

**BLACK ROCK: A
TALE OF
THE SELKIRKS**

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Black Rock: A Tale of the Selkirks by Ralph Connor & George Adam Smith

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RALPH CONNOR & GEORGE ADAM SMITH

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A TALE OF THE SELKIRKS

By RALPH CONNOR, *author of*
"The Sky Pilot," Etc., with an introduction by
PROF. GEORGE ADAM SMITH, L.L.D.



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INTRODUCTION

I think I have met "Ralph Connor." Indeed, I am sure I have—once in a canoe on the Red River, once on the Assinaboine, and twice or thrice on the prairies to the West. That was not the name he gave me, but, if I am right, it covers one of the most honest and genial of the strong characters that are fighting the devil and doing good work for men all over the world. He has seen with his own eyes the life which he describes in this book, and has himself, for some years of hard and lonely toil, assisted in the good influences which he traces among its wild and often hopeless conditions. He writes with the freshness and accuracy of an eye-witness, with the style (as I think his readers will allow) of a real artist, and with the tenderness and hopefulness of a man not only of faith but of experience, who has seen in fulfillment the ideals for which he lives.

The life to which he takes us, though far off and very strange to our tame minds, is the life of our brothers. Into the Northwest of Canada the young men of Great Britain and Ireland have been pouring (I was told), sometimes at the rate of 48,000 a year. Our brothers who left home yesterday—our hearts cannot but follow them. With these pages Ralph Connor enables our eyes and our minds to follow, too; nor do I think there is any one

who shall read this book and not find also that his conscience is quickened. There is a warfare appointed unto man upon earth, and its struggles are nowhere more intense, nor the victories of the strong, nor the succors brought to the fallen, more heroic, than on the fields described in this volume.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

BLACK ROCK.

The story of the book is true, and chief of the failures in the making of the book is this, that it is not all the truth. The light is not bright enough, the shadow is not black enough to give a true picture of that bit of Western life of which the writer was some small part. The men of the book are still there in the mines and lumber camps of the mountains, fighting out that eternal fight for manhood, strong, clean, God-conquered. And, when the west winds blow, to the open ear the sounds of battle come, telling the fortunes of the fight.

Because a man's life is all he has, and because the only hope of the brave young West lies in its men, this story is told. It may be that the tragic pity of a broken life may move some to pray, and that that divine power there is in a single brave heart to summon forth hope and courage may move some to fight. If so, the tale is not told in vain.

C. W. G.



BLACK ROCK.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN A LUMBER CAMP.

It was due to a mysterious dispensation of Providence, and a good deal to Leslie Graeme, that I found myself in the heart of the Selkirks for my Christmas Eve as the year 1882 was dying. It had been my plan to spend my Christmas far away in Toronto, with such Bohemian and boon companions as could be found in that cosmopolitan and kindly city. But Leslie Graeme changed all that, for, discovering me in the village of Black Rock, with my traps all packed, waiting for the stage to start for the Landing, thirty miles away, he bore down upon me with resistless force, and I found myself recovering from my surprise only after we had gone in his lumber sleigh some six miles on our way to his camp up in the mountains. I was surprised and much delighted, though I would not allow him to think so, to find that his old-time power over me was still there. He could always in the old 'Varsity days—dear, wild days—make me do what he liked. He was so handsome and so reckless, brilliant in his class-

10 Christmas Eve in a Lumber Camp.

work, and the prince of half-backs on the Rugby field, and with such power of fascination as would "extract the heart out of a wheelbarrow," as Barney Lundy used to say. And thus it was that I found myself just three weeks later—I was to have spent two or three days—on the afternoon of the 24th of December, standing in Graeme's Lumber Camp No. 2, wondering at myself. But I did not regret my changed plans, for in those three weeks I had raided a cinnamon bear's den and had wakened up a grizzly. But I shall let the grizzly finish the tale; he probably sees more humor in it than I.

The camp stood in a little clearing, and consisted of a group of three long, low shanties, with smaller shacks near them, all built of heavy, unhewn logs, with door and window in each. The grub camp, with cook-shed attached, stood in the middle of the clearing; at a little distance was the sleeping-camp, with the office built against it, and about a hundred yards away on the other side of the clearing stood the stables, and near them the smiddy. The mountains rose grandly on every side, throwing up their great peaks into the sky. The clearing in which the camp stood was hewn out of a dense pine forest that filled the valley and climbed half way up the mountain sides, and then frayed out in scattered and stunted trees.

It was one of those wonderful Canadian winter days, bright, and with a touch of sharpness in the air that did not chill, but warmed the blood like draughts of wine. The men were up in the woods, and the shrill scream of