

trade and discovery in the North-West reads like a muster-roll of the clans, and mainly of the northern clans of the second order. There are MacTavishes, MacGillivrays, McKays, McLellans, McDougalls, with Frasers and Stuarts and the French Frobishers. A Mackenzie, a Fraser, and a Thompson gave their names to as many mighty rivers. That came in the natural course of things. The Company found its best recruiting-grounds in the Highlands, and enlisted the martial spirit of the mountaineers for a country where local feuds were forgotten. It was different altogether when civil war broke out between the companies, and then the clansmen fought like fighting-cocks. But for the youth from Assynt or Applecross solitude had few terrors, as hardships had always been familiar. He had been born in some isolated glen and cradled in the mountain mists. He changed the soil but scarcely the climate, and as for the new circumstances, they opened a career to his ambition. He looked forward to promotion and increasing pay: in the North-west Company he drew profits on the co-operative system, and so he cast in his lot for life with the land of his adoption. He had little inducement to ask leave of absence for home, and such a request would probably have been answered by summary dismissal. Naturally a young man will turn to thoughts of love, but in that country there were few maidens of his own blood. And if he desired to be well considered by his superiors, he could do no better than get hand-fast with a native. The Company, though chiefly Scottish by race and Presbyterian by religion, winked at these illicit connections, for settlements removed several thousand miles

from headquarters were not what Mr Squeers would have called the savages' workshops for morals. But the managers encouraged mixed marriages, and the commercial and political grounds for they deemed that an agent could do better business as against his family connection of some Dogrib or Loucheaux chief.

The territory was autocratically administered, and the subordinate, within well-understood limits, had almost absolute discretion. Removed beyond all reach of the law, they were a law unto themselves. The agents were not partners, as in the North-West Company; but they were assured of advancement and a competence if enterprising and resourceful. And it is admitted that the government, though arbitrary, was admirable, so far as the Indians were concerned. It contrasted very favourably with that to the south of the international line where parties were organised and sent out on the war-path, and premiums offered for the Indian scalps, irrespective of sex or age. In the north the innocent were never made to suffer for the guilt of others, but any criminal was relentlessly sought out and hunted down. Consequently outrages came to be almost unknown, and latterly posts might almost have been unstockaded. But being commercial, the Company's policy was based on commercial selfishness. No intrusion was permitted to their boundless preserves. A portion had been guaranteed by charter or trading licences, and the monopoly was everywhere secured by distances and deductions. To the west of the lakes, down the Mississippi and the Missouri, the solitary voyageur or *coureur de bois* might live his gun and by barter, if he chose, risk having his hair raised by