

fully equal to those of his class in Europe; living without law, they are a law to themselves. The Indian is said to be a creature of apathy, when he appears to be so, he is in an assumed character to conceal what is passing in his mind; as he has nothing of the almost infinite diversity of things which interest and amuse the civilised man; his passions, desires and affections are strong, however appeared subdued, and engage the whole man; the law of retaliation, which is fully allowed, makes the life of man respected; and in general he abhors the shedding of blood, and should sad necessity compel him to it, which is sometimes the case, he is held to be an unfortunate man; but he who has committed wilful murder is held in abhorrence, as one with whom the life of no person is in safety, and possessed with an evil spirit. When Hudson Bay was discovered, and the first trading settlement made, the Natives were far more numerous than at present.

In the year 1782, the small pox¹ from Canada extended to them, and more than one half of them died; since which although they have no enemies, their country very healthy, yet their numbers increase very slowly. The Musk Rat country, of which I have given the area, may have ninety two families, each of seven souls, giving to each family an area of two hundred and forty eight square miles of hunting grounds; or thirty five square miles to each soul, a very thin population. A recent writer (Ballantyne)² talks of myriads

¹ The exact date when smallpox first spread among the Indians throughout the North-West is not quite certain; but it would appear that it was sometime during 1781, and that it disappeared, or at least greatly decreased in virulence, in 1782. A full account of the havoc played among the Indians by this dread disease will be found in Thompson's own words on pages 321-25.

² It was about the time when Thompson was writing his memoirs that R. M. Ballantyne began to publish his interesting stories of life among the fur-traders of the Hudson's Bay Company in western Canada. Ballantyne was then a young man, and Thompson was getting very old; and it is possible that the exuberance of spirit shown by the former may have grated on the mature judgment of the older man. Game was then, and is yet, fairly abundant throughout many parts of what Thompson calls