

As to tilling the soil, this was out of the question, first because the soil was unfit for agriculture over practically the whole of his domains, but chiefly on account of his own irresistible restlessness, which is one of the main causes of his nomadic habits. So that, with the inclement skies under which the threads of his wretched life unfold themselves, he has to put to as good account as possible every little item of his environment in connection wherewith human ingenuity can exercise itself with a view to deriving therefrom some sort of self-sustenance.

An excellent instance of this ingenuity, prompted by that life-preserving instinct which is innate in every animal, being is recorded by the first exponent of the northern Dénés' sociology, and, wonderful to relate, this is to the credit of one of those despised members of their tribes who were reputed good for nothing else than abuse and slavery. In the course of his journey to the Arctic Ocean Hearne came upon a forlorn young woman under such circumstances that I must be excused for reproducing his account of the occurrence almost in its entirety. Here it is in his own words.

#### **Necessity the Mother of Invention.**

"On the eleventh of January [1772], as some of my companions were hunting, they saw the track of a strange snow-shoe, which they followed; and at a considerable distance came to a little hut, where they discovered a young woman sitting alone. As they found that she understood their language, they brought her with them to the tents. On examination, she proved to be one of the Western Dogribbed Indians, who had been taken prisoner by the Athapuscow Indians in the summer of one thousand seven hundred and seventy; and in the following summer, when the Indians that took her prisoner were near this part, she had eloped from them, with an intent to return to her own country; but the distance being so great, and having after she was taken prisoner, been carried in a canoe the whole way, the turnings and windings of the rivers and lakes were so numerous, that she forgot the track; so she built the hut in which we found her, to protect her from the weather during the winter, and here she had resided from the first setting in of the fall.

"From her account of the moons passed since her elopement, it appeared that she had been near seven months without seeing a human face; during all which time she had supported herself very well by snaring partridges, rabbits, and squirrels; she had also killed two or three beaver, and some porcupines. That she did not seem to have been in want is evident, as she had a small stock of provisions by her when she was discovered; and was in good health and condition, and I think one of the finest women, of a real Indian, that I have seen in any part of North America.

"The methods practised by this poor creature to procure a livelihood were truly admirable, and are great proofs that necessity is the real mother of invention. When the few deer-sinews that she had an opportunity of taking with her were all expended in making snares, and sewing her clothing, she had nothing to supply their place but the sinews of the rabbit legs