

French were the true Yankees of that country. They and their half-breeds were always in the van as explorers and traders, and as early as 1731 M. Varennes de la Verandrye, licensed by the Canadian government as a trader, penetrated the West as far as the Rockies, leading Sir Alexander Mackenzie to that extent by more than sixty years.

But to return to the first serious trouble the Hudson Bay Company met. The investigation of its affairs by Parliament produced nothing more than the picture I have presented. The committee reported that if the original charter bred a monopoly, it would not help matters to give the same privileges to others. As the questioned legality of the charter was not competently adjudicated upon, they would not allow another company to invade the premises of the older one.

At this time the great company still hugged the shores of the bay, fearing the Indians, the half-breeds, and the French. Their posts were only six in all, and were mainly fortified with palisaded enclosures, with howitzers and swivels, and with men trained to the use of guns. Moose Fort and the East Main factory were on either side of James Bay, Forts Albany, York, and Prince of Wales followed up the west coast, and Henley was the southernmost and most inland of all, being on Moose River, a tributary of James Bay. The French at first traded beyond the field of Hudson Bay operations, and their castles were their canoes. But when their great profits and familiarity with the trade tempted the thrifty French capitalists and enterprising Scotch merchants of Upper Canada into the formation of the rival Northwest Trading Company in 1783, fixed trading-posts began to be established all over the Prince Rupert's Land, and even beyond the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia. By 1818 there were about forty Northwest posts as against about two dozen Hudson Bay factories. The new company not only disputed but ignored the chartered rights of the old company, holding that the charter had not been sanctioned by Parliament, and was in every way unconstitutional as creative of a monopoly. Their French partners and *engagés* shared this feeling, especially as the French crown had been first in the field with a royal charter. Growing bolder and bolder, the Northwest Company resolved to drive the Hud-

son Bay Company to a legal test of their rights, and so in 1803-4 they established a Northwest fort under the eyes of the old company on the shore of Hudson Bay, and fitted out ships to trade with the natives in the strait. But the Englishmen did not accept the challenge; for the truth was they had their own doubts of the strength of their charter.

They pursued a different and for them an equally bold course. That hard-headed old nobleman the fifth Earl of Selkirk came uppermost in the company as the engineer of a plan of colonization. There was plenty of land, and some wholesale evictions of Highlanders in Sutherlandshire, Scotland, had rendered a great force of hardy men homeless. Selkirk saw in this situation a chance to play a long but certainly triumphant game with his rivals. His plan was to plant a colony which should produce grain and horses and men for the old company, saving the importation of all three, and building up not only a nursery for men to match the *courriers du bois*, but a stronghold and a seat of a future government in the Hudson Bay interest. Thus was ushered in a new and important era in Canadian history. It was the opening of that part of Canada; by a loop-hole rather than a door, to be sure.

Lord Selkirk's was a practical soul. On one occasion in animadverting against the Northwest Company he spoke of them contemptuously as fur-traders, yet he was the chief of all fur-traders, and had been known to barter with an Indian himself at one of the forts for a fur. He held up the opposition to the scorn of the world as profiting upon the weakness of the Indians by giving them alcohol, yet he ordered distilleries set up in his colony afterwards, saying, "We grant the trade is iniquitous, but if we don't carry it on others will; so we may as well put the guineas in our own pockets." But he was the man of the moment, if not for it. His scheme of colonization was born of desperation on one side and distress on the other. It was pursued amid terrible hardship, and against incessant violence. It was consummated through bloodshed. The story is as interesting as it is important. The facts are obtained mainly from "Papers relating to the Red River Settlement, ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, July 12, 1819." Lord Selkirk owned 40,000