

part Scotch, and chiefly Orkney-men, with French Canadians and half-breeds, the progeny of a mixed European and Indian parentage. They are stationed at isolated and far-asunder posts or forts, often amid dense forests and cheerless solitudes, with the wolf and bear prowling in the neighborhood, ranging to the distance of three and four thousand miles from York Factory, the head-quarters of the Company on Hudson's Bay. The officers are either chief factors, who superintend the business of a district, in which there are several posts, with one of superior pretensions for a kind of capital, but sufficiently rough and homely; or traders, who barter with the Indians for skins; or clerks, who keep an account of all transactions. The servants perform the miscellaneous menial labor requisite, as cutting wood, drawing home provisions on sledges, and transporting furs. The latter service involves labor of the severest description; for the difficulties of mountain and forest, torrent and shallow, have to be encountered and overcome, while the extremes of cold, heat, and privation are experienced. From the remote stations it requires nearly a twelvemonth to convey the goods to York Factory, from whence they are shipped for England. The furs are made up in closely-pressed packs, the smaller and finer skins—as those of the musk-rats, martens, and otters—being placed in the inside, and inclosed by those of the wolf, bear, and reindeer. In winter they are drawn on sledges to the nearest point from which water-carriage can be obtained in spring; and upon the rivers becoming open, they are placed in boats, which can only advance through immense distances by being dragged along; while at the rapids, goods and boats have to be transported on the backs of the men, to a point of the stream above the embarrassed locality.

The forts vary as to the number of persons attached to them, according to their importance; and their accommodations hinge upon the same circumstance, as well as upon their distance from the borders of civilized life. They are commonly constructed of roughly-hewn pine logs, of large dimensions, interstices being plastered with mud, the universal substitute for mortar. The roofs are composed of flat layers of sticks and moss; while light is admitted through casements of parch-

ment, which is repaired, when rent, with scraps of paper. As to interior furniture, there is neither sofa, ottoman, nor easy chair, though the inmates are not always bachelor Scotchmen. The bedsteads are branches of pine, the unadorned work of the ax; the chairs are stools, made out of huge single blocks; the tables are similarly made, and massive; while a most miscellaneous assortment of articles may be observed here and there, consisting of guns, blankets, skins, kettles, horns, coffee-pots, pemmican tins, and fishing-lines, with the woodman's and carpenter's implements. Yet the persons in charge of these primitive dwellings are gentlemen in manners, feeling, and intelligence; and at one of them—Fort Macpherson—the most northerly, a Scotch bride arrived in the winter of 1842, to commence the duties of married life amid the ice and snow of the Arctic zone. The northern district of the Company's territory, which includes the basin of the Mackenzie River, has Fort Simpson on its banks for the head station; in latitude 61°, that of the Great Slave Lake. Further north in succession are Fort Norman, on the Bear River; Fort New Franklin, at the south extremity of the Great Bear Lake; Fort Good Hope, on the Mackenzie, under the Arctic circle; Fort Confidence, at the north extremity of the Bear Lake; and Fort Macpherson, on the Peel River, an affluent of the Mackenzie. The natives of the district are the Loucheux, or Quarrelers, the Hare, Rat, Dog-rib, and Strong-bow Indians, with the Esquimaux of the coast.

There is little variety of food at these remote stations. Flour, bread, tea, and sugar—European importations—are articles of extreme luxury, owing to the difficulty of transport through such an immense distance and wild country. A certain quantity of these and other domestic stores is annually forwarded from York Factory; but in order to make the allowance last, it must be consumed in homeopathic portions, or reserved as a treat for Sundays. Fish is a main article of diet, summer and winter, prepared in almost every conceivable method—boiled and roasted, dried, smoked, and cured. There are fish soups and fish cakes, with "fish, fish, fish" in a variety of phases, somewhat taxing to ingenuity to invent. Summer fare includes fresh buffalo, reindeer, and elk flesh, with rabbits and other smaller animals, usually