

able to endure for several weeks together a temperature of so great intensity, and yet the traders gathering furs for their vessel, coming out in the short northern summer, passed with much cheerfulness, and even pleasure, their sojourn year after year. From far and near came the tribes of Indians inhabiting the vast region to the west, which the traders thus found it unnecessary to visit. Without leaving their so-called forts on Hudson's Bay, they could receive for a trifle of goods, or some paltry trinket, the most valuable furs; and Fort Churchill and the shores of the inland sea of the north became the centre of attraction for the many tribes of the great Crees or Algonquins of the South-east, as well as the Chippewan nations of the North-west. To the romance of the trade was added the feeling of superiority which their knowledge and their goods gave the traders over the Indian—astute enough as to honour, but simple as a child in trade. There is a grim humour in the motto of the Hudson's Bay Company: "Propelle cutem," (skin for skin) adopted as embodying the results of a thousand successful transactions. Yet there was evinced on the whole a sagacity and tact in dealing with the savage, even in the early days of the Company, that has been seldom equalled. Coming down with his bundle of furs upon his back, from the shores of some of the innumerable lakes stretching to Lake Winnipeg over four hundred miles, or reciting the strange stories of far-off Athabasca, the Indian hunter did not fail to return with his powder, shot and Queen Bess musket to wake the echoes of his quiet home. Had the North-west been hospitable, no doubt the influx of other traders brought by the news of the great profits would soon have made it impossible for the traders to retain their monopoly, and settlements such as those of Manhattan Island and Nouvelle France would have followed in the wake of the fur hunters. But the rigour of the climate, the sterility of the soil, the difficulties of approach and the

threatenings of a monopoly, retained in a most unexampled manner the country for its first masters, who found their mine of wealth not in the soil, but in the animals which civilization banishes. Encroachments, however, came from a most unexpected quarter. New France had, from its very beginning, become the resort of the fur trader. The Saguenay, with its clear waters and its rugged banks, gave good returns to the trader; and Tadoussac, at its mouth, became the fur dépôt for many a year. The Ottawa, too, in turn yielded its share of northern wealth, and the enterprising French voyageurs continued their North-western course until crossing the watershed they reached the plateau of Red River and the Saskatchewan. Trapping and trading, the hardy descendants of the men from Norman France followed the genius of the race that left its northern fiords to carry vigour to Western Europe, and sent off the captain of St. Malo on his adventurous quest to the new world. M. de la Verandrye, a French seigneur, was the first white man who penetrated the solitudes of the North-west, and to him is given the honour of having, in 1731, discovered Lake Winnipeg and its affluents. His success was the occasion for a score of other adventurers seeking out the new land, and the Indians of the region west of Winnipeg soon found another set of traders nearer to their native lakes than Fort Churchill, on whom they looked at first with suspicion, but who at length won their confidence. For twenty or thirty years were the strangers from Nouvelle France courting the favour of the Indian hunters, and their persistent efforts were so successful that the English Company of more than a hundred years standing, cut off from inland supplies, were compelled to meet their rivals by leaving the coast and journeying westward. The French trappers had now the co-operation of such stirring spirits of the army of Wolfe as had settled in Canada, after, in 1759, it became British.