

The Montreal brigades of rivermen were here, slinking in the woods, but this year the Northmen from the Pays d'en Haut would not gather to meet them.

Grande Portage was an open road, not a private gateway to the West, and though it would be used for some time by his company as an entrepôt for inland business and as an outlet on Superior, Carlisle saw in his mind's eye a changing of the routes by which the fur would all flow to Hudson's Bay instead of to Montreal.

He pictured the dwindling of the Grande Portage, the spot where the brains of the Northwest Company had been situated though its nominal headquarters posed in Beaver Hall, the spot from which the ruthless power of the organization was distributed in stupendous ramifications, like electric energy from a distant waterfall. And in the end he saw the post dismantled, its foundations buried in the sand and scrub, the Portage unused, the Western highway forgotten!

Something of the same thought was running through Wayne's mind as he watched the packing down and the relaunching and reloading of the canoes, and Carlisle, turning to speak to him, caught it in his eye.

"You see it, too, Wayne?" he ventured. "You see the glory departing from this place?"

"Yes, it's sure to go down now," prophesied Wayne, his eyes fixed seer-like, "and the first wagon road linking up the East and the West will carve its epitaph."