. "Here's a ballistics table from a recognized book. You can see from this that the bullet wouldn't reach that far."

The hearing was moved to the scene of the killing. Rodgers put a card on the post where the bird was supposed to have been, and propped up a sheet of plywood where the dead boy had stood. Staff Sergeant William Sutherland, a champion rifle shot, fired the sixteen-year-old's rifle at the card. The bullet penetrated the plywood. The jury decided that death was accidental.

It is interesting to compare the plight of this lad, the

## THE LIVING LEGEND

soldier, the treasurer, the farmer's neighbor and Mrs. Coocose with that of the baker in Judge Cambo's court. The jurists of Cambo's day placed great emphasis on the confession. They tended to assume a suspect guilty till proved innocent, by which they justified torture as a means of getting evidence. The advance of science has given judges confidence in the experts. It has enabled police to convict a criminal without a confession, which has led to the gradual abandonment of torture in its last and illegal form, the third degree. As scientific methods grow common in even minor cases, judges are demanding more and stronger evidence, and while the guilty may sometimes go free it becomes increasingly difficult to convict an innocent person.

In this process the lab man contributes more to his force than new techniques. The scientific method is more a way of looking at things than the use of any particular instrument. The scientists bring to their work a devotion to objectivity. They have reinforced the police ideal with the scientific tradition. In the scientific tradition truth is pursued disinterestedly, as a value in itself, the manifestation of reality.

## 10

**A**T two o'clock in the morning the ringing of the telephone awakened Superintendent Donald McKinnon, head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Newfound-

## THE INVESTIGATOR

land. He recognized the voice at once. It was Premier Joseph Smallwood, the pint-sized political giant who ruled the island with irrepressible zeal.

"Could you come to my office right away? It's urgent!" the premier said.

When McKinnon arrived the premier was pacing his room. Smallwood was perturbed, subdued. His career was at a crossroads. Four years before, in 1950, he had hired a brilliant Latvian-born economist, Dr. Alfred Valdmanis, to direct an industrial renaissance. Now he wanted the RCMP to investigate this man whom he had made his closest confidant, the second most powerful man in the province. Smallwood, the hard-headed ex-farmer, ex-labor leader, ex-radio commentator, father of confederation with Canada, the brash bustling prophet of industrial prosperity, idol and oracle of the poor, was convinced that the fate of his government hung upon this investigation.

Smallwood had come into power on a promise to cure his people of their chronic poverty by bringing new industry to the island. A year's effort had blunted the edge of his optimism. He had spent a million dollars on a survey of resources but Canadian and U.S. businessmen wouldn't give it more than a glance. He was willing to gamble the cash in his treasury, forty-three million dollars, and his own political future on some government-sponsored industries, but he couldn't find an economist willing to risk *his* reputation on such an unorthodox escapade.

In May 1950, Smallwood paid a visit to Trade Minister C. D. Howe in Ottawa. One of Mr. Howe's staff told him that Dr. Alfred Valdmanis, a part-time government ad-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

viser on trade and immigration, might be the man he was looking for.

Valdmanis at this time was forty-one. He had been born in Riga, son of a high school principal, a serious man who would not allow his son a toy but who taught him to read and write before his fourth birthday. In World War I, when Alfred was seven, the Germans overran Latvia and took his father away. Enfeebled by TB and tension, Alfred, the oldest of five children, hustled to help earn the family's food in his after-school hours.

His school work caught the eye of the government. Faced with a shortage of leaders, they picked seven hundred boys, the brightest in the land, for special training. Every term they were reselected. By 1929 only a dozen were left. Alfred Valdmanis was one. He won degrees in philosophy, law and economics. He mastered five foreign languages. He sat in the Reichsbank, a young apprentice, and watched the financial wizard, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, gear the Nazi economy for war. He studied industries in a dozen European countries and set up similar industries in Latvia. Valdmanis was the boy wonder of European finance and at twenty-nine, his dress suit studded with decorations, he took over Latvia's Ministry of Finance, Trade and Industry.

In 1940 the Russians marched in. They shot all cabinet ministers except Valdmanis, who was jailed for two weeks, then released. According to the author of *Dianas Baltas Nibaltos*, they had found him an "honest man" — and a useful one, for they made him head of planning for the Commissar of Light Industry. The following year, when

## THE INVESTIGATOR

the Germans drove out the Russians, Valdmanis fled, but returned — he says — to lead the Latvian underground, though papers released by the Latvian Legation at Washington state that he served in the Nazi regime as Director General of Justice. In any case, he ended the war in Germany as one of the Nazis' senior economists. He had survived and impressed both the Russians and the Germans; now he won the confidence of the Allies, first on Montgomery's staff, then Eisenhower's, then as director of planning for the International Refugee Organization in Geneva. In July 1948 he brought his wife and five children to Canada, where at Ottawa's Carleton College he taught political economy to students awed by the crisp ring of authority in his voice.

Smallwood, reading Valdmanis's personnel file, was intrigued. He invited Valdmanis to dinner in his suite in the Château Laurier. As Smallwood outlined the challenge he was sizing up his guest, a boyishly handsome man with an athletic carriage. He was charming, at his ease, deferential yet reserved in a manner that implied strength of character. He had assurance. His small firm mouth shaped his thoughts with incisive clarity. In Latvia, he said, he had solved many problems similar to Newfoundland's. Smallwood quickened to the latent power of the man. After dinner he hired him at ten thousand dollars a year.

In remarkably little time Valdmanis laid on the premier's desk a plan to build three government-owned plants — cement, plaster and plywood — solidly based on Newfoundland's natural resources. He knew German firms, he said, that would build these plants cheaply and quickly.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

He also knew German firms that might be persuaded to move to Newfoundland. He had many contacts in Europe, he claimed.

They flew to Europe that summer of 1950, the premier, Valdmanis and Attorney General Leslie Curtis. Curtis had been skeptical of Valdmanis's claims. His attitude changed as they toured factories in Sweden and Germany. These big efficient plants were clearly doing a world-wide business. Their directors, men of large affairs, greeted Valdmanis respectfully. "Why, he knows everybody!" Curtis marveled.

Valdmanis also knew how some of his German friends were thinking. They headed potential war industries. Their output was restricted. If Russia moved into West Germany, as many feared it might, their firms would be taken over. In Newfoundland, if war came, the risk would be less. Unfortunately, they were banned from taking capital out of Germany.

Valdmanis worked out a scheme whereby Smallwood would loan Canadian dollars to any companies that wished to emigrate. The loans would match the value of the equipment they landed in Newfoundland. Happily, Smallwood signed contracts that would bring in a leather tannery, a leather goods factory, a cotton mill and a heavy-machinery plant.

This machinery plant, ostensibly Swiss, in reality was a branch of the huge German firm, Miag. It was Miag that Valdmanis now selected to build his cement plant. As Smallwood was later to understand, a plan had been shaping in Valdmanis's mind for some time around this deal.



## THE INVESTIGATOR

On this three-million-dollar contract he was pinning his hopes for wealth.

Accompanied by Attorney General Curtis and the premier, Valdmanis walked into the big Miag board room. He sat down at the board table across from the Miag negotiator. As the only man in the Newfoundland party who understood German, all authority for this deal was vested in him. A few feet away, Smallwood and Curtis were talking in English with several other Miag directors. The negotiations went smoothly. Hearing his name mentioned, Smallwood looked up and smiled.

Valdmanis at that moment was explaining to the German that if this deal went through there would, of course, be a commission, the customary ten per cent, payable to the treasurer of Mr. Smallwood's party. The two men returned the premier's smile.

The Miag negotiator nodded. He had not expected this from Canadians but he was not surprised. He had operated this way for years in Latin America. "How do we pay the money?" he asked.

As Smallwood later understood it, Valdmanis replied, "You will pay it to me in Newfoundland, in Canadian funds, as you receive the payments on your loan. Mr. Smallwood's name must not come into it, of course." Again the two men exchanged smiles with the premier. "—I wouldn't even mention it to him if I were you. He likes to pretend that these things don't exist."

With equal aplomb a like transaction was carried off in the board room of Benno Schilde, another big German machinery firm. Valdmanis awarded them a two and a

## THE LIVING LEGEND

half million dollar contract to build the gypsum plant. The commission was to be \$200,000.

Miag started construction on the cement plant that fall, Benno Schilde a few months later. Smallwood was delighted to see his dream taking shape in concrete. He gave Valdmanis unstinted praise for his planning and bargaining. When a crown corporation was set up to manage the cement plant, he named it the North Star Cement Company in honor of this genius who wore on his lapel Sweden's Order of the North Star.

Equally impressed, a U.S. steel corporation offered Valdmanis fifty thousand dollars a year and a vice-presidency. Smallwood raised Valdmanis's salary to \$25,000 a year, an extraordinary sum in this low-salaried island. The premier countered criticism by vowing that Valdmanis was "worth his weight in gold to Newfoundland."

The following year Valdmanis sold eight more German industries on the move to Newfoundland. Critics charged that he was "flooding Newfoundland with Nazis." He became the central issue of 1951's bitter election. He was called the Quisling of Latvia, a friend of Hitler, a mass murderer of Jews — a repetition of charges made in Europe by Communists in their usual attempt to discredit potential enemies. For it was Valdmanis's constant ambition, the great dream of his life, to return to a free Latvia as president.

Smallwood branded the charges as "foul, malicious and utterly false." Valdmanis, he said, had been checked by British Military Intelligence, the RCMP, and twice by U.S. Army Intelligence. "Some day the people of Newfound-

## THE INVESTIGATOR

land will raise a monument to him [Valdmanis]," Joey Smallwood proclaimed. "If I lost him I would not want to be premier." And whatever Newfoundland citizens might feel about losing Valdmanis, the thought of losing Joey was unbearable. In every district except St. John's they voted him back to power.

Now Smallwood began his big pitch to bring in not only industry, but capital. He set up a development company, the Newfoundland and Labrador Corporation, and gave it timber, mineral and water rights over an empire of thirty-two thousand square miles. Its chairman was the fabulous financier Sir William Stephenson, who formulated policy in New York. But the real ruler was president Alfred Valdmanis.

Valdmanis was now the industrial boss of Newfoundland, one of the highest-paid men in Canadian public life. Latvians throughout Canada looked up to him and he had the respect of the island's growing community of Germans, who, when they wanted something, called "the Doctor." He had even more power, more latitude of action, than he had had as Latvia's finance minister. People spoke of the "Smallwood-Valdmanis government."

Only his lack of popularity marred Valdmanis's prospects. Behind his back, his colleagues called him "führer," "dictator," "czar." It did not seem to help that he could trim them at tennis or bridge and play the piano with style. They were, perhaps, inclined to resent a foreigner anyway, and one whose salary was larger than theirs was particularly suspect. They mistrusted the sincerity of his modest, winning manner and noted that his courtliness did

## THE LIVING LEGEND

not extend to his staff. Finance Minister Gregory Power, a lean dark saturnine man, did not even attempt to disguise his distrust; more than once he urged Smallwood to get rid of Valdmanis.

But the busy premier saw only a man whose labors from morning till midnight had wrought a miracle: a dozen new industries paying out wages, bringing in money; a dozen mining companies scouring the hinterland. Valdmanis, he felt, was a great man. He would not brook criticism of him. He gave him unquestioning loyalty, absolute authority. In 1952, when a U.S. correspondent asked the premier how his industrial program was shaping up, Smallwood replied, "Hell, I don't know. Ask Valdmanis!"

Yet even Smallwood noticed that Valdmanis seemed troubled — though the doctor passed it off as overwork. Sometimes, in Smallwood's office, he would raise his hands to his head in a gesture theatrical yet distraught. "I'm tired, my Premier," he would blurt. "I cannot sleep. I think sometimes I am going mad." He was subject to violent headaches. He used huge amounts of aspirin. He regularly took sleeping pills. On one occasion he called up his brother Osvald in Montreal and said he was going to shoot himself.

Whatever it was that distracted Valdmanis so desperately, it was slowly destroying his judgment, that superb capacity for clear cold analysis. He made his first grave error early in 1953. Sir William Stephenson, for personal reasons, resigned as chairman of the Newfoundland and Labrador Corporation and Valdmanis accepted an invitation to take his place. He decided also to quit as the government's

## THE INVESTIGATOR

economic director and to move the corporation's head office from St. John's to Montreal. It seemed a harmless decision but it had two fatal defects: it encouraged Valdmanis to overestimate himself while weakening the source of his importance: his value to the premier.

Smallwood had been disappointed that Valdmanis had not brought his family to St. John's. Valdmanis explained that one of his children had a spinal condition that needed the constant care of a specialist. Smallwood felt that the explanation was less than the whole truth and when Valdmanis told him he himself was quitting St. John's, the premier was vexed and upset. Again he could not dispute the reason; Montreal was the logical base for a big-time promoter. But in his heart the premier felt that Valdmanis had deserted him, that having begun these new industries he had run off, leaving him, Smallwood, to struggle alone with their problems.

He told Valdmanis as much one day. "But, my Premier!" Valdmanis protested, "You know I am at your beck and call any hour of the day or night."

"Yes," Smallwood said drily, "on your infrequent visits to Newfoundland."

Now Smallwood noted other flaws in his paragon. When it came Valdmanis's turn to pick up a restaurant check he would frequently contrive to be in the washroom. Often he would neglect to leave a tip for the waitress and Smallwood would reach across the table surreptitiously and place a couple of coins beside his plate. He found it irritating. The honeymoon of the premier and the economist was over.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

In early February of 1954, Smallwood received several visitors, officials of the Newfoundland and Labrador Corporation. The secretary-treasurer, Ronald Turta, drew some papers from his briefcase. He laid them on the desk in front of Smallwood. The premier shuffled through them. They were expense accounts made out by Alfred Valdmanis and charged to the government-controlled corporation. There were bills receipted by Montreal's Mount Royal Hotel that included costly C.O.D. trinkets from Morgan's and Birks. There was a bill for a high-priced car, brand new, and two months later, a bill for four new tires. Among the furniture bills for the new Montreal office was one for a five-hundred-dollar antique clock.

Smallwood looked up aghast. "Why, he must have furnished that place like an Indian maharajah!"

"That's not all," said Turta. Valdmanis's pay had been boosted at the time he moved up from corporation president to chairman — from \$25,000 a year to \$30,000. For some months, through a bookkeeping error, he had received two checks, his old salary as well as his new one. Incredibly, he had kept them both.

The disclosure roused a mixture of emotions in the premier. He was hurt that Valdmanis had let him down, indignant at his dishonesty, and saddened by the thought of what he must do.

Valdmanis was due in St. John's the following day. As soon as he telephoned, Smallwood said curtly, "Come on over. I want to talk to you." He replaced the phone and asked his secretary to tell Finance Minister Gregory Power to come in right away.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Valdmanis burst into the premier's office exuding purposeful energy. He greeted the two men jauntily, his hand outstretched to the premier. Smallwood affected not to see it. Valdmanis stepped across the room to shake hands with Gregory Power. Power ignored him. Valdmanis's eyes became cautious, alert.

"Sit down," Smallwood said harshly, "I want to tell you a few things." He ticked off on his fingers the items Valdmanis had charged. "Now I want your resignation and I want it right away, and I want that money repaid before you go."

Valdmanis stared at the premier. The blood drained from his features. Then he buried his face in his hands.

Smallwood stared at the abject figure in the chair. He could not help but pity him. "Why, man?" he burst out. "Why did you do it?"

Valdmanis did not answer. For ten long minutes he sat with his face hidden, silent. Not until later did Smallwood realize that he was not grieving but thinking, wondering how much the premier knew. Finally he raised his head and said dully, "All right. I will do whatever you wish."

Only two or three people saw Valdmanis off at the airport, though his name had been a household word in St. John's. Reporters had taken his resignation at face value, knowing that he had bought a large fish plant in New Brunswick and presuming that he wished to enter private industry. Only Smallwood seemed moved at the parting. As he gave the press Valdmanis's letter of resignation he could not forbear one final compliment. "Newfoundland,"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

he said, "will not soon again see so remarkable a man as Alfred Valdmanis." In a few weeks he would know just how remarkable Valdmanis was. Offstage, another chain of events was fast approaching a climax.

It had begun in Germany. Smallwood had admired the plant of Benno Schilde, the firm with which Valdmanis had made his deal on the gypsum mill contract. The premier wanted Benno Schilde to open a branch plant in Newfoundland, and in late 1953, Dr. Hubertus Herz, head of the firm, agreed to put up a plant at Bay Roberts if Smallwood would help with a \$150,000 loan.

The loan was made and Valdmanis, to whom Benno Schilde still owed \$20,000 "commission," saw that now, while the firm was flush with Canadian dollars, was the opportune time to collect. When the premier left after Christmas for a holiday in Jamaica, Valdmanis, in Montreal, phoned Herz in Germany. Smallwood, he told Herz, was pressing him for the \$20,000. Herz had better fly over with it right away.

Herz did not want Smallwood pressuring him just then. His firm had not yet begun work on the branch plant. It looked as if the plant would cost more than he'd thought. He needed time to consider the whole thing carefully. He flew over and paid Valdmanis the money.

Smallwood, knowing nothing of this, came bustling back from vacation. He noted that Benno Schilde had made no move to fulfill the bargain. "Write them a letter," he snapped to his assistant. "Make it stiff. If they're not going to build that plant they can give us our money back."

Dr. Herz must have read and reread this letter with



## THE INVESTIGATOR

amazement. He had, he thought, just paid the premier off. He flew back to Newfoundland for a chat with his resident manager, who first made some discreet inquiries, then called on Smallwood.

"Mr. Premier," he said, "I think you should know that over the past three years Dr. Alfred Valdmanis collected \$200,000 from our firm in your name!"

Smallwood stared at him. He could not believe it. Later that night Herz told him the details and promised to put them in writing. It was early morning when Herz left. Smallwood sat in his office alone and faced what he has since called "one of the hardest decisions I shall probably ever be called upon to make." As he afterwards said, "I have six brothers and seven sisters, and I never loved one of them as I loved that man."

It was not only a personal blow, he was facing political death. The exposure of Valdmanis could ruin his career and his party's future. He was sorely tempted to drop the whole affair. Valdmanis had given Newfoundland much more than he had taken and in all probability nothing more would ever be heard of it.

At 2 A.M. Smallwood had made his decision. He telephoned Superintendent McKinnon. When McKinnon had heard him out, Smallwood hesitated, then said, "I'd like you to do me a favor."

"Anything in my power," the Mountie said.

"Find that money. For God's sake, find that money! If you don't, not all the water in the ocean can wash me clean. Valdmanis can say he was acting for me. Who would believe that he wasn't?"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"We'll do our best," McKinnon said.

The investigation — in St. John's, Montreal, New York and Germany — was conducted with the utmost secrecy. The police and the premier were certain that if Valdmanis caught the least hint that he was under suspicion, he and the money would vanish, and with it Smallwood's reputation. Only the premier, Dr. Herz, his Newfoundland-based manager, and Attorney General Curtis knew that the life of the government might now rest upon the skill and caution of the Mounties, and law enforcement agencies in Germany and the United States.

At 5 A.M. on the morning of April 24, Smallwood routed Canadian Press reporter Stewart MacLeod out of bed to give him this statement:

The RCMP arrested Dr. Alfred Valdmanis in New Brunswick early today. . . . He is being brought to St. John's by the RCMP to stand trial on charges preferred against him by me that he extorted very large sums of money from various firms with whom he dealt in behalf of the Government of Newfoundland. These sums run into many hundreds of thousands of dollars. . . . My decision to bring about the arrest of Alfred Valdmanis was the most unpleasant duty I have ever had to perform and it will always be for me a matter of intense regret that one with his great talents should have to face such charges.

This statement was at once augmented by Malcolm Hallett, leader of the Progressive-Conservative opposition party, who said that "the real defendant must undoubtedly be Premier Smallwood and his entire cabinet." In the

## THE INVESTIGATOR

House of Assembly the opposition clamored happily for Joey Smallwood's resignation.

Smallwood met the issue squarely. "I, and I alone," he reminded the legislators, "am responsible for the fact that Dr. Valdmanis lies in jail. . . . When I had [him] arrested I took my political life in my hands. . . ." Unless the money had been recovered, he said, "I would live and die . . . and after me, my children — would live with the name Smallwood the grafter, Smallwood the robber. . . ."

Outside the House the premier's nerves showed the strain. "Frankly," he barked at a journalist, "I don't give a tinker's curse what the papers say — the St. John's papers or the mainland papers — it couldn't matter less to me. . . . I certainly have nothing to lose politically over Valdmanis." Mr. Smallwood was not sleeping well. All the money was not yet accounted for.

Valdmanis, in jail, still held the winning cards. He wept as he told Toronto *Telegram* columnist Allan Kent that he felt "a great hopelessness" about his chance to defend himself adequately. His private papers, he claimed, had been seized by police or had "disappeared." He called his arrest a "misunderstanding." He pictured his disillusionment on discovering that the charges against him were laid by Premier Smallwood, "the one man I thought I could trust — my friend that I thought would help me out." Falling silent, then looking up with a sad bright smile of apology, he said, "You know, when I first came to Newfoundland, the premier told me that I'd do the work and he'd do the talking. I've always tried to keep it that way — but I just don't

## THE LIVING LEGEND

know where I am now." He waxed ironic: "You know, I've had one election fought over me in Newfoundland. Now I guess I'll have another."

With this veiled warning, Valdmanis, though a weary, nerve-sick man, capped a skillful dress rehearsal of the role he could play: the bewildered henchman taking the rap for a double-crossing boss. Valdmanis did not believe that his friends in Germany would prosecute and he did not think Smallwood would dare.

In the meantime, Inspector Cecil Bayfield had traced the commissions Valdmanis received to a New York bank. He found deposits totaling \$470,000, the sum that the German police said Miag and Benno Schilde had paid. Had the doctor left this cash in the bank he still could have claimed that he had merely deposited it for Smallwood. But Bayfield found no money in his safety deposit box, only a sheaf of slips that recorded his purchases of stock. It had been more than Valdmanis could bear to leave so much money idle.

A chartered accountant from headquarters, Sergeant Edgar Murray, painstakingly tracked down every purchase of stock, verifying the fact that Valdmanis had bought it. Murray did not recover the shares, which may have been sent out of the country, but he managed to account for all but a few hundred dollars of the entire \$470,000.

But Smallwood was still in danger. Anywhere but St. John's, he felt, Valdmanis's conviction would have been certain. But he could choose trial by jury and St. John's, a Conservative stronghold, was chock-full of Smallwood enemies.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

On the day of the hearing crowds surrounded the old rock-walled courthouse for a glimpse of the celebrated "doctor." Two red-coated Mounties ushered him in. Before Chief Justice Sir Alfred Walsh, Valdmanis bowed his head and whispered hoarsely, "My plea is guilty, your Honor." Sternly, Sir Alfred sentenced him to four years in the penitentiary. Reporters were dumfounded. Why had he changed his plea?

Valdmanis had once more tried for too much. While in custody he had written to a friend in Germany. He had asked this man to contact the heads of Miag and Benno Schilde. Valdmanis wanted them to say that the money they had paid him — the \$470,000 — was a legal commission. The letter was intercepted and came to Attorney General Curtis, who saw at once that Smallwood at last was safe. The letter was, in effect, an admission of guilt. Confronted with this overwhelming piece of evidence, Valdmanis decided to try for a lighter sentence by pleading guilty.

The important thing now was to get the money back. Valdmanis had offered to make restitution as far as he was able. But his assets were disappointing: \$50,000 in stock, a draft for \$10,000, a \$50,000 stake in the New Brunswick fish plant, about \$110,000 in all. Where was the rest of the money, some \$360,000? The question has never been answered.

The pressures on the investigators in this case were exceptional. They might have begun their investigation from either of two set points of view: disbelief in the guilt of a man so highly respected as Valdmanis, or belief that he must be guilty because the premier of Newfoundland said so.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Either opinion could have led them to disregard those facts that did not support their preconceived view. The success of their evidence was due, at least in part, to a certain clarity of mind, a freedom that derives less from intelligence than from training.

# 11

**F**RANK DECHEVERRY sauntered down the street that leads to Montreal's Central Station. He could sense the eyes that were watching him from the cover of the traffic. When he turned his head he could see from the corner of his eye the black-robed figure of the priest. Somewhere behind the priest, he knew, was a thick-set, round-faced man whose gun scarcely bulged his elegant tailoring.

It had taken DeCheverry six months to lure this man to the trap that was ready now, this bright September morning, to spring. He would know in the next few minutes whether the time, the risk and the many thousands of dollars had been wasted, or whether he had captured the brains of the biggest wholesale drug ring in the realm of the RCMP.

Constable Frank DeCheverry was one of the CIB men whose job is to keep the drug traffic in check. Canada has only three to five thousand addicts but they are a far graver problem than their numbers indicate. With few exceptions they are criminals. They cannot hold a job. Their entire existence becomes a search for narcotics. The addict be-

## THE INVESTIGATOR

comes a pickpocket, sneak thief, burglar, shoplifter, forger or pimp. Women usually become prostitutes.

These are no ordinary criminals. Their habit, requiring a larger and larger drug dosage, drives them. According to one survey, only 2 per cent of the shoplifters in chain stores are addicts, but those 2 per cent steal 96 per cent of the value of goods stolen. The amount of money they siphon off from society is staggering, for the drug they take costs them more than one hundred times its weight in gold.

The drug is heroin, an opium derivative, less bulky, more powerful than either opium or morphine. Legally, an ounce of heroin sells for from \$10 to \$12. But an addict pays from \$3 to \$10 for one grain. This grain is invariably adulterated by 50 per cent. There are 437 grains in one ounce. That means that an ounce, pure, by the time it has passed along its intricate underworld supply route, brings from \$2500 to \$8500!

This incredible profit is reaped by a network of criminals equally incredible. The individual drug racketeer has gone with the opium den. The traffic is controlled today by "syndicates" headed by the kind of man that Frank DeCheverry was stalking: clever, suave, quiet, but beneath the veneer of good manners, as vicious and dangerous as any old-time gangster.

The name itself — syndicate — suggests the new approach. The syndicate bosses employ accountants and lawyers. They pay their employees scaled salaries or commissions. They operate as efficiently as any modern business — except that their business is crime.

Cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver may

## THE LIVING LEGEND

have several syndicates. They compete by raising the quality of their product or cutting the price, like any other business firm. No one man controls them all, a common misapprehension. Neither are they controlled from the United States, though the U.S. syndicates often contribute capital.

The syndicates with the main retail outlets are in Vancouver, which has nearly half the addicts in Canada. The addicts buy from a street peddler, or "pusher," who is frequently an addict himself. A pusher will service fifteen or twenty addicts. He, in turn, gives his order to a "front-end" who tells his pushers where to find the constantly changing street caches. Behind the front-end is a "back-end," who cuts the drug with sugar or milk to help the profit along, "caps" it (puts a grain in a gelatine capsule), and caches it in packages of twenty-five to fifty caps. Only the back-end, as a rule, knows the big boss, the "connection."

The connection DeCheverry was hunting headed what might be called the drug department of his particular syndicate, a wholesale operation and therefore simpler in structure than a retail organization. He had several associates in Montreal, racketeers who backed him with money in return for a share of the profits but whose main interest was gambling.

Montreal is Canada's main wholesale drug center. The Montreal rings have contacts in New York, the continent's main port of entry for heroin. The New York connections have agents in southern Europe. They buy from illegal factories or overproducing legal plants. These factories distill morphine and heroin from raw opium. The illegal



## THE INVESTIGATOR

opium is smuggled in, usually by sea, from the poppy-growing lands of the Near and Far East.

It is only once a year, occasionally twice, that the RCMP can reach behind the addicts to the men who control the traffic. These men know every trick of the federal police. They lurk back in the shadows and let their front men take the risk. It had taken DeCheverry four months to even learn that the Montreal connection existed and even after the man was known, the Montreal drug squad, for whom DeCheverry was only the spearhead, had still to get evidence that would stand up in court against cross-examination by the defense.

The investigation was a psychological drama with overtones of danger, the dialogue mainly a clash of wits between four members of the incongruous cast: DeCheverry, a secret agent named Papillon, a canny sociable racketeer, and a priest. But this dialogue was in large part prepared off-stage, on one side by the two plainclothes men who directed DeCheverry, on the other by the syndicate boss. These were the real protagonists, unknown strangers probing in the dark for each other's weaknesses, working from experience and reports. And, in the background, the inevitable minor characters: the special informants, the strong-arm men, a shady businessman from Quebec City and the pretty buxom mistress of a call house.

It had begun with an RCMP constable, Ross Andrews. At 27, Andrews was an old hand in the drug squad, a big, relaxed, clear-thinking plainclothes man. He had good contacts among the addicts in Montreal. One day in January

## THE LIVING LEGEND

1949 he picked up a tip that Jean-Claude Lapres was wholesaling narcotics in a big way.

Andrews was well acquainted with "Johnny" Lapres, a cagy racketeer on the fringe of the big time, a dealer in high-grade gold and a former counterfeiter. In April, Andrews had his chance. A Quebec City businessman came into the Montreal CIB office. This man — we will call him André Houle — was involved in several borderline business transactions and he wanted the Mounties' goodwill. He knew an associate of Lapres and he offered to introduce him to an RCMP undercover man.

The chance was too good to let go. Andrews's boss, Inspector Wilson Brady, brought in a reserve constable. He met Lapres's associate and confirmed the rumor that Lapres had a large amount of heroin. But the strain of playing a double role before such a hard-eyed audience was too much for his nerves. At the end of two days his hands shook when he lit a cigarette. It was too tough a job for an inexperienced man. Inspector Brady withdrew him before he was discovered.

This effort, while abortive, uncovered a fantastic fact. Lapres's front man was a priest, Abbé Joseph Arthur Taillefer. He was trafficking in stolen bonds, counterfeit money, black market gasoline and alcohol, as well as drugs.

The bonds appeared to be the loot from some bank hold-ups in Ontario. Brady approached the Royal Bank with this news. A head-office official, Cleo Fee, offered to put up \$3500 toward the expense of what Brady warned RCMP headquarters might be "a long and costly operation . . . having in mind the scale on which these people operate."

## THE INVESTIGATOR

The investigation was put in charge of Raoul Carriere, an intense, bright, hard-working corporal. Ross Andrews, the drug squad veteran, was assigned to assist him. They were to be the brain trust of the case.

As they waited for CIB headquarters to find them a man who could work undercover, Frank DeCheverry, a hefty, dark-haired, good-looking constable, was transferred to Montreal from Quebec City. He was shrewd, quick-witted, self-assured and single. Most of his adult life had been spent in the Air Force and the RCMP. But he acted and looked like a man who had been around — with money in his pocket. And, most imperative, he was a Catholic. Corporal Carriere asked Inspector Brady to let headquarters know that they had found their man in their own division.

Carriere and Andrews spent days preparing DeCheverry's fictitious background. He had to be a French-speaking out-of-towner who knew Montreal. He had to have a reason for acting mysterious and for having no permanent address the mob could check on. Looking ahead to the give-and-take of negotiation, he had to have a good job, something to lose by trusting the syndicate. They decided to make him a secret inspector for a hotel chain, a man who traveled from coast to coast sizing up the service in competing hotels.

Now they had to have someone to introduce him. André Houle, the Quebec City businessman, had fallen out with Lapres. Lapres's men had threatened to have Houle "beat up and left in a ditch." Carriere and Andrews pressed Houle to name someone else. He suggested another Quebec City man who did odd jobs for him, Henri-Paul Papillon. Papillon had met the priest through Houle.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Corporal Carriere checked on Papillon. He had six children and needed money badly. He was ex-Army Provost Corps and had no criminal record, no trade, no regular employment. He looked good. On April 11, Carriere called him long-distance. He appealed to Papillon's sense of duty, adding that the Royal Bank would guarantee his expenses and, if the bonds were recovered, he could claim a reward. Papillon agreed to catch the Montreal train that afternoon.

Carriere at once booked two adjoining rooms in the Mount Royal hotel. On the stationery of various first-class hotels across the country, Andrews and his wife composed letters hinting of shady deals and promiscuity. Andrews knew that the wily Lapres would search DeCheverry's room and these letters would begin to fill in DeCheverry's counterfeit character. DeCheverry, who had never worked undercover before, went downtown and bought a light blue suit to match his new personality, neither flashy nor conservative.

Papillon, their secret agent (an RCMP term), met them in DeCheverry's room that night, a thin wiry man with a little mustache.

"This is Frank Martin," Carriere said, indicating DeCheverry. "He's a fast-buck operator who talks of Vancouver, Winnipeg, Halifax, Toronto and the States. He's fixed you up with black market coupons during the war. That's all you know about him, except that he's flush and he's interested in B and H [bonds and heroin]. Don't forget, we want notes on everything that's said and done."

Carriere glanced around the room, at the telegrams and

## THE INVESTIGATOR

the bottle of Scotch on the dresser, the barely visible letters in DeCheverry's bathrobe pocket. "Are we all set?"

DeCheverry nodded. But, as he cleaned his teeth that night, he was shocked to see stamped on his toothbrush the initials "RCMP." A detail had almost tripped them up before they had begun.

In the morning Papillon went to St. Madeleine d'Outremont Parish to call on the Abbé Taillefer. The abbé, in his late forties, was a sallow dark-haired man with a manner faintly harassed. Even in his priest's robes he was thin, almost fragile. He was reputed to be a dynamic preacher.

"I have stopped working for André Houle, I have a new client," Papillon told him. The Quebec city businessman had tried to cheat him, he said. He described DeCheverry. "A little commission in B and H would suit me fine, Father."

The abbé promised to talk with "Johnny," the shrewd and convivial Lapres, for whom he fronted. At 8:30 that night Lapres came into the hotel lobby, a medium-sized man, sharply dressed. He had sensual lips, a prominent nose, and heavy-lidded, nearsighted eyes. He was a man who thought nothing of dropping five thousand dollars in one night of gambling, or of borrowing five dollars to eat on the next day. He was only 32 but he had been in the rackets a long time. He was very cunning, very wary. But Papillon was persuasive. "All right, I'll deal," Lapres said finally, "as long as you don't introduce me to a horseman [meaning a Mountie]."

Up in the room, DeCheverry poured a couple of rounds of drinks and Lapres began to relax. "What do you want?"

## THE LIVING LEGEND

he asked DeCheverry. "I've got everything — gold, diamonds . . ."

"How much H can you give me?" DeCheverry asked.

"Any amount. Up to 120 — pounds, not ounces." Lapres liked to impress people, he was a man who bought fifty-dollar shirts. But if what he said was only one tenth true, he had an enormous supply.

"Is it pure?" asked DeCheverry.

"Everybody I do business with, they come back for more, that's how pure it is." Lapres turned wary. "Who's it for? Yourself?"

"Hell, no," DeCheverry said. He knew what was wrong. He was too keyed up, like an actor on opening night.

"I don't know how he figures he's going to tell the stuff if he doesn't use it," Lapres said in a sneering aside to Papillon.

"I got ways," DeCheverry said, forcing himself to be off-hand. "You sell me an ounce, I'll get it checked in an hour. This is no deal for a chocolate bar."

"Okay. You've got identification? Driver's license? Letters?"

"I don't carry that kind of stuff on a deal like this," said DeCheverry. His instructions had been to let Lapres find out who he was for himself.

They continued to spar. Lapres showed a scar on his head which he said he had got by not being careful.

"You think you got something?" DeCheverry said. He pointed to his jaw, broken by the kick of a horse during RCMP training. "I been crossed too."

Finally the racketeer agreed to get the heroin. Papillon

## THE INVESTIGATOR

left with him; DeCheverry was pretending not to trust the secret agent. But Lapres didn't pick up the drugs. He took Papillon into a tavern. He tried to get him drunk. He kept asking questions about DeCheverry. "You see how he's dressed?" he said. "No flash. No stones. You sure he's not one of those goddamned horsemen?" Papillon told the Mounties about it when he got back to the room, half drunk, in the early morning.

"It's time to show him some money," Corporal Carriere decided. Cleo Fee, the Royal Bank official, had agreed to deposit \$35,000 in a safety-deposit box in DeCheverry's cover name "Frank Martin" in the main branch of the Royal Bank.

Next day DeCheverry took the racketeer in a cab to the bank. Fee himself ushered them into the vault. DeCheverry unlocked the safety-deposit box. "I'm the kind of a guy who deals in cash," he told Lapres. "You want to see money? Look at that. There. You see what I got?"

Lapres's eyes were bulging. "Feel the stuff," DeCheverry said, carried away by his role. "You know counterfeit money. What's this?" He picked up a packet, riffled it grandiosely, and almost fainted away. Between a sandwich of real bills there was nothing but blank paper. (Carriere had padded out the \$35,000 and neglected to mention it to DeCheverry.) Lapres had noticed nothing. "Get your paws off," DeCheverry snapped. "Now you know how I do business."

Back in the hotel cocktail lounge, waiting for Papillon, Lapres's caution struggled with his greed. "Let's get rid of Papillon," DeCheverry suggested. "I know he's getting a

## THE LIVING LEGEND

cut. Give him a little money and he'll just spend it on flash like all the rest of the cheap punks."

Papillon joined them. Excusing himself to go to the bathroom, DeCheverry called the two RCMP strategists, who were waiting in the room next to his.

"You're fed up," Andrews instructed him. "That's your line now."

In the lounge the racketeer was saying to Papillon: "Martin's trying to cross you up. I think he's a *flic*. Look at the steel on his heels. Look at his belt. You think a guy with dough would wear a cheap belt like that?"

"I think you should have his room searched," Papillon said, feigning fright. The skinny secret agent was proving exceptionally cool-headed. Lapres had no suspicions whatever about him.

DeCheverry came back to the lounge. "I figure I'm getting the run-around," he told the racketeer. "I produce money and what do you produce — nothing but arguments."

"You produce a right guy that knows you," said Lapres, "and I'll get you the stuff tonight."

"I'll see," DeCheverry said. Again he left the lounge and called the room. "We can't set that up by phone," Carriere told him. DeCheverry came back to the table and said that his friend had been out. Lapres refused to talk business. DeCheverry stood up. "I'm cutting out," he said. "You're taking me for a sucker."

Next day DeCheverry checked out of the hotel and Papillon told Abbé Taillefer and Lapres that DeCheverry didn't like the way they did business. The racketeer



## THE INVESTIGATOR

shrugged. "If he's a horseman, it doesn't matter. If not, he'll be back."

Carriere and Andrews, the backroom psychologists, decided to feed the syndicate a little more information. A week later, Papillon arranged for DeCheverry to call the priest.

On the telephone, the abbé was nervous. He asked for DeCheverry's solemn word that everything was all right. "You're not a Mountie, my son?"

"Oh no, Father," DeCheverry said. "God forbid." The abbé promised to see him the following day.

The Mountie met the priest in the presbytery parlor with its big, solid, old-fashioned furniture. "I respect your position, Father," DeCheverry said. "You must also realize my position. I'm out to make a buck like you, but I have a good job too." He explained his hotel connection. "I'm not going to let some two-bit punk like Lapres foul things up." The abbé's nervousness vanished. He called Lapres and told him "Martin" was "all right."

Lapres now agreed to sell a sample ounce, although he was still suspicious. "You could still be a Mountie," he told DeCheverry. "You got the shoulders for one."

DeCheverry laughed. He had the feel of his role now. He felt that Lapres knew nothing; his senses had simply been sharpened by his years in the rackets to an almost intuitive wariness. "If every guy my size is a dick there must be a lot around," he kidded Lapres.

He met Lapres and Papillon next morning in the lobby. In sight of the plainclothes Mounties who hovered nearby, watching, DeCheverry handed Papillon \$300. Cautiously,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Lapres refused to count the money or touch it. "Meet me at the Club Tavern in ten minutes," he told Papillon.

With Lapres when he joined Papillon was a husky man named Rosaire Delisle. They sat down and looked at Papillon in a way that made him uneasy. "I tell you what I think," Lapres said softly. "I think you're an RCMP sent to nail me."

The nerves in Papillon's stomach tensed. Unless Lapres was bluffing, his life wasn't worth much. He laughed. "Let Delisle search you," Lapres ordered.

Papillon stood up, seemingly bored. Delisle slapped his pockets, searching for a gun. He looked under his lapels for the pinpricks of a badge.

"All right," said Lapres. "Give Delisle the money and you stay with me."

Papillon relaxed; Lapres had been bluffing. "When I get the stuff," he said coolly, "I'll give you the money."

They met Delisle an hour later outside another tavern. He showed Papillon where he had taped the one-ounce packet of heroin underneath the step of an outside staircase. Papillon paid him and left. Back in the hotel Corporal Carriere and Constable Andrews tested the powder with nitric acid. It turned vivid blue-green, a heroin reaction.

Papillon then telephoned the priest. He told him "Martin" was annoyed at the time the deal had taken. "Rest easy, my friend," said the priest, "the big deal will go through in the morning. We will all make a lot of money."

But it was evening before Lapres and the abbé knocked on DeCheverry's door, and Lapres was still hanging back. "We must trust one another," said the priest.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

"It's all right for you to trust him," Lapres said. "I don't trust anybody. How much H do you want, Frankie?"

"Fifty pieces [ounces]," DeCheverry said. "How about bonds?"

"The big lot is out of town," Lapres said. "I'll need a thousand bucks' deposit to get them."

"We must have faith in each other," said the priest. "You can leave the money with me in perfect safety."

"Do you think I'm a bloody fool?" DeCheverry said. "Forgive me, Father. It's not that I don't trust *you*. But I'd be leaving myself wide open."

The abbé left and the argument adjourned to the cocktail lounge. For DeCheverry this was the worst night of all. With the pretense of showing him drugs Lapres dragged him from nightclub to nightclub, holding him up to the deadpan inspection of mobsters who had met a great many Mounties in their careers. Long before morning they lost their plainclothes cover, and Andrews, alone in their hotel headquarters room (Carriere had slipped out to attend his father's funeral) was pacing restlessly, plagued by thoughts of DeCheverry lying dead in some alley. Whenever possible, DeCheverry went to the lavatory and put his finger down his throat in a fairly successful but nerve-racking attempt to stay sober. By dawn, dead on his feet, he realized Lapres had never intended showing him drugs. "To hell with this," DeCheverry said, "I'm going home to bed."

The next day, Saturday, the racketeer brought a couple of girls around in a transparent move to get information. "Look," DeCheverry told him. "You took me for a sucker last night. But you're crazy if you think I'm paying the shot

## THE LIVING LEGEND

for your girl friends today. I'm leaving town on a big deal tonight, I'll see you Monday." Then DeCheverry took a streetcar to the outskirts of Montreal and spent the week end with his aunt.

Sunday night he came back for a late pow-wow with Carriere and Andrews. "We can't do any more to convince him you're okay," Carriere said. "Get tough. Tell him to make up his mind. But even if he doesn't come through, don't close the door."

DeCheverry called Abbé Taillefer in the morning. "I'm tired of wasting time with Lapres, Father. I'm not going to take my money from the bank. The way Lapres's muscle men have been following me around, I think he's planning a hijack." He was taking a shot in the dark about being followed but the priest did not dispute him. "Either we put the deal through tomorrow," DeCheverry concluded, "or we'll wash it out. I'm leaving on the 4:30 train."

Just before noon the following day Lapres and the priest both came to the room. DeCheverry ignored their glances at his Scotch and told them flatly: "The only way I'll deal is for you to put the stuff in a railway station locker and give me the key. That way I can get a look at it first. I'll give the money to the abbé here, either in the bank or outside, whichever he wants."

Lapres wanted the money first and he wouldn't touch a locker. The meeting broke up. At one o'clock Corporal Carriere told Papillon to call Abbé Taillefer. "Martin's gone out to eat," the secret agent told the priest. "I just wanted to tell you he's sure Lapres is a con man. He says, 'If they want to do business, they'll have to do it my way.'"

## THE INVESTIGATOR

"I don't blame him," the priest said. "Johnny wants him to take all the chances."

"Don't tell him we were talking," Papillon cautioned.

Twice during the afternoon Lapres called DeCheverry to argue for his method of handling the sale. "Why doesn't he make up his mind?" DeCheverry said irritably.

"I think he's willing to deal," Andrews said thoughtfully. "I think there's someone behind him holding him back. That's why they're changing plans so much."

At four o'clock DeCheverry said good-bye to Papillon and returned to the big downtown RCMP divisional building, where he was confined to barracks to avoid recognition.

Papillon paid a visit to the presbytery next morning. "Frank's pulled out," he said. "I've lost my commission. You've lost yours. All because of Lapres."

"Johnny thinks Martin is a policeman," the abbé said. "I think he is right. We do not want to trust him. Good-bye, my friend. I am sorry you have not made any money."

This was April 25. The curtain had fallen on the first act, a long opening movement. These salient facts were referred to Ottawa:

1. They knew Lapres had narcotics, probably a huge amount.

2. They could more than likely link him to the first test purchase by the testimony of Papillon, DeCheverry and the cover men, who had sometimes been close enough to record conversation.

3. But a premature seizure might fail to net the drugs or the bonds.

4. There was the delicate matter of the priest; in such a

## THE LIVING LEGEND

case, one purchase seemed scarcely sufficient evidence.

5. There was the vague mysterious figure behind both Lapres and the priest. This man was undoubtedly big, for Lapres was no minor criminal.

Headquarters decided to let two months go by to give the syndicate a feeling of false security. But on June 3 the case took a bad turn. They heard that their original informant, Quebec City businessman André Houle, had gone to Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montreal, with the tale of Abbé Taillefer's activities. When Corporal Carriere questioned Houle he denied it, but his manner was evasive and uneasy. Carriere asked Papillon to visit the abbé and try to find out what actually had happened.

The priest welcomed Papillon. "I have much to tell you, my friend. You ex-boss, André Houle — he has tried to blackmail me." Houle had told the priest that Papillon and "Martin" were Mounted Policemen, that all the syndicate's movements had been watched, their telephones tapped, their conversations recorded. For a thousand dollars, Houle had said, he would pay off a high-ranking Mountie and stop the investigation. Otherwise, he would tell the archbishop all about the abbé.

This threat had been discussed at a top-level meeting of the syndicate, the priest told Papillon. "Suppose I go to Quebec and knock him off?" one mobster suggested.

"No, no, no!" the priest had replied. "That would be against my principles."

"We could pick him up and make him talk," said another racketeer.

"Let us wait," the priest advised. "If I do not hear from

## THE INVESTIGATOR

the archbishop we can be sure he is lying to get money out of me.”

“I think he’s lying,” the top man had concluded. “If Martin and Papillon were redcoats they’d have knocked us off long ago. From what you say, Martin spent \$400 in one week. The *Montés* wouldn’t spend that kind of money. Besides, it takes more than a thousand dollars to fix them.”

Their quarry was still on the hook and the drug squad now knew what had been only suspicion before: someone big was directing the moves of both Lapres and the priest. Carriere and Andrews warned their double-crossing informant, André Houle, to keep his mouth shut, but how long he would they didn’t know. Once again they extended the bait, a letter from Papillon to the priest.

On July 8 the priest replied:

Dear Mister & Friend:

I see that you are fine but if money was present things would be better. . . . If you communicate with Martin and I think it would be a good idea if you did, tell him J. Lapres has always his material H and that he would be willing to do business this time.

I leave you now with my best regards,  
J. A. TAILLEFER, *Ptre.*

This was their opening. On July 12, DeCheverry and Papillon and the two coordinators, Carriere and Andrews, once again checked into adjoining rooms, this time in a different hotel. Their strategy now was to cut out Lapres. They already had enough on Lapres to convict him and as

## THE LIVING LEGEND

long as he remained active there was little hope of involving the man behind him.

Papillon set it up by a visit to the abbé. "Martin's in town," he told the priest. "He doesn't know I'm here. I wanted to see you first. Here's our chance to make some money. He's mad at Johnny Lapres. But he trusts you, Father. I think you could swing a deal."

The next morning the priest came to the hotel. DeCheverry, playing hard to get, tried to beat down the price (\$300 an ounce).

"I didn't set it myself," explained the priest.

"That ounce I bought from Lapres was one-fifth short," DeCheverry complained.

"I assure you I didn't know," the abbé told him. "You will get full measure from me, my friend. You can have every confidence. My man is a good solid man."

The abbé left and returned at noon. "Everything is arranged," he said, "but my man will only sell ten ounces this time."

"The same old runaround," Martin said. "I'll think it over." At eight o'clock he called the priest. "On a test purchase, Father, I'm not going to risk more than fifteen hundred dollars." Again the abbé had to go back to his man. Again and again DeCheverry haggled, each time drawing the unknown figure behind the priest deeper into the deal. Finally, the terms were agreed.

The priest knocked on DeCheverry's door at eleven the following morning, very pale, very agitated. "Where's the H?" DeCheverry asked him.



## THE INVESTIGATOR

"In a locker at Central Station. The key is hidden near St. James Cathedral."

"Once I've seen it, is it okay to move it to another locker?"

"No, no, do not move it! There are men watching it. They might jump you. On my honor, no one will touch it."

"Okay, okay. Don't get excited, Father."

They walked out of the hotel, along the street, and up the steps of the great cathedral. On the east side the abbé pointed toward a diamond-shaped stone. DeCheverry found the locker key in an envelope beneath it. "Wait for me at the station, the south entrance," he told the priest.

The locker in the station held a brown paper package. In it were six small cellophane envelopes. DeCheverry slipped one under the band of his wristwatch. Outside, he found the priest chain-smoking nervously.

"Relax, Father, everything looks okay," DeCheverry said. Making sure the tails had had time to get into position, he flagged a cab. "Royal Bank, main branch," he said. In the rear-view mirror he could recognize a police car, a blue sports model.

The priest sat in the cab while DeCheverry went in. Carriere and another Mountie were waiting in the vault. They tested the ounce of heroin, then gave DeCheverry \$1500 in marked bills. Riding back to the station in the cab, DeCheverry let the priest count the money, then took it back. "We'll wait till I see if the stuff is still there, Father." He didn't know if their plans included a hijacking or not.

The brown paper package was still in the locker. "Here's

## THE LIVING LEGEND

the money," DeCheverry said. He had no trouble pretending to be nervous. "Now telephone your man and get him to call off his hoods." He maneuvered the abbé into a telephone booth that had no dial system and the priest was forced to repeat the number aloud to the operator. DeCheverry memorized it, holding in his excitement. This was the break.

"My man is satisfied," said the priest. "I must admit, I was afraid there would be some federal police." They shook hands. That afternoon the priest called back. "I am leaving on my holidays. When you come back to town we will make a good deal, eh?"

This might be termed the second movement, brief but successful beyond their hopes. They had now enough evidence to prosecute the priest, Lapres, and Lapres's henchman, Rosaire Delisle. And they knew the man behind, the "connection." His phone number had been traced. He called himself Michel Sisco. Little else was known about him. He had no police record in Canada.

RCMP strategy now was to have DeCheverry meet Sisco. The Mountie booked a hotel room on August 1 and invited Abbé Taillefer up for a drink. They talked of the money the priest had made during the war with black market gas and sugar coupons. "Who would suspect me?" the abbé said. "I'm a perfect front. They wouldn't dare touch me." They talked of communism, blondes, automobiles. More than anything else the priest wanted a car, a limousine. "If I make enough on our deals to buy a car," he said hopefully, "you can borrow it when you come to town."

"I've got to get a better price," said DeCheverry. Always

## THE INVESTIGATOR

while dangling the lure he had to seem to be backing away.

"I'll ask my man," the abbé promised.

"Maybe I should talk to him. Put things on a solid basis. We're wasting a lot of time running back and forth."

The priest said he would try to arrange a meeting but he did not mention it the following day. DeCheverry did not press it. He checked out of the hotel, boarded the Halifax train, got off at Montreal West and was picked up by a police car. A few days later, through the hotel chain he was supposed to work for, he received a card from the priest. "I will pray for you," the abbé wrote, "and that our deal goes through."

On September 6, hotel chambermaids noticed that the strange men who seldom went out were back in adjoining rooms. This time the strategists, Corporal Carriere and Constable Andrews, were determined to force Sisco into the open. They had primed DeCheverry with logical questions the abbé would not be able to answer. They had given him letters supposedly written by a backer in Winnipeg suggesting he get the stuff in Toronto for fear of "a double-cross by Lapres."

"Cancel the deal if you have to," Carriere said. "For the kind of money he thinks you've got he'll come out." They knew by now that Sisco owned a roadhouse north of the city. He was listed as a commercial agent but customs records showed no importations under his name. He paid no income tax. Dun & Bradstreet didn't know him. He was suave, sophisticated, spoke five languages, and made several phone calls a week to New York. The FBI had been asked to check on the calls.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

DeCheverry had expected that the priest would greet him gladly. Instead, the abbé was standoffish. He said he was very busy with the opening of the schools. "Don't hand me that," said DeCheverry testily. "You don't want to deal, okay. I know where I can get the stuff and none of this run-around." Uneasily, the priest promised to come to his room.

When he came, two days later, he talked ambiguously of getting out of "the H business." Suddenly, he said: "Did you hear that Johnny Lapres was arrested?"

"No!" DeCheverry said.

"Some *Monté* named Carriere."

DeCheverry choked on his drink. Carriere had wanted DeCheverry's surprise to be genuine. He had grilled Lapres on a counterfeiting charge. He wanted Lapres to be too hot for Sisco to use.

"They questioned him all night," said the priest. He met DeCheverry's eyes. "Johnny says when he went to the toilet he met you face to face. Is that true? Are you a Mounted Policeman?"

DeCheverry jumped up angrily. "He's a doublecrossing chiseling no-good. Get him to meet me in the presbytery. I'll tell him to his face. We'll see who's lying." He swore bitterly. "The deal's off. How do I know Lapres isn't behind your man?"

"I give you my solemn word," said the priest. He left on a somewhat conciliatory note.

The next day he called back. "You do not have to confront Johnny, my son. My man has forced him to tell the truth. Johnny was lying. We know you are not a Mounted Policeman. My man will meet you for fifteen minutes to-

## THE INVESTIGATOR

morrow night, here in the presbytery." It was the word they'd been waiting for. Lapres's lie had been an unexpected piece of luck.

The Mountie and the syndicate head shook hands in the abbé's office. Michel Sisco had thin close-shut lips and a prominent nose in a round olive-skinned face. His short heavy figure was draped in expensive tailoring. His fluid French had a continental flavor. "This is the boss," said the abbé. "He will answer your questions."

"Where does Lapres come in?" demanded DeCheverry belligerently.

"I no longer trust him," Sisco said. "He is not in this transaction. Were you satisfied with our deals? Was the quality good? Have I given you full measure?"

DeCheverry allowed himself to be mollified. "You can guarantee a steady supply?"

"Even if war comes." Sisco allowed DeCheverry a cut in price, referring to the heroin as "merchandise." "The merchandise from America is not pure," he said. "The best is made in Germany." He exuded authority and charm. "I have been in this business for twenty years. I know how to handle these deals. If at any time you cannot come yourself, write a letter to the abbé here, tear it, mail half, and give half to a messenger. It is dangerous to send merchandise through the mails. Do you want any now?"

"Yes, but I'll have to check with my clients on the amount." DeCheverry invited Sisco out for a drink. Sisco declined. "It would not be wise to be seen together," he said.

It had come to a head much faster than they had ex-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

pected. Corporal Carriere and Constable Andrews hastily assembled their men. They couldn't risk shadowing Sisco but two constables and their wives were sent to his roadhouse, ostensibly to dance, actually to familiarize themselves with his appearance so that they would be better able to shadow him during the deal. Six constables were assigned to watch the presbytery in eight-hour shifts. When the priest left they would join six others covering DeCheverry along the route of the transaction.

DeCheverry telephoned Abbé Taillefer and set up the sale: 32 ounces of heroin — the same arrangement as last time. A hurry-up request for \$7200 went up the RCMP chain of command to the Treasury Board and was granted. Until the last moment DeCheverry pestered the priest with changes of plan in the hope of badgering Sisco into personally taking part.

DeCheverry was on edge when the abbé arrived in his room at eleven o'clock on the morning of the deal. Much of their work would succeed or fail in the next hour. "Everything's ready," the priest said nervously. "I am sure all will go well." On the other side of the wall Constable Andrews was talking softly into the mike of a two-way radio, coordinating the movements of a half-dozen police cars.

Once more the abbé led the Mountie to St. James Cathedral, and they waited in the still, cool, vaulted entrance. "My man would like the money when we get the key," the priest said. "Nothing doing," DeCheverry said, "I've got to see the stuff first."

A thick-set round-faced man walked in: Sisco himself!

## THE INVESTIGATOR

He shook hands, leaving the locker key in DeCheverry's palm. "My men will be watching every move you make," he said evenly. "Please don't try anything or you've had it."

DeCheverry walked to Central Station, the abbé following, Sisco trailing the abbé. The Mountie opened the locker and felt the brown paper parcel. He threw it back in and slammed the door. He had felt no drugs. The sensation of being watched crawled up his spine.

The abbé was loitering at the station's south entrance. "What the hell are you pulling off?" said DeCheverry, low-voiced and angry. "All I got there's a bunch of lousy paper."

The priest laughed. Sisco came up. "I wanted to see what would happen," he said. "We have to protect ourselves. Go back to the church and wait for me."

This time Sisco gave him a key for a Windsor Station locker. DeCheverry opened it, felt the waxy one-ounce packs and knew that this was the big haul (\$40,000 to \$140,000 retail, depending on the city where it was sold). He and the abbé and Sisco got into a taxi.

A man in an idling car nearby spoke quietly into a microphone: "He's heading for the bank." Andrews, in the hotel room, relayed the message. A car pulled up beside the Royal Bank and Carriere went in.

Corporal Carriere was standing like any customer by the rows of safety-deposit boxes when an attendant ushered DeCheverry and the priest to a private room. "Count the money," he heard DeCheverry say, and then, "Take it, it's yours."

"Later," the priest said.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"It's yours," DeCheverry insisted and he turned and left the room. As the priest followed uneasily, holding the money, Carriere placed his hand on his shoulder. "You're under arrest," he said.

Abbé Taillefer's mouth opened but no words came. "We'll go to your place first and change your clothes." Carriere said, thus carrying out the only request of Monseigneur Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montreal, who, when warned what would happen, refused to intercede in any way for his errant priest.

Outside on the street Sisco had been arrested. Lapres's henchman, Rosaire Delisle, was being rounded up. Lapres, cocky as ever, came in by himself. "I'm Johnny Lapres," he said. "I hear you're looking for me."

A search of Sisco's flat yielded no new evidence but in the abbé's office they found a scrap of paper on which the priest had been figuring his profit. They did not recover the rest of the huge drug cache which now they were certain existed. The bonds had already been sold to racketeers in New York.

At first Sisco suavely tried to pass off his arrest as an unfortunate misunderstanding. Said Carriere: "The man you met in Abbé Taillefer's office, the man you sold thirty-two ounces of heroin to, was not Frank Martin, but Constable Frank DeCheverry of the RCMP."

"No name was mentioned when I met him," Sisco said. He realized his slip at once. "If you think you can get me to talk you've got the wrong man. If you think you have a case you have only to charge me. I'll tell my story in court."

But Michel Sisco never came to court. And he told his



## THE INVESTIGATOR

story a few days later. He was born in Michel, British Columbia, he said. His mother had died very young and he had been taken back to Italy. The Germans had interned him in Milan but he had escaped to North Africa. A British cruiser had brought him from Casablanca to Halifax. He had no proof for his story but it was very hard to disprove; the records of birth in Michel, B.C. had been destroyed by fire.

Some weeks later Sisco's fingerprints, identified by the International Criminal Police Commission in Paris, told his true story. He was Antoine (called Michel) D'Agostino, born in Bone, Algeria, in 1919. He held controlling interests in various illegal businesses in Italy and France. He was wanted for counterfeiting in Italy. And in France, as an ex-Gestapo agent, he was under sentence of death for murder. He is believed to have been smuggled into Canada by the steward of an Italian liner.

A judge of the Court of King's Bench set bail at \$20,000, though the RCMP advised that allowing Sisco bail was unwise. At first, Sisco wasn't able to raise it. Then he asked to see Corporal Carriere and said: "If I'm not sprung I'll have something to tell you." He said he could supply the lowdown on the international drug traffic reaching back to illicit factories in Europe. His threat found its way via the underworld grapevine to his syndicate associates. Shortly afterward his bail was reduced to \$12,000. It was posted and Sisco promptly vanished.

He came briefly to view again in 1951 when a very large narcotics ring was broken in New York. Sisco is described by the U.S. Immigration Service as "a main ringleader of

## THE LIVING LEGEND

this international smuggling organization . . . very clever, very dangerous . . . usually armed," and his stature may be judged by the fact that two of the gangsters arrested were top-level figures in the nationwide *Unione Siciliano*, which succeeded the murderous Mafia. Sisco escaped to Mexico, was picked up crossing the U.S. border in 1956, and as this is written six lawyers were resisting attempts to bring him back to New York.

As for the others, Johnny Lapres was sentenced to three years, and his henchman Rosaire Delisle drew three months for a first offense. The unfrocked but unrepentant Abbé Taillefer received two years and a thousand-dollar fine. None of the sentences seemed designed to teach any sterner lesson than to never, never sell narcotics to someone you do not know.

Many a costly, troublesome and risky investigation ends with just such a muted climax. Any idealization of justice dooms the Mountie to disillusion, leads to cynicism, so often the prelude to corruption.

Cynicism is the abyss of the profession. Fortunately, few Mounties sound its depths. They pass through a cynical period and emerge into skepticism, an awareness of the gap between reality and appearance.

The investigator is fated to doubt; doubt is the price he pays for his freedom of mind. But in doubting he must have faith, he must believe in more than results. He must believe that justice is something more than an eye for an eye, that justice is also the way he does his job. Says a former head of the CIB, "A policeman shouldn't care what the result of

a case is. He should only feel he's done his best and gotten the best evidence possible."

## 12

**T**HE MURDER had taken place on the island ahead. It looked very like the island they had just left. It humped from the sea ice of Hudson Bay like the back of a monstrous white whale, low, snow-covered, starkly bare.

The policeman plodded up the bank behind the dogs, the Eskimo guide, the missionary, the doctor and the witness — the native woman. At the top he turned and surveyed their back trail. He could still see the Hudson's Bay post, six white buildings small in the distance. After this, he guessed shrewdly, Ernest Riddell, the post manager, would not remain in the Belcher Islands alone. He wondered why the Eskimos remained. The caribou had left fifty years before. As late as August pack ice surrounded these islands. In all their length and breadth, 91 by 51 miles, there was not a solitary stunted tree. Even moss and cranberry bushes grew in only a few secluded areas. Soil blew away as fast as it formed. There were only the seals, the fish, and the ducks and geese that bred in the shallow lakes in multitudes to feed and clothe some forty Eskimo families.

The policeman, "Nubby" Kerr, was a wiry little man. His features under a broad bulging forehead were tough and cheerful. He had spent years in isolated RCMP detach-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

ments much closer than this to the pole but he had never known land as bleak as these Belchers.

He pushed on, shoulders hunched against the stabbing April wind. Ahead of him the Eskimos in their fantastic feathered clothing looked like Gargantuan birds walking upright. The snow deepened. The domes of four igloos rose from the wastes of white. They had been deserted perhaps two months, Kerr noted. They looked forsaken as ancient ruins on a desert.

The Eskimo woman, Eva Naroomi, pointed to a rocky ledge and spoke in dialect to the missionary, the Reverend George Neilson, who had walked a hundred miles from Great Slave River on the mainland to serve as interpreter.

"This is the Tukarak Island camp," he told Kerr. "She says you will find her husband under some rocks beneath that ledge."

Kerr uncovered the corpse, frozen solid, fully clad in the feathered pants and parka that the islanders fashion from skins of the eider duck. Obviously the rocks had been thrown on the body, not built up into the customary monument to the dead.

The doctor, Thomas Orford, stripped away the parka from what had been a young, fine-looking Eskimo man. The head was sheathed in frozen blood.

"Two bullet holes," the doctor reported. "One entered the back of the head, the other between the shoulder blades. Either one could have caused death." The police plane on its flight from Ottawa yesterday had picked up the doctor, who was also Indian agent and coroner, at Moose Factory, 350 miles south.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

The Mountie began to replace the rocks, piling them in a proper burial mound. By nightfall, he reckoned, they ought to reach Camsell Island. They would camp and in the morning they could examine the six bodies there. Inspector Martin should have found the first two by now. With luck they could round up the witnesses, get their statements, finish the inquests and take off before the ice broke and stranded the plane. He would send the guide tomorrow to tell the killers to come to the post. By next week he and Martin would be back in Ottawa with the facts all ready for typing in quintuplicate. A queer case. The queerest he had ever come across.

The policeman thought of the man he was burying and suddenly he was angry. These bloody islands, he thought, these islands and the white man. Together they had been too much for even these sane people. It was going to be a hard report to write. He was going to find it hard to keep his opinions out of it. He could only try to put down the facts so they would show why it happened.

It had begun with Charlie Ouyerack, a small man with the sullen face of a disappointed child. In January, 1941, Ouyerack convinced his neighbors that he was Jesus.

He was an unusual Eskimo. When he was a boy his father had been murdered. He had never outgrown his sense of helplessness, loss and resentment. Now, at twenty-seven, he had not the self-sufficiency so characteristic of his people, who, finding nature outside themselves uncontrollable, have evolved toward control of their inward nature. He had some of the traits of the white man, rare in an Es-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

kimo; he sometimes struck his children, envied other men's skills, coveted their women and spoke less than the whole truth. Confronted by the cruelty or indifference of the elements he gave way at times to panic or anger. And since he could not respect himself, he practiced self-deceit and craved the respect of others.

Charlie Ouyerack was clever and imaginative. He claimed mastery of the trance by which medicine men project their souls through the ether to locate caribou. He studied the New Testament, a translation in Eskimo syllabics given out two decades before by a visiting missionary; and he envied the powers of Jesus, medicine man of Kabloona the white man, who could walk on water and raise the dead. It was written in the Book that Jesus would visit the earth again. Sometimes Charlie imagined that he was Jesus, filled with a power that would raise him above all evil, above all men.

The winter of 1940-1941 had been bad in the islands. Seals were scarce and what skins the Eskimos took brought only a few cents. Some families did not earn enough to replace their ammunition. They could not afford their only luxuries, tea and tobacco. They sat through the sunless days in their gloomy round snowhuts, too discouraged to hunt, hungry, uncertain. At night Keytowieack the catechist went from igloo to igloo bringing hope by his reading of the Book.

Keytowieack was forty-seven, already old and bent, dignified and a little stupid. Ouyerack found it unbearable that people should listen to him. One night in an open-topped snowhouse as the catechist read to a gathering, Ouyerack's

## THE INVESTIGATOR

patience snapped. "What do you know of Jesus, old man?" he shouted.

Keytowieack stopped reading. Ouyerack stood up. He was conscious that the flow of time had ceased, that destiny was waiting on this moment. He raised his hands toward the sky. "Listen to me," he cried, "I have seen Jesus — brighter than the sun."

Across the great dark dome of the sky streamed the blood-red polar lights. In the silence he could hear them, a vast faraway rustling, like the banners of an unseen heavenly host. Ouyerack felt certainty gathering in him. "Listen to me," he cried again, "Jesus is coming. His spirit has entered into me. I am Jesus, telling you of the One who is to come."

At that moment a meteor trailed fire across the sky. A cry went up from the people in the snowhut. Kugveet leaped to his feet. "It is a sign!" he shouted. "Jesus has spoken!"

Next morning Peter Sala returned from a two-day hunt on the sea ice. Among the eight families camped on Flaherty Island, Sala was the natural leader, intelligent, tall, handsome, the man with the fastest dog team, the surest hunter. As he drove into camp he could hear people shouting, "Jesus is coming tonight!" and they clustered around him, shaking his hand, everyone talking at once. Markusie took the rifle from his sled and shot several dogs. Markusie was laughing. "We do not need bullets or dogs," Markusie said. He smashed Sala's rifle against an ice bank. "Material things are of no use now. Jesus is coming!" Some people started playing ball with a cap. They seemed very happy. Only the children were frightened and crying.

Lifting the walrus from his sled, Sala entered the big

## THE LIVING LEGEND

igloo. It was crowded with people. Ouyerack, in a stained white cotton surplice, a wooden cross hanging from his neck, sat with a staff in his hand facing the others. Near him sat Keytowieack the catechist.

Sala tried to hide his fright and offered them walrus meat. Ouyerack refused. "How can we eat meat," he said, "when we are waiting for God?" And all the people began to cry, "God! We want God."

"Who is God?" Sala asked.

No one spoke. They looked at Ouyerack. He was staring fixedly at Sala. Then Kugveet said to Sala, "You are not an ordinary Eskimo. You are taller, stronger, better than the rest of us."

"No, no, do not think that," Sala said.

Kugveet did not seem to hear. "You must be God," he said. "You will teach us to be good."

"No," Sala said, frightened, "I cannot teach you. I am not good."

Ouyerack rose and came close to Sala. "I am Jesus," he said. "We have all been saved. Our sins are blotted out. You are the best among us. You are God." He lowered his voice hypnotically. "Say you are God. Tell them I am Jesus."

"Hear me," Sala shouted. "I am God!" He believed now.

It grew dark in the igloo. Singing happily, they built a bonfire of all their hymnals and Bibles and the flames leaped in the close steamy darkness. Apawkok the widower came crowding in with his family. Everyone shook Apawkok's hands and the hands of his eldest son Alec and kissed his thirteen-year-old daughter Sarah. Then they joined in prayer to Peter Sala and Charlie Ouyerack.



## THE INVESTIGATOR

Sala saw that Sarah was not praying. "Come here," he said.

"I don't know what to say," Sarah said.

"Come here," Sala said. He took her by the arms. "I am God. Do you not believe in God?"

"I believe in God," Sarah said, "but I do not believe you are God. And I do not think Charlie Ouyerack is Jesus."

The people began to murmur. Ouyerack in a loud voice said: "My body is Ouyerack but my thoughts are Jesus."

"You should believe and follow us," Sala said. "You should believe as your father and brother believe."

Sarah hung her head. She was a willing girl who had always done as her father told her. Her brother Alec, sitting beside Ouyerack, reached over and pulled her roughly toward him. "You do not want to say yes," he said angrily. "You are lying when you say you believe in God."

"No" Sarah said, frightened now. "Do not hurt me. Please. I am telling the truth."

"Is this girl any good?" Alec asked Sala.

"No," Sala said. "She does not believe."

Alec hit Sarah heavily in the face. He shifted his grip to her hair and struck her again.

"I want to believe," Sarah cried, "I want to believe what my father believes."

"You are lying," Alec shouted. He hit her until she collapsed, then he pulled her up off the floor by her hair. Sala looked away. He did not want to see Alec hurting his sister.

"Eyah," Sarah cried faintly, "please stop."

"What's the matter?" Alec shouted. "You look bad."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Her eyes were swelling shut. "I will do worse. Someone bring me a piece of wood."

"No, no," several people murmured.

Alec turned in fury to Ouyerack. "Am I doing right or am I doing wrong?"

"You are doing right," Ouyerack said. "She has a devil in her. The devil will not let her believe."

"I do believe, I do believe," Sarah was crying.

Someone put a board in Alec's hand. He beat Sarah about the head and neck. Blood gushed from her mouth and she fell on her side, pulling her parka hood over her head. Sala leaned down in the dark and felt her heart.

"It does not matter if she is dead," Alec said.

Sarah moaned softly.

"What? You can cry yet?" Sala said, amazed.

"Should this girl live?" Alec asked Charlie Ouyerack.

"It is just as well to kill her," Charlie said. "God will not mind."

In the glare from the burning books Sala saw that the people's faces were pale. "Take her outside," he commanded. And the people murmured, "God does not want her in the igloo."

Four Eskimos dragged Sarah from the snowhouse. Her shawl trailed across the blazing books and her clothing caught fire. She made a sound like a sigh. Then the people in the igloo heard her saying outside, "I will go to the house of my father." Then they heard the sound of blows and the young girl Akeenik came back in. She was holding the barrel of a broken rifle. The breech was wet with blood. "My hands are frozen," Akeenik said plaintively. "I was

## THE INVESTIGATOR

holding the steel gun barrel while I hammered Satan to death. Thaw them out for me, someone."

"We have killed a devil," Ouyerack said. "Now we can all have a good time."

"Let us be thankful Satan is dead," said the people.

Keytowieack the catechist rose. "No!" he said angrily. "No, it is all bad. At first I believed you. Now I know you are wrong. Charlie and Peter are not God and Jesus. God is good. Jesus was kind. He would not take life as you have taken Sarah's."

Peter Sala's mother screamed that Keytowieack was Satan. Others began to shout "Devil" at him. Keytowieack started out, trying to pull others with him. Charlie Ouyerack seized him. Keytowieack tore away, thrusting past the clutching hands. At the entrance he paused. "There is only one God," he said. "He is not here. He is in Heaven."

For a long time the din in the igloo was deafening. Everyone talked angrily of Keytowieack. Then they heard the window break. Keytowieack had come back. He looked in the broken pane and said loudly, "Those who believe in the true God come out. Come on my side. Help me. Please. I need help."

Peter Sala picked up a slat from the sleeping bench and hurled it through the window like a harpoon. "I hit Satan in the mouth," he cried triumphantly.

"All right," Keytowieack mumbled, holding his bleeding mouth. "I will go away. I will go to my own igloo. But I will tell you first—" he raised his voice—"a lot of people will go astray from listening to you." He backed away from Sala's menacing gesture.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"Satan is gone," someone said. "Now Jesus will come." And they all sang happily, "Jesus is coming."

"No, no," Sala said angrily, "Jesus is here. God is here. How can Jesus be coming when Jesus is here? Speak to them, Jesus. What they say is not right."

But the people would not listen. All night they prayed and sang that Jesus would come. There was no longer need to work or hunt. Some families, though half-starved, had put away food for Him, for He would surely be hungry after His trip.

In the morning Sala was still angry and more than a little frightened, for the things Keytowieack said had found an echo in his heart. He ordered several Eskimos to harness what dogs were left and prepared to leave camp with his family. As he walked past Keytowieack's igloo, a harpoon in each hand, he looked in the window and saw the old man sitting bowed in a chair. Bitterness welled up in him against Keytowieack, whose malice had destroyed his happiness.

"Who are you praying to?" Sala shouted derisively.

Keytowieack did not answer.

Sala broke the window. "Look at me," he said. He poked Keytowieack with his steel-tipped harpoon. "You are not praying right," he mocked. "Your prayers will do you no good."

Keytowieack did not move or speak.

Some Eskimos, hearing voices, had left their snowhouses to watch; others had remained in the all-night meeting. Sala fainted with his harpoons but Keytowieack did not flinch. Sala threw a harpoon; it pierced Keytowieack's

## THE INVESTIGATOR

sleeve. Still the catechist sat with his head bowed, silent.

"What can you do now?" Sala taunted. "Look at me. I am God."

But Keytowieack's eyes remained on his lap and still he did not speak. Infuriated, Sala said, "You are Satan. I will kill you." Keytowieack gave no sign that he heard. Sala gestured to Adlaykok. "Shoot him!"

Adlaykok was a tall, balding, middle-aged Eskimo whose face had set in tired, half-humorous lines. "If that was God's command," he said, "to kill all who do not believe, we would all have been dead long ago."

"I am God," Sala raged. "Shoot him, I said!"

Adlaykok went to his house and came back with his rifle. Deliberately he aimed through the window at Keytowieack. "Shoot!" Sala said, as he hesitated. Adlaykok fired.

Keytowieack jerked slightly as the bullet entered his shoulder, but no sound passed his lips.

"I have no more bullets," Adlaykok said.

"Jesus will give you one," Sala said. Adlaykok went to the meeting, asked Ouyerack for a bullet, came back, and shot Keytowieack through the head. The old man toppled sideways from his chair. After carrying Christ's word for twenty years among the Belcher igloos, he had died in the image of Satan.

Some people turned away in sudden doubt of the new religion. But most of the watchers crowded into Keytowieack's igloo and stared down in silence at the body.

"We should bury him in the right way, with rocks," Markusie said.

"No," Sala said angrily. "It is no use. He cannot freeze,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

he is in hell's fire." He rammed his harpoon down the old man's mouth and left it quivering upright. "Pull the snow-house down upon him!" he ordered. Then Sala left camp with his family, Adlaykok and Ouyerack. Ouyerack had left his wife; he was sleeping with Sala's sister, Mina. Her husband Moses did not object since Ouyerack was Jesus.

Early in February, while Sala was hunting, Ouyerack came to the Tukarak Island camp of Quarack, short, square, erect, greatest hunter in all the islands. Quarack, too, was convinced by the tongue of Charlie Ouyerack. But his son-in-law, Alec Keytowieack, did not believe.

Keytowieack was the son of the murdered catechist and he could not reconcile his knowledge of Jesus with a man who had taken one man's wife and now wanted his — Eva Naroomi, daughter of Quarack. Seeing that Keytowieack was not to be persuaded, Ouyerack said, "You are a devil. Obey me or you will die."

Now Keytowieack was frightened. "I believe a little," he said. They were gathered, all except Quarack, in Quarack's igloo.

"You lie," Ouyerack said. "Kill him, Moses."

"I do not want to kill someone like myself," Moses said.

Ouyerack looked contemptuously at him and went outside to find Quarack. The great hunter was feeding his dogs.

"Keytowieack is bad," Ouyerack told him, "Jesus will be coming soon and he will not want to see bad people. Shoot him."

Quarack agreed.

"Come out, Keytowieack," Ouyerack called.

## THE INVESTIGATOR

Keytowieack came out. He had lost his fright. "I believe in God," he said proudly. "I do not believe in Charlie Ouyerack."

"Walk away from the igloo and do not turn around," Ouyerack said. "Walk out to that black crack in the ice. You will see something wonderful."

Keytowieack walked out under the rock ledge of the shore, walking with his back very straight. "Go ahead," Ouyerack said to Quarack. And Eva Naroomi turned her back as her father shot her husband between the shoulder blades.

"He is still moving," Ouyerack said.

Quarack, walking closer, shot Keytowieack again.

"He is not dead yet," said Ouyerack. "We must make sure he is dead." And Quarack walked close to Keytowieack where he lay on the ice and sent a heavy bullet through his brain. Ouyerack smiled. "Be happy," he said, "Satan is dead." Singing, they threw rocks at the body until it was covered.

Late that month, Peter Sala received an invitation to guide the Hudson's Bay post manager, Ernest Riddell, to Great Whale River. Here Sala confided the story of the new cult to interpreter Harold Udgarden, a Hudson's Bay Company pensioner known to Eskimos as the White Brother. Udgarden told Riddell, who wired the RCMP through the Hudson's Bay Company's headquarters in Winnipeg.

The Mounties had given the Air Force all their pilots and usable planes. It was April before they could recondition a broken-down Norseman, borrow a Department of Transport pilot, and fly in Inspector D. J. Martin and Cor-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

poral W. G. Kerr. But even under the best of conditions the Mounties could not have prevented the last act of the tragedy.

It took place at a Camsell Island camp while Quarack was hunting and Sala was guiding Riddell. Ouyerack had gone back to his wife. Sala's sister, Mina, had been brooding for several days. She was a powerful hard-faced woman of thirty.

On March 29 at midday she became hysterical. She ran from igloo to igloo calling, "Jesus is coming to earth. Come all thou to meet him. We must meet him on the ice!" Shoving and shouting "Hurry, hurry!" she emptied the camp and herded the children seaward, the mothers following reluctantly for their children's sake. It was a fine day, windless and cold.

Far out on the sea ice Mina lifted her hands to the sky, calling, "Come, Jesus. Come, Jesus." She stopped and said, "Take your clothes off. We cannot meet Jesus with our clothes on. Hurry. He is coming!" She ran round the group in a circle, clawing the clothes from Kumudluk her sister, from Moses her husband, forcing these two to help her undress the children. As their bodies grew numb the children cried out in pain and fright, but Mina would not give them their clothes; she beat off Sala's wife, she ran round the naked group calling, "Jesus is coming!"

Now Quarack's wife, frantic with fear, came and snatched her children's clothes, dressed them, gave her baby to her thirteen-year-old daughter, and carrying another child, hurried back to camp. Sala's wife tried to dress her sons but they were too stiff to move; her own feet



## THE INVESTIGATOR

were freezing; she could carry no more than her baby. "Help me!" she cried to Mina. But Mina said, "Let them freeze, it does not matter," and ran back to camp alone.

Those adults who could still move each carried a child to safety. When Peter Sala returned he found that his two boys, his mother, his sister Kumudluk, and two other children were dead. Of his family, only his wife, his baby and Mina were left, and Mina was insane. It was the end of the madness that had begun with Ouyerack and long before, with the slaying of Ouyerack's father.

All this went into the crime report of Corporal Nubby Kerr and Inspector Douglas Martin, the RCMP investigators. Having put Adlaykok, Quarack and Mina in cells at Moose Factory, they found that they had been caught in the spring break-up. They abandoned their plane and returned to the capital by dog team, canoe, railway handcar and train.

Martin flew back on July 25 with a slight red-haired sergeant, Henry Kearney. In five days they had finished the preliminary hearings, Martin, a justice of the peace, acting as judge, Kearney as prosecutor. Sala, Ouyerack, Quarack, Adlaykok, Apawkok, Akeenik and Mina were committed for trial in mid-August when an Ontario Supreme Court judge and two Ottawa lawyers would arrive on a Hudson's Bay schooner. Then Martin returned, leaving Kearney in charge of seven prisoners, fifty-odd witnesses and the trial arrangements.

In this situation Kearney, a precise, conscientious man, needed all his knowledge of the north. Flu, often fatal among Eskimos, struck every man, woman and child in his

## THE LIVING LEGEND

charge. With the help of a corporal and two Hudson's Bay men, Kearney nursed them back to health with only one death. When all their food except rolled oats was gone he organized hunting expeditions. He summonsed a prospecting party to act as jurymen, put his prisoners to work making tables, chairs and benches, and by the time Mr. Justice C. P. Plaxton arrived, his courtroom was ready for him.

It was one of the strangest trials ever held. Kearney had set up a marquee as big as a carnival tent. At one end hung a large photograph of the King and Queen. Beneath it was the judge's bench, a wooden flag-draped table. The judge, bewigged and begowned, faced the befeathered Eskimo witnesses who squatted on the moss floor like a flock of man-like birds. Wooden benches on either side held the jurymen, their feet swathed in bearskins; the two black-garbed lawyers; two Mounties in scarlet tunics; and the prisoners, arms akimbo, Ouyerack emotionless, Sala rocking back and forth, faster and faster as the bizarre case progressed. As the women testified, their children would peep from a cocoon of skins on their backs and fix their dark unblinking eyes disconcertingly on the lawyer. Rain drummed on the canvas roof. Eskimos sneezed and snuffled and over all hung the ripe aroma of half-tanned sealskins.

Mina, who had to be carried into court strapped on a stretcher, was declared insane. The jury found Apawkok and Akeenik "Not guilty, on account of temporary insanity." Quarack, Sala and Ouyerack were sentenced to two years with hard labor to be served in the RCMP guardroom at Moose Factory.

Here Charlie Ouyerack, after only a year in captivity,

## THE INVESTIGATOR

experienced the final mystic adventure. Officially he died of tuberculosis. But strangely, his tests were negative. It seems likely that the Eskimos were nearer the truth than the doctors; Ouyerack, they said, willed himself to die. Perhaps the murders lay on his conscience. Perhaps he merely mourned his lost prestige. Or perhaps he missed the freedom of life on the Belchers, which, unutterably bleak as they are, are home to the islanders.

No one feels this more deeply than Peter Sala. Forbidden by the RCMP to return to his rocky reefs, he wanders the mainland shores, a lonely memory-haunted exile.

The Belcher Island murders, for all their strangeness of setting, for all their bizarre fanaticism, are in essence typical. In an average year the Mounties will investigate forty-five murders. Ten will be murder and suicide, without a suggestion of mystery; a Mountie calls the coroner and the wagon. Ten will be murder while insane; some harassed soul runs amuck with a gun, knife or ax; his capture may be dangerous, but again, no mystery to solve. In another ten cases the investigator arrives on the scene to find the murderer sitting in a daze, possibly drunk, not only willing but anxious to confess. Only in about half the remainder is much reasoning required, and this, as a rule, not clever deduction but a shrewd, careful plugging-up of those legal loopholes through which a guilty defendant might wriggle free. The fiction murder is nearly always a crime of the intellect. The real-life murder, in Canada, is usually a crime of passion. The investigators have little to

## THE LIVING LEGEND

do but ask questions. Their legs get a harder workout than their wits.

Nevertheless there is mystery in every murder, facts beneath the surface, secrets dimly perceived, to be drawn from the depths like fish from a pool. The investigators may know what has happened, they do not know why, and the law demands proof of intent. Justice is based on religion, in which concern is divided between what we do and what we are. It was not enough for the Mounties to prove that Alec Keytowieack had died from a gun in Quarack's hand. Who or what had compelled Quarack to shoot?

The mystery of the human heart confronts the Mounted Policeman in the murders he investigates. When Inspector Martin and Corporal Kerr flew to the Belcher Islands they knew in a few hours who was dead and how they had died. But the truth was more than that. The truth was the islands, the ice-bound reefs, the long dark winter, the scarceness of game, the influence of the white man, the way the Eskimo thinks. In the light of this truth, as the Mounties presented it, the court had dispensed its justice.

This concept of police work is implied in the Mountie's motto, "*Maintiens le droit*," which in practice he translates as "Get the Facts," and "Be Fair." To be fair is to be just and to be just one must know the facts, not some of the facts, not the obvious facts, but all pertinent facts, the truth. Truth and justice are aspects of the same thing. There is no place where one leaves off and the other begins, no way the Mountie can separate what he does from how he does it. Faith in this principle, this police ideal, lies at the heart of his frontier tradition.

*Book V*

# The Frontier

*I am inclined to think at times we are too prone to be influenced by the hard, tough and thankless aspects of our task and we thus lose sight of the vital part we can and should play in our society.*

**RCMP Commissioner L. H. Nicholson, speaking to the 1953 conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, at Detroit.**



# I

**S**TRETCHING north from Canada's provinces far into the polar sea is a strange empty region, North America's last frontier, now a strategic area — first line of intercontinental defense, crossroads of global air travel, a potential treasure chest of minerals.

Here is a wilderness half as large as the United States. Great rivers wind through brooding forests and desolate bogs where bands of Indians trap for fox and muskrat. In a few electric-lit oases, men dig gold and uranium, and life and crime is much the same as in cities to the south. Beyond this sub-Arctic bushland, sardonically dubbed "the banana belt," beyond the central barrens, range of the musk ox and caribou, the tundra meets the ice pack, Eskimo nomads stalk the seal and trade their surplus skins in a handful of outposts, fragments of civilization fringing an island-studded sea.

The only law in this lonely land is 140 Mounties, scattered across it from Labrador to the Yukon in forty-three outposts, small weatherbeaten frame buildings whose wind-torn Union Jacks proclaim Canadian sovereignty over the territory. In the high north these men lead lives as stark, as withdrawn, as reconciled as any monk in the fastness of Tibet. Yet there is no lack of men for service in what is

## THE LIVING LEGEND

called G division. Half the men who go in do not want to come out.

Their reasons for volunteering in the first place are not complex. They want to be on their own, free of nagging regulations. They want to see far places and taste adventure. In the sub-Arctic mining towns the Mountie patrols paved streets in jeeps, but in the high north he mushes behind his huskies on patrols as adventurous as any made before the advent of the airplane.

In 1942, Constable Clifford Delisle set out by dog team from Pond Inlet, 425 miles above the Arctic Circle, to check a rumor that a young and attractive Eskimo woman had murdered her husband at Victory Harbour. In the next fifty-two days Delisle covered 1,176 miles. He wore out two dogs and shot a third that went blind in a sleet storm. At Fury Point, confronted by a series of deep crevasses, he crawled across on his komatik (sled) and swung over the dogs by their harness. He narrowly escaped death on Lancaster Sound when the ice he was camping on broke up. He recorded queer accidents: an Eskimo hunter had drifted out to sea on an ice pan and had never been seen again; an Eskimo boy had frozen to death when a bear chased him out of his igloo.

In a snowhouse of the isolated Netsilinguit tribe the Mountie found his murderess, Miktaeyout. By the wavering flame from a dish of seal blubber he wrote down her story. Her husband, a mighty hunter, had been persuaded by a tribesman to leave Miktaeyout and take the tribesman's daughter as wife. Miktaeyout had been consoled with a shiftless substitute named Kookieyout. For two years she



## THE FRONTIER

and her children lived on the verge of starvation until, unable to bear the pain and shame any longer, she had shot Kookieyout in his sleep.

Delisle took the frozen corpse, murderess and witnesses to Fort Ross for trial when the yearly supply ship, *Nascopie*, came in. But the ship, for the second summer, was unable to break through the ice. A U.S. plane evacuated the Hudson's Bay manager. Delisle released Miktaeyout with a warning to be on hand when the ship arrived the following year. Then he headed home in a long looping patrol through the Eskimo camps.

The sun sank low in the Arctic sky, then disappeared for the winter, and Delisle had to travel by moonlight. He froze his nose, ran out of provisions and had to live off the land, catching fish and hunting polar bear. It took him 98 days to reach Pond Inlet. Going and coming he had covered 3550 miles, interviewed 750 Eskimos, recorded 50 births, 52 deaths, two marriages and gained 20 pounds in weight.

Delisle was an athletic man who jumped out of bed every morning for a snowbath at 30 degrees below zero; the Eskimos thought him mad. He was shaping up as a crack northern traveler till he caught pneumonia at Clyde River and had to come "outside." He has worked ever since in the RCMP Montreal canteen. As for the widow Miktaeyout, she trudged back to Fort Ross next year only to find that once again the supply ship could not get through. It was 1945 before the *Nascopie* finally made it. Miktaeyout was convicted and sentenced to one year's hard labor in charge of the Mountie at Pangnirtung. On her release she

## THE LIVING LEGEND

married again, but the marriage didn't work out. Her husband was afraid to come home after each unsuccessful hunting trip.

Delisle's patrol is exceptional only in length. Every Mountie goes out on such routine treks several times a year and he may make other patrols to rescue the sick or insane, deliver mail, map the country, and hunt for missing men. Each patrol tests his skill, endurance and courage.

In 1930, the German Arctic Expedition, led by Dr. H. E. K. Krueger, disappeared across the glacial icecap of mountainous Ellesmere Island. Sergeant Bill Beattie, then a constable at Craig Harbor, says: "We put him on top of the icecap and that's the last we saw of him."

Two RCMP patrols set out to search ninety thousand miles of frozen wasteland, where the gaping mouths of crevasses that plunge down hundreds of feet are deceptively bridged by drifted snow. Heading north with two Eskimos, Corporal Henry Stallworthy, a tall, loose-limbed man with an easy drawl, had one of the closest calls in his notable northern career. His dogs dashed off in a frantic chase after a bear and dropped Stallworthy down a crevasse. At thirty feet it narrowed like an hour-glass and Stallworthy's body jammed, his legs dangling over a black abyss. Before he fainted he managed to call to the Eskimos coming behind him and when he came to they hauled him up on a harpoon line. "I felt a bit shaken," he says, "but after a drink of brandy, I was none the worse for the experience."

Constable "Paddy" Hamilton, heading west meanwhile,

## THE FRONTIER

was finding the going tougher. One by one he was eating his dogs, chewing the frozen hindquarters raw and feeding his team the remainder. After five days of starvation they sighted a bear. All one day his Eskimo stalked it. Finally he shot it and waited beside the body for Hamilton.

As the Mountie came up, the Eskimo tossed his hat at the bear in an automatic gesture to make sure he'd killed him. The bear sprang up and bit the seat from the Eskimo's fur pants with a sizable chunk of flesh adhering to it. Hamilton shot the beast, which gave them fuel to reach easier country.

In a cairn left by Peary, Stallworthy found a note by Krueger that said he was "going towards Meighen Island." It was late in the year, the ice was rotting, the patrols' food was gone, they'd lost 29 out of 125 dogs; they could not follow him. But with the scarcity of game and Krueger's relative inexperience, Stallworthy was positive he had perished. The German Government sent their appreciation to the searchers.

Three years later Stallworthy guided an Oxford University expedition up the precipitous ice-sheathed coast of Ellesmere. The party split up and Stallworthy's section ran out of food. For three days the Mountie jigged for fish through a hole in the sea ice, constantly stirring the water to keep it from freezing, catching only a mouthful a day for each dog, while on the slopes within rifle range the musk ox, protected by law, pawed away the snow for grass like cattle. "I cannot look at them," the police-employed Eskimo said, after Stallworthy had refused to let him shoot

## THE LIVING LEGEND

one. "They give me a headache." A lucky encounter with caribou got the party back to seal country and kept Stallworthy's ethics intact.

A patrol is usually a contest with either the elements or animals. One night in the Parry Islands, Inspector Alfred Joy and Constable Reginald Taggart were wakened in their igloo by the frenzied barking of their dogs. "Bear!" guessed their Eskimo hunter, cutting a hole in the igloo with his snowknife and peering out. "Bear is stealing stores off komatick."

Taggart had left his loaded rifle outside by the igloo entrance so that it would not sweat and freeze. The entrance was blocked by drifted snow. He pulled on his clothes and began to cut a hole beside the entrance.

"Bear on the roof," the Eskimo reported, taking his cue from the direction the dogs were looking.

Taggart stuck his head through his hole and looked squarely into the bear's mouth. He hurriedly pulled back in and the bear lunged after him. Taggart whacked him across the nose with his snowknife. The bear withdrew his head but remained by the hole, crouched like a monstrous cat about to pounce.

Taggart and the bear regarded each other. Just outside, tantalizingly within reach, Taggart could see his rifle. Cautiously, he stretched out his arm; he had the gun half-way inside when the bear's paw flashed out and his claws hooked the barrel of the weapon.

Taggart pulled and the bear pulled and the bear won. Again they stared at each other with the rifle in front of the bear's paws. Again, Taggart slowly reached out and

## THE FRONTIER

slowly pulled it in. In an instant he reversed it, aimed, and shot the bear through the head.

Such adventures are mixed with a lot of prosaic paper work, for the Mountie, off patrol, has forms to fill in for fuel, supplies, mileage and natives' pay. He has to collect rock specimens and taxes on furs, and take weather readings with ten instruments. He must issue the natives relief, old age pensions and family allowances, and explain to the luckier trappers why they must pay income tax. After one Mountie's long and patient explanation, an Eskimo trapper vehemently shook his head. He wasn't going to "buy" any income tax, the "price" was too high.

The Mountie is a postmaster, mining recorder, customs collector, aircraft inspector, fisheries officer, game warden and marriage counselor. He may even have to cater to philatelists. For years the annual supply ship brought mail from all over the world to the Craig Harbour outpost for stamping. It was sent by collectors, addressed to themselves, to obtain the world's most northerly postmark. It is typical of the RCMP in the Arctic than an inspector, in his capacity as policeman, once brought in an Eskimo murderer, committed him for trial as a magistrate, kept him locked up as jailer, supervised his hanging as sheriff and recorded his death as a coroner.

Simply to stay alive keeps the Mountie occupied. Ice for his water supply must be cut from a nearby lake or iceberg, hauled by sled and stored out of reach of the dogs. The dog harness must be mended, rifles oiled, boats calked, tools sharpened, fish nets repaired, stovepipes cleaned. The Mountie must sew, wash and iron his clothes. He has to

## THE LIVING LEGEND

hunt and fish for dog food and fresh meat, which is often sport but sometimes hard work. He learns how to skin and cut up a carcass. He becomes an accomplished housekeeper and cook. Two Mounties once had an argument about who baked the better bread and didn't speak to each other for two months. Week about, each cooked the meals, and woke the other by gramophone.

In a land cut off from refinements, food takes on an added importance. At Pangnirtung one Christmas, Constable Hughie Margetts was overwhelmed by a craving for roast pork. Returning from leave on the annual supply ship he brought three pigs in crates. Off the Labrador coast the ship hit bad weather. Margetts' only concern was his pigs. Two of the crates, lashed amidships, were washed overboard, and the Mountie sprained his leg trying to save them.

At Pangnirtung he built a pen and a house for his one remaining animal. In the polar cold it sprouted hair till it looked like a miniature musk ox. Margetts and the other Mountie became so fond of the creature that they didn't have the heart to kill it for Christmas. But the vision of roast pork was overpowering. They asked their Eskimo hunter to shoot it.

The Eskimo had also grown attached to the pig. He closed his eyes as he fired and shot the animal through the ear. It ran squealing into its shelter and could not be coaxed to come out. The native had to tear down the pig-house to shoot it. The two Mounties ate a delicious Christmas dinner of roast pork with tears trickling down their windburned faces.

## THE FRONTIER

G division is not made up entirely of lonely bachelors. More than a fifth of the men on Arctic service are married. Several wives are nurses for the Department of Health and Welfare, and they too must measure up to emergencies. At Old Crow in the Yukon the wife of Corporal Ernest Kirk chanced to see an Indian boy slip and fall. Immediately his huskies leaped upon him; their long fangs tore his clothing to tatters, slashed ribbons of flesh from his face. Mrs. Kirk snatched up a stick and beat off the blood-maddened animals. Her prompt and courageous action won her a Humane Society certificate.

It is not an easy life for a woman. When Margaret Clay went into the western Arctic in the 'twenties with Staff Sergeant Sidney Clay, all her household possessions sank with an overloaded scow to the bottom of the Athabasca River. At Chesterfield Inlet a few years later, when Clay was on patrol, she was walking alone by her house and the huskies attacked her.

A native woman heard the dogs snarling and ran to the post for help. Two Mounties drove the dogs back and carried the unconscious woman into the house. The flesh of her right leg from ankle to knee had been chewed off.

In terrible pain, she begged the Mounties, Corporal Oliver Petty and Constable Henry Stallworthy, to amputate her leg. The two men talked it over through most of that night. They did not think the leg could be saved and they were afraid of gangrene. By morning they had decided. They asked Father E. Duplain, a Catholic priest with some knowledge of medicine, and the Hudson's Bay factor, E. B. Snow, to operate. "You've had more experience than

## THE LIVING LEGEND

we have," Petty said, "but I'll take full responsibility."

The operation seemed to go well. Mrs. Clay was cheerful when she recovered consciousness. Stallworthy and two Hudson's Bay men set out by boat in a blizzard to fetch her husband from Baker Lake but the wind drove them back. The following day Mrs. Clay sank into a coma; she died that night. By the time Clay returned his men had buried her.

No one knows just why Mrs. Clay was attacked by her dogs, handsome hardworking animals which she had been petting for months. Perhaps, like the Eskimo boy, she had lost her footing. Helplessness provokes the wolf in the husky. Occasionally, when hunting, a Mountie will tether a husky bitch where a wolf can visit her. The pups by this mating have too much wolf blood in them to be useful but crossed with huskies they make fine sled-dogs, one quarter wolf.

Tragedy is not uncommon but life is far from grim, even during the long midnight of winter. There is usually two Hudson's Bay Company men, a minister or priest for the Mountie to swap yarns or play cribbage with. He reads; crates of books circulate from post to post, though occasionally, by error, one post gets the same crate back and a desperate man may be forced to read *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He may take up bead work, try hooking rugs, carve ivory walrus tusks. He huddles close to his radio to catch the Northern Messenger, a CBC program that brings him news from the relatives at home. "We have a message for Corporal MacBeth," the broadcaster an-



## THE FRONTIER

nounces. MacBeth hitches his chair a little closer to the loudspeaker. A sudden gale obscures the message.

On Saturday night the Eskimos drop in for tea and games and the Mountie must get down on the floor for friendly contests of arm twisting and thumb pulling. No matter how strong the Mountie is, he is at a disadvantage, for the Eskimo, who seldom washes, has slippery hands. When their last visitor has said good night, the Mounties close up the kitchen, bring out their portable rubberized tub, fill it from hot-water kettles, and soak.

At Moose Factory, Corporal E. S. "Tiny" Covell, six feet seven-and-a-half, used to amuse himself by impressing the Indians with feats of magic. One favorite was to conjure up a dollar bill by burning a cigarette paper. After a show at Albany post an Indian chief came around and presented him with a bundle of newspapers. "Medicine man burn these," he suggested. "Make lots of money."

Covell played his biggest audience — six hundred natives — in a boatshed turned theater at Moose Factory. As the natives nailed him, handcuffed, into a box for "The Packing Case Escape," one Indian leaving the stage was heard to say, "At last I have policeman where I want him. Now I make some home brew." When he got back to his seat he found the Mountie sitting in it. Tiny's awesome reputation kept the natives in his area in a constant state of grace.

Life on the frontier is spiced with humor, occasionally risk and adventure, but always and above all it imposes responsibility. When the fall fish runs are poor and the caribou fail to appear, the Mountie may radio Fort Smith

## THE LIVING LEGEND

to have the police plane drop food. More frequently he hitches up his dogs and goes out himself.

Late one night just before the war, a trapper, Charles Linklater, came into Old Crow detachment high in the Yukon. An Indian family named Thomas, he said, was starving at Bluefish Lake, more than a hundred miles away. They had no transportation, their dogs were dead. Except for an American trapper, Harold Ostrude, they too would have died. Ostrude had given them all his supplies. Living on nothing but tea for three days he had brought three of the family seventy miles to Rampart House, then sent Linklater on to notify the Mounties.

Corporal Ernest Kirk was alone — his partner was on patrol. He borrowed four dogs, packed a heavy load of rations and set out with a local trapper. They stopped briefly at Rampart House, bought more dogs and picked up Ostrude. On the fourth day, ten miles from the Thomas camp, they sighted a campfire. It was Thomas and his teen-age son, trying to thaw the remains of a moose's stomach, all that was left after wolves had killed the animal months before. They had carefully scraped up the blood-soaked snow to carry back to the children but the effort had taken the last of their strength. Kirk thawed a can of broth, fed the two men, and the trappers lifted them onto the sleds.

Long before they reached the Thomas camp they could hear the children crying. Their stomachs were distended. The eyes of one eight-year-old boy were swollen shut. But the children were in better shape than the adults. One 18-year-old had died in raving agony two weeks before. The

## THE FRONTIER

family had eaten their caribou skin bedding, moosehide toboggan baskets and snowshoe webbing. Kirk brought them back with him to Old Crow. He traveled slowly, stopping every hour to feed them hot canned milk and broth. By the time they arrived Kirk was able to write in his report that "the children were recovering their spirits, and the whole family was getting stronger."

Mounties on Northern service may act as nurses, midwives, and doctors. In April 1953, an Eskimo hunter named Mingeeneek was brought into the Lake Harbor police post on Hudson Strait, bent over with pain and clutching his stomach. Constable Alexis Wight took his temperature: 101 degrees. He put him in bed, then radioed his symptoms to the nearest doctor at Pangnirtung.

"It sounds like appendicitis," the doctor radioed back. "Keep him in bed and give him penicillin daily."

The retching stopped and the pain disappeared. But in four days Mingeeneek's lower abdomen started to swell. "Better operate," the doctor advised.

Wight put a pot of water on his stove to boil and went next door for the Hudson's Bay manager. They laid the Eskimo on the detachment table, sterilized their instruments, washed the swollen bluish-brown abdomen with alcohol, put an ether mask on Mingeeneek's face, and with the radio beside them, an invisible but audible fourth person, Constable Wight made the incision. Somewhat disturbed, he reported to the doctor that Mingeeneek did not appear to have any appendix. That was all right, the doctor replied, sometimes Eskimos who live entirely on meat do not have one. But the operation was nevertheless successful,

## THE LIVING LEGEND

for the swelling vanished, the stitches healed well and within a week Mingeeneek was back hunting.

Even a minor illness can be fatal to the Eskimos, who have not yet built up immunity to the white man's diseases. When Sergeant Glyn Abraham was serving at Cambridge Bay on the Arctic Ocean just before World War II, a native came in to ask for help. His people, camped on the sea ice twenty miles out, were coughing and spitting.

Abraham did not underrate the danger. He left at once. He found the entire camp, a dozen igloos, some forty people, sick with flu. Some simply lay on their skin-covered sleeping platforms waiting to die, for the Eskimo is a fatalist. Two were already dead.

Abraham pointed to the bodies. "You can take them to the land," he said, meaning he wanted them buried. "None of you will leave here, and each family will stay in its igloo." They had spread the disease by visiting one another.

The Mountie made sure each patient was warm. He gave them laxatives. He rubbed their chests with antiphlogistine. "You're not going to die," he told each patient firmly. He made jokes, arousing their sense of humor and their hope.

Next day he heard that people were sick in another camp twelve miles away. He hurried back for his detachment partner; between them they nursed the two camps back to health. Then they let them return to the mainland where the Eskimos had food cached — all except one woman who did not seem to be recovering. The flu had killed her husband, she had remarried immediately, and she and her

## THE FRONTIER

bridegroom appealed to the Mounties to let them leave this place where evil spirits dwelt and caused death. Thinking that fear of the campsite might be retarding the woman's recovery, Abraham let them go.

The following day he trailed them to their new camp. He found the husband distracted, the woman lying unconscious. At first Abraham thought she had had a relapse. On examination he found she had had a miscarriage. He had not even suspected, swathed as she was in bulky furs, that his patient had been pregnant. He removed the dead child, washed the woman, warmed her with hot soup, and soon had her smiling, proud that her stillborn child had been male.

The farther north a Mountie serves the less crime there is and the more he is called on to aid and nurse the sick and the starving. And the Mountie, in fulfilling this elemental obligation, sometimes sheds a burden of doubt and frustration so heavy that some have remarked on a sense of exhilaration, as if they were free for the first time in their lives.

Many are able to pay the price of loneliness for this freedom. They take faith from a deepened sense of humanity, from the order perceived behind the chaos of nature, from their own increasing self-reliance. Their exploits filter down to enrich the shop talk of the force and when they come outside their attitudes strengthen the frontier traditions that were forged on the western plains in the 1870s.

2

**T**HE BLACKFOOT had been hunting buffalo when they sighted the dust and now they lay belly-flat in sparse dry grass on top of a rise and watched the curious procession winding toward them. It straggled across the prairie as far as they could see, a long file of freight wagons, ox carts and cattle. And on the flanks rode pony soldiers; their coats shone red in the sun; pennants fluttered gaily from their lances. But as they came closer, moving very slowly, the Blackfoot saw that the riders were haggard, the horses emaciated. And when the procession stopped and the ear-splitting shrill of the cartwheels ceased, they could hear the low sick moaning of the cattle.

For weeks, unseen, the Blackfoot shadowed the queer cavalcade, sending back reports that puzzled their chiefs. Who were these redcoats riding through Blackfoot country so blindly that their horses died from lack of water or grass? If they came to make war why did they carry machines to break the land? If they came in peace why were they hauling cannon? Should they be killed as the young men urged, or should they heed Crowfoot, their great chief, who counseled them to wait and judge the redcoats by their actions?

The redcoats were struggling westward by order of John A. Macdonald, first Prime Minister of a nation born in 1867 only seven years before. Homely, dryly humorous

## THE FRONTIER

and sly as a wolverine, Sir John, in 1869, had helped close history's biggest real estate deal. For \$1,500,000 Canada bought from the Hudson's Bay Company a region as big as half of Europe, two and a third million square miles stretching north and west of Winnipeg. But the land was Canada's in name only. Thirty thousand Indians roamed these prairies, fierce, independent, never defeated by the white man, unsurpassed as plainsmen except perhaps by their kinsmen the Métis, the halfbreeds who lived along the Red River. And the Métis had no love for Canada. They had had to use armed resistance before Sir John would grant their rights and when the affair was over and their army was disbanded he had exiled their leader, Louis Riel.

Fiery opposition critic William Lyon Mackenzie called the purchase "a magnificent piece of foolery!" The Northwest, sneered Disraeli, was "an illimitable wilderness." But Sir John dreamed of a continental empire, and in 1871 he lured British Columbia into his union by promising a railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific. "Impossible!" his opponents declared, and even if it could be built it would end as a streak of rust across nine hundred miles of empty prairie.

Sir John moved warily through a maze of intrigue. The British, though they wanted a route to the Orient, would give him only limited support; they desired no further strain on U.S. relations. And the United States, wrote Sir John in 1870, "are resolved to do all they can, short of war, to get possession of the western territory. . . ." Sir John had no illusions about why Hamilton Fish, the U.S.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Secretary of State, had pressed Britain to grant Canadian independence. When the factories of St. Louis had drawn the Northwest into their orbit, Fish wanted to deal with a weak Canadian government. Only a coast-to-coast railway, costly risk though it might be, could break the tightening economic grip of the United States. But before Sir John could build a railroad he had to control the prairies.

Sir John's intelligence officers scouted the west and reported danger. Montana frontiersmen — traders, freebooters, outlaws — were running rotgut whiskey across the border to Blackfoot country to plunder the last great Indian wealth of the plains. Murder and rape were standard amusements in drunken brawls. Traders connived to get Indians to wipe out competing trading posts. Any of these incidents might touch off an Indian war that could set the entire Northwest aflame.

South of the border Indian wars had cost hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of settlers' lives. Canada could not afford a Wild West. The entire Canadian budget and the whole Canadian Army would not be enough to subdue thirty thousand Indians. Nor did Sir John dare send west a force big enough to provoke the Americans.

In August 1873, he drafted a bill to raise six troops of cavalry, three hundred men whom he called the "Mounted Rifles," and he ordered them issued with crimson coats patterned after the British Army, the most distinctive uniform in all the colonial wars, the insignia of men who had never broken their word to an Indian tribe. As they traveled west to Fort Garry for training, U.S. newspaper headlines warned that Canada was raising an expeditionary force.



## THE FRONTIER

Sir John, with a wry smile, picked up his pen, stroked out the word "Rifles" and above it wrote "Police."

But it was indisputably a military force. Its commander, George French, a good friend of Sir John and sometime trooper in the Royal Irish Constabulary, was OC of Canada's School of Gunnery, a Royal Artillery colonel. French drilled his wild young recruits, half of whom had already seen service, on the open prairie beside the stonewalled bastion of Fort Garry from six A.M. until after dark — rifle practice, foot drill, horsemanship — and he issued salt to rub on their saddle sores until, as one said, "we became so tough I could sit on a prickly pear." Yet French was no martinet; rather, a conscientious leader who foresaw that the lives of his men were soon to hang by a thread of discipline.

Hair-prickling rumors reached the old stone fort that spring of '74. Three hundred gunsicks were gathering in the foothills to stand the police off. The Sioux and the Blackfoot had taken the warpath. Thirty-one men deserted and Manitoba's Lieutenant Governor, Alexander Morris, wrote to the Minister of the Interior that he "believed the Privy Council had not yet fully realized the magnitude of the task that lay before the police . . ."

French called a full-dress parade and spoke bluntly. They were facing unknown odds in an unknown country. Their objective: to take Fort Whoop-up, the main outlaw stronghold. Even the march of eight hundred miles to the Rockies would be rough, for lack of supplies had delayed their start and the rains had been light that spring. Anyone else who wished to back out could do so now, French said.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

A few more left but morale rose. It was their first shake-down.

On July 8, with a rousing cheer, they set out for the land of the Blackfoot, two hundred and seventy-five rookies riding guard on a column of carts and wagons loaded with gear, supplies, farm machinery and ammunition. Dragging two mortars, two field pieces, and behind them a herd of cattle, they plodded over a plain scorched brown by the midsummer sun. Alkali shimmered like soap flakes in the dry water holes. Some of the larger sloughs had been trampled to paste by wallowing buffalo. Men drank filtered water the color of ink and came down with dysentery.

Progress was painful, fifteen or twenty miles a day. Hordes of mosquitoes, riding the wind, swept down upon them and left the cattle, horses and riders' faces streaming blood. Once a sky-blackening swarm of grasshoppers stripped the paint from their wagons and, passing, left the plains a naked desert. Heat lightning flickered in the awesome expanse of sky and thunder echoed ominously. Everywhere they saw bleached bones of buffalo.

Late in August the Cypress Hills loomed dark and low on their left. This was the border of Blackfoot country. Beyond, the guides proved useless. The horses grew too weak to ride; many fell and did not rise; the troopers walked, their worn-out boots wrapped in sacks. They had met only one small band of Sioux, three brigades of buffalo hunters, a party of boundary surveyors and a scout named Morriseau, whom French hired.

By September 14 they had reached the forks of the Bow and Belly Rivers but now French knew that he had been

## THE FRONTIER

misinformed. Fort Whoop-up was nowhere to be found. His sketch maps were inaccurate. The troops were hopelessly lost. French suspected that Morriseau was an outlaw spy who had lost them deliberately. French no longer thought of success but of their lives, for now in the mornings ice crusted the sloughs, soon the buffalo dung, their only fuel, would be buried under snow.

They were sighting buffalo every day now, buffalo by the thousands, huge shaggy creatures slowly moving south. French took the advice of his Métis guides and followed the herds. Four days later, navigating by starlight, they sighted the Rockies, soaring miragelike in the distance. Hope revived them; they stumbled forward to grass, water and wood in the Sweet Grass Hills, from where a well-marked trail led into Montana.

Leaving his column to camp and recuperate, French and a few men rode south to Benton, "Chicago of the Plains." Here hurdy-gurdy joints jostled great trading houses; missionaries mingled with men on the dodge; miners, hunters, trappers, muleskinners, prostitutes, landgrabbers, gamblers, cowboys, Indians, soldiers and rivermen thronged the board walks. Benton, at the head of navigation on the Missouri, was on the verge of its golden age as the hub of northwestern commerce and future merchant princes courted French for his custom and corrected the maps and reports given him by Sir John.

The stories of Whoop-up were gross exaggerations, said I. G. Baker, a leading Benton merchant. The Hudson's Bay Company had spread them to bring the Canadian Army west and crush the whiskey trade that was ruining their

## THE LIVING LEGEND

business. Sure, the boys had boasted in Benton saloons of how they would get the police, but that was whiskey talk. Few whiskey traders were outlaws, they were merely quick-triggered frontiersmen who felt that the only good Indian was a dead one. The Blackfoot were the real threat.

Soon an I. G. Baker bulltrain was toiling toward the Sweet Grass Hills with supplies for the two troops French was leading back to Manitoba. One troop had already struck north to Fort Edmonton earlier and French was leaving three troops with Assistant Commissioner James Macleod to winter in the foothills, stamp out the whiskey traffic, and try to win the confidence of the Blackfoot.

Macleod lingered some days in Benton, collecting information. The Blackfoot, he learned, still ruled the foothills, having defeated the Crees in a great battle five years before. But that year Missouri steamboats carried small-pox north with their cargoes and the Indian tribes were decimated like snow before a chinook. In hopeless hate they dragged their black and swollen dead near the trade posts where the wind would carry the plague to the whites within; they crept to the stockade walls at night and rubbed their sores on the gates. But the plague was brief and in the end less malevolent than the traders who built the posts with colorful names like Whoop-up, Stand-off and Slide-out, stockades of upright logs with sharpened ends to impale those Indians drink-crazed enough to try to scale them. The whiskey shoved out through the wicket, one cup in return for one robe shoved in, was raw alcohol spiked with red peppers and colored with blackstrap, tea, or tobacco, a concoction that would malign the Indian for years

## THE FRONTIER

to come with the myth that he could not hold his liquor. When their furs were gone the Indians would trade their horses, their food, even their wives and daughters for more whiskey; they would try to climb on the trading post roof to slide down the chimney. Driven off by rifle fire, they would turn on each other; some seventy squaws had been widowed this past year. In the morning the braves would wake up sick, broke, shamed and bitter. Once wealthy, the foothill tribes were growing poor, soon their chiefs would be desperate; already they had burned three trading posts.

Macleod hired a scout to guide him to Whoop-up, a tracker of uncanny skill named Jerry Potts, a sour, sawed-off, bandy-legged 'breed who had killed his first man at fifteen and scalped his way into Blackfoot inner war councils. As dawn broke on October 9, Macleod was positioning his mortars on the banks of the Belly River above the fort, massive, gray-timbered, and loopholed. As the men watched, an Indian woman carrying a pail came out of one building and entered another. They could hear no sound but the rooting of pigs which the traders kept to kill rattlesnakes.

The redcoats advanced in skirmishing order, then halted. Tensely they watched Macleod and Potts stride ahead with drawn guns and hammer on the heavy oaken gate. Finally it swung open. A tall angular man with sharp eyes, a long nose and a brown pointed goatee drawled, "Walk in, General. Walk in, General, make yourself at home." His name was Dave Akers. Instead of resistance he offered them buffalo steaks. His partners had discreetly

## THE LIVING LEGEND

taken themselves and the whiskey off when they heard the police were coming.

The Mounties had gained their first objective without firing a shot. Their only contact with Indians had been to pick up their lice when they slept on an Indian camping site. Nevertheless they had been tried. The land itself had tried them. They had blazed no trails — pioneers had passed that way before. But considering their inexperience the march had been epic. All ranks were understandably proud of themselves. *Esprit de corps* had been born.

Now winter was closing in on Macleod, his men were still tired from their ordeal, and Dave Akers refused his offer of \$10,000 for Whoop-up. Twenty-eight miles northwest, on the site of the town that bears his name, Macleod set his troopers felling cottonwood trees. "I have made up my mind," he reported to French on November 1, after battling a snowstorm that threatened to kill his horses, "that not a single log of men's quarters shall be laid until the horses are provided for, as well as a few sick men. Then the men's quarters will be proceeded with, and after that the officers'."

Always in Macleod's mind these first critical months was the knowledge that he was deep in Blackfoot country; they surrounded him, some eight thousand savages, the most warlike on the plains. The uncertainty of their intentions weighed upon him. Though he seldom saw an Indian he knew that no move of his escaped them. In Benton they were offering odds that his force would be wiped out by spring.

Macleod at this time was 38, a courtly black-bearded

## THE FRONTIER

Scot with a legendary capacity for liquor. He was charming, shrewd and tough, in that order, qualities that had brought him success as a soldier and a lawyer. He had now to prove his aptitude for diplomacy.

His policy was simple but startling in its contrast to that practiced south of the border. There the policy at first had been to exterminate the Indians, to break their power by any means: bullets, alcoholism, disease, systematic destruction of the buffalo, broken treaties. This had given way to a policy of humanitarianism. It too had ended in bloodshed, reinforcing the frontier belief that the Indian could be tamed only by force. But Macleod and Commissioner French had talked it over many times and they felt that U.S. policy changed too late, and then more out of sentiment, expediency and guilt than out of respect for the Indians or faith in justice. French, deciding on equal rights for all, Indians and whites alike, selected for the motto of his force *Maintiens le droit*. It was a policy proper both to their situation — the Indians' strength — and their own character — the rigid chivalric code of honor that had been maturing since King Arthur's day in the upper ranks of the British cavalry.

There was only one way to begin: strike at the whiskey traders and hope that the Blackfoot chiefs would be grateful. Every man Macleod could spare from building he put on patrol. All incoming pack trains and ox carts were searched, any whiskey found was dumped, and the smugglers were fined or sent to jail.

"You put me in jail," Macleod was warned by one persistent trader, an influential Benton merchant, J. D.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Weatherwax, "and I'll make them wires to Washington hum when I get out."

"Let them hum," said Macleod. "In the meantime you go to jail. And if you say any more I'll double your sentence."

Waxey's jail term was a lively conversation piece in Benton. "We knew from experience," wrote John J. Healy, an ex-whiskey trader who edited the Fort Benton *Record*, "that wherever the English flag floats might is right, but we had no idea that the persons and property of American citizens would be trifled with."

Other Bentonites took a longer view of the incident. It was clear that these federal police were unlike all others. No dreams of fortune had brought them west, no hope of gain would tempt them; they stood apart from politics, unmoved by local pressures. And merchants like I. G. Baker, who had helped finance Fort Whoop-up, read the signs of a passing age and judged that legal expansion would be not only safer but more profitable. "The police you stationed north of here," he wrote to connections in Ottawa, "are certainly doing a great deal of good in suppressing the whisky trade. . . ."

But Macleod was aware that die-hard traders were still at work spreading lies about the police in hope of rousing the Blackfoot against them. Late in November he judged the time ripe to move. He dispatched Jerry Potts with a message to all chiefs of the Blackfoot alliance — Blackfoot, Blood and Piegan — inviting them to a great feast in the nearly finished fort. One by one the chiefs rode in to accept his offer. Only Crowfoot, great *Ogemah* of the Blackfoot,



## THE FRONTIER

supreme leader of the alliance, held aloof. But Crowfoot, as Macleod well knew, would be told every word that was spoken.

The chiefs were an intelligent, strong-looking group of men. Macleod, resplendent in gold braid and plumes and flanked by a guard of honor, greeted them warmly. After much ceremony he made his prepared speech. The redcoats, he said, did not covet the Indians' land. When the White Mother wanted land she would send her great men to bargain for it. She had heard that white men and whiskey were bringing sadness to Indian lodges and she had sent the redcoats to bring the law to all in the west, the same law for Indians as for whites. At first, this law might seem strange. But no Indian would be punished for something he did not know to be wrong. The law was just, and justice and truth were things that all men knew, the great common law of human nature. As surely as the Great Spirit made water to run downhill He made men to be drawn toward truth and justice. The chiefs accepted his gifts and rode away.

On December 1 a band of horsemen in beaded buckskins and war bonnets rode up to the stockade gate. The warriors accompanied a tall man who carried an air of command. A blanket fell from his broad shoulders in stately folds and he carried an eagle's wing, symbol of kingship. Word spread swiftly through the fort: Crowfoot himself had come.

Isapwo Muksika, or Crow Big Foot, was perhaps six years older than Macleod. Each finely embroidered line on his buckskin jacket was a campaign ribbon, a victory won holding these foothills against all comers. But he was also

## THE LIVING LEGEND

a poet, an orator, a tribal politician and a sage. He could foresee the time when the buffalo would vanish and the Indian would need the white man's help in finding a new way of life.

As he clasped the hand of the redcoat chief who had routed the whiskey traders a bond of fellowship sprang up between the two men. "We shall call you Stamix Otokan [Bull's Head]," Crowfoot told the Mountie, perhaps because of the buffalo head above Macleod's quarters (already suggested to Ottawa as an emblem for the force).

The friendship was often strained. Only a few weeks later they were trading bitter words about the arrest of some Blackfoot horse thieves. It was hard for Crowfoot, who believed that the land and its creatures were owned by God, to grasp the sanctity of private property. Yet despite his anger he let Macleod persuade him to come to the trial. He listened, engrossed, his anger forgotten. At the end he told Macleod, "This is good medicine. This is the place where the forked tongue is made straight. When my people do wrong they shall come here." And upon a later meeting he exclaimed impulsively, "You are a brave man, Stamix Otokan. The law of the Great White Mother must be good when she has a son such as you. We will obey that law."

It was a gentleman's agreement, formally ratified two years later at Blackfoot Crossing on the Bow River. To this beautiful valley, a sacred burial spot, came every tribe in the foothills, some 4800 Indians, each warrior fully armed, to hear Lieutenant Governor David Laird offer the terms that would place them on reservations. He offered them their choice of reserves, with roads, cattle, seed,

## THE FRONTIER

ammunition, school teachers, \$12 for every person in the tribe this year, \$5 every year thereafter. The terms had been accepted as fair by the plains Indians to the east, but in the minds of both Indians and whites was the knowledge that south of the line the peaceable Nez Percés were fighting a brilliant but losing battle brought on by a broken treaty.

Shrewdly Laird linked his government to the Mounted Police whom most of the chiefs had come to know. "When bad white men brought you whiskey," he said, "robbed you and made you poor, and through whiskey made you quarrel amongst yourselves, the White Mother sent the Mounted Police to put an end to it." Then he asked them to retire to their council tents and consider the terms.

Crowfoot was first to reply two days later. "If the police had not come to this country where would we all be now?" he said, "Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that few of us would have been alive today. The Mounted Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter. . . . I am satisfied. I will sign the treaty."

One by one the other leaders responded. Said Red Crow, chief of all the Bloods: "Three years ago, when the Mounted Police came to this country, I met and shook hands with Stamix Otokan at Belly River. Since that time he made many promises. He has kept them all. Not one has been broken. . . . I entirely trust Stamix Otokan and will leave everything to him. I will sign with Crowfoot."

Said Eagle Tail, head chief of the Piegans: "I shall never forget the help and advice I received from the police. I trust the treaty will endure as long as the moon brightens

## THE LIVING LEGEND

the night, as long as water runs and the grass grows in the spring."

Said Bull's Head of the Sarcees, a notorious trouble-maker: "We are all going to take your advice." And as Crowfoot made his mark upon the treaty parchment he said, "I have been the first to sign. I shall be the last to break."

The treaty was signed in September 1877. On this treaty the peace of the Northwest would depend. Already, war had been narrowly averted by the gentleman's agreement upon which the treaty was based, that tenuous link of trust between two men of differing faiths.

### 3

**T**O THE Little Big Horn River in the Black Hills of Dakota in May 1876 came all the tribes of the Sioux to join in council, the most powerful gathering of Indians ever to meet on American plains. The year before, Colonel George Custer had led an expedition into these hills and reported "gold in the grassroots." This was a secret the Sioux had guarded for nine years under penalty of death for betrayal. Now, as they had foreseen, the whites were crowding in, unconcerned that the Sioux held this land by treaty with the United States.

"We know the soldiers plan to kill us," cried Sitting Bull, onetime medicine man who had climbed to be captain of

## THE FRONTIER

all Hunkpapa warriors. "Let us have one big fight with the soldiers!"

The convention agreed. Sitting Bull was elected supreme military leader and out of his lodge that night slipped a courier, riding hard to the north.

Nine days later, caked with dust, he rode into Crowfoot's camp. He brought tobacco from Sitting Bull, he told the Blackfoot leader. Would Crowfoot smoke it and join the Sioux in battle with the Long Knives? Many more tribes would join them if Crowfoot agreed. When they had killed all the white men south of the Medicine Line the Sioux would help Blackfoot kill all the whites in the north. The police forts, the courier pointed out, would be easy to take.

Long into the night the Blackfoot argued — Crowfoot against the younger braves excited by visions of glory. Here was the specter feared by perceptive whites on both sides of the border: the rise of an Indian leader who could unite the scattered tribes in a war to recapture their lost power. But Sitting Bull had made his play too late.

"Tell Sitting Bull," said Crowfoot, "that we cannot smoke his tobacco on such terms. The police are our friends."

The courier flung the tobacco to the ground. "We will kill the Long Knives ourselves," he said curtly. "We will then come north and see if the Blackfoot remember how to make war."

Macleod, on receiving this news, sent Crowfoot his thanks and assurance that the police would fight beside the Blackfoot in case of a Sioux attack. Macleod was both relieved and apprehensive, for he already knew, via Ottawa

## THE LIVING LEGEND

dispatches, that Sitting Bull was right, the U.S. Army planned to attack the Sioux, and should the tribes be driven north God alone knew what would happen.

A month later a Métis scout burst into Macleod's office. "Colonel," he cried, "Sitting Bull and his Sioux just wiped out Custer's Seventh Cavalry — every last man — and they're headed for Canada."

They came in December, two thousand strong, men whom whites called "the tigers of the plains," huge battle-scarred warriors such as the Mounties had never before seen. They came again, another thousand, in January and they camped in the wooded coulees among the Cypress Hills — Sans Arcs, Ogalallas, Hunkpapas, Minneconjous, Two Kettles, Blackfeet Sioux — and they waited for their leader, Sitting Bull, who was fighting a rearguard action up the Missouri.

Days before he arrived scouts brought news of his coming to J. M. Walsh, commandant at Fort Walsh south of the hills. It was Walsh who would have to cope with the crisis, a bold-eyed ex-cavalry major with bristling hair and a handsome mustache. He was a forceful officer, quick in all he did and said, too ready to curse at trifles but when the chips were down, amazingly steady and cool. He had the egotist's flair for showmanship and he had luck or he would not have survived that month of March. He set out at once on his horse Barney to intercept Sitting Bull's band, a flamboyant figure in knee-high boots and immaculate fawn sombrero, accompanied by three constables, a sergeant and Peter Leveille, a scout so devoted to Walsh that he would not let him out of his sight.

## THE FRONTIER

In two days they struck a trail made by many horsemen and soon on the hilltops ahead they saw Sioux scouts. The Sioux came pressing from all directions, ringing them, silently riding beside them, their big hands lightly balancing carbines stamped by the U.S. Army, the scalps of Custer's men joggling from their belts. Calmly Walsh cantered on to the edge of a large camp, where his path was barred by a line of towering warriors.

Walsh dismounted. A chief stepped forward, battle-ax in hand, a long shaft inset with three steel blades. He was young, handsome, at least six feet six, and his voice seemed to come from the depths of his powerful chest. Walsh's scout, interpreting, introduced him as Spotted Eagle, war chief of the Sans Arcs. "It's Sitting Bull's camp, all right," the interpreter said. "He says it's the first time a soldier has dared to enter it."

"Explain that we're police," Walsh said. "Ask them if they know they are in the land of the Great White Mother."

Spotted Eagle nodded. Walsh followed his backward glance and saw in front of a war lodge a group of enormous men. One beckoned, Walsh stepped forward, the group parted, and Walsh was face to face with Sitting Bull.

The renowned killer looked small beside his gigantic bodyguard. A blanket clutched tightly round his stocky form concealed his bowlegs. His head was massive. Two braids of light brown hair fell across his breast, framing his face, broad, unpainted, stern, pitted cruelly with small-pox. He was only forty-three but he looked older. Then his wide mouth, tight as a trap, loosened in a smile and Walsh could feel the man's magnetism.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"Ask him why he has come," Walsh told the interpreter.

"We are British Indians," Sitting Bull replied. "Our grandfathers were raised on British soil." He showed Walsh medals given them by the *Shaganosh* Father (King George III). He did not know why the White Father gave their country to the Americans, who had driven them from their homes. His voice became choked with hate as he spoke of Americans.

Did he wish to winter here and regain his strength, Walsh asked, and then in the spring return south to war upon the Americans?

No, no, Sitting Bull said, he had buried his weapons. His people were tired of war. For years they had not slept soundly. War had made the children forget how to play. He wanted peace.

Did he know that the Great White Mother had laws which all must obey? As long as they stayed, they must not kill, or steal, or bear false witness, or molest any person or property.

Sitting Bull and his sub-chiefs nodded assent.

That night Walsh slept in the camp of the dreaded hostiles and fell asleep to the rhythmic beat of their tom-toms and their chanting. He awoke to a gentle tapping on his lodgepole; Sitting Bull entered and sat by his bed. In the midst of rejoicing the chief was melancholy. He told Walsh he had known twelve days in advance that Custer was coming. He had sent flag men to seek a truce but Custer killed them. Then he baited a trap: emptied his teepees, lighted fires inside, hung up manikins made of blankets and rags that would stir as the fires set up air currents, and



## THE FRONTIER

waited for Custer's attack on what he thought was a half-sleeping village. They came to kill us, Sitting Bull said, and now they call it a massacre.

In the morning as the police party was saddling up to leave, three Assiniboines rode in from the south. Walsh recognized White Dog, a noted fighter. The Assiniboine was leading five spare horses. "Stolen horses," Leveille whispered; they belonged to Father De Corby, a Catholic priest.

Walsh weighed his chances. "Arrest him," he ordered.

The sergeant and two men walked over to White Dog, holding forth excitedly in the midst of some sixty Sioux, and told him he was under arrest. White Dog stared at him incredulously. The horses were his, he declared. He grew scornful. He would not give them up. Nor would he submit to arrest.

Walsh had walked up behind the sergeant. Now he stepped in front of him. "White Dog," he said, "you say you'll not give up the horses, nor let yourself be arrested?" He put his hand on the shoulder of the Assiniboine. "White Dog, I arrest you for theft!" He nodded to his men. "Disarm them." Leveille seized the horses. In a moment the Assiniboines were helpless.

It had happened so quickly the Sioux had no time to think. They watched in astonishment as Walsh dangled a pair of leg irons in front of the startled Assiniboine. "Tell me where you got those horses, White Dog, or I'll put you in irons and take you to Fort Walsh."

White Dog saw that the Sioux would not help him now. He said he had found the horses lost on the plains. He did

## THE LIVING LEGEND

not know it was wrong to keep lost horses. Walsh could not prove that he lied but he took the horses and warned White Dog against stealing north of the line.

Humiliated, the proud Assiniboine could not contain his rage. As Walsh turned away he hissed, "I shall meet you again."

Walsh swung around. "What did you say?"

White Dog spat in defiance.

"Take back those words," Walsh said. "Take them back or you'll go to Fort Walsh."

Before the assembled Sioux, the overawed warrior apologized and the Sioux murmured amazement at the courage of these whites. Sitting Bull now understood what Walsh meant by the law: that each man alone, and not his tribe, stood accountable for his actions, even a chief of chiefs.

But as Walsh rode away he knew he was in for trouble. Last night had given him insight into the nature of Sitting Bull, strong, unyielding, bitter, implacably vengeful. He would never cease angling for allies to renew his war with the United States; there would never be peace in his heart toward whites. He undoubtedly planned to make lightning raids on American troops, then return, in which case the United States might demand reparation from Canada. At any time his pride or ambition might spark intertribal war and at the least sign of weakness he might turn upon the police. As long as Sitting Bull remained, the West was a powder keg which a single mistake by one Mountie could ignite.

Walsh had scarcely returned to his post when the first test came. Into Fort Walsh galloped Little Child, a popular

## THE FRONTIER

Saulteau chief who had always cooperated with the Mounties. He had been hunting buffalo with a small band, some fifteen lodges, about a day's ride away, when a large band of Assiniboines from Montana moved in beside them. Their chief, Crow's Dance, ordered Little Child to hunt under him. Little Child refused and prepared to move on. Whereupon Crow's Dance surrounded him with two hundred warriors and demanded that he obey. "I am a British Indian," Little Child said stubbornly. "This is British soil and the only chief I obey is the White Chief at Fort Walsh." Whereupon Crow's Dance tore down his lodges and shot nineteen of his dogs and threatened to kill the women and children. "Tell this to your red-coated friends," he had mocked. "Tell them to come to my camp. I will cut out the heart of the redcoat chief and eat it."

"We'll see about that," Walsh said. Quickly he mustered fourteen men, Leveille, a sub-inspector and — since bloodshed seemed certain — a surgeon. Walsh did not know yet what he would do but he had to act. This was precisely the kind of crisis that he had foreseen and feared.

All day and all night they rode on the trail of the buffalo-hunting nomads. Just before dawn Walsh and Leveille, riding ahead, breasted a hill and saw below them the silent Assiniboine camp. As Little Child had said, there were many lodges. Crow's Dance would be in the big one, the war lodge in the center. Walsh surveyed the surrounding hills, withdrew, and ordered breakfast.

"Kittson," he said to the surgeon, "I want you to take three men and climb that butte over there. Build a breast-work of stone that will hold them off if it comes to a fight.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

The rest of you, listen to me. There's two hundred warriors asleep in that camp. We're going in there and we're going to arrest their chiefs. Don't fire unless I tell you, don't even draw your guns. Just do what I say and do it fast, no matter what it is."

The thirteen Mounties rode over the hill and between still shadowed tepees to the very heart of the camp. At a signal from Walsh they surrounded the war lodge. Walsh and a sergeant dismounted, crept inside, located Crow's Dance, clapped a gag over his mouth, seized him in an arm-lock and hustled him outside. Twelve other chiefs who were sleeping nearby were captured the same way and handcuffed. Then with the camp awakening in confusion they galloped to "Kittson's Butte," where, with the prisoners under guard, Walsh ordered a second breakfast.

Success, he knew depended on his next move. "Leveille," he said, "go back down there and tell the sub-chiefs I want them. Tell them their chiefs are responsible for your safety."

Leveille came back with the sub-chiefs, trailed by a mob of angry warriors. Walsh made them wait until he had finished breakfast. Then he sternly warned them they could no longer hunt in the White Mother's land unless they obeyed her laws. By her laws all men had the right to hunt as they pleased. Never again must they interfere with these rights. Impressed by his self-assurance, the Assiniboines quieted down. Next day, at Fort Walsh, Crow's Dance was sentenced to six months' hard labor. The story spread across the plains. Walsh was commended by Canada's Minister of the Interior, David Mills. The Fort Benton

## THE FRONTIER

*Record* gave him its highest accolade: "Custer's charge was not a braver deed." Most important, Sitting Bull had had a second lesson.

The great Sioux chief kept the law that year as he had promised Walsh. But the constant threat of his presence blocked the nation's westward growth. As Superintendent James Walker wrote from Battleford, "The very name of the Sioux strikes terror into the hearts of many of the settlers."

The Sioux were also causing unrest among the Canadian Indians; the buffalo herds dwindled yearly; competition for their ranges might at any time spark an intertribal war. Until the United States persuaded the Sioux to surrender and return, the situation, Macleod wrote Mills, would remain "explosive."

Ottawa passed on its arguments to Washington, where the British chargé d'affaires passed them on to the U. S. Secretary of State. After much diplomatic quibbling between the three nations, after three U.S. cabinet meetings and much understandable stalling, the United States set up a commission to treat with Sitting Bull, headed, perhaps to ensure its failure, by Brigadier Alfred Terry, bitter foe of the Sioux.

Now Mills wrote Macleod to tell Walsh to persuade Sitting Bull that the U.S. cabinet were "upright men, willing and anxious to do justice to the Indians." Sitting Bull now trusted Walsh more than any other white man but this he simply would not swallow. Finally, as a favor to Walsh, he said he would meet with Terry, but only if the police were there to prevent Terry from murdering him.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

Before the meeting could take place, the United States ordered the Nez Percés out of their ancestral home in the Wallowa Valley, giving them thirty days to move, this in floodtime. Hitherto a peaceable tribe, they chose to fight. Three hundred and fifty Nez Percés outfought and outwitted some two thousand U.S. troops in a long running battle north until they were trapped in the Bear Paw Mountains, only a few miles from freedom. The one band that escaped reached Sitting Bull's camp on October 1, still bleeding from their wounds, to entreat his aid.

Walsh, keeping close touch with events to the south, called on the Sioux that day to find the camp in a state of wild excitement, tom-toms beating, runners coming and going, a war council plotting strategy to rescue the Nez Percés. The Sioux, Walsh knew, had the strength to wipe out the U.S. command in Oregon; allied with the Nez Percés, they would set the border aflame.

Walsh told them that they were committing suicide. "The man who crosses the boundary line from this camp," he said, "is our enemy. Henceforth we shall be to him, if he returns, what he says United States soldiers are to him today — wolves seeking his blood."

Self-interest and friendship won over hatred and chivalry. Sitting Bull called off his campaign but Walsh needed all his tact to convince him once again to meet with Terry.

They met in Fort Walsh, in the officers' mess. The Americans, already seated, stood up as Sitting Bull, followed by twenty-four chiefs and a squaw, stalked into the room. Sitting Bull was smiling blandly. He ignored Terry's out-

## THE FRONTIER

stretched hand and rubbed in the snub by shaking hands all around with the Mounted Police. Then he and his followers squatted on buffalo robes and smoked their pipes, waiting with stony faces for Terry to speak.

Full-bearded General Terry, six feet six inches tall, had impressed the police as a gentleman. With obvious sincerity he read the President's offer: full pardon, food, clothing, cattle, their own reservation, but they must give up their horses and guns, their old free way of life. Sitting Bull's lip curled in irony. Spotted Eagle winked at Macleod, who reclined in an easy chair. Walsh rested on a table corner. The room reeked of smoke.

Terry finished. Sitting Bull rose, threw back his blanket, and began in his deep, emotional, orator's voice to list the wrongs done his people. Macleod, risking resentment at a breach of Indian etiquette, interrupted gently and asked that he give his answer.

Sitting Bull took no offense. He spoke for the first time to Terry. "For sixty-four years you have treated my people badly. . . . I was kept ever on the move. . . . I had to forsake my lands. . . . We had no place to go so I took refuge here." He paused to shake hands again with Walsh and Macleod. "This is a medicine house [the abode of truth]," he said, "and you come here to tell us lies. We do not want to hear them. You can go back. Take your lies with you."

As Sitting Bull spoke the chiefs grunted, "How, How." In turn they stood up and echoed his truculence. Then — crowning insult — Sitting Bull introduced the squaw. The interpreter strained to catch her few diffident words. He

## THE LIVING LEGEND

hesitated, then lowered his voice. "She says, General, you won't give her time to breed!"

Terry smiled with composure. "Am I to tell the President that you refuse his offer?"

"I told you what I meant," Sitting Bull snapped. "That should be enough. . . . You can take it easy going home." It was another insult. The Sioux, he meant, would not harm them.

Still holding his smile, Terry turned to Macleod. "I think we can have nothing more to say to them, Colonel."

"I suppose you are right," Macleod said.

Sitting Bull had clearly closed his mind against going back. Later that night he told Macleod and Walsh: "Once I was rich, Americans stole it all. Why should I return? To have my horse and my arms taken from me? I have come to remain with the White Mother's children."

Walsh never ceased trying to change the mind of his unwelcome visitor. The Queen, he warned, could give the Sioux nothing but safety. When the buffalo had gone she could not feed them.

But the brooding chief was adamant. "I will not go to the gift-house [a reserve]. I am a hunter and will hunt as long as wild game is on the prairie. When the buffalo are gone I will send my children out to hunt mice, for the prairie will furnish me food as long as I live. I do not want to live in a house. Some of my people have gone to live in houses. Where are they now? Many are dead."

In three capitol diplomatic controversy accumulated in the files marked "Sitting Bull." His braves dipped south of the border hunting buffalo, and invasion rumors (started



## THE FRONTIER

by speculators who wanted to sell the Army land for a new base in Benton) kept tension high among Montana settlers. The United States urged that Canada either adopt the Sioux or expel them. Canada pressed the United States to offer the Sioux more generous terms. "She could not undertake the responsibility of restraining them," Mills warned, "should they . . . attack the United States settlers. . . ." General Terry disagreed. "Whether on Canadian soil or immediately south of the line, Sitting Bull," he wrote, ". . . appears to be under the control or influence of that Canadian official [Walsh]."

It was control, but of a precarious sort. When a band of Sitting Bull's high-mettled braves stole some horses from Wood Mountain and the single Mountie on guard fired over their heads to try to stop them, Sitting Bull, in irascible mood, sent Walsh a note of displeasure at this "attack."

Edwin Allen, the sub-inspector who had helped Walsh capture Crow's Dance, rode out to his camp and was met by the chief himself, riding a handsome cream-colored pony.

"I want the horses your braves stole," Allen stated.

Sitting Bull smiled contemptuously. "You are few. What can you do?"

"I would take even your horse if I thought it was stolen," Allen declared.

Sitting Bull's eyes flashed challenge. "It is!"

Allen smiled disarmingly, edged his mount closer, suddenly yanked Sitting Bull off his saddle onto the ground and snatched the cream-colored pony's bridle. His men closed in behind him and they all raced away.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

That night in the post with the Sioux circling outside, firing and yelling, the Mounties put their wills in the safe and buried it under the floor, turned out the lights and waited. The attack did not come. Sitting Bull, outbluffed, allowed himself to be pacified by Chief Broad Tail, who counseled discretion.

The danger heightened in summer, 1878. Agents of Louis Riel, exiled idol of the Métis, began to appear among the Indian tribes. He had told a trader: "These people [Indians and halfbreeds] are just as were the children of Israel, a persecuted race deprived of their heritage. But I will redress their wrongs. I will wrest justice from the tyrant. I will be to them a second David."

Rumors reached Walsh that halfbreeds and Indians were forming a grand alliance to drive the whites from the plains and found a new empire. He tracked down a covenant signed by Red Stone, South Assiniboine chief. Crowfoot had been approached, had been told that if the Blackfoot joined so too would Sitting Bull. Crowfoot declined and informed the police.

Quietly Walsh went to work. All traders were ordered to stop selling guns and to lock up their ammunition. He convinced Red Stone to desert Riel. He won pledges of fidelity from Sitting Bull, Long Dog, Broad Tail, Dull Knife, Stone Dog, Spotted Eagle and Black Moon. The conspiracy lagged; the Indians had food; they trusted the police.

Next year they were starving. The buffalo herds had vanished; they were never to see the buffalo again. From Fort Calgary, Inspector Cecil Denny reported to Macleod:

## THE FRONTIER

"I have sent meat to parties [of Blackfoot] who were eating grass to keep themselves alive. I hope I have your approval. . . ." Once proud warriors ate their dogs, hunted on hands and knees for gophers and mice, grubbed for roots.

The predicament of Walsh at this time, caught between friendship and duty, for he had explicit orders not to give food to the Sioux, is reflected in a report to Macleod: "I was forced to make small issues of food to save their lives. Following this, want of food and the eating of diseased horses, an epidemic appeared. . . . The conduct of those starving and destitute people, their patient endurance, their sympathy and the extent to which they assisted each other, their strict observance of law and order would reflect credit upon the most civilized community."

But a starving people grow desperate. The police walked a knife edge now, and the strain was telling on Walsh. One day a small rancher came in to say that the Sioux had run off his horses. Sitting Bull himself had been with them, he said.

Walsh was angry. He tracked down the Sioux chief and told him to give up the horses or he'd let the U.S. Army cross the border after him. It was a tactless threat which he could not have backed up. But Walsh was tired and suffering from erysipelas. Sitting Bull, too, was angry. But he had the horses brought in.

It was only a few weeks later that he turned up at Fort Walsh, backed by many braves. Walsh was still sick, overworked, and irritable. He looked at Sitting Bull bleakly. "Find out what he wants," he told his interpreter.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

"We want provisions," Sitting Bull said blandly. "Also tea and tobacco."

Walsh slapped his hands on his desk and shoved himself upright. "Why damn you!" he exploded. "You know you're American Indians. You've no right to be here at all. You've caused me nothing but trouble!" He glared at Sitting Bull. "You seem to think all white men are afraid of you. You're wrong. If you want to stay here you'll have to behave yourself. We've got our own Indians to look after without being bothered by you. Get your damned provisions at the trading post."

Only the great Sioux's eyes showed his wrath. "Take heed, Wahonkeza. You are speaking to the head of the Sioux nation."

"I know who you are all right," Walsh said. "You're a damned horsethief."

Slowly Sitting Bull raised a menacing finger to point at Walsh. "Not even you, Wahonkeza, can talk to me like this."

"Are you threatening me? Are you trying to bluff the Mounted Police?" shouted Walsh, who had so often bluffed the Indians. "Behave yourself or I'll throw you out."

Sitting Bull uttered an animal snarl and snatched at his revolver. Before he could get it out of his belt Walsh had one hand on his arm. The other hand seized his breechclout. Walsh heaved. Sitting Bull arced backwards and lit outside. The Mountie leaped after him and as Sitting Bull started to rise, Walsh kicked him squarely on the rump.

The Indians stared, stupefied by the sudden disgrace of their chief. A moment before they would have killed Walsh

## THE FRONTIER

at a word from Sitting Bull. But now as he rose to his feet, black with rage, two of his followers pinned his arms as he tried once again to shoot Walsh, and they held him until he had ceased to struggle.

Walsh ran to the barracks. "All right, men. Bring your rifles. There may be trouble."

They hurried outside, two dozen men. Sitting Bull was leading a horde of mounted Sioux toward them.

"Get two poles from the hay corral," Walsh told the interpreter. "Lay them across the trail between us and the Indians. . . . Now tell them not to come past those poles. The first one who does will be shot."

The Indians moved in a body along the trail to the poles. They showed no fear of the leveled rifles. Expert in-fighters all, they knew they could drop from their horses and fire almost as fast as the Mounties could pull trigger. But they knew their first shot would sever forever their bond with Canada, their last sanctuary, their last hope of peace. They stopped at the poles.

Walsh stepped forward. "Good. You're wise. Now you must do more. I don't want you hanging around here. Clear out. I'll give you five minutes." The Sioux paused uncertainly, wheeled their ponies and galloped away.

Deep snow that winter (1880) made hunting impossible. Sickness spread from lodge to lodge. The dreaded smallpox appeared in the Qu'Appelle district and Constable Holmes, a one-time medical student, risked his life repeatedly to bring it under control. The lone corporal at Norway House on Lake Winnipeg, David Smith, fought twin epidemics of scarlet fever and diphtheria.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

This was the desperate testing time of Mounted Police policy. But the Indians respected, above all else, courage and selflessness. Despite the blow Walsh had struck at his pride, Sitting Bull renewed their friendship.

Walsh tried to impress on the Sioux chief that the White Mother would not help him. The Sioux had one choice, he told Sitting Bull, stay and starve, leave and live. "So long as there remains a gopher to eat, I will not go back," said Sitting Bull.

Hardening his heart, Walsh dealt with the lesser Sioux chiefs, thus weakening Sitting Bull's prestige. As they loved their children, he told them, they should return home. Twelve hundred left that winter. Sitting Bull, troubled, proclaimed: "Those who wish to go back may do so. I will place nothing in their way."

But he himself would not give up. He traded his horses for flour, he traded his personal ornaments and the worn-out spoils from Custer's defeat. Gaunt, stoical, iron-willed, he waited, hoping that somehow Walsh could convince the Great White Mother to take him as her son.

Not until 1880 did he realize that further resistance would end forever his waning power. He gave his war bonnet to Walsh and wrote to relatives in Dakota: "Once I was strong and brave; my people had hearts of iron; now I will fight no more forever. My people are cold and hungry. My women are sick and my children are freezing. My arrows are broken and I have thrown my warpaint to the winds."

Yet it took another year of persuasion — by followers, halfbreed friends, police — to overcome his suspicion,

## THE FRONTIER

pride, and fear for his personal safety. It was 1881 — July 19 — when he rode wearily into Fort Buford, Montana, and surrendered to Major Brotherton of the 7th Infantry. "I wish it to be remembered," he said, gazing through and past Brotherton, "that I was the last man of my tribe to give up my rifle." Nine years later, as high priest of a new messianic cult, he was shot and killed while resisting arrest by Indian police.

This tragic enigmatic man had subjected the Mounted Police to six years of unrelieved nerve-racking tension. But in return for trouble he gave them their first international fame. He coupled their name with his in news reports, and every act of Sitting Bull, the conqueror of Custer, was front-page news in America. It was Sitting Bull, that able ambitious Sioux from North Dakota, so consciously tending his own fame for posterity, who was midwife to the legend of the Mounties.

## 4

**L**ATE in March 1885, a telegraph boy wheeled into the driveway at Earncliffe, the stately Ottawa home of Sir John A. Macdonald. The Prime Minister was giving a small dinner party. He read the telegram and slid it under his plate without comment. Only one guest, a senator, noted his look of pain and surprise. As the senator left, Sir John walked to the door with him. "Mac," he told the senator, "there's the mischief to pay in the Northwest." The half-

## THE LIVING LEGEND

breeds had attacked the Mounted Police at Duck Lake, he said. It was the start of the Northwest Rebellion, Louis Riel's ill-starred attempt to found a Métis nation.

Macdonald, whom the Métis called "Old Tomorrow," was reaping the fruit of his ignorance of the West. He had failed to give the Métis, "those miserable halfbreeds," legal claim to their farms along the South Saskatchewan River. He had failed to heed police reports that warned of rising anger as incoming whites filed deed to Métis lands. "If you wait for a halfbreed or an Indian to become contented you may wait till the millennium," he had joked.

Under Gabriel Dumont, "Prince of the Prairies," a barbarian general of extraordinary skill, the halfbreed army, reinforced by a few dissident Crees, won three victories but lost the war. Had the Métis risen before the Sioux disbanded, or before the railway was nearly complete, had Dumont not been restrained again and again by Riel, whose piety and patriotism were constantly in conflict, most important, had Riel's agent succeeded in swaying Crowfoot — then the prairies, so soon to become the "breadbasket of Canada," might have remained for years a guerilla-infested no man's land.

But Superintendent (later Major General, Sir) Sam Steele dragged Riel's negotiator out of Crowfoot's council lodge, and when a government officer, a volunteer from Calgary, Major General Thomas Strange, sent a messenger to ask if Crowfoot could keep his young men in order, Crowfoot replied: "I have the young men in hand. None will join the Crees."

The faith Macleod (now a magistrate) and Crowfoot



## THE FRONTIER

held in each other had been the cornerstone of peace throughout the era of Sitting Bull. Now, in the twilight of Indian power, in this last organized effort by plains people to keep the land and life to which they were bred, that bond held firm.

The rebellion did one thing. It finished the world's longest railway. The Canadian Pacific was broke when the government's need to move troops west forced Sir John to grant the line a new government loan. The CPR's master builder, dynamic William Van Horne, generously shared his triumph with the Mounties. "On no great work within my knowledge," he wrote Commissioner Acheson Irvine, who had taken over from Macleod, ". . . has such perfect order prevailed."

Van Horne had in mind that in that final construction year, 1885, he had five thousand men laying track, their wages a target for gamblers, prostitutes, bootleggers and thieves, their presence a constant irritation to Indians who knew from experience that settlers would follow along the "white man's trail." One noted war chief named Piapot, leading two hundred Crees and Salteaux, camped squarely in the path of the hated smoke-belching iron horse. Work on the great transcontinental railway halted abruptly.

Two Mounties — Corporal William Wilde and a constable — were given the mission of moving Piapot. With their forage caps at a jaunty angle they cantered into his camp through a jeering mob of armed half-naked horsemen.

"I bring orders from the Great White Mother," Corporal Wilde said crisply. "Strike camp and journey north to your own hunting grounds."

## THE LIVING LEGEND

The braves hooted scornfully. The squaws laughed. Piapot turned his back to show his indifference and contempt.

The corporal took out his watch. "You have fifteen minutes to move."

Squaws screamed at the two impassive redcoats sitting silently on their horses in front of Piapot's big tepee. A hundred howling warriors milled around them, jostling their mounts, firing over their heads. Inside his tepee Piapot sucked his pipe in malevolent satisfaction. Now and then the corporal looked at his watch. Piapot began to fidget.

"Time's up!" Wilde said. He tossed his reins to the constable, dismounted, and strode toward Piapot. The Mountie stood in the tepee entrance looking down at the chief. Then, with a kick, he knocked out the keypole. The lodge collapsed upon Piapot and his harem. As the warriors watched incredulously the Mountie strode through the camp, kicking down lodge after lodge. Piapot had either to kill him or move. He chose discretion.

Such tales spread the fame of the force around the world. They drew adventurers from Rugby and Cambridge, from the backwoods of Quebec, from the wars in Afghanistan, Egypt and South Africa. Halfbreed log birlers shared k.p. with the best blood of the Old World. There was Constable H. Rosenkrantz, whose mail bore the Danish royal coat of arms. There was Corporal John Temple, twelfth Baronet of Stowe, amateur birdwatcher, broncbuster and descendant of Lady Godiva. Serving alongside Inspector Francis Dickens, youngest son of the English

## THE FRONTIER

novelist, was an Irish revolutionary, a runaway circus clown and the brother of a Yorkshire baronet.

They guarded the excursion trains that were bringing out new settlers. They showed newcomers how to protect their farms against the fires that raced across the prairies faster than any horse could run. They organized log-cutting bees to build schoolhouses. With stubby pencils they jotted down the new cattle brands, the condition of the roads and crops, marriages and births. In the blazing heat of summer they held court lying flat on their backs in the meager shade of a buckboard; in winter they carried mail to isolated camps and brought out the bachelors whom loneliness drove insane. They tracked down Indians who rustled the white man's "tame buffalo" and stopped whites from cutting Indian timber. They kept the West free of Indian wars, feuds, lynchings, highwaymen. When one imported gunslinger threatened to shoot up the town of North Portal, the local Mountie reported:

On the 17th instant, I, Corporal Hogg, was called to the Hotel to quiet a disturbance. The room was full of cowboys and one Monaghan, or Cowboy Jack, was carrying a gun and pointed it at me, against Sections 105 and 109 of the Criminal Code. We struggled. Finally I got him handcuffed and put him inside. His head being in bad shape I had to engage the services of a doctor, who dressed his wound and pronounced it not serious. To the doctor Monaghan said that if I hadn't grabbed his gun there'd be another death in Canadian history. All of which I have the honor to report,

C. HOGG, *Corporal*

## THE LIVING LEGEND

To which his superior officer added a memo:

During the arrest of Monaghan the following Government property was damaged: door broken, screen smashed up, chair broken, field-jacket belonging to Corporal Hogg spoiled by being covered with blood, wall bespattered with blood.

They were a rough-faced, stern-eyed lot. Slouched on a cayuse in sweat-stained buckskins they looked like border ruffians. But their horses always showed grooming, their saddles were always clean, and at table in a hotel they had all the elegance of the smartest Imperial trooper. They drank hard, fought, swore and gambled, but they were known all the way to Texas as men who couldn't be bluffed, bribed, bulldozed or browbeaten. As the Fort Benton *Record* observed — a remark soon to be famous — “they fetched their man every time.” And they fetched him alive; it was three months in cells with hard labor for bringing him in dead. From the Red River to the Rockies the scarlet-coated rider was the symbol not only of law but of fair play.

Gold drew them north in 1895, twenty men handpicked by Inspector Charles Constantine. They sailed around the Alaskan coast to the mouth of the Yukon River, upriver 1500 miles to Forty Mile Creek, and here on the permafrost of an unmapped wilderness so hard to reach that prospectors called it “the other end of nowhere,” they built the first far-northern Mounted Police Post and collected customs duties from U.S. traders in the gold camps.

The following year Constantine scrawled his name on

## THE FRONTIER

three mining permits, three claims on Bonanza Creek filed by prospector George Carmack. The gold ran as high as \$150 a pan, boasted Carmack, launching the greatest gold rush of all time.

It was hard to hold the men, Constantine said afterward. They were making a dollar a day, the price of a candle. Their food was mainly pork and beans and the influx of fortune hunters left little time to hunt. "I had three tables in my room," Constantine said, "and a different kind of work on each. I walked from one to the other to rest."

The trickle of strangers swelled to a torrent — clergymen, murderers, bankers, thieves, Arabs, Chilians, Kanakas, men of every kind and creed — they came by the thousands. They surged off the steamer at Skagway, they scaled the mountain passes. "Climbing the golden stairs," they called it, holding each other's coats, an endless human chain floundering through the snow. They died of exhaustion, cold, bullets, despair. They drowned in the rapids that swept their dinghies, barges, rafts and canoes downriver to Dawson. Still they came. And only a handful of Mounties, now needed desperately for every function of government, deserted Constantine and Sam Steele, who succeeded him.

They piloted pilgrims through the rapids, dug them from under snowslides, fed them, nursed them, arbitrated their squabbles, and escorted their shipments of gold to Skagway. They built a chain of police posts along the river, each post an information bureau, sanctuary and jail. They saved many lives by a system of boat inspection and many more by enforcing sanitation laws in Dawson.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

They cracked down hard on drunkenness, bunco games in the gambling dens, and obscenity in the theaters. The fines they imposed so ruthlessly they used to finance hospitals.

At the height of the rush, Skagway, Alaska, bossed by a cultured killer, Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith, was the toughest town on the globe. But across the border in Dawson, the hub of the great gold camp, life was so peaceful a miner didn't dare chop wood on Sunday. "Life and property are safer in Dawson than in London," wrote a clergyman to the *London Times*. And this never ceased to amaze ex-U.S. Marshal Wyatt Earp, who kept bar in Nome during the Gold Rush. "If I'd had a couple of them red-coated fellers behind me," the celebrated gunfighter once mused, "we'd have kept Tombstone clean for sure."

In 1904, Edward VII honored the North-West Mounted by conferring the prefix "Royal" upon them. Their patrols, by then, had reached Hudson Bay and the shores of the western Arctic. Here, camped five years on a bare and desolate rock called Herschel Island, Sergeant Francis Fitzgerald broke the riotous raping rule of the whaling captains over the Eskimos, and froze to death bringing mail from McPherson to Dawson in 1911. Meanwhile, Constantine, now a superintendent, was conquering muskeg, forest, mountain torrent and chasm to cut a backdoor route to the Yukon, a graded road of logs out of Fort St. John, foreshadowing the present Alaska Highway but built without machinery in three years by 31 men, a staggering feat that drained Constantine's vast store of vitality; he died in 1912, four years after his road was abandoned.

The Mounties pushed east and north, half policemen,

## THE FRONTIER

half explorers. They were on hand to give information, dogs, rations and refuge to the great explorers Amundsen, Rasmussen and Stefansson. And Constable Alexander Lamont, nursing Stefansson through typhoid, caught the fever himself and died.

Again in 1920 their achievements changed their name. Canada needed a federal force to cope with her postwar growth. The RNWMP became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Commissioner moved from Regina to Ottawa. But tradition flowed on unbroken and the frontier saw no change.

In 1929, Inspector Alfred Joy, sometimes called "Byrd of the Arctic," made an epic patrol of exploration through the Parry Islands and turned down an invitation to be Byrd's Antarctic adviser; coming out of the north to be married at forty-five years of age, Joy died on the eve of his wedding day in Ottawa's Chateau Laurier, worn out by his Arctic travels. Eleven years later, the RCMP schooner *St. Roch*, skippered by Sergeant Henry Larsen, sailed north from Vancouver bound for Halifax, and eight Mounties spent the next two years locked together on an 80-ton wooden ship, inching through ice across the top of the world.

In the history taught recruits such feats are stressed. There have been many of them, obscure but arduous patrols in which men faced the unknown, endured, survived or died, alone. They show, as no other stories do, the dynamics of the ideal, the lifestuff of both legend and tradition: an adherence to duty that does not need to be forced by regulations, spurred by ambition, sustained by

## THE LIVING LEGEND

an audience; the acceptance of a challenge wherein the thing to be mastered is self and the only reward a sense of fulfillment. Such a patrol was the hunt for the killers of Harry Radford and Tom Street.

# 5

**H**ARRY RADFORD, a young American sportsman and biologist, came into the north in 1909, the holder of a permit to shoot a buffalo for a U.S. museum. The last wild herd roamed the timber north and west of Fort Smith, protected by the Mounties. With their help he secured his head.

This success ("My big wood bison is, of course, the largest wild animal of which record exists ever killed on the American continent, North or South America") led Radford to view the north as the path to an early reputation. He persuaded Tom Street, a husky young Canadian outdoorsman, to join him in an expedition across the Barren Lands, one of the world's last unexplored regions and one of the most formidable. Street, affable and easily impressed, was excited by the prospect of bringing back rare specimens of wild life, flora and fauna.

They set out in 1911. Reports drifted back of Radford's highhandedness with the natives. Then no more was heard until 1913, when the moccasin telegraph — news passed along from native to native — told of two whites slain on



## THE FRONTIER

the sea ice of remote Bathurst Inlet. Their killers were said to be a tribe of stone-age Eskimos, so primitive that they still used arrowheads of barbed bone driven by four-foot bows made of musk-ox horns and caribou sinew.

A police patrol, commanded by Inspector Walter Beyts, sailed from Halifax on the RNWMP schooner *Village Belle*. Storms raging down the coast of Hudson Bay turned them back. It was 1914 before the patrol could be landed at Chesterfield Inlet, and another year before Beyts, an experienced northern traveler, could erect an advance post on Baker Lake to the north. Twice from this post Beyts tried to cross the Barrens the winter of 1916, and twice the game-scarce Barrens turned him back.

The exhausted Beyts, soon to die of pneumonia, was replaced in 1917 by Inspector Frank French, a handsome, vital man, son of a Mountie and nephew of the force's first commissioner. French was serenely confident. With Sergeant Major Tom Caulkin, a tough Arctic veteran, four Eskimos and twenty-five dogs, he headed northwest for Bathurst Inlet on March 21.

They were soon into country of which their guides knew nothing. They wandered off course, their compass needle gyrating uselessly from unknown mineral deposits. The land was featureless, bare except for the tiny ancient willows that thrust their stunted limbs up through the snow-crust, an immense awesome desert strewn with rubble from the Ice Age, huge boulders that reared up everywhere, knocking the mud from their sled runners, forcing them to stop frequently. They could gauge their direction only by the snow ridges formed by prevailing winds. They could find

## THE LIVING LEGEND

no fuel to light a warming fire and every night, red-eyed with weariness, lashes and mustaches caked with ice, they built a snow house, unpacked, staked the dogs out, fed them, and while they cooked the day's only hot meal over the primus stove, tried to dry their clothing, filling the igloo with steam.

On April 5 the gales subsided. The sun came out and melted the crust which, refreezing, reflected the light like polished steel. Magenta and purple patches danced in front of the travelers' eyes, became pinwheels and rockets of orange fire. For three weeks they were snowblind, fighting the pain as of grit beneath their eyelids. Then fog closed in. A range of high bare hills forced them to detour. But they were lucky in traveling part way with migrating caribou, and on April 24 they stumbled onto a camp of Eskimos who directed them to the coast. By May 7 they were on polar ice, moving west, and on May 14 they sighted a cluster of igloos and skin tents on an island at the mouth of Bathurst Inlet.

The women fled indoors as the strangers approached. The men, who had been sealing at the floe edge, ran to intercept the patrol, spears and snow knives half lifted.

French raised his hand overhead in the universal sign of peace. "Tell them we come in friendship," he told his interpreter. The headman slowed his pace and his Mongoloid features creased in a smile. "Welcome," he said. "Welcome to our camp."

These were Cogmollocks, Stefansson's famed "blond Eskimos." They had gray eyes and their parkas were cut in a queer swallowtail design. After Caulkin handed out

## THE FRONTIER

gifts, French asked, "Do you know of two white men who passed this way, said to have been killed?"

The headman nodded. He brought forward a woman and three men, eyewitnesses to the murder of Radford and Street. The moccasin telegraph had not lied. With the candor of children the Eskimos told what had happened:

About five winters ago, two white men came from the south, and they had their Eskimos with them, and they came to an island on the salt called Kwogjuk. One was named Ishumatak (the man who does the thinking — Radford) and the other Kiuk (meaning wood, a tribute to Street's strength). Ishumatak was bad\* but Kiuk was good. The three Eskimos who came with the white men went away again to the south and the white men could not speak to us and we did not understand them but they made us understand a little by making signs.

They wanted two men to go away with them to the west. Two men, Harla and Kaneak, were going with them, but Kaneak's wife was sick, she had fallen on the ice and was hurt, and Kaneak did not want to leave her there. The white man called Ishumatak got very mad and ran at Kaneak and hit him with a whip. The other man (Street) tried to stop him. The white man was shouting all the time. He dragged Kaneak to the water edge. The other white man went with him. They were going to throw Kaneak in the water. Everybody was frightened the two white men were going to kill Kaneak.

Two men, Okitok and Hulalark, ran out and stabbed Ishumatak. He fell on the ice. The other white man ran off shouting towards the sleigh and Okitok ran after him and caught him and Amegealnik stabbed him with a snow

\* Meaning, probably, that they found Radford hard to get along with.

## THE LIVING LEGEND

knife. He was running towards the sleigh, he tried to get a rifle. The two white men were covered over and left on the ice. I do not know what happened to their property. . . .

I do not think this would have happened if the white man had not beat Kaneak with the dog whip, or if we had understood the white man.

ANINGNERK

Witness: F. H. French, Inspector

X *his mark*

French questioned every Eskimo in the district for a month but neither he nor Caulkin, who spoke Eskimo, could find any flaws in this story. French's orders had been to make no arrests if the killings had been provoked. His concern now was to get back. The patrols' supplies were gone. Their health was poor from the diet of half-raw, half-spoiled meat. They had already traveled more than two thousand miles on foot and the trip back across the Barrens loomed in their minds like a nightmare.

They heard of a trading post to the west and they pushed toward it over the rotting sea ice, sloshing along knee-high in icy water. A June snowfall masked the cracks and once Caulkin fell through. Hungry and sick with dysentery from eating polar bear meat, they finally reached Bernard Harbor, a Hudson's Bay trading post. Here they rested, waiting to go out with the company boat. "It has been the hardest trip I have ever made. . . ." French wrote in his diary. "We suffered much from cold and exposure."

The boat never came. They moved back along the coast, fishing for salmon. By October 16 there was snow enough on the ground to travel and they started their long return journey.

## THE FRONTIER

Movement over the newly formed sea ice was slow and dangerous. Autumn gales tore at their deerskin clothing, opening rents in the worn seams. Reaching Bathurst Inlet, they shot six caribou, which took them through a stretch of soft deep snow to the bare rock hills. It was now December. The weather was calm and cold. Stillness enveloped the Barrens, a quiet so intense that the faintest noise carried for miles and the caribou, forewarned, were seldom seen. The only sign of life was the great gray Barren Land wolves that stalked them from a distance and stole one dog in the night.

By December 17 the dogs were without food and weakening rapidly. The patrol was close to starvation. They shot ten of the weakest dogs and skinned them to feed the others. "A hard thing to do," French wrote in his diary. "In this country a man grows to love his dogs."

They came across a herd of musk ox in time for Christmas dinner, but in two weeks they were starving again. They were smoking tea leaves. Their skin clothing was ragged. Their hands and faces were frozen. A bitch in their team produced seven pups which the dogs at once devoured. The men stumbled along, weak, numbed by the 75-below-zero cold. A storm was blowing up. There was no sign of game. "It looks like our last patrol," French wrote on January 20.

Next day a band of deer crossed their trail and a kill of ten took them through to Baker Lake. "After more than ten months," French wrote, "we're safe at last." They had traveled 5153 miles on foot through an unmapped prehistoric land. They had brought the five-year quest to a

## THE LIVING LEGEND

finish: to prove three Eskimos innocent. Shortly afterward French was invalidated out of the force.

In his diary the man who had started out so confidently wrote: "Could I have foreseen or realized the immensity of that journey, could I have but visualized its hundreds of perils and hardships, had I but a glimpse of the gaunt spectre of hunger, cold and starvation, and nameless fear for my party, then I might have decided that life was too short to be walking side by side with fate. But duty must be done."

It was a rare but understandable break-through of feeling into a Mountie's laconic recording of fact. But, with the last sentence, French comes down to earth. Perhaps he realized suddenly that he had no choice in this matter. No glimpse of the future could have spared him his hardships.

Even in the Arctic, where a Mountie is free from superiors and nagging regulations, where a self-reliant policeman has the power of an emperor and half the men who go in do not want to come out — even in the Arctic no Mountie escapes his concept of duty. The force demands all, even up to the Mountie's life. And perhaps, in the end, this is what man really wants: to be used to the full, to be tried to the utmost, to be free only to realize all that he is.









UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



129 786

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

