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CAPTAIN THIERRY MALLET - Adventures in the Far North



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“We saw across the river, on the horizon, a small yellow streak which seemed to be moving toward us. It looked exactly like a huge caterpillar creeping on the ground. We watched it intently.

The yellow streak, little by little, grew in length and width until suddenly it spread into a large spot, which, widening and widening on either side, still kept moving in our direction... In a few minutes the yellow patch had grown to such a size that we realized, far as we were from it, that it covered many acres. After that we began to see in the mass of yellow hundreds and thousands of tiny dots which moved individually. Then we knew what it was. It was a great herd of reindeer, the Barren Land caribou, migrating south.” This excerpt, taken from Captain Thierry Mallet’s book, *Glimpses of the Barren Grounds*, graphically describes one of the author’s observations during his adventure in the Far North.

Thierry Mallet (1884-1969) as a young man spent more than twenty years in northern Canada between the eastern Atlantic seaboard and the Yukon interior. His experiences as a fur buyer took him across remote Arctic areas and exposed him to the hardships experienced by the Eskimos, Indians and the few white men that ventured into this primitive land.

Mallet worked for Revillon Freres, a French fur and luxury goods company with offices in Paris, London, New York, and Montreal. In 1903 the company decided to set up a network of fur trading posts in northern Canada to compete with the Hudson’s Bay Company. By 1909 Revillon Freres had 48 trading post stores in its Eastern Arctic Division while the Hudson’s Bay Company had 52.

Mallet went on to become president of Revillon Freres based in New York. It was during this time that he became a member of Boone and Crockett Club. One of his interesting projects was the film *Nanook of the North*, which he co-produced. It was filmed

BOOKS BY CAPTAIN THIERRY MALLET

Plain Tales of the North (1925)

Glimpses of the Barren Lands (1930)

in 1922 in the Hudson Bay area and apparently was a big hit. Competition between the Hudson’s Bay Company and Revillon Freres ended in 1936 when Hudson’s Bay Company bought out its competition.

Several sources have commented that Thierry Mallet’s writings are the most graphic and interesting ever written about the Barren Lands. Certainly he lived the experiences he described, and he had the gift of portraying beautifully a way of life that is no more. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Thierry Mallet portaging on Rupert River, Quebec (1913). ■ Mr. Cotter, Mallet and Revillon Freres Factor at Fort Chimo (Kuujuaq), Ungava Bay, 1909. ■ Mallet and party on expedition up Rupert River, Quebec (1913).

