Glover M. Allen
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"Scotty" Allen's famous Alaska dog team on the trail.

The Indian Sled Dogs of North America.

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Photographs by the Author and Others.

THE origin of the use of the dog as an animal of draught is not known; but the weight of opinion is that it was introduced from Siberia and that the idea was probably Kamchatkan.

The canine of the American aborigine, or Amerind, was simply a tame wolf, differing from its wild brother in the qualities that would naturally follow breeding in the semi-domestication of the savage. The dog used by the Indians of the plains was usually of coyote origin, rarely of gray-wolf stock; while the one bred by the Indians in the forest regions, and the Eskimos, was always derived from the gray wolf. With the advent of the white man came the European species. By crossing and intercrossing these strains with the native animal, the ancestor of the present-day sled dog was produced. As this mixed breeding has been going on ever since, there has been no opportunity to create a new variety of dog or to recover the primitive one, and to-day the Indian dog is nothing more or less than a canine potpourri of all kinds of breeds. In the districts remote from civilization the mongrel character of this dog is less marked than in those dogs nearer the settlements.

The sled dogs of the Northern regions of this continent may be, for convenience, divided into two groups: The Eskimo, or "husky," found in the Far North, and the so-called Indian "gidde," found in the timber regions or Indian country.*

The difference between these two groups, though not marked, is apparent. In general, the Eskimo dog differs from the Indian variety in being more wolfish and in having less European strain. His tail is more bushy and he is cleaner-legged. His ears are more erect and pointed, while his body is larger in size and form. The temper of the husky is said to be better and his intelligence of a higher order; altogether, he is a better dog in every way. It is probably possible to find to-day the pure blooded husky dog in the regions about the Coppermine river and in Banks Land and Wollaston Land. With the exception of these areas, I doubt if this dog is to be seen, in the uncrossed state, anywhere else.

A typical specimen of the Indian sled dog is wild in appearance and character. His weight, when full grown, varies from sixty to 130 pounds. The muzzle is long, projecting and pointed, but not so pointed as that of the collie. The nose shows good powers of scent. The ears are sharp, pricked upright and pointed forward. The eyes, obliquely placed, express neither affection nor friendliness. The general countenance is surly, unpleasant, and always expectant of a blow from the foot or some missile. The body is squarely and compactly built and somewhat smaller than that of the wolf. The carriage is bold and the motions are quick. The tail is long, round and bushy and is usually curled over the rump when the dog is at work. Occasionally it may droop, especially when the animal is fatigued. The feet are tough and broad. The coat consists of an inner layer of very short, soft and warm hair, and an outer layer composed of long, shaggy, coarse and wiry hair with a tendency to curl. It is especially abundant over the body and around the neck and shoulders, and sparse on the legs. The chief colors of the fur are gray, black, brown, red or white, or a mixture of these in varying proportions. White is the most common. A black body with white paws is a combination often seen. The dark gray is perhaps the favorite color among the natives, and the dogs so colored are said to be the purest blooded and have the superior intellect. The nose is usually black.

In choosing a sled dog, one should judge him along the follow-

*In Alaska the term, "malamut," is used synonymously for "husky," although in some parts it is employed to mean a dog of small proportions and unadapted for heavy work. The term, "husky," is probably Innuit in origin and is Indian slang for almost anything that is Eskimo. Therefore, if one wishes to be correct, one should not refer to the Eskimo dog as a husky.

The etymology of the term, "gidde," is also obscure. I have heard it used in several different ways. Dogs of Indian breeding are often referred to as giddes, or the word may be applied to small or sickly dogs. In this latter sense it is used as a term of disparagement. Puppies are also called giddes.—The Author.

harbor dock—three miles across Michipocoten bay. The work of picking seven-day essentials out of the commissary department was progressing very slowly. The afternoon was waning. We had to get a start up the river that day; or, at the least, we had to make camp, somewhere.

Providence sent us Mr. Coleman and his gasoline launch. We fell upon him and chartered him for an indefinite period on the spot. We divided the party. Jim and His Lordship stayed on the wharf to finish the work of inventory and elimination. Fred and I loaded up the Rambler with duffle, tents and supplies already accepted and the Rambler settled down in the Superior waters to her guards. We took George Andre, Pete, William Teddy and Tommie and, with the four canoes leaping and capsizing in tow astern, we cut across the bay for the river-mouth to find a camp site. We promised to send back for Jim and His Lordship when the deep, dark hold of the Caribou should give up the rest of our "grub."

There is a Hudson's Bay post there, where the mighty Michipocoten swings around the thousandth bend and slips at last into Superior. That is, the buildings are there—low, rambling, picturesque old structures of logs, with great beams cut by hand a century ago and little diamond window panes. There is the old house of the factor and smaller houses where the *coureurs de bois* and trappers and defenders of the H. B. C. once made the Northern midnight howl with epic songs and journey-end celebrations. But these buildings are deserted now. The Hudson's Bay Company has moved its post up to Missanabie. We camped in the front yard of the silent post with the ghosts of other days.

We had put up the tents—the A tents—and got out the blankets. George had filled the water-pail from a spring and Tommie had the pot on the fire and the potatoes peeled and the coffee and bacon ready. In the lull, waiting for Jim and His Lordship, I thought it wise to run over the map and the campaign and route with George Andre.

Right there I made a discovery that jolted me as I hadn't been jolted for years. In my ignorance I had planned to start out at sunrise tomorrow with the flotilla and paddle briskly and lightheartedly right up the Michipocoten river. George put a gnarled finger on a spot of the map about fifteen miles from the rock where we were sitting and said firmly:

"Take a week to get there."

"Why?" I asked with sinking heart.

"Water swift, all rapids," said George. "Have to pole and line all the way."

"But we must get up there," I insisted, pointing to Lake Manitowick, a good sixty miles by the river, " and do it in a week, too."

"All right," said George. "We go over these lakes here, make portage and do it in two days."

"How about the portage?" I asked fearfully.

"Seven-mile one to start with, to Lake Wa-Wa," said George.

"Do you think we're carrying a moving-van in the outfit?" I inquired.

"Mebbe. I got a team—at the Mission," said George.

The abandoned Hudson's Bay post at the Michipocoten River Mission.

"One team to tote four canoes and this colossal scenic production?"

"Sure," said George. "Get wagon with rack."

"Take a canoe and get the team and the teamster," I said.

George did it. He paddled over to the Indian Mission and back and reported that the team would be waiting for us with the morning's sun.

We had a surprise for Jim and His Lordship when they puffed into camp with another launch-load of "eats." But they didn't grumble or call me any of the things I deserved and fully expected to be called. The optimism and charity—and appetite—of the wilderness had already softened the iron in their hearts. In gratitude I open some ox-tail soup and two cans of pork and beans. Right there Tommie's culinary genius, hidden these decades beneath a half-bushel, began declaring itself. We sang and perpetrated bad puns and capered as we spread our blankets over balsam boughs that William Teddy had cut, and sweet marsh-hay filched from the H. B. C.'s deserted barn. We rolled into those blankets, too, at the time when we should be just about finishing a huge, indigestible dinner back in the big city. The camp was very still in the stillness of the Northern night, when I took a last look at the bright Northern stars and hearkened to the surf of Superior and the snores of James. I opened the flap of His Lordship's tent cautiously. He had his moustaches in curl papers and was manicuring his nails by the light of an electric lantern. I wasn't sure how His Lordship was going to enjoy and last out this trip. He waved his hand at me gaily and said:

"My dear old chap, this is perfectly ripping—I say—isn't it?"

Which it certainly was. Then the pack of half-wolf Indian dogs at the Mission began howling and I dreamed that I had my eager fingers around the neck of that "no-trout-on-the-Michipocoten"-specter and was choking it to death with the full delight of a pleasure long deferred.

(To be continued.)

"His Lordship" (in the cap) just arrived, and hungry, sizing up Tommie's supper preparations—and being beaten to it by Jim. You will notice the latter's eagerness is not so nicely held in check as that of his fellow sufferer. The author captioned this picture "The bacon smell."

ing lines: The weight, or substance, should be for the most part forward; body long and agile-looking; chest deep; shoulders sloping and muscular; loin straight and without suspicion of roaching, legs straight with muscles and sinews well developed; feet should have a well-padded sole and with little feathering. If there is much feathering it must be clipped off in winter; otherwise, it will cause balling of the snow between the toes, thereby laming the animal and sometimes putting him entirely out of commission.

The resemblance between these dogs and timber wolves is so marked that at a distance a band of them may be mistaken for the latter. Moreover, it is not an easy matter to differentiate their tracks. I have never been able to distinguish the difference, and the Indian himself must be an unusually close observer to note the distinction. To the experienced eye, the spoor of the dog spreads out more than that of the wolf and the detail of its imprint is not so sharply defined; that is, the balls of the toes and the spaces between them are less definitely outlined.

Their affinity with the wolf remains so close that they readily breed with it. The Indians take advantage of this fact and resort to it when they want to increase the ferocious character, or when there has been too much interbreeding with domestic stock. The puppies thus secured are wilder and bolder than the bitch. On the other hand, emasculation has been resorted to in order to subdue the spirit of the wild. Now and then a wolf is seen doing team work with the dogs. In the case I saw, I noted no apparent difference in the quality and quantity of his labor and he certainly impressed me as being more docile and attractive in every respect than the average Indian dog.

The vocal sounds of these dogs are the growl, whine, yelp and sniff. They never bark unless they live in the vicinity of settlements, where they acquire the custom from domestic dogs. They soon drop, however, the habit when removed to a community where there are no other kind of dogs. Their howling is prolonged and so exactly in the pitch of that of the wolf that it is sometimes impossible for the practised ear to discriminate between them. At night, especially if the moon is up, the dogs often set up a steady howl in unison at it, the effect being most mournful and weird.

In disposition, most of them are capable of no attachment to man, and I have never observed between the Indians and the dogs any demonstrations of affection. Occasionally one may meet a dog that is somewhat patronizing and will greet your advances with a peculiar, friendly growl. None, however, will accept any great amount of petting. They are whimsical and will even take a dislike to other dogs, always greeting their approach with a snarl. Whenever a fight starts, the uprising attracts the other dogs in the neighborhood, who rush up to join in the general melee. If one falls, he is instantly pounced upon by his companions and may be torn to pieces if not rescued by his owner. When angry they are absolutely dangerous, not only to their master, but to themselves as well. An instance of their ferocity occurred several years ago when I happened to be in the district east of Lake Winnipeg. A four-year-old Indian child who had been left alone for a short time, was attacked by a band of these dogs, who devoured their victim so completely that, with the exception of blood on the snow and some pieces of clothing, not a vestige of the child was to be seen.

The hardships that these dogs bear are at times terrible. They are slaves with the cruelest of masters and liable at any moment to be subjected to the most extreme cruelty or want. No wonder they are vicious, obstinate and unsociable! There seems to be an unremitting struggle for mastery between the man and the beast. Some of the punishments inflicted are torture. The spot commonly selected for chastisement is the bridge of the nose. I have seen

A fine team of typical Hudson's Bay dogs.

some of the most fearful blows imaginable fall on the snouts of these unfortunate wretches. The implements often used are the butt of the whip or a good-sized tree branch. Strange to say, I have never noticed a nose deformed or permanently injured; nor have I seen a single muzzle free from scars. Sometimes discipline makes the dog stubborn. Then ensues a battle which is fierce and relentless. Under these circumstances, it is often necessary to

Method of storing frozen fish for the dogs.

string the inflexible brute up by the fore-limbs to a tree and scourge him. This is a most summary means of bringing about submission. When the whip is used the dog throws himself on the ground, trembling, howling and groaning as the lashes fall on his side. Sometimes he utters not the slightest murmur. The dogs are constantly on the lookout for the driver's long lash, which is often used with wonderful skill. The sight of a threatening gesture on the part of the driver is sufficient to bring out not only a most plaintive howl from members of the team, but also renewed energy. With well-trained dogs and a good driver, it is seldom necessary to use coercion. A skillful driver dislikes to punish his team while tripping, as it fatigues the dogs; but the only way to keep them under control is by fear of the lash. If, in the course of punishment, the dog's eye is badly hurt with the whip, the drivers of the North put sugar into it. I tried to point out the folly of this, but to no effect.

Notwithstanding the grievous cruelty extended to these animals by their trainer, they exhibit, nevertheless, a certain kind of respect

A dog team carrying the United States mail out of Council, Alaska.

An Indian crossing Lake Winnipeg by dog team.

for him. This he repays by caring for them in many ways; he provides them with food in comparative abundance during the winter months; he is constantly on the watch that there may be no loss of life or severe injuries inflicted while participating in their sanguinary skirmishes with each other; he is mindful not to expose them to unnecessary dangers or to overwork them on the trail; he is ever ready to assist in hauling or guiding the sled or holding back on it when going down hill, and in many little ways he is of much aid to his team.

The distance it is possible to make depends on the load and the going. When loaded, they average about four miles an hour, going at a dog-trot. There are many tales in the North of phenomenal journeys made by the Indians with their dog teams. A servant of the Hudson's Bay Company covered once over 2,000 miles in forty-six days of travel with the same dogs. One hundred and eighty miles of continuous traveling without stopping, except for the man and dogs to eat, has been made in twenty-four hours with dogs lightly loaded. In a competition in hauling, four dogs were able to draw 1,000 pounds on hard snow. A fair day's work for a good dog under favorable conditions is forty or fifty miles with a load of 100 pounds. Thus a team of five dogs can transport 500 pounds fifty miles. Twelve hours is considered a day's work. There is one case on record in the region north of James' Bay where both team and driver, one winter, went eight days without food or fire.

A band of Hudson's Bay sled dogs in the summertime.

Some of the dogs have a great dislike for their work and have to be literally dragged to the sled to be harnessed. Others, on the contrary, seem to have a certain fondness for it and evince their feelings by a noisy, unrestrained excitement as they await the command to be off. The tinkling of the bells about their harness seems to act as a stimulus to them, urging them onward. I am credibly informed that in the absence of these sounds a difference in their pace is noticeable. If the sled will not draw readily the dogs will not start until it has been lightened. Some of the dogs are so high-spirited, or neurotic, that they never make good sled dogs. They overwork during the day's haul and so wear themselves out for the work of the next day.

The gaits used in teaming are the walk, trot and the lope, or gallop. The last is entered upon when approaching a camp. At this time both man and animal instinctively seem to desire to impress their new audience with their superiority of style and condition. In the bush, or on a new and soft trail, the walk is often the only possible pace. In the open, the common speed is the trot. The driver follows behind the sleigh by a kind of running walk. It is sometimes necessary, however, for him to break into a run in order to keep up. When the trail is level and the load does not require balancing, he often goes ahead of the dogs and sets the pace. Occasionally, the head dog catches the scent of some animal that has crossed the trail and he is at once off on the scent, pulling the rest of the team with him. It is often with difficulty that the driver gets under headway again. Sometimes the dogs resort to tricks to avoid their work and their strategy is so very cute that it takes an experienced eye to note whether they are lagging. The number of animals driven by the Indians ordinarily is five or six to a team. The Eskimos usually drive more.

On account of the trails in the timber regions being necessarily narrow, the Indians always drive their canines tandem, while the Eskimos, because of the open nature of their country, are able to harness their animals abreast or in packs. From among the most intelligent dogs, the leader, or "foregoer," of the team is chosen. He sets the pace and keeps the direction, and upon him depends the easy and continuous going of the entire team. The animal next to the sled is known as the steer or "sled" dog. He is the heaviest and is trained to swing the head of the drag away from obstacles. The intermediate dogs are the ones that steady the outfit. A team trained together is obviously many times better than a picked-up one, as it has uniform gait, fights are less apt to occur among the dogs, and they will combine against any foe. The dogs once given their places in the team, always keep the same location, because in this way they accustom themselves to the pulling in that position. When not "mushing" (traveling) the dogs usually lie down on the trail. They are not ordinarily unharnessed until the end of the day, unless they have become very tired. They are rested, or "spelled", en route four times every day and at the same hour every day. If they try of their own volition to take other times,

Dog trains on the trail, Hudson's Bay region.

the whip and oath—the latter often highly embellished—are brought into play.

Besides profanity, the common terms employed in sled-travel are "Mush" or "Mush on," signifying to start off; "Whoa," to stop; "Gee" and "Jah" respectively to go to the right or to the left. These exclamations differ according to the section of the country and whether English or French, Indian or Eskimo predominates. These I have given are the ones used immediately about the region of Hudson's Bay.

At the start everything is excitement, Indians shouting, dogs yelping and getting tangled in the harness. This confusion lasts until a start is made. A tripper in the meantime has started off ahead in order to make the trail and show the way. This runner is allowed to keep two or three miles in advance of the party. Many of the animals, especially the leaders, often display a fretfulness in their desire to catch up with the man, or even the team in front. This irritability is also seen when a team in the rear attempts to pass one ahead of it.

When it is time to rest, the guide, in advance, selects a stopping place and makes a fire. By this time the outfit arrives and finds the camp all ready. When the stop for the night has been reached, the first thing the Indians do is to give their entire attention to the dogs. The animals are immediately unharnessed and [illegible] them is placed before the fire to thaw.

The dogs will eat anything. It is hard to starve [illegible] in fact, it is incredible how long they can go without sus[illegible] Everything must be cached, especially those articles made of [illegible] or vegetable matter. Food stored in tin-ware is not proof against them. In the winter-time when the dogs are needed the[illegible] regularly. In the Arctic regions the food consists chiefly [illegible] walrus and bear, with musk-ox and caribou when they [illegible] had. In the wooded areas farther to the south the staple f[illegible] white fish. The amount of ration depends upon the [illegible] labor the dog is called upon to perform. The more [illegible] greater the allowance. On an average, about three pounds of [illegible] are given daily. The meal is always given at the end of the d[illegible] work, because if given before, the dog is inclined to be [illegible] shirk his work. When the labor has been unusually sev[illegible] little food is given at the noon stop. The fish, which is fr[illegible] the winter months, is thawed out for the dogs if the [illegible] wooded country, but if there is nothing with which [illegible] then it is given in the frozen state. The short [illegible] these dogs to swallow one of these frozen fishes, whi[illegible]

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A Michigan gray wolf in the Detroit zoo.

Husky dog of the Hudson's Bay region.

The Indian Sled Dogs of North America.

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cally as hard as stone, is amazing. As the fish often has reached an advanced stage of putrefaction before "cured," the odor emitted from the dog's mouth is horrible. During the feeding, each driver is obliged to stand over his team to prevent fighting over the food.

These dogs, notwithstanding that they are inured to Arctic hardships and live in the open the year round, nevertheless, quickly take advantage of any possible comforts; so when the men have made their camp and gone to sleep for the night, the animals gradually work their way toward the fire, and even endeavor to hunt for the luxury of a corner of a blanket. In this way, both men and dogs become closely packed together, and great additional warmth is provided for all.

There seems to be a clannish tendency among the different bands of dogs in a camp, and even among the dogs of each team. There is usually one dog in each which is the master spirit.

Hudson's Bay sled dog, hobbled with a clog.

If, while on a trail, a strange team is met, it usually means a dog fight. The canines of one team will unite against those of the other. In the scrimmage and confusion that follows, the brutes always discriminate between foe and friend.

In the springtime, their feet often suffer from the crusted snow. In a situation like this, the driver ties a kind of shoe, made of curried deer hide, on their paws.

In the summer, the dogs wander about the country hunting and fishing, or live the life of scavengers about the camps. Those owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, and by some of the white traders, are fed regularly. The Company, in order to prevent their dogs from roaming and getting injured in dog fights, often hobble them by means of a heavy piece of wood, suspended from the collar and just long enough to drag on the ground.

In one sense, these Northern dogs do not lead a "dog's life," for it is seldom that one observes a dog scratch or bite his body; fleas are unknown to them.

Puppy mortality is low, and they are easy to raise. After weaning, their food is boiled fish, and finally the regular diet of raw fish, fresh or dried is given to them. The training of the young dog consists in learning to haul and to fear the master. The latter is accomplished by lashing.

A team of good sled dogs, with ordinary care, lasts eight or ten years before the age of retirement is reached. The cost of a team varies according to the section of the country. In Alaska, a good dog will sell for from $50 to $75, or even as high as $200, and a well-broken team of eight dogs has been known to bring as much as $2,500. The average price for an Indian dog in the Hudson's Bay region is $15 to $20. At the time of the Klondike gold rush,

values all over the country bounded up, and in some cases a dog that was formerly worth $5 would bring $20 to $25 in the interior, and much more if near the coast or a shipping point.

I have several times been asked whether the Indians eat dog. A few winters ago one of the

A plains Indian dog, with travois.

old servants of the Hudson's Bay Company told me, that in the earlier days within his memory, both the white and the red man ate the animal, but not those with European blood. There is no reason why these dogs, which pass their lives in such an ideally healthy region, should not be eaten occasionally or during stress of famine. It would be strange, moreover, if the Indian did not use the dog for food, as I have seen him eat nearly all the other Northern animals, including otter and marten. Between the Indians and their dogs all the parts of an animal are consumed except the contents of entrails.

A Hudson's Bay gidde.

These are carefully withdrawn and hung out of reach of the dogs, and thereby much illness is avoided. At one of the more isolated Hudson's Bay posts, where I visited a few years ago, the natives regularly had their medicine man hold a dog feast three times a year. At these ceremonies, a dog was eaten, with the belief that a future life was thereby assured.

Now, that Alaska and Siberia are being settled, there is a possibility in the North of a most interesting development of scientific breeding of sled dogs, either for work of for racing. The great annual sweepstakes dog race, held annually at Nome, has already done much to arouse a great and growing interest in them. I am told that the best sled dog is a cross between a husky, on account of its endurance, and a foxhound, on account of its speed. Undoubtedly, the pure gray wolf will always be used to maintain uniformity and to correct reversionary tendency.

Waterproof Matchsafe.

Get a six-inch piece of the inner tube of an ordinary bicycle tire. You can procure this at any bicycle store, as they always have wornout tubes or pieces they will sell very cheaply. Put your matches in this and tie up the ends and you have a light and waterproof safe. I use the parlor match ordinarily, but always carry a few blocks of sulphur matches in this form.

Washington. W. H. MORTON.