

It is not his fault that most of his race have degenerated. It is not our fault that we have better uses for the continent than those to which he put it. But it is our fault that he is, as I have seen him, shivering in a cotton tepee full of holes, and turning around and around before a fire of wet wood to keep from freezing to death; furnished meat if he has been fierce enough to make us fear him, left to starve if he has been docile; taught, ay, forced to beg, mocked at by a religion he cannot understand, from the mouths of men who apparently will not understand him; debauched with rum, despoiled by the lust of white men in every form that lust can take. Ah, it is a sickening story. Not in Canada, do you say? Why, in the northern wilds of Canada are districts peopled by beggars who have been in such pitiful stress for food and covering that the Hudson Bay Company has kept them alive with advances of provisions and blankets winter after winter. They are Indians who in their strength never gave the government the concern it now fails to show for their weakness. The great fur company has thus added generosity to its long career of just dealing with these poor adult children; for it is a fact that though the company has made what profit it might, it has not, in a century at least, cheated the Indians, or made false representations to them, or lost their good-will and respect by any feature of its policy toward them. Its relation to them has been paternal, and they owe none of their degradation to it.

I have spoken of the visits of the natives to the posts. There are two other arrivals of great consequence—the coming of the supplies, and of the winter mail or packet. I have seen the provisions and trade goods being put up in bales in the great mercantile storehouse of the company in Winnipeg—a store like a combination of a Sixth Avenue ladies' bazar and one of our wholesale grocer's shops—and I have seen such weights of canned vegetables and canned plum-pudding and bottled ale and other luxuries that I am sure that in some posts there is good living on high days and holidays if not always. The stores are packed in parcels averaging sixty pounds (and sometimes one hundred), to make them convenient for handling on the portages—"for packing them over the carries," as our traders used to say. It is in following these sup-

plies that we become most keenly sensible of the changes time has wrought in the methods of the company. The day was, away back in the era of the Northwest Company, that the goods for the posts went up the Ottawa from Montreal in great canoes manned by hardy *voyageurs* in picturesque costumes, wielding scarlet paddles, and stirring the forests with their happy songs. The scene shifted, the companies blended, and the centre of the trade moved from old Fort William, close to where Port Arthur now is on Lake Superior, up to Winnipeg, on the Red River of the North. Then the Canadians and their cousins, the half-breeds, more picturesque than ever, and manning the great York boats of the Hudson Bay Company, swept in a long train through Lake Winnipeg to Norway House, and thence by a marvellous water route all the way to the Rockies and the Arctic, sending off freight for side districts at fixed points along the course. The main factories on this line, maintained as such for more than a century, bear names whose very mention stirs the blood of one who knows the romantic, picturesque, and poetic history and atmosphere of the old company when it was the landlord (in part, and in part monopolist) of a territory that cut into our Northwest and Alaska, and swept from Labrador to Vancouver Island. Northward and westward, by waters emptying into Hudson Bay, the brigade of great boats worked through a region embroidered with sheets and ways of water. The system that was next entered, and which bore more nearly due west, bends and bulges with lakes and straits like a ribbon all curved and knotted. Thus, at a great portage, the divide was reached and crossed; and so the waters flowing to the Arctic, and one—the Peace River—rising beyond the Rockies, were met and travelled. This was the way and the method until after the Canadian Pacific Railway was built, but now the Winnipeg route is of subordinate importance, and feeds only the region near the west side of Hudson Bay. The Northern supplies now go by rail from Calgary, in Alberta, over the plains by the new Edmonton railroad. From Edmonton the goods go by cart to Athabasca Landing, there to be laden on a steamboat, which takes them northward until some rapids are met, and avoided by the use of a singular combination of ba-