

Astoria. What the difficulties were may be surmised from the experiences of their comrades, under capable leaders and comparatively well equipped. The main party started again with provisions for only five days. They must have been at least 1200 miles from their destination, and autumn was drawing on towards winter. They cached their goods to lighten the loads, keeping only a little for occasional barter. But for two hundred miles they did not meet a living soul. They separated in search of bare sustenance, only to come together again when both parties were reduced to extremity of emaciation. When they did happen upon scattered bands of Indians, they found them in little better case than themselves. All were half-starving; they had buried their dried salmon, and their first proceeding was to drive away the horses which they could not be tempted to part with. At a critical moment the expedition was only saved by taking a camp by surprise and forcibly seizing half-a-dozen of horses. Some days they supported nature on diluted portable soup; other days they went altogether without food; now and again they had such a stroke of luck as to trap a beaver, which they stewed down with hips and blackberries. It shows wonderful vitality and powers of endurance that they were still struggling forward when the snowstorms set in with December. At length they struck the Columbia river, where Indian settlements were more frequent. Even then their sufferings were not at an end, as they had fondly fancied. For days as they followed its sinuous

course, as it flows between precipitous banks, they were on point of perishing of thirst without sound and sight of the water. Finally they succeeded in hiring a couple of canoes, and paddled down-stream to the mouth of the river, where they were welcomed as men who had been given up for dead. The journey from St Lawrence to the Pacific lasted for nearly two years.

A few sentences must bring the story of the companies to a close. The North-Westers reached Columbia soon after Hunt's expedition, and they had suffered similarly, though somewhat thanks to greater experience and better organisation. The war between Britain and America had broken out. To anticipate capture by a British squadron, the party in command at Astoria sold its furs and furs to the North-West Company for less than a third of their value. To the disappointment of our officers, who had been hoping for prize-money, they found nothing but the dismantled fortalice to take over, when it changed name from Fort Astor to Fort George. In Columbia and Oregon the North-West Company rendered what they could of the harvest which Astor and his agents had been sowing the seed, till by the treaty of Ghent in 1818 Fort George again became American and was once more known as Fort Astor. Then most of the Canadian traders returned to the Katchewan and the Lakes, three years later, on the death of Lord Selkirk, the rival north-west companies buried the war-hat. They amalgamated in 1821, and the North-West merged its name in that of the older association.