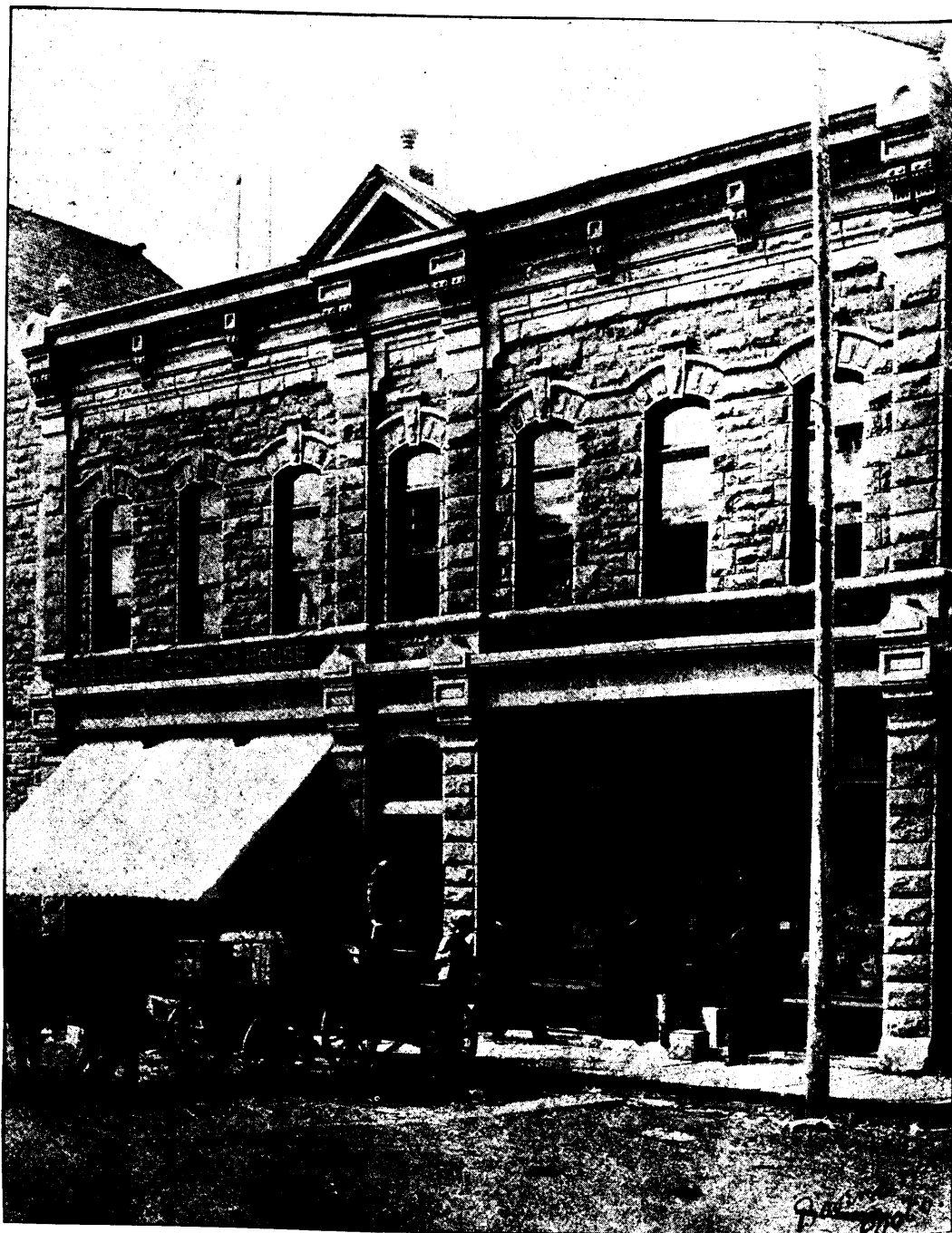


ALBERTA.

"The surface of the prairie region of British North America occupies," writes Professor Fream, "three extensive steppes or table-lands, the lowest of which is on the east, the most elevated on the west. The western boundary of the prairie region is constituted by the magnificent natural rampart of the Rocky Mountains, the junction of plateau and mountain being usually flanked by foot hills, such as those to the south and west of Calgary, among which the Canadian cattle ranches have been established. * * * Though cattle are to be found in some numbers in the rich pastures around Turtle Mountain, Moose Mountain, the Wood Mountains, the Cypress Hills and in the valley of the South Saskatchewan, it is in the Bow River district, south of Calgary, that the best grazing lands occur. * * * Luscious herbage, abundant and nutritious grass grows in this favoured region, and it is here, in the south of the district of Alberta that the Canadian ranches are to be seen." This portion of the Territories, so rich in scenery and resources, so exceptionally adapted for the pursuit of all the industries of civilization—for mixed farming, for mining, for lumbering, for various branches of manufacture and of trade—has only within a comparatively recent period been brought within the ken of capital and enterprise. Some of our readers can doubtless recall the time when it was a *terra ignota* outside of the initiated circle of the Hudson's Bay Company. It seems like yesterday since we were reading Butler's romantic record of his adventurous journey through the "great lone land" that lay west of the Red River settlement. Yet its history can be traced to a date long antecedent to the publication of that epoch-making volume. Mr. Kingsford is, indeed, inclined to dispute de la Verendrye's claim of having caught a glimpse of the giant peaks in the western horizon, but he must have come near enough to that goal of so many explorers to merit mention in any account of the third prairie steppe. The northern limits of the district were not unknown to Sir A. Mackenzie. The valleys of both the Peace and the Bow were familiar to Sir George Simpson and several of his colleagues. Mr. M. McLeod, Barrister-at-Law, has saved from oblivion the journal of a canoe voyage from Hudson Bay to the Pacific, made by Sir George in 1828, which was kept by one of his companions, the late Chief Factor, Archibald McDonald. The Rev. Prof. Bryce has drawn up an admirable historic outline, with careful bibliography, of the whole series of famous journeys in Western Canada (Canada beyond Lake Superior) from the time of de la Verendrye to our own day. The record is signalized by many illustrious names—beginning with the great French explorer and his valiant sons, and closing with Mr. Sandford Fleming, C.M.G., and the Rev. Principal Grant. The long interval is made glorious by heroism, brightened by discoveries of far-reaching import, and sometimes made dark with disappointment and sorrow, or crimsoned with disaster and tragedy.

Leaving behind us the era of adventure and romance, of trade rivalries and persistent struggle, we come to the modern period—that of colonization and civilizing enterprise. This, too, is not without its features of romance. Half a century intervened between the carrying out of Lord Selkirk's humane schemes and any successful attempt on the part of the pioneer to occupy



THE ALEXANDER BLOCK.

the land of promise beyond. The first undertaking of the kind was prompted, however, not by reports of the natural wealth of the cismontane region, but by the gold boom in British Columbia. The emigrants who first took the route of exile westward were satisfied with no goal higher than the Pacific slopes. The Canadians who in 1862 made their way to Edmonton *via* Fort Ellice, Carlton House and Fort Pitt, earned a glory as discoverers which the historian has been slow to recognize. For it was to them that the world was indebted for a knowledge of the facilities offered by the Leather Pass for establishing communication between the valley of the Athabasca and that of the Fraser river. The particulars of that pioneer journey were related by Dr. Henry Y. Hind in the following year (1863) in the pages of the *British American Magazine*. At Fort Garry the party separated into two divisions—the first, consisting of about a hundred emigrants, took the north route by Edmonton; the second, of sixty-five persons, took the southern trail. At Edmonton they all changed their carts for horses and oxen. Of the latter animals one hundred and thirty were taken

through the Rocky Mountains; of the former, about seventy. A few oxen were killed for food; others were sold to Indians and others were rafted down the Fraser to the Forks of the Quesnelle. A portion of the party left the main body at Tête Jaune Cache and by an old well-worn trail made their way to the wintering station on Thompson river and Kamloops Lake. Others, on rafts or canoes of cotton-wood or ox-hide, constructed by themselves at the Cache, descended the Fraser. The success of these unpretentious explorers—explorers by the grace of the great mother of invention—was a revelation to those who had been misled by deterring descriptions of the formidable obstacles that the mountains were supposed to present to travel. But it must be remembered that the Rocky Mountains are a long range, and that in the far north they sink gradually to mere hills.

But though the journey of the emigrants of 1862 belongs to the history of this western region, it was not until many years had passed by that its development as an abode for civilized man was to begin. The emigrants passed out of sight and left no impress on Athabasca or Alberta. Still