

THE LOST WHITE TRIBE

Missing for Four Centuries, a White People, Descendants of Lief the Lucky, Are Discovered Living Within the Arctic Circle—This Is Their Story.



Type of White Tribe Maiden Discovered by Stefansson.

OUT of the frozen North comes Professor Vilhjalmr Stefansson, bringing a tale of romance and discovery that reads as weirdly as would the announcement that one of the lost tribes of Israel had been discovered. And viewed ethnologically the facts that he has brought back with him are hardly second in importance.

For Professor Stefansson has discovered a lost tribe of 2000 white people, who are believed to be the direct descendants of the following of Lief Erickson, surnamed the "Lucky," who went to Greenland from Iceland in the

year 982 and later discovered the north coast of America.

And for nearly 500 years—to be exact, since 1492, or just 50 years before Columbus set foot on San Salvador—the world has had no trace or tidings of this hardy Norse colony.

In that year, while the black plague was sweeping over Europe, Iceland forgot all about her infant colony on the other side of the world and when 200 years later, communications were reopened, no trace of it could be found. It was believed that the Eskimos, or Strakings, as the Norsemen called them, of the higher latitudes, had swept down from the north upon them and massacred the entire colony.

Instead, it is now supposed, they were driven across the frozen strait to the mainland, where they mingled with friendly Eskimos, only to be driven later still further westward to the region where they now are. This section, which includes Victoria Island and Coronation Island, is 30 degrees east of the mouth of the Mackenzie River and more than 2000 miles by the coast line.

Explorers Warned Away.

UNTIL the advent of Professor Stefansson in 1906 and later his partner, Dr. R. Anderson in 1910, this region had never been explored. It was a No Man's Land, a country which the two explorers were warned against entering, for it was believed to be entirely uninhabited, either by Eskimos or game.

And in part this was found to be true.

There is a strip some 300 miles wide at the top of the world, across which the Eskimos do not go. It is barren of game and difficult of travel. So it is that the Eskimo of the East knows nothing of the Eskimo of the West. Their traditions told of a strange race who were cannibals—terrible men with red beards and blue eyes, whose chief pleasure it was to eat the little Eskimo babies.

Every explorer in the Far North has heard these tales and not a few have tried to verify them. Rold Amundsen, discoverer of the South Pole, in his quest for the Northwest passage, sought to find a trace of this strange race, but failed. And it was then put down as an Indian myth—this queer white race whom no one had ever seen.

But Professor Stefansson was not satisfied with the search that had been made and when the American Museum of Natural History sent him North in 1906 he determined to test the tradition thoroughly. In this he was aided by his companion, Dr. R. Anderson, a former classmate from the University of Iowa, who joined him in 1910 on his return to the mouth of the Mackenzie River, after a year and a half spent among the different tribes of Eskimos, none of whom, however, was the race he sought.

In all Professor Stefansson discovered 12 new tribes. Ten of these had never been seen a white man or held any traditions about them. Two other tribes stated that their fathers had seen members of the ill-fated Franklins expedition. There were two very old men also, one of whom had seen Richardson in 1848 and the other Collins in 1853.

The tribe of white people, believed to be the descendants of the Norsemen, never had seen any people of their own color until visited by Stefansson. Their number is about 2000 and more than half of them have red hair, blue eyes, fair skins and light eyebrows and beards.

They live on both shores of Coronation Gulf, on the mainland of North America and Victoria Island, which was formerly known as Prince Edward Island.

Live in Stone Age.

BUT while the civilization of nearly a thousand years has grown they have stood still. In fact, they have retrograded, for they are still in the stone age, while their forefathers must have been skilled in working in iron and in many of the arts of the crude civilization of their day.

While they retain some of the customs of the Norsemen who sought to colonize Greenland in the twelfth century, their method of living is entirely different. The conditions under which they live are of the most primitive sort. No vegetation, except moss and a few stunted willows, grows in their habitat.

Ethnologically the newly discovered tribe is entirely different from the Eskimo, not only in the shape of the skull, but in general features, color of eyes and texture of hair. They have not a single trace of the Mongolian type.

They are meat and fish eaters. The island abounds with caribou and the sea with seal and other fauna. They use bows made of willow bound together with sinews and their arrows are tipped with flint and native copper, which is pried out of ledges or found in stream beds on the mainland.

Their knives are made of copper, with horn handles, and made in much the same manner as implements were made by the early Norsemen who inhabited Greenland.

Like nearly every savage tribe, they have a legend of a flood which a long time ago devastated the world. This legend, anthropologists say, is universal among savage tribes and therefore cannot be regarded as proof that this particular tribe is descended from Christian forefathers.

In any event, they now show scant traces of the customs of their forefathers, save for their white skins and Scandinavian physiognomical characteristics being almost identical with the other Eskimos.

History of Lost Tribe.

PROFESSOR STEFANSSON accounts for their existence by the fact that in the year 982 Greenland was discovered and settled by 300 Icelanders. One thousand of these people sailed from Norway and missed Greenland, but landed on the coast of Newfoundland, where they established a colony, built 14 churches, two monasteries, a university and other structures, the ruins of which are still standing.

These people crossed to the coast of America for timber. There were no Eskimos at this time, either on Greenland or Newfoundland. The Norsemen settled in two colonies, one on the north and one on the south side of Newfoundland.

In the fourteenth century Eskimos came from the north and exterminated the north settlement. Their record was complete till 1442, when the black plague scourged Europe and for two centuries communication between Newfoundland and the old country was cut off.

When communication was restored the people of the second settlement were missing. Their graveyards, buildings and other adjuncts of their semi-civilization were left in ruins. The theory was formed that the people had drifted to a settlement further west across the narrow straits, where they mingled with Eskimos, whom they took along with them to the island on which

their descendants make their headquarters.

They still use the bone needles that were invented by their forefathers, and many of their methods of life are similar to that of their progenitors. Different environment, a more rigorous climate and a lack of vegetation, however, has changed many of their usages.

People Always on Move.

THEY are a migratory people, never remaining longer than a few weeks in the same place. When they moved Stefansson moved with them. They never live on the coast itself and it was for this reason that Amundsen failed to discover them when he sailed past their island.

In the winter time they settle on the ice in the center of a bay and hunt seal.

In the summer they go to the center of the island where they eat the caribou which there abound in thousands. Once in a great time they capture one of the rare specimens of Barren Land bear.

Their houses are made of snow, with a roof of driftwood, which on rare occasions is found on the coast. The stray fragments of wood are highly prized. Furs furnish their clothing. Their shoes are cut to come well up to the thighs. Here they are met by a kind of undershirt, which reaches to the waist. The coat is fashioned in almost precisely the same manner as the full dress coat worn at inaugural balls by their civilized brothers. It cuts off at a sharp angle just above the waistline and a long tail divided into two pieces hangs down behind. The whole outfit is strapped together by means of thongs and buttons made from rawhide and bone.

In one place on the island Professor Stefansson discovered a conical stone house which bears a striking resemblance to the houses built in Greenland and Newfoundland by the Norsemen who first inhabited those places.

Matches and Guns Unknown.

NONE of the natives had ever seen a sulphur match or a rifle. One tribe expressed surprise when Stefansson exhibited a caribou with a rifle at a distance of more than 1000 yards. They told him of a wonderful man who had once lived in that country who had a bow and arrow that would shoot over a mountain and kill a deer or a bear on the other side.

In a paper prepared by Dr. Henry Rink, Copenhagen, which was written in 1875 while Dr. Rink was an inspector for South Greenland, facts are given about the ancient settlement of Greenland which seem to back up the theories of Professor Stefansson and the other ethnologists concerning the white Eskimos. Dr. Rink, whose work is an authority on Eskimos, had this to say about these lost Scandinavian colonists:

"According to the sagas of the Icelanders they met the Eskimos on the east coast of Greenland about the year 1000, and at almost the same time on the south coast of the American continent, in the so-called Vinland. Thorvald, a son of Eric the Red, was killed in a fight which ensued at this meeting.

"Between the years 1000 and 1300 the Eskimos do not seem to have occupied the land of 65 degrees on the west coast of Greenland, where the Scandinavian colonies were situated.

"But the sagas were received to have been aware of the existence of the Eskimos in higher latitudes and to have lived in fear of attack from them.

since in the year 1298 an expedition was sent out for the purpose of exploring the abodes of the Skrælings, the Eskimos were called by the colonists.

"In 1378 the northernmost settlement was attacked by the Eskimos. About 1450 the last accounts were received from the Scandinavian colonies, and the way to Greenland was entirely forgotten in the mother country. It must

be supposed that the colonists on being thus cut off from the world abroad retired into the interior of the island, while the Eskimos gradually settled on the islands, and that the latter defeated and partly destroyed the remains of the Norsemen.

"The features of the natives in the southern part of Greenland indicate a mixed descent from Scandinavians. In 1585 Greenland was discovered anew

by John Davis, and found inhabited exclusively by Eskimos. After a series of exploring and fishing expeditions, during which many acts of violence and cruelty were perpetrated by the natives, the present colonies were founded in Greenland by Egde in 1582, and since then the whole west coast up to 74 degrees has been brought under complete and regular communication with Denmark."

White Tribesmen of A Race Lost 400 Years.



THE CURIOUS CASE OF LUCKY CHANCE

WHEN the call came to move south, Chance laid it to the prairie fires.

"Nowadays, the minute I see that yellow in the air, and the grass crackles up crisp and ready under Siwash's toes, why, I don't stop to do any plowing or back-firing. Siwash and me get the call of the south quick, and we take the trail toward Yankton."

"Going to stop off at old man Nawn's place, as per usual?" inquired Bill, mildly.

"Sure," said Chance.

"Going to bring a mislous back with yer?" Still the tone was gentle.

Chance laughed and rubbed his fingers up through his thick, curly hair dubiously.

"She wouldn't like it 'way out here, would she, Bill? Even you and me find it lonely. I guess a woman would die."

"Nope." One of the brown puppies rolled nonchalantly over into the pan of milk, and Bill fished him out carefully and rolled him on the ground in tender, motherly fashion, to dry him off. "Women don't mind being lonesome if they've got the man they love best and a few chickens to look out for and some dogs and cats and heifers and plants and kids. They like to be the whole show and boss a place like this. They'd boss us something fierce if one ever did get a foothold here, Chance."

"Wouldn't it do us good?" protested Chance. "You and me, Bill, we're getting too set in our ways. We're getting like a couple of half-ferried polliwogs down under the creek bed. We're getting so plumb set that we don't care what we turn into in the next thousand years, if they'll only let us alone. I'm going to ride south tomorrow, and I'm going to stop off at old man Nawn's place and say 'howdy.'"

It was a challenge to further argument, but Bill took it not up. He knew the spring was against him, as well as the memory of Madeline's tanned, dimpled face, with its quick smile and big, soft, dark eyes. So the next morning at daybreak Chance rode south, with his head held high to greet the dawn-light over his shoulder, and his hat brim turned low with a jaunty twist, as befitting a wailing cavalier.

Every spring, for six years back, he had taken the same route. It had constituted his spring run after the long, slow, snowbound winter back up in the foothills where the prairie breaks against their base like long, rolling waves.

Through the winter he and his partner would live quietly in the little rough shack that hugged the shelter of the shelving butte behind it. When

a big storm was in the air, they would ride out with the dogs and drive the herds down into the gullies. It was the only exciting thing that ever happened from November to April.

But when it was over the winter wait, then the sap of spring ran fast in Chance's veins, and he took the southern trail for relaxation.

He was whistling softly as he rode this time. It was getting on toward sunset before he checked Siwash and rested to take his bearings. They were on the crest of a creek bed. It was one of those meandering, dried-up affairs, with tangled masses of mud here and there, and a few cottonwoods and caked grasses down in the bottoms and a few scrawny young cottonwoods here and there along the slopes. The bleached, weather-beaten skull of a steer lay half buried in the sun-baked earth midway down the slope; but it was not a mere skull that caused Siwash to drop his long neck and whinny restlessly.

"Not meaning to argue with you, Si," said Chance, "but I don't see a blame thing suspicious on this horizon." The horse nosed at the long, dry grass tops, and suddenly Chance looked down, not at the creek bed, but at the deep, tangled mass of weeds where the land dipped to the slope, and he swung off the pony's back with a sharp exclamation. It was the body of a man.

"Si, you're the most sagacious and perspicacious animal on four legs in the state of South Dakota."

He turned the body over and looked at the face. The eyes opened widely and stared back at him, dully at first, then with slow-gathering consciousness in their listless, flamed depths.

"Hallo, Chance," whispered the parched, blackened lips. "Hallo, Lucky Chance. Give me a drink."

Chance drew a bottle from his hip pocket and put it to the dry lips. The man drank thirstily. Chance laid him back on the dusty, yellow grass, and sat on his heels, his square chin tilted inquiringly forward.

"Where's Leroux?" he asked. "Heard you and he had swung into partnership since he got thrown out of the reservation. Heard he and you were making quite a bit of money out of land speculation. Indian mortgages ain't much value when Uncle Sammy uses pen and ink, are they, Pete?"

The half-breed closed his eyes obstinately, his lips shut in a curious half moon of bitterness. Chance watched him closely. Pete Frozen Nose he was called—outcast from his own people, and from the whites also, because of crooked deals carried on in Indian mortgages. Not by his own wit, however. Chance knew he had been merely the outward symbol of the business intricacies of Leroux, one-time

Indian agent, and now a stroller from station to station among the hill camps and prairie ranches, getting money whenever it grew easy.

For over three years the two had carried on their trade in their own way. By virtue of his standing with the reservation Indians, the name of Leroux had been enough to lend confidence to any deal the half-breed proposed, until miles of the best land lay under paper bearing the Leroux stamp.

And from the Far East of reprobated officialdom had swung the thunderbolt. After years of bickering and dallying, the reservation was to be moved Northward to good, arable, guaranteed land, homesteaders had crowded in down at Dallas, and, as a side issue, totally unimportant, two right-fingered gentlemen partners had found themselves and their projects squelched.

"It's too bad, Pete, it sure is," said Chance, thoughtfully. "Who gave you this one?"

Hated showed in Pete's eyes.

"Leroux," he muttered. "He not want me to tell Madeline Nawn what he's doing. He demanded 'Chance.' The half-breed shivered, and his head dropped lower on his chest. The sun was half an hour above the line of the earth and sky. Before that time the soul of Pete Frozen Nose would have slipped out past the sky limits. Chance pulled him up on his arm and gave him a drink. He drank it, and he wanted the soul to slip out before he had all the news.

"Did he try to kill you, Pete?" he asked, bracing the half-breed's head against his own shoulder and knee.

Siwash whinnied anxiously, lifting his nose to the wind.

"He shoot about the girl and the cent," began the half-breed slowly. "She draw big land last Fall—big Indian land down at Dallas."

"I know," interrupted Chance, impatiently. "At the land drawing. Go on, quick."

"Me an' Leroux had Indian mortgage on that land. Last week Leroux find one there, some silver, some gold. Then he go down and get old man Nawn, and they play cards, and Leroux get back the land."

"But it's the girl's land," broke in Chance.

"Sure." Pete's lips fomed the words stiffly. "Gili rode down with old man Nawn to buy stuff. Come in where Leroux's making the old man give up, and stare up big row. Then they chase Leroux and me out of town, and Leroux says wait for me out here."

"Wait out here?" Chance lifted up his head and stared dully around at the wide expanse of "out here," miles upon miles of black, silent land, with no living soul as far as the eye could see.

cried, shaking the half-breed almost savagely to force him to speak plainly. Behind it, at first sight, reposed a peaceful and unsuspecting camp. A couple of ponies were picketed in the shelter of the slope. A buckboard, with boxes of provisions protruding from its buffalo robes, stood by. Under it reposed old man Nawn, sound asleep. But, standing, facing each other, were Jim Leroux and Madeline.

The sound of their voices came clearly on the silence of the night. "It don't make no difference what you say," Madeline was saying, her head back like a fighting wildcat. "I know all about you, Jim Leroux. You can't talk yer voice round me the way you do with daddy. The land belongs to me. I drew it. Daddy never even knew I was putting in a bid for it. It was my idea and mother's. You can't have it. We've lived ever since I can remember in that old shack, and first it wasn't even a shack. It was just a dugout. And daddy ain't got a mite of ambition. He'd just as soon we all died there. But we ain't a-going to. We're going to have that land of mine—do you hear me—and we're going to have a real house on it, a cot-tage-house like mother used to live in back East. And we're going to be real town folks. I know all about you, Jim Leroux. You still be her higher."

Chance listened, the muscles of his throat tightening, his hands clenched on Siwash's bridle as he waited.

"You've followed daddy and me out here all the way from town. I ain't afraid of you, do you hear? You don't do a thing to us."

He was in no hurry. The turn things had taken amused him. He sat down on the buckboard's shaft and looked at the girl. It seemed almost a pity to do what he meant to, and leave the two of them at the mercy of the fire that was certain to come. Perhaps there'd be a chance of saving out a girl if she'd behave herself, if she wouldn't tell on him. If she'd get tamed down and give up the land without a holter.

He took out his revolver carefully, and before she was aware of his intent he had deliberately shot the two ponies dead.

At Madeline's scream old man Nawn tumbled heavily out from under the buckboard; but, before Leroux could shoot again, there came a noise that checked his move, the steady, hard thud of horse's hoofs, and even louder still, a low, queer roar and the soft, quick click that comes before a prairie fire.

"It's got us!" yelled old Nawn, as he raised both hands helplessly skyward. Leroux rose. His own horse stood safe, and he hesitated, looking at Madeline. And even as he lingered, there whizzed out over his head the circling line of Chance Haines' lariat, thrown neatly and with precision, until it threw him flat on the hearth, roped as surely and safely as any steer.

It wasn't that he meant for him to die outright. Chance was fond of explaining. "But there wasn't no time for fine calculations. Here was a prairie fire and dead horses. Here was a prairie fire

long, deep rolls; and Siwash made straight for the nearest dip of land. Behind it, at first sight, reposed a peaceful and unsuspecting camp. A couple of ponies were picketed in the shelter of the slope. A buckboard, with boxes of provisions protruding from its buffalo robes, stood by. Under it reposed old man Nawn, sound asleep. But, standing, facing each other, were Jim Leroux and Madeline.

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a-sweeping down on us like kingdom come, at short range. Here was old Pa Nawn, and over there was a noise that checked his move, the steady, hard thud of horse's hoofs, and even louder still, a low, queer roar and the soft, quick click that comes before a prairie fire.

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Madeline, with a shudder, and she leaned her head back on Chance's shoulder. "Let's have morning glories all over the porch, Chance. And double hollyhocks, pink ones with deep-red hearts, Chance."

"Sure," laughed Chance, kissing her upturned lips. "You can hang Bill and me up for ornaments, if you want to, honey girl. 'Cause why? 'Cause it's going to be home. And you won't be lonesome, will you, with just old Bill and me and the dogs?" He gazed at her tenderly.

"Lonesome?" she repeated, her big eyes wide and reproachful. "Lonesome, Chance, where you are?"

Bill looked up, though not fully at the blue sky and winked with an understanding heart. The other two were silent.

"God help him, anyway," whispered