



The Author

A LATE SUMMER

The Memoirs of

E. R. CARTWRIGHT C.B.E.



FOREWORD BY

THE RIGHT HON. LORD GODBER

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Salt Spring Island

At any time after leaving Camborne I could have taken a job on the Rand, but only as an Assistant Assayer or Surveyor. That was not my idea of life or, for that matter, of mining engineering, so I decided to go to British Columbia and see what was developing there in the mining line.

My brother Bill, a year and a half older, was already in British Columbia riding for Tom Ellis, the Cattle King of the Okanagan Valley. He, Hans Richter and others were some of the last of the true Cowboys of British Columbia. From Penticton they rode over tens of thousands of acres over which Ellis cattle ranged. But the end was in sight, settlers were pouring into the Valley pre-empting land and planting fruit trees, and in a very few years Bill was down on the Coast, complete with cowboy saddle and lariat, taking up timber cruising and surveying on foot.

I sailed from Liverpool in April 1903 in the 8,000 ton steamship *Dominion* and arrived at Montreal seventeen days later. Our ship was caught in field ice in the Gulf of St Lawrence and was not powerful enough to break through it. After some days the SS *Ionian* of the Allan Line came along and, with more power, she was able to move ahead. We managed to get into her wake and followed her.

From Montreal I travelled by CPR to Vancouver and straight over to Victoria on a coastal ferry boat; the total fare from Liverpool to Victoria was, I well remember, £28. This did not of course include food on the train. For those five days I did very well on one meal a day in the dining car. Snacks of crackers washed down with water from the wash room kept me contented the rest of the time. Smoking was not allowed in the Pullman cars, but in each wash room there were four or five seats in front of the basins for those who wished to smoke. An amazing number of tall stories were told by occupants of those seats.

A job was offered to me when crossing Alberta, at what seemed a fabulous salary, on a survey party which was going to work for the summer near Calgary. I refused, I had made up my mind to go 'farthest West'.

On arrival at Victoria where I joined forces with my brother who had come down from the Upper Country to meet me, my total capital was \$32. I was introduced to the Balmoral Hotel, a comfortable three-storeyed building on the north side of Douglas Street. The Balmoral was an institution, owned by Mrs White, who lived much of the time at her ranch on the Saanich Peninsula. She was the kindest woman in the world and the most human. It was a home for the young, many lived there for months at a time. Land surveyors who were up North all summer with their survey parties wintered there.

The rates must have been absurdly low, but it was roomy, beautifully clean and the food adequate. It had no licence, which probably was its greatest asset, and it was managed by Bert Anderson, the truest and most long-suffering friend to all of us. Tall, solemn, perfectly dressed, with a high white collar, he met and received guests, allocated rooms like any London hotel manager. Underneath he was one of us.

In about 1908 I took ten days' holiday with one Bodkin who owned a 30-foot yawl. Bert Anderson came with us. We assembled one evening at the Cowichan Bay Hotel, Bert coming up from Victoria by train. We were due to start very early the next morning to catch a tide and westerly wind that would carry us out of Cowichan Bay and round the southern end of Salt Spring Island before the south-easterly daily trade winds started. Bodkin and I were up betimes and looked into Bert's room and there was no sign of him, but a large wardrobe was flat on its face on the floor with its doors akimbo. We heaved it up and found Bert none the worse, having enjoyed a peaceful night. The accident was due entirely to his town-bred habit of hanging his jacket up at night. The cruise, an account of which could easily fill a book of its own, was a huge success and, ten days later, we spent another night at Cowichan Bay before despatching Bert off to a further year of managerial duties.

In Victoria, on my brother's advice, I bought two 'fourpoint' Hudson Bay blankets, navy blue in colour. One of the outstandingly successful purchases of a lifetime. They were my closest friends for the next eleven years; I left them on the borders of South East Alaska when I came home to the 1914 War and I think it is more than likely that some fortunate person is still enjoying them. Armed with these I went to Salt Spring Island and took a job on a farm, just to get acclimatized.

I went to work on the Crofton 'ranch'—all farms were ranches in those days—it lay at the head of Ganges Harbour in a most perfect

setting. Today it is, I believe, the 'Harbour House' Hotel. Its 160 acres had been pre-empted some twenty years before by Jack Scovell, an Irishman. He was well past middle age when I first met him, but even then he had one of the soundest practical brains and an extremely forceful personality. He gave and demanded of his friends absolute trust and loyalty.

Jack was a bachelor, and with him lived a strange character, Hugo Robertshaw. Hugo had come to the Island with Ross Mahon, a wealthy Irishman, who owned the land at the head of an inlet running parallel to Ganges, Long Harbour. Ross Mahon had by way of transport a small steam vessel named *The Mist* and he had brought Hugo out from Ireland to run her. Ross was drowned when bathing at Long Harbour and Jack Scovell, who understood Hugo, gave him a home. Hugo was a man of great strength and a small squeaky voice, a eunuch we always supposed, a good gardener, splendid cook and a very willing hair-dresser who knew how to sharpen his own scissors. His devotion to and dependence on Jack was almost pathetic. Fortunately perhaps he died of pneumonia just at the time when Jack himself was going into hospital for his last illness.

Life on the Crofton Ranch was full of hard work, but I was fit and strong and loved every minute of it. Had there been a little more in it than my keep and \$5 a month I might have stayed there for years. Fred Crofton had taken over from Jack Scovell shortly before I got there and he had married Nona Wilson, the ninth child of Padre Wilson, who was in charge of the little church in the centre of the Island.

At that time the population of Ganges was largely composed of the Scotts, there were Will, Geof, Frank and Harold, all four the finest of swimmers. Harold was drowned tragically trying to save a non-swimmer after their canoe had been swamped in a heavy sea. Their bodies were found near Craig's Point; Harold still had a firm hold of his pal and had evidently reached the rocks but had been unable to make a landing.

However, the Croftons were not going to let the Scotts or anyone else have things all their own way and they proceeded with the utmost speed and regularity to populate the Island. I do not know what their eventual score was but I believe it reached nine. The eldest was born whilst I was there, he nearly died when a month old. One night when at his worst, Purvis, of whom more later, and I made a somewhat strenuous trip in a small boat to Sidney on the Saanich Peninsula to get a child specialist from Victoria. When eventually she reached Ganges she thought she was too late, but in the end she succeeded in saving his life and he never looked back. If he or any of his brothers or sisters ever

read these lines I know they will forgive me for writing so lightly of their parents.

In those days the Island was a sporting paradise. Pheasants had been introduced and were increasing at a great rate. They were to be found in practically every clearing on the Island. 'Cocks only' was the law but many a hen found its way into the kitchens. Willow grouse were on the lowlands and round the edges of the clearings, crab apple swamps being their speciality. Blue grouse, 'Hooters', so called because of their mating call in spring, were deep in the bush and up the mountains, a grand bird; in September we got good bags of them when they were feeding on salal berries; by October they had retreated to the high ground; from then on they lived in the Douglas fir trees, feeding on the pine needles.

Black tail deer were very plentiful, both on the mountains and in the low grounds. At night they came into the cleared land and at times were a nuisance. The normal way by which ranchers dealt with them was by 'pit lamping'. A bicycle lamp tied on the hat, a shot gun and buckshot. The great drawback to this was that you could only see a pair of gleaming balls of fire and they might belong to a horse, cow or sheep, yours or your neighbour's, which had got into the wrong field. Largely for this reason and from a dislike of shooting deer with a shot gun, I tried once only. That was in Jack Scovell's vegetable garden when I killed a buck that was playing havoc with his lettuce and carrots. I was not more than a dozen paces from his verandah steps when I shot it, but even then I felt a certain apprehension as I went forward to see what I had shot. Neither the eyes of humans nor of pigs shine to a light, which perhaps is fortunate.

Many experts claimed that they could tell the difference between the eyes of a deer and other animals. I well remember one, he was an American, his name was Conway and he had a ranch up near the Divide, adjoining Cushion Lake. He was very short but he came from Texas, he wore an enormous Stetson hat and his voice was out of all proportion to his stature. He was out to 'show the world'. On boat days we congregated at Ganges Wharf to meet the boat, supposedly to get the mail, but actually on the chance of getting the purser of SS *Iroquois* to relent, to open the bar and let us have a drink. The said purser, when he was feeling his best, might even be persuaded to part with a bottle of whisky. On this particular day Conway was there; the talk was about an unfortunate young fellow who had shot a cow by mistake for a deer a few nights before. Conway held forth good and proper on how 'any goldarned fool could tell the difference, etc., etc.' That evening he went out on his own ranch to kill a deer and shot his own team of horses, a perfect right and left.

My trouble at first was that I had not got a rifle and could not afford to buy one. One of Nona Crofton's brothers, Norman Wilson, solved the problem; he had a Savage ·303 which he never used and he lent it to me. It was a beautiful weapon and I used it for three years. It had one weakness: under certain conditions, extreme cold, wet or dirt the next cartridge in the magazine might fail to come up. It let me down in this way twice but each time with nothing more serious than deer.

I had been up 'The Mountain' many times after grouse and had some insight into 'still' hunting for deer from 'Doc' Baker, who was a past-master at it as well as being a magnificent shot. The day came when I was able to get away directly after the morning milking with the rifle. I went straight to the top of the mountain, to the open spaces above the timber and amongst the rocks. It had been a cold rough night with a peppering of snow, but the sun had come out and deer might well be drying out in the open. As I was preparing to creep over a rocky ridge which would open up a likely little plateau, I came on fresh human tracks. All the joy went out of life which a moment before had seemed so wonderful; what earthly chance was there of finding a deer after the ground had been disturbed? I walked carelessly to the top of the rocky ridge and looked over, a good buck trotted smartly away: he had evidently been standing quite near. I got in one shot at about sixty yards and saw him lurch, before disappearing behind some rocks. I ran forward and found blood in plenty.

Then I made a fatal mistake, one that I have made a good many times since; instead of sitting down and smoking for ten minutes, as I had been advised to do, I followed, and, worse still, let a six-month-old puppy that I was breaking get away on the blood trail. In a few minutes I saw my deer on a ridge against the skyline about a hundred yards away. I can remember even now how I and the rifle shook, but I managed to pull the trigger, only to flip some hair off the deer's rump. It plunged into a small ravine to the left; I ran across, entered the ravine lower down and came on it standing still a few yards away in thick undergrowth. A shot in the neck and I had killed my first deer.

Pleasant and interesting though the life was, there were no prospects and the chance of being able to buy a rifle was as distant as ever. Crofton doubled my wages when he saw me getting restless but even on the princely wage of \$10 a month one couldn't see much future.

I have already mentioned Purvis, he was an American and partner with Malcolm in the store at Ganges Harbour, 'Malcolm and Purvis'. The store is still there, considerably enlarged; I saw a photograph of it recently in a B.C. paper, now called 'Mouat Brothers'. Purvis, then about 40, was a quick-moving, active-brained man with a real flair

for business. His partner was a delightful, easy-going countryman who was quite content to let the world go by. Purvis had go-ahead ideas for selling the produce from the Island in the colliery town of Lady-smith on Vancouver Island, which was probably thirty or forty miles from Ganges by water.

He bought a 30 ft. launch, *Nomad* she was christened, with a single cylinder Union gasoline engine. The Union was a San Francisco firm and they turned out a very sound job. This was a four-cycle engine with a bore of about seven inches and stroke of twelve inches fired by the 'make and break' principle. Contact between the insulated plug in the cylinder head and the piston was by means of a bit of clock spring pinned to a small rib cast on the head of the piston. This spring burned away slowly but was easily renewed. The electric current to the plug was interrupted during the scavenging stroke by an ingenious device operated by a worm on the main shaft. Electricity was our problem and our weakness; it was before the days of the magneto and we had to rely on Edison wet cells. The *Nomad* had a heavy canvas roof permanently fixed over her full length and loose canvas curtains that rolled up but could be lashed down when required. Later she had a solid frame with heavy glass windows built in forward which enabled her to face much heavier seas. She could carry about two tons; with that she was low in the water and could not make more than five knots, but she was strongly built and carried many hundred tons of freight, often through heavy seas, successfully.

Purvis had a ranch a mile and a half from Ganges Harbour, run in conjunction with the store; the house on it was empty, as he lived up at the Settlement with a wife and large number of small children, a number that increased steadily as the years went by. I joined Malcolm and Purvis at \$50 a month and went to live in the empty house. The back door had blown open at some time and sheep had taken to resting in the main room. However, it was dry and easily cleaned out. There was a cook stove already in place, so a kettle, frying pan, and a cup and saucer with a few plates made home complete. There was also a large heater in the main room which took four foot cord wood and was invaluable. Not so long after, my brother came down for good from the Upper Country and joined me. He was a great cook and we soon had a comfortable home.

Purvis started immediately to develop a thriving export business; buying everything that the ranchers of the Island could produce, except milk and cream, which went to the local Government Creamery. This was good for the ranchers who up till then had been in the habit of sending their fruit, pigs, sheep, etc., to Victoria via SS *Iroquois* and the

rail from Sidney, and having to take any prices they were given. Now they were able to bargain, or imagine they were bargaining. They did get better prices and Purvis got his bills at the store paid.

Sheep, calves and pigs were bought and an occasional cow; they were killed, dressed and taken to Ladysmith along with all the eggs and fruit that could be collected. An Indian half breed, Jack Sheppard, did the butchering when 'he was around'; when he wasn't we all did it, and I quickly became an efficient butcher.

Along with Malcolm and Purvis at the store there worked one Gilbert Mouat, quite young but of outstanding ability. He saw all the possibilities and threw himself heart and soul into it. Many days and nights he and I spent together on the *Nomad* working our way up to Ladysmith and back—generally nights, as the preparation and loading of the cargo was done by day, and Purvis was much too keen a business man to let the boat lie idle all night. In no time I came to see that Gilbert, although much younger, was a born salesman and had the better brain of the two. It was not many years before he and his younger brother took over the business, store and all. The last time I saw him was in 1925 when I stayed with the Will Scotts for a few days. Polio had dealt him a cruel blow and he was in a wheelchair, but the charm, the brain and the courage were still there, and it was plain to see that he and his family owned and ran a very real business.

To the day of his death Gilbert had very prominent ears. Probably I alone knew what helped to make them so prominent. It was in this wise, the quantity of freight was increasing, especially in the summer when fruit was plentiful. Often there was more than the *Nomad* could take, so we tried, when the weather was fine, towing a small scow. One day, fortunately in daylight, going up Stuart Channel with the scow alongside, a spring line needed tightening. When pulling hard, the rope slipped off the bollard and Gilbert went overboard right forward on the outside of the scow. He couldn't swim. I jumped across to the after end and leaning over could see him coming along clawing at the smooth side of the vessel. As he passed I caught him by the only thing I could reach, one of his ears, and a second later my other hand connected with the other ear. As he was swept aft, or rather as the two vessels forged ahead, his ears began to take the strain. How they stretched, so much that I became helpless with laughter, but they stood the strain and in time he got safely aboard. But as far as his ears were concerned the limit of elasticity had been exceeded and they never returned to normal.

The *Nomad's* engine only once let me down. I was coming back from Ladysmith alone. I had got off-loaded and started home just after

dark. It was a nasty night, visibility was very bad and the weather unsettled. The engine was flat out running splendidly. I was for'ard at the wheel craning out, hoping to hear the foghorn on the point of Chemainus Bay which would give me my position for turning from Stewart Channel round the end of Kuiper Island into Trincomalee channel. Without warning there was a tremendous crash and then complete silence. We found later that the bolts holding the wrist pin bearing in the piston head had sheared and that the engine had fired with a loose piston bending the connecting rod badly. We carried two long ash sweeps, lashed on the roof; I got them down and began to do what I could, always working to get over to starboard with the hope of getting into Chemainus Bay. That was the only landing place, or civilization for the matter of that, for many many miles. Some time after midnight the weather cleared and the wind freshened from the WNW and soon a nasty sea was running. The wind was driving the boat forward but also right on to Chemainus Point, the light on the Point being clearly visible. I have seldom worked harder.

After an hour or two when it was still anybody's guess whether she would clear the Point or not, I suddenly remembered that it was now the 31st March—my birthday; I redoubled my efforts in the hope that in the morning I might get a drink to celebrate it, in Chemainus. We were swept past the Point, too close to be comfortable, but on the in-shore side and just when day was breaking we bumped up against a boom of logs at the head of the Bay and alongside the great Chemainus saw mills. I walked the logs and was ashore long before the office was open, but I found a cookhouse and settled for hot coffee. Purvis arrived a day later with a small hired tug and was very upset because I had not got the *Nomad's* engine stripped down and a list of the parts required, already prepared. That will give you some idea of the man's drive.

Very soon the weight of business grew altogether too great for the *Nomad*. Purvis went over to Vancouver ostensibly to probe the possibilities of marketing farm produce over there. After a few days he returned and told me that he wanted me to come to Vancouver with him at once to bring back a larger boat. Over we went; he had bought a new hull still on the 'ways'. Sixty feet long, built for a steam tug but not engined. He had ordered a Fairbanks Morse engine from San Francisco, a two-cylinder job, she was supposed to run on distillate when warmed up, after starting on gasoline, and she had a magneto. Day and night he drove the shipyard to get the engine installed and an absurd little structure erected round the wheel. One afternoon it was finished and down the 'ways' she went. I got the engine going and we took a short run up Burrard Inlet and back to what is now the Yacht

Club anchorage under Stanley Park. I had tried the engine on distillate and she would not have it. That night we carried our suitcases aboard and at first grey of a May morning we started up, put out through the Narrows and pointed her bows for Mayne Island, the other side of the Gulf of Georgia.

We (the *Ganges* she had been christened) were without a pound of ballast and there was a very fresh nor'westerly wind which against the strong current coming out of the mouth of the Fraser River kicked up a wicked sea. It was full on our beam and Purvis had to point more and more up the Gulf. Fuel in the gasoline tank was getting low, and I decided to turn over to distillate. The engine promptly shut down. It is only those who have been in an empty hull in a very short steep sea who can appreciate the violence of the roll. Purvis managed to creep into the engine room and was promptly sick, very sick. All he said was 'For God's sake get the engine going' and out he crawled again. She started up again on gasoline and I kept her going, but never again do I want the job of re-filling a small feed tank at intervals from five-gallon cans of a high grade gasoline, when sometimes one's feet are in the air and sometimes one's head.

Then the clutch began to slip, but by late afternoon we were off 'The Gap', the narrow channel between Galiano and Waldes Islands twenty miles north of our proper course. The tide rip outside was a beauty; we had a light gangplank lashed on top of the hatch covers, it went overboard; ropes and everything left on deck were swept away and then we were through and in calm water. Two or three hours later, in the clear light of a perfect evening, we tied up at Ganges Wharf fourteen hours out from Vancouver practically without food, and an admiring crowd welcoming us home and saying they had been expecting us for several hours, Purvis and I spoke with one voice for once when we said: 'We got away a bit late but we had a swell trip.' When I got ashore I could barely walk and rolled like the proverbial drunken sailor.

Next morning at a little after 8.30 Purvis came aboard the *Ganges* and asked me if the clutch was fixed. I said it would be in an hour and that it would be OK. Loading started immediately and at about 5 p.m. the *Ganges* sailed for Vancouver with her first cargo; Gilbert Mouat at the wheel, myself in the engine room, and a boy, if my memory serves me right called Rogers, as deckhand. We had a perfect crossing, I had pumped out the distillate tank and filled it with gasoline, and we tied up to the first wharf we came to in Vancouver just as day was breaking. We were back at Ganges long before daylight the following day with a full load of corn and cattle feed in sacks. But the

pace was too hot, there were no facilities of any kind, for sleeping, eating or for navigating the ship properly. I handed in my resignation verbally to Purvis. Next day he overlooked that, and came to where I was living and shouted cheerily that the *Ganges* was loaded and ready to sail, and pretended to be surprised when I replied 'Sail on'. I relented in so far that I went aboard and started the engines. She sailed with Jack Sheppard as engineer—he had been running the *Nomad* for the past few weeks—and the last I saw of the *Ganges* she was drifting helplessly towards the head of the Harbour and Purvis was rowing out in a dinghy to bring her in. Such was the man—

By this time I was very fine drawn; long hours, irregular and often no meals, had left their mark. In addition, when I did get into my blankets, after a few hours' sleep I always awoke with a fierce gnawing pain in my middle. I see now that it was probably the threat of a duodenal ulcer brought on by the life I had been leading. I went to Doc Baker and he gave me a whisky bottle full of something and told me I must rest and feed up a bit.

His brother Cecil worked for the Ernest Croftons who had a house in the middle of the Island. They were in England for a few months and Cecil very kindly offered to put me up. It was an ideal arrangement. Cecil lived for shooting, there was no livestock to be looked after except our two dogs and two horses, so life consisted largely of shooting, cooking, washing up and sleeping—a treatment which soon restored me to fighting form.

Whilst living at the Purvis ranch I had acquired a saddle horse; it was almost a necessity for anyone, particularly so for me as I had taken on the job of looking after the telephone line, for which the store at *Ganges* was ultimately responsible. It was a single line, ground return system owned by the Provincial Government. It ran from Vancouver Island near Maple Bay under the Sansum Narrows to Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring Island through the bush to Fullford Harbour thence over the Divide to *Ganges* and on to the Settlement. Under good weather conditions it was possible to carry on quite a reasonable conversation with Victoria but in bad weather breakages in the line were frequent.

The mare I bought was brought over from the mainland by Purvis. She had been one of the leaders in a four-horse coach running from New Westminster up the Fraser River. He tried her in his buckboard and she broke it up. She was good-looking, sound, kindly and not too old, I bought her for \$25. She proved a treasure, comfortable, kindly and sensible to a degree; we became firm friends. When repairing the telephone wire I could use her as a step ladder, standing on the saddle whilst splicing a wire and she would never move. She would follow

me like a cat through the bush and over difficult ravines. But she had a fault which she kept to herself for a long time.

As it happened I was always out by myself. One day, however, just as I was off to the Harbour to meet the boat, my brother and Doc Baker came riding down the road and joined me. In those days it was considered the thing to make someone else's horse buck or play up rough, and these two were doing their best to unsettle my mare. I felt her getting restless and she began to pull. Before I could do much about it she had got her neck out straight and was off down the road at a mad breakneck gallop. I tried everything and could make no impression on her. The road ended at the seashore, a cross road led to the Wharf. To carry on over the mass of driftwood into the sea would be certain disaster. A hundred yards before getting there I put in a despairing effort and swung her into the entrance to Frank Scott's ranch; she kept her feet and we crashed the gate but it stopped her. I walked her round the corner to the store, tied her to the hitch post and went into a cellar under the store and sat there for an hour, with a blinding headache.

On remounting later I could feel that she was still in the same mood so I headed her up the road to the Divide and Fullford, and let her go. As the road got steeper and steeper I started to ride her hard, but she was not to be beat; as the top of the Divide, a climb of 1,000 feet, came in sight, I tried to slow her down but her neck was straight out, and I had to swing her into the bush and risk a fall to stop her. The prospect of being galloped down the other side into Fullford did not appeal to me. However we made friends again and as I got to know her better and better she promised never to do it again and she never did.

I only lent her three times. The first, when my brother asked to try her one Sunday morning, he came back later in the day looking thoughtful and said 'You can keep her.' I never heard the full story, but apparently he had gone out with friends and she had taken him for a hair-raising gallop all round St Mary's Lake, a trail that was very rough indeed. The second time was a day when we were at the Wharf to meet the boat. Harris, who was staying at the Smith and Halley ranch, had left an important letter behind and asked to borrow the mare to get it. As they left the store she moved into an easy canter. Some time later they returned, now galloping, and came to rest at the hitch post. He was very done, much more so than the mare, and he hadn't got the letter. She had galloped straight past the Smith and Halley ranch on to her home. He had turned her round and started back. Again she failed to stop until she reached the Wharf. The third and last time was when one day at the store a message came through that one of the Maxwells at Fullford had cut himself badly with an axe

and was bleeding to death. Doc Baker was there, he jumped on the mare and made record time to Fullford, but she cast a shoe on the way, split a hoof badly and was never sound again, but it saved Dave Maxwell's life.