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SLUMACH – MURDERER OF LOUIS BEE

The accompanying data was collected by Mr. William W. Burton and kindly given to The Native Voice. The murder of Louis Bee happened 69 years ago. Slumach the murderer, was hanged in 1891. This Indian had found an immense quantity of gold somewhere in the vicinity of the Pitt River, and year after he returned from his trips in the mountain with a large pail full of gold the size of walnuts. Many old timers had tried to follow him and hundreds of people have gone out every year since his death to try and find, what is now called the Lost Mine of the Pitt. But as Slumach said when asked before his hanging to disclose where he found the gold, "Nika Memloose . . . Mine Memloose," in Chinook language meaning, "When I am dead the mine is dead." Mr. Burton has spent years collecting data on Slumach and his lost mine, and we greatly appreciate the following material taken from the newspapers of that time.

Data on the Slumach case from the Daily Columbian, New Westminster, B.C.,

Tuesday evening, September 9th, 1890.

Shot dead

Louis Bee, a half-breed, is deliberately shot and killed by an insane Indian named Slumach at Lillooet Slough.

A terrible unpremeditated murder was committed yesterday afternoon at a point on Lillooet Slough, not far from the Pitt River, and some two and a half miles above the Pitt River bridge. An Indian named Slumach, aged about sixty years, was hunting in this neighbourhood, and coming out of the bush with his double-barrelled shotgun in his hand, found several other Indians trout fishing on the banks of the Slough.

A half-breed named Louis Bee, sauntered up to Slumach and asked him in a casual way what he was shooting around there.

Without a moment's warning, or any preliminary sign of anger, Slumach instantly levelled his gun at Bee and fired.

Just before the discharge of the piece, Bee held up his hands and begged Slumach not to shoot. The distance between the two men was so short that the whole charge entered the victim's body, just under the right arm pit, behind the shoulderblade. Death was instantaneous, and Bee fell -without a groan and lay weltering in his blood, while his murderer coolly proceeded to reload his piece.

One of the Indians who witnessed the awful deed imme-

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diately fled, not only to give the alarm, but from motives of personal safety. He describes the countenance of the murderer after the act was committed as resembling that of an incarnate demon. Slumach is insane, and what he had done seemed to have kindled all the wild disorderly fancies of- madness in the maniac's brain, and lit up his eyes with a ferocious gleam that boded no good to anyone whom he should encounter when his gun was reloaded. Slumach slowly retreated to the impenetrable and pathless jungle surrounding that part of the Lillooet Slough and plunging into its gloomy recesses was lost to sight and is still at large.

September 19, 1890

Slumach's Action

The Indians say that Slumach has always acted strangely and at irregular intervals would withdraw himself alone into the forests that border and remain there for weeks, reappearing at the end of those periods of aberration, looking haggard and more like a savage beast than a human being. In spite of his lunacy however, the maniac never displayed any signs of hostility, nor gave indications that his freedom was dangerous to human life.

He is described as a very powerful man and is rather dreaded by his own Indian friends.

It is of the utmost importance that fishing and hunting parties going into this region, should keep a most vigilant lookout, as the murderer is still roaming the woods armed with a shotgun, and as far as can be learned, with plenty of ammunition.

The Indian who informed Mr. McTiernan, Indian Agent, of the occurrence, says that from Slumach's looks, he had not the slightest doubt that he would murder the first man he met.

Parties contemplating a visit to the spot indicated above should therefore be on their guard, as carelessness in this matter may result in a still more lamentable tragedy than that just described.

Louis Bee was a splendid specimen of the half-breed—he was tall, well formed, and very muscular, besides having a rather handsome face. It is related of him that once, when in the city, and under the influence of liquor, six stalwarts could not hold him down and it was, only by their dogged perseverance that they got him to the police.

Bee figured several times in police court, owing to his fond-

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ness for alcoholic stimulants, but otherwise he was a quiet respectable man.

Several parties of 'men are now scouring the woods in the neighbourhood of the scene of the murder, in the endeavour to run the desperate perpetrator of the crime to earth.

Capt Pittendrigh proceeded to Pitt-River bridge today at noon to take charge of the murdered man's remains, impanel a jury, and hold the inquest. The Indians in that part of the district are intensely excited over the horrible affair, and are doing everything in their power to capture Slumach.

September 10, 1890

The Murder of Louis Bee

Through the courtesy of Mr. L. F. Bonson, who placed his fine steam launch at the coroner's disposal, Capt. Pittendrigh and his attendants were enabled to perform the journey yesterday from the city to the scene of the Indian murder at Pitt River, in an expeditious and comfortable manner.

Long before the fatal spot was reached, the Indians could be heard chanting a loud strange death song, or coronach for the untimely demise of their comrade Louis Bee. The party from the city, on arriving at the place where the murder occurred, found a number of Indians congregated together, and apparently suffering from fear to a considerable extent. Enquiry developed the fact that none of them dared to pursue the murderer through the bush, and their terror of him had been very much increased by the appearance of Slumach the day following the murder, and his appropriation of the murdered man's remains. He placed the body in a canoe and set out in the direction of the lake with it. It was suspected that Slumach's intention was to drop the body overboard in deep water, and Capt. Pittendrigh, acting on the supposition, set the Indians to work dragging the river for the corpse. The latest news received states that the body was recovered, and was in the custody of friends in the neighbourhood of the spot where the tragic occurrence happened.

The Indian eyewitness who came to the city with the first information of the crime, was taken to the city lock-up this morning for safekeeping, by order of Mr. W. Moresby.

Capt. Pittendrigh and jury returned from the Pitt River last night. This morning a new jury was summoned to proceed to view the remains of Bee.

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Sept. 11, Thursday

Coroner's Inquest

A coroner's inquest was held yesterday in the committee rooms at the City Hall upon the body of Louis Bee, the half-breed who was murdered last Monday afternoon at Pitt River by an Indian named Slumach, and whose remains were brought to the city yesterday. Dr. Walker performed the post-mortem examination, and found the bone of the upper left arm to have been shattered by the passage of a ball, that had entered the [s]ide of the deceased, fracturing the fifth rib, penetrated the right side of the heart, and torn the lungs. The bullet was found imbedded in the right lung. Death, in the doctor's opinion, must have been instantaneous. Charlie Seymour, an Indian, was the principal witness examined by the jury . . .

The jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against the Indian Slumach. -

The body of the murdered man was coffined and taken home by the Indians for interment at their own cemetery near the entrance to Pitt Lake. Mr. Moresby and two special officers left this morning by steamer for the scene of the murder.

They were to be met by the Chief of the Indians with a selected posse of men, and the search for Slumach will be prosecuted unceasingly until he is captured.

September 12, 1890

Still at Large

Slumach, the murderer of Louis Bee is still at large, and there is no immediate prospect of his capture, unless he is driven by starvation into the haunts of men. Mr. Moresby went up to Pitt Lake yesterday and continued the search for him, but with no success. Just before Mr. Moresby arrived, the Indians saw Slumach at his cabin, but he quickly plunged into the bush again and was not visible during the remainder of the day. On examining the cabin, Mr. Moresby found a can of powder and a large quantity of provisions which he destroyed and then, to prevent Slumach returning there for shelter, the shack was burned to the ground. His canoe was also destroyed.

Slumach will now have to keep to the woods until cold weather and starvation drives him in. Mr. Moresby left for Pitt Lake again this morning and may not return to the city for several days. He is determined to bring him to justice and will, if he can, obtain the assistance required.

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The Indians are all afraid of the murderer, and decline to assist in beating the bush for him, as he is still armed and has lots of ammunition. Slumach is a desperate character and is credited by the Indians' with another murder, committed years ago and under similar circumstances. Although a few of the murderer's friends say he is insane, dozens of Indians who know him, say otherwise, and declare he is only a blood-thirsty old villain,

September 13

Slumach the Murderer Still at Large

[no text]

September 16

Slumach the Murderer Still at Large

Indians who know him well, say he has committed four or five murders during the last 25 years.

His last murder, previous to the killing of Louis Bee, was committed about six years ago when he is said to have killed an Indian without any apparent cause. He fled to the mountains and remained in seclusion for a whole year, and suddenly returned one day, took possession of his cabin and lived quietly until the perpetration of his last crime.

Slumach is looked upon by the Indians as a very wonderful person, being able to endure the greatest hardship without apparent inconvenience. As a hunter he is without an equal and he is an adept at making fires in the primitive manner, using two sticks and rubbing the same together until the friction ignites the wood. He is said to be without fear of man or nature vicious in the extreme.

September 19, 1899

Mr. W. Moresby went up to Pitt Lake on the steamer Constance on Wednesday, returning to the city last night. Constable Anderson reported having seen Slumach the preceding day standing on a rocky bluff afar off with nothing on but a red shirt and a handkerchief around his head.

He was armed with his deadly rifle, and was too far away to permit of in exchange of bullets. On the nearer approach of his pursuers he quietly retreated into the impenetrable fastness among the stupendous precipices that frown over the lake at that neighborhood. He has not since been seen.

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September 22

Still at Large

[No text]

October 25

Starved Out

The Indian Slumach, who attained to ghastly celebrity some weeks ago by wantonly murdering a young half-breed named Louis Bee, has been suffering terrible privations in the mountain fastnesses around the shores of Pitt Lake, whither he retired after the murder and set the power of the law at defiance. A month ago, Mr. P. McTiernan, Indian Agent here, had a conference with the members of the tribe at Pitt Lake, and succeeded in convincing them of their duty' to deliver Slumach over to the law. From that day no assistance was given to the outlaw, and probably on that account was he forced to give himself up yesterday to the police. Yesterday he sent his nephew for the Indian Agent, who went up to Pitt Lake accompanied by two Indian policemen, and to them the desperate fugitive quietly surrendered. He had eaten nothing for several days, and was in a terrible state of emaciation and thoroughly exhausted.

His ammunition was all gone and his clothing in rags, and he presented a very wild and weatherworn aspect. Slumach was at once brought to the city and placed under the care of the physicians of the Provincial jail. At latest accounts today, Slumach a very precarious condition, his vitality being almost spent. The doctors do not care to express an opinion as to his chances of recovery, but it is understood that they are very small. Should he recover he will be given a preliminary trial. and then remanded for trial at the assizes in November .

Nov. 3. Monday

District Court

(Before Capt. Pittendrigh, JP)

The murderer, Slumach, was up in the district court before Capt. Pittendrigh, JP, for a preliminary hearing. Several witnesses were examined, and a mass of evidence taken down, and the magistrate sent Slumach up for trial at the approaching assizes.

The prisoner has greatly improved in health since his surrender and will be strong enough to undergo the tedium of the assize trial this month. Slumach is rather an' intelligent look-

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ing man of about sixty years of age. His face expressed a great deal of determination, even ferocity. He sat in court listening to the evidence this morning with the utmost apathy.

A number of Indians occupied seats and took a great deal of interest in the proceedings.

November 11

The Case of Slumach

Slumach, the murderer of Louis Bee, now confined in the Provincial gaol awaiting trial at the Assizes which opens tomorrow is in a very bad state of health and may not be in a fit condition to appear for trial at this term. He is very weak and does not seem to gather strength so rapidly as might be expected, considering the attention and comforts he receives from the medical superintendent and gaol officials.

Mr. McTiernan, Indian Agent is of opinion that Slumach will not live long in confinement and that it is a well known fact that an Indian sentenced to a long term of imprisonment soon pines away and dies. It now looks as if Slumach will not be able to stand trial at the coming assizes, and should this turn out to be the case it is pretty certain that he will escape the gallows by death from natural causes before the spring term.

November 14

Fall Assizes

Court resumed sittings at 10:30 o'clock.

The crown prosecutor asked the arraignment of Slumach for murder. Mr. T. C. Anderson, defending council asked that this case be adjourned until next assizes on the ground that there were two important witnesses for the defence, Moody, an Indian, and Florence Reed, who could not possibly be obtained in time for this assize, but could be produced at the next sitting of the court. The affidavits of Slumach and his daughter Mary, were produced and read...

Mr. Moresby said he could produce both the witnesses required by the defence by 11 o'clock tomorrow and his Lordship therefore adjourned the court until that time.

November 15, 1890

Fall Assizes

(Mr. Justice Drake presiding)

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The Slumach murder case occupied the attention of the court today. The evidence had to be nearly all interpreted. There were several Indian witnesses examined at length, and they gave minute particulars of the tragedy.

It came out in the evidence, that Bee, the victim of the murder, was in the habit of blustering at, and threatening almost everyone with whom he came in contact. Against Slumach he indulged something like a grudge, and for a long time there was bad blood between them. The Indians who were with Bee at the time of the murder were fishing, and on Slumach emerging from the adjacent woods, a slight altercation ensued between him and Bee, with the result that Slumach shot him dead.

The jury retired at 3:45 and after being out 15 minutes, returned with a verdict of guilty.

His Lordship sentenced Slumach to be hanged on Jan. 16 next.

January 16, 1891

Paid the Penalty

Slumach, the murderer of Louis Bee, pays the penalty of his crime. Old Slumach was hanged in the yard of the provincial gaol this morning at 8 o'clock, for the murder on Sept. 8th last, of Louis Bee, a half-breed.

The particulars of the murder are briefly as follows. . .

Pierre, (the Indian catechist - medicine man) slept in the same cell with Slumach, and prayed with him day and night, and it is satisfactory to know that the labor of the good priest and his assistant was not in vain .

The condemned man retired to rest at an early hour last night and slept well...

Slumach awakened early and immediately went into devotional exercises with his spiritual attendants, after which breakfast was brought in and he ate a good meal- with apparent relish.

A few minutes before 7 o'clock Father Morgan baptized Slumach, who professed his belief in Christianity and the hope of salvation. Prayers were continued until the arrival of the hangman to pinion him, and to this operation he submitted without a murmur. All being in readiness a few minutes before 8 o'clock, the procession was formed and proceeded to the scaffold. Mr. Armstrong led the way, followed by Mr. Wm. Moresby, governor of the jail and the deputy sheriff, next

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came Slumach, supported by gaolers Burr and Connor, and followed by the hangman, masked and hooded.

Father Morgan, Pierre, Dr. J. M. McLean, Dr Walker and a number of constables brought up the rear of the procession.

Slumach walked firmly up the steps leading to the platform, and faced the crowd below. The hangman quickly adjusted the noose, and Father Morgan commenced a prayer. Then the black cap put on, and at 8 o'clock exactly, the bolt was drawn, the trap fell, and Slumach had paid the penalty of his crime.

The hanging was very ably managed, and beyond a few little twitching of the hands and feet, the body remained perfectly still after the drop. In three minutes and fifty-eight seconds life was pronounced extinct, but it was more, than twenty minutes before the body was cut down and placed in the coffin.

Coroner Pittendrigh and a jury viewed the body and brought in the usual verdict. Slumach's neck was broken in the fall, and death must have been painless. The drop was eight feet five inches. Over fifty persons witnessed the hanging and a large crowd gathered outside the jail, and remained there until the black flag was hoisted. Among the crowd on the street were several Indian women, relatives of Slumach, who waited around the jail for more than an hour after the execution.