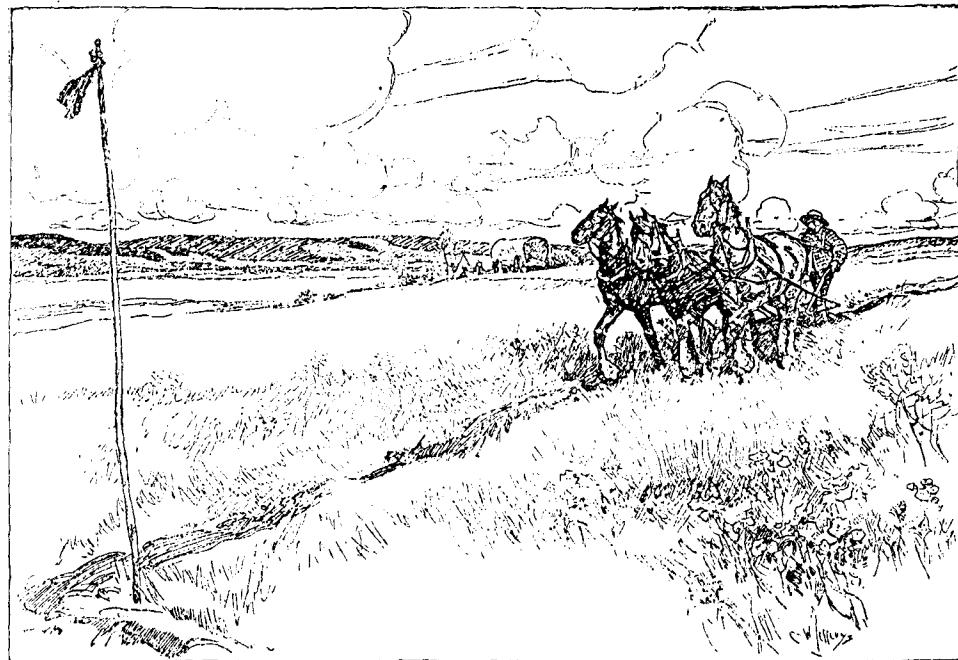


*July 1913
MacLean's Magazine*



"The First Furrow—Saskatchewan." C. W. Jefferys.

Jefferys—Painter of the Prairies

None of the Canadian Art studies that have appeared from time to time in MacLean's Magazine, will carry a more general appeal in every province than does the story of Mr. Jefferys, whose work not only has established for him an enviable Canadian reputation, but has added to the artistic wealth of the Dominion. Earnestness and faith always give point to the productions of man, whether those productions are in speech, music or paint. In this case Mr. Jefferys' love of Canadian scenery and his faith in and hope for his country are almost a passion with him.—

—Editor's Note.

By J. Edgcumbe Staley

"BLACK and white work is as good as any other preparation for the career of a painter. It gives one the power of easily committing to any ready medium what one sees daily all but one. Almost unconsciously the youth, who takes up his pencil and his pen diligently, grows accustomed to the rendition of feature, form, and fact in the progressive ratio of incidents and inspiration. To be sure this method throws one more or less under the influence of the Press, to the exclusion of a strictly academic system:

and one is apt to get into mannerisms, which may be fatal to the free treatment of color. Colorwash, however, is distinctly a palliative in this declension, and black and white artists are able to produce attractive work in this direction, which leads into the orthodox water-color. I consider that in no other medium can the manifold expressions of human life be so vividly and expeditiously reproduced."

These words express something of the opinion, which Mr. C. W. Jefferys,

A. R. C. A., holds with respect to the personal outfit for the career of the painter.

The cathedral city of Rochester, in the "Garden of England," Kent, was the birthplace, in 1869, of Charles William Jefferys. His parents — Charles Thomas Jefferys and Ellen Kennard — were in comfortable circumstances. Mr. Jefferys was an architect and builder, and for many years acted as Clerk of the Works to the late prominent architect, Sir Gilbert Scott. There was not only artistic instinct in the family, but martial spirit, too; one of the hero Wolfe's subalterns was a Thomas Jefferys, who was a painter to boot. Till the age of nine the boy Charles William schooled and played with other boys of his own age, in the historic neighborhood of *Gad's Hill*—Charles Dickens then is quite naturally the inspirer of much of the early work of our painter.

In 1878 the Jefferys family came to America, and after a brief sojourn in the United States lived, for a time, at Hamilton; but in 1881 they settled in Toronto. Young Jefferys' general education was thus attained mainly in Canada, and he first gave serious attention to artistic study after his arrival in the "Queen City." There was then certainly very little to encourage a budding artist in Ontario, but young Jefferys persevered, and he joined the Art Students' League—an association for mutual encouragement and help. Mr. Reid, R. C. A.—now Principal of the Ontario College of Art—most generously opened his studio, on King Street, for young men who desired to improve themselves in draughtsmanship. The Life classes were held in the evening, where Mr. Reid gave his services quite gratuitously. When he went to Europe, to work and gather laurels in Paris studios, Mr. C. M. Manly, A. R. C. A., permitted the members of the League to use his painting room for study and friendly intercourse. Many of the younger painters of Ontario have much for which to thank these two members of the "Old Guard." Meanwhile, Jefferys had been apprenticed to a lithographic firm, where his work consisted

of sketches for reproduction in printer's ink, drawings for engravers' cuts, and studies in black and white with color wash for advertisements and posters.

GOLDEN AGE OF NEWSPAPER ART.

Soon after his twenty-third birthday Jefferys found himself in New York, upon the staff of the "New York Herald." This was the golden age of newspaper illustration, when skilful draughtsmanship with excellent materials led to admirable results. Each man had to discover and develop the technique of his special art. The work was hard, but keen rivalry smoothed the way to success. Still in the service of the "Herald," Jefferys was despatched hither and thither to sketch matter for illustration. Spectacular episodes were entirely in his way, and he made his mark by the spontaneity of his work during the Democratic conventions of Mr. Bryan's first Presidential election. Then Chicago claimed him to picture the uproar and the humor of the great Pullman strike. "Here," our artist says, "as well as in my pen and pencil saunters in the slums of New York, I became the target for playful crowds (?). The impressions I drew of human character were, as often as not, hammered in with the pleasant application of a rough hand or a rough brick!"

During eight years' work in the United States, where he exhibited studies and paintings in both water colors and oils at many picture shows, something kept on pulling at Jefferys' heart, and there came a loud cry from Canada,—the "Land of the Free and True"—where everything was possible for the man of good will and energy, which could not be gainsaid. The new century, therefore, saw Jefferys once more down-town in Toronto—his experienced hand fully occupied with work for the Ontario press. He had all along kept up his connection with the land he loved by displaying his work at principal art exhibitions of the Dominion.

The year of Jefferys' return to Canada was red-lettered by the State visit

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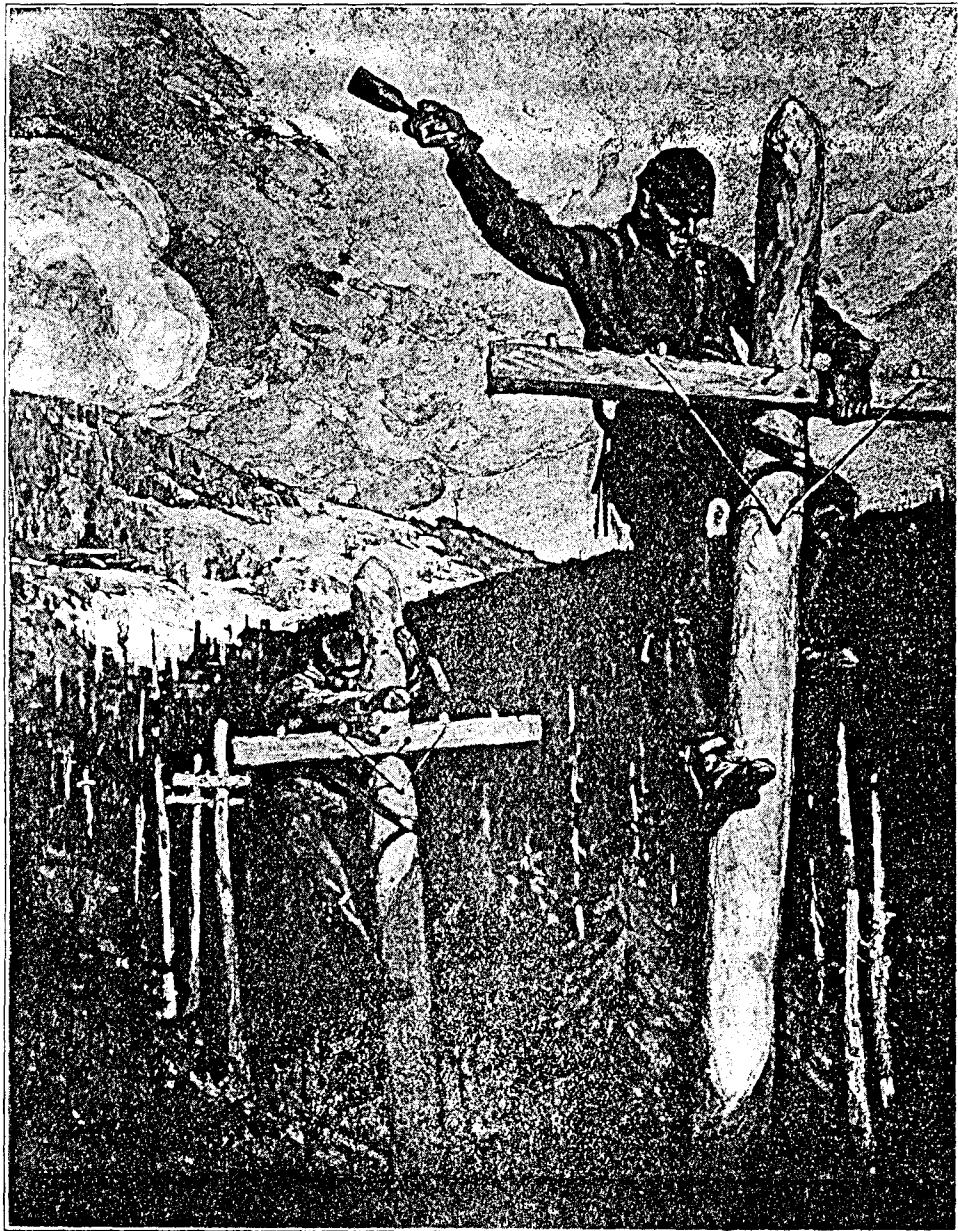
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"Linemen in New Ontario."—C. W. Jefferys.

Purchased by the Ontario Government

This picture was shown at the Royal Canadian Academy's special exhibition held at the Festival of Empire, in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, in 1911.

of the present King and Queen—then Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. Jefferys was ordered off to Quebec to represent the "Toronto Globe," and he joined the little army of newspaper correspondents, who followed in

the Royal progress. "My first sight," he relates, "of the country, which was to exert such an important influence in my career, was, when after crossing the more cultivated wheat-belt of Manitoba, the wonders of the Prairies flashed upon

my eyes in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Some men of the party compared the lay of the land to that of the Transvaal. Air and sky and soil and vegetation were all so very similar, they said. At Calgary they cried, "Why, that's Pretoria!" The swelling prairie was just like the rolling veldt.

"Words fail me," Mr. Jefferys goes on to say, "to describe my impressions of that amazing land. Limitless horizons extend over endless sweeps of virgin soil. The roll and run are broken here and there by sunken narrow water courses — 'Coulees' — running dry in summer. Along them grow the only tree-life—the buffalo willow—scrubily enough, but wonderfully sheeny; the scintillating leaves of grey green and silver, ever mingling in color with the varying light—as do the olive trees in more southern climes. Like some gorgeous oriental carpet woven in a Gargantuan loom, spread miles and miles of vivid tufting grasses and brilliantly hued flowers — the brambles are rose-ramblers, laden with the sweetest bloom. This kaleidoscope of colors stretches out as far as eye can see, and then the light tints of rose-pink and sky-blue mingle with the deeper tones of purple-red and brown-gold in a fawn-grey harmony of land and sky. The cloudless deep cerulean sky is shot-silked with prismatic reflections of Nature's galaxy of color. It would tax a Whistler to voice and paint in silver "Nocturnes" and golden "Harmonies" the pageant-like magnificence of it all—pigments fail the ordinary colorist."

THE MYSTIC QU'APPELLE.

Qu'Appelle Valley, perhaps, is Jefferys' chief beauty-spot. He has painted "bits" of it many times. And has rendered in his "Approaching Storm, Qu'Appelle Valley"—shown at the National Canadian Exhibition in 1912—something of the wonderment of Nature's destructive mood. A blizzard on the prairies is an extraordinary spectacle: the brilliant hues of soil and flora refuse to be discharged and the driven snow piled up in wreaths is turned to gold—a magic transformation!

"An expedition on the Prairies," continues Mr. Jefferys, "is an experience



C. W. Jefferys, A.R.C.A. Pres. O.S.A.

forever to be remembered. Everything must be taken with one for day and night, and for food and drink. One drives off from some modest inn-shack or friendly homestead, in a country wagon, bearing all one's wordly goods. Summer trekking is the time of one's life, wherein to the full health and happiness are combined, and there is no aftermath of disappointment. But the painter-trekker must fill his paint-box with many tubes of the brightest colors: pinks, blues, grass-greens and yellows soon run out, whilst purples and browns and all the deeper tones are rarely touched—this, of course, applies to the Fairy Prairie's summer dress. Painting in the open has its drawbacks even in this terrestrial paradise. Noontide heat and glare—the hot shimmer of the sky, tinted like the opal hues of snow flurries and sea-foam—are almost unbearable; but once the sun sinks beneath the dome of earth, the blood is instantly chilled, and the last strokes of the brush are cramped by hands benumbed. Pinks and blues and greens

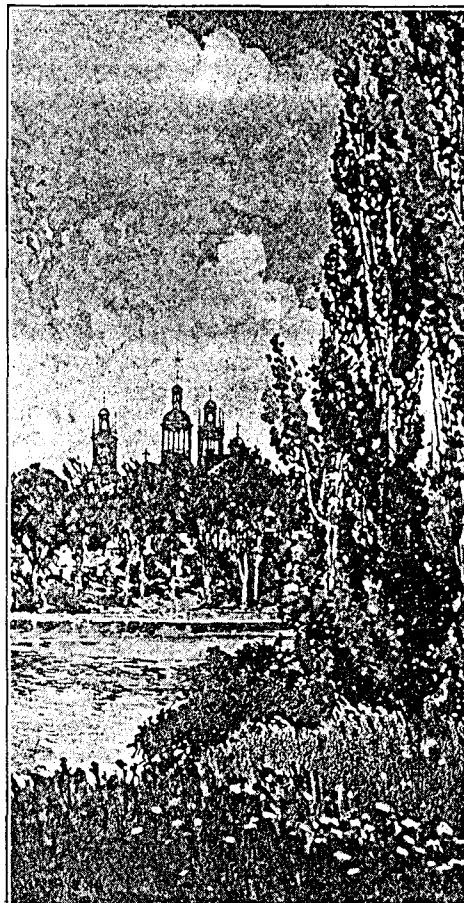
are then transfigured, and everything is gold and black—yes, black—for the afterglow has no crimson. This sable strain is most manifest in Manitoba where the soil is black—black with the decay of vegetable life, the earliest concomitant of coal."

"In my prairie wanderings," chats on the prairie-painter, "I am unaccompanied save by my wife, who shares my enthusiasm and hardships. We meet with adventures of many kinds and witness many stirring scenes. I remember very well a very interesting episode out in Saskatchewan. Upon a ridge, where East met West, was an Indian encampment, full of "braves." Some miles or so away was the outspan of Bulgarian Gipsys—each settlement a rare subject for the artist's brush. Horses were the staple article of merchandise, and in a hollow of the land we had a mimic 'Derby.' Each animal was sent to show his pace—ridden by Indian and Bulgarian in turn. Much animated finger-play was a prelude to the exchange of dollar-bills, and all departed peacefully to smoke the pipe of peace and drink the fire-water of the gods. A modern note was struck, however, in this racial harmony, and it came as a burlesque interlude. Peacefully surveying this characteristic scene, and making many little studies, my ear was assailed by the hoot of an automobile, and presto, a cry reached me — 'Hello, Jefferys! What are you doing here?' It was an enterprising Toronto comrade of the press out seeking copy!"

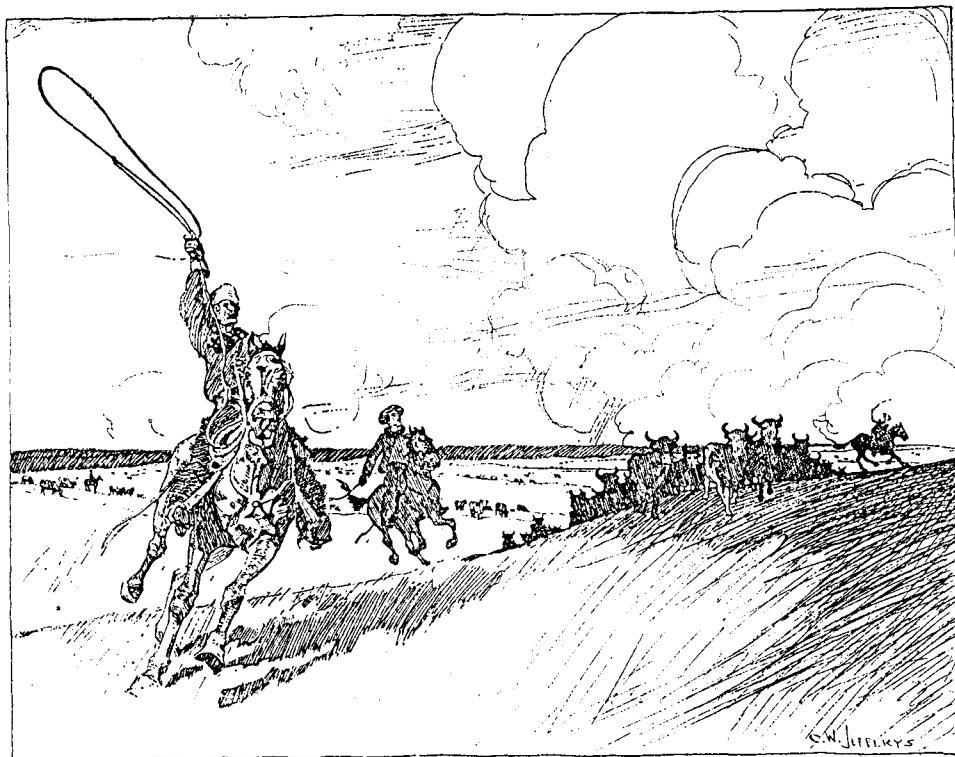
No one can be on the prairie domains many days before he is interviewed by one of the *North-West Police*—the finest body of mounted men in the world. What one lone member of that Force can do, cannot be presaged; he has complete confidence in himself for any emergency. He, youth though he may be of no more than four and twenty years, goes single-handed into camps of outlaws and takes thereout the man that is wanted. This is not the only bold thing the North-West Mounted Police can do. "My host," Mr. Jefferys relates, "at one of the prairie shanty-inns, told me that the wife of a Dutch settler, near at hand had run away from home. Two

days afterwards a North-West Policeman rode up, the matter was explained, and off he trotted there and then, and, next day, came back with the errant woman! I have seen a poor fellow who had succumbed to the nervous madness of the Prairie solitude, most tenderly cared for in a wagon, lying in a North-West Policeman's arms, and being conveyed to the nearest asylum." Surely the North-West Police Force is a revival of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table!

Mr. Jefferys' first Prairie landscape came out like a strip of silk, shot with yellow, pink, and blue—a bar of gold linking soil and sky. It was called "Autumn in the Prairies," and it was



"Belfries of St. Denis, Quebec." Water-color—C. W. Jefferys.



"The Round-up—Alberta."—C. W. Jefferys.

purchased by the Ontario Government. His "Western Sunlight" is at Ottawa. At the late Canadian National Exhibition were "The Valley"—rich in corn, with a mounted farmer surveying the riches of his land; and "Flight of Wild Ducks on the Prairie." A list of his "bits" of the Prairies would fill many columns; his work is widely known, and its quality generally admired—in fact, no other painter comes near him in exact portrayal of the virgin soil of Canada.

Still in chatty mood, he goes on, "Another direction to which I have turned my attention is the pictorial delineation of the history of Canada—a field full of wonderful possibilities for the painter, and as yet untouched. I have made considerable research for data, upon which to reconstruct representations of the past. Although very much

has disappeared beyond hope of recovery, diligent search will, I am sure, reveal valuable material. I have made a number of illustrative sketches in black and white and also in color, picturing phases of the earlier periods of our country, and I hope to find opportunities for the rendition of other historical matter."

Mr. Jefferys is Instructor of Freehand Drawing and Water-color Painting in the Architectural Department of the University of Toronto. Since 1908, Vice-President of the Ontario Society of Artists he has, this year, been unanimously chosen to fill the Presidential chair. He has, moreover, lately been elected Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy. These honors fitly come where they may be fitly worn—for plodding is akin to genius, and Mr. Jefferys bears goodly tokens of both.