

# Hudson Bay Company Planned in Hard -ship, Built up by Toil, Has Reaped Millions

THOSE who look upon trusts as modern growths may be surprised to learn that one of the most powerful on the North American continent is 86 years old. This is the Hudson Bay Company, which probably furnished the muff, collar or the fur overcoat which you are wearing this winter. It is the continent's oldest trust.

Age isn't the chief distinction of this trust, however. It can claim, what no other trust can, that it has made a nation; for it would be difficult to exaggerate the Hudson Bay Company's part in creating modern Canada. Many of the great Dominion cities of today have developed from trading posts established by the fur company many years ago.

In the forming of this trust and its development tragedy and romance run riot. The killing of rival traders in close encounter, in duels and in pitched battles; the accidental death of many a man while engaged in his perilous work; the hardship of life in isolated sections, to some of which mail, even at this day, goes only once a year; the commercial romances connected with bay-tree growth of cities in the wilderness—these things might, if inanimate objects could speak, be told by



A Furrier of the Early Days.



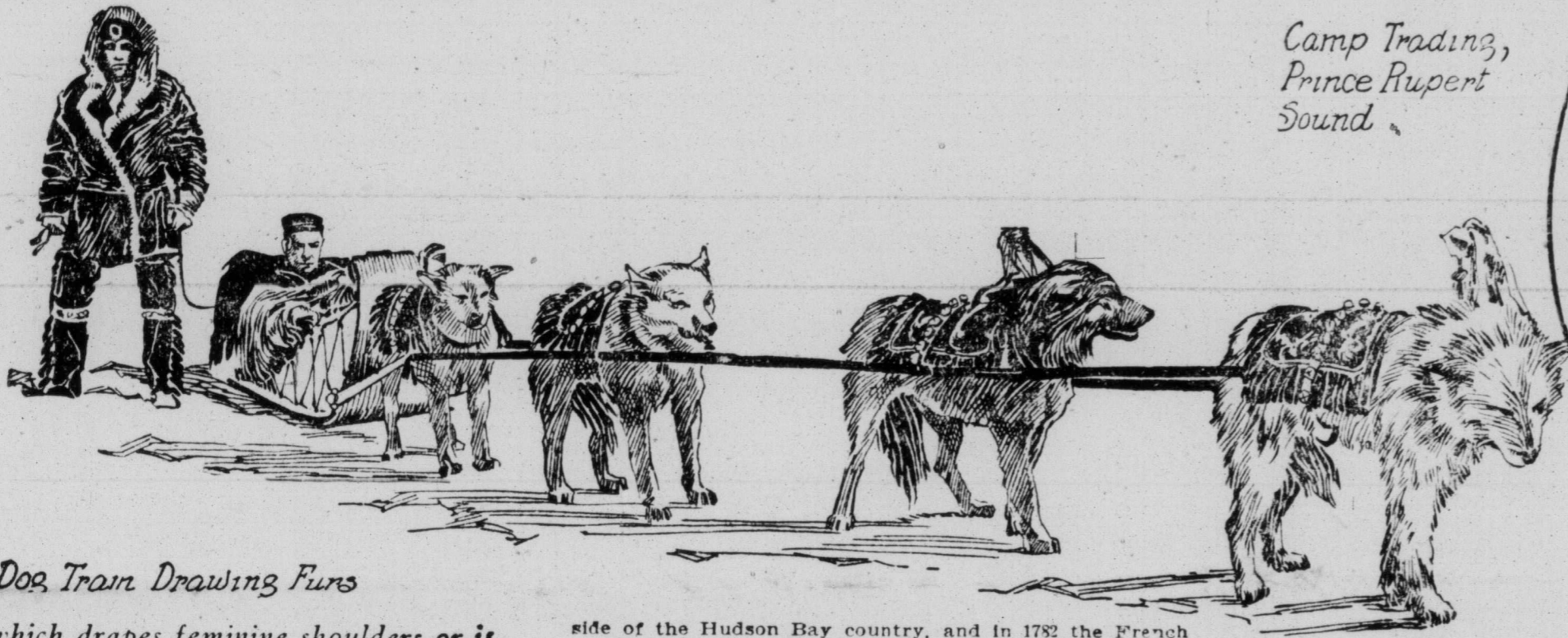
Racing in Canoes!



Camp Trading, Prince Rupert Sound.



Another Mode of Transportation—Moose in Shafts



Dog Team Drawing Furs

the fur which drapes feminine shoulders or is exposed for sale in the store window.

Before the Hudson Bay Company absorbed its rival and formed the first trust of the continent its stirring history had already extended over a century and a half, and for a long time enjoyed a monopoly of the rich fur field.

IF THE Hudson Bay Company had not absorbed the Northwest Fur Company, of Montreal, in 1821, thus forming America's first trust, it is perhaps not too much to say that Canada for many years thereafter, perhaps almost to the present, would have been little more than a chain of towns and cities along the St. Lawrence and around Lake Ontario, and a group of semi-isolated maritime provinces.

Not long ago a Toronto writer expressed this opinion, and found none to dispute it. It is not in itself an excuse for the existence of a corporation, as such, although it speaks volumes for the enterprise of this particular trust.

Misled by its name, many people have thought the company's original scope of operation was only in the Hudson Bay district, when, as a matter of fact, it extended from ocean to ocean, and from the latitude of Alaska south as far as the Great Lakes—a country hardly smaller than the whole of Europe. This immense region was populated by about 160,000 Indians, half-breeds and Eskimos.

Only twenty years after the landing of the English at what is now Jamestown, Va.—to be exact, in 1627—the nucleus of the Hudson Bay Company had its birth in a trading post which a Frenchman named Du Pont set up at the junction of the St. Lawrence and Saguenay rivers. He sold merchandise to the Indians and received furs in return.

Then came the French Fur Company, a few years later, and, in 1688, an expedition outfitted by Prince Rupert, of England, the first to penetrate the Hudson Bay country.

Two years later a company was chartered by King Charles II. Less than forty years ago this company sold to the Dominion Government for \$1,600,000 its territorial rights to certain lands, but retained its trading privileges.

What a romantic story of commerce these less than 400 years have written on the snow-clad topography of British Columbia! And how much more tragic than that recorded may be that which is not known!

## ONCE RULED THE NORTH

The Hudson Bay Company is not today what it was before the Dominion Government became a strongly organized force. Once it was the ruler of the North; its factors exercised the power of feudal barons, declared war and made peace. No other enterprise on this continent has had such a colorful career.

One of its wars—the one which ended in the consolidation—lasted over forty years. Both the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Fur Company realized that further fighting would mean destruction to both, and so, in 1821, "for mutual protection," did what many oil companies, railroad lines, rubber factories, tanneries, sugar refineries and other industries have found it to their advantage to do since then. They consolidated.

And why shouldn't the history of the Hudson Bay Company have been a romance of commerce, when in its very foundation existed such a quiet strain of humor and court atmosphere as one might expect to find in a time of King Arthur's day?

Witness the fact that when the liberal old English monarch ceded to the stock company of noblemen and gentry, including Prince Rupert, the vast lands in

Canada, he exacted as payment only two elk and two black beavers annually, and this only when he should happen to be within the territories granted.

If kings and parliaments of this day only had a sense of humor!

The fates ordained that these Englishmen, invested with unlimited powers by their government, were not to have things all their own way. The French could appreciate furs, too. In 1672 the company of New France was founded.

It is unnecessary to go into the merits of the French and English contentions. Both seriously claimed the territory. Things dragged along until, in 1688, Sieur D'Iberville headed a hostile expedition, which captured three of the Hudson Bay Company's five forts and several of its vessels.

For a century warfare interfered with the commercial

side of the Hudson Bay country, and in 1782 the French admiral, La Perouse, captured Fort Prince of Wales. This was on Cape Prince of Wales, on the coast of Alaska, just south of the Arctic Circle. Today that old fort stands, just as the conqueror left it after he had destroyed it, perhaps the most imposing ruin on the continent.

All the time the English had been living comfortably in their seaside quarters, never venturing into the forest, content to let the Indians bring them what furs they would, the more adaptable Frenchman was making his way into the recesses of the forest, living with the Indians, gaining their confidence first, their skins afterward.

It was not long before the Hudson Bay Company managers realized that the pick of the furs was going overland to Montreal on the backs of French carriers. In this connection, the year, 1774, and the place, Fort Cumberland, on the Saskatchewan river, are important. It was then, and there, that the French and English traders first met. This was the beginning of that second war, not between the nations, but between man and man, which lasted over forty years.

## HAND-TO-HAND BATTLES

At the present day the only thing in this country that can be compared with that struggle is the sheep feuds of the Northwest, in which shots have been taken, at shepherds at sight post, in the Canadian wilds, guns were freely used. When it so happened that the combatants got close enough together, knives were brought into play. Fists were seldom used—this would have been too mild.

Stirred to commercial competition, the Hudson Bay Company for a time paid the highest prices to the Indians, thus securing the pick of their furs; but the Frenchmen, so it is recorded, got around this by introducing frowater. And, in order to offer a formidable front to the English, the French traders in 1772 organized into the Northwest Fur Company, of Montreal. Soon this company overshadowed its rival.

Instead of paying salaries to its men, as its rival did, the Northwest permitted them to work on commission, or to acquire partnership in the business, and so in a few years it was making annual profits of \$200,000, which in ten years jumped to \$600,000.

The principal "Northwesters," as partners in the Northwest Company were called, formed an exclusive aristocracy in Montreal and Quebec, living in lordly style, yet preserving associations with the superintendents of their trading posts, joining them in pleasures, dangers, mishaps and novel adventures.

When they ascended the streams, it was in magnificent barges, decked with red furs, with every luxury at hand, carrying with them their cooks and barbers—like sovereigns making a progress.

Colonists came from Great Britain; their coming spurred the French Northwesters on to acts of intimidation and violence. At this time Lord Selkirk acquired a controlling interest in the Hudson Bay Company and determined to punish the pertinacious rivals.

Where they established a fort, he placed one. Every method that artifice, fraud or violence could suggest was adopted to get the skins from the Indians, who cared not who got them so long as the money and frowater were sufficient.

What ruses were tried to gain the upper hand in this odd rivalry! Once the Hudson Bay people, on the pretense of making friends, got up a grand ball with the Northwesters as their guests, and while the merriment was on, a few agents slipped out to meet a company of Indians whom the scouts had reported as headed for the town. When, next day, the Northwesters learned of the Indians' approach, they found them all gloriously drunk and not a skin left.

Another time, two trading parties met in the woods. The Northwesters proposed a fire and a round of drinks.

Then, while the others drank, they poured their liquor on the ground.

Finally, when every Hudson Bay man was helplessly drunk, the Northwesters bound them to their sleds, turned the dogs toward the Hudson Bay camp, and then hurried on to the Indian camp. This time they had the skins all to themselves.

Forts were attacked, burned and the settlers and officials made prisoners and terribly maltreated. In vain did the Governor-General of Canada exhort and threaten. These bloody scenes led up to a frightful battle at Fort Garry, the post of the Hudson Bay people, in which seventeen men and three officers of the company, including Governor Semple, fell, pierced by bullets.

Officers and men on both sides were hired with a view to their fighting qualities; prices were sent so high and frowater flowed so plentifully that the trade was ruined.

Such was the condition when, in 1821, the cooler heads of both companies got together and formed the first trust on this continent. Like those of today, it was for mutual preservation.

Then, talk of your captains of industry of the present day! How small most of them seem beside a young Scotchman who, simply on account of his business acumen, was singled out among all the residents of British Columbia to be head of the new trust and Governor of Rupert's Land, as the fur country was called.

This man was George Simpson—Sir George he afterward became, for he was knighted because of the wonderful ability he displayed in his new position. For forty years he remained at the helm, and his reign was one of peace and prosperity.

When, in 1869, the Hudson Bay Company was induced by the Canadian Government to part with all but about one-twentieth of the immense tract of land in its grant, the money recompense was \$1,500,000.

This ended the romantic, thrilling side of the company's history; it thereafter became simply a very prosperous corporation, with capital swollen to \$10,000,000, no competition and enormous dividends assured.

## MANY VIOLENT DEATHS

As indicating the perilous lives of the hunters and half-breeds in those early days, it is recorded that of those Northwesters who assisted in the killing of Governor Semple and his nineteen associates, sixty-five died violent deaths.

First, a Frenchman dropped dead while crossing the ice on the river, his son was stabbed by a comrade, his wife was shot, and his children were burned; Big Head, his brother, was shot by an Indian; Coutonahs dropped dead at a dance; Battosh was mysteriously shot; Lavigne was drowned.

Fraser was run through the body by a Frenchman in Paris; Baptiste Morille, while drunk, was thrown into a fire by ebriate companions; another died drunk on a roadway; another was wounded by the bursting of his gun; Dupluis was impaled on a pitchfork; Gardaple was scalped by Indians; another was gored to death by a buffalo, and still another shot by mistake in a buffalo hunt.

And so on down the list—there are fact and fate for every one of the sixty-five cases.

But, while some people prefer to consider this a punishment for what they term "the massacre," it is perhaps no more than an illustration of the dangers attending the fur-hunting business on every hand.

Today all is changed. Those places which the old school geography designated as trading posts have become prosperous cities, some of them with department stores as elegant and comprehensive as those found in the largest American and British cities.

For instance, near the head offices of the Hudson Bay Company, at the point where used to stand the walls of Fort Garry, one may now see the principal stores of the city of Winnipeg, which is likened to Whiteley's Necessity Store in London, where you may buy a house or anything belonging to or around a house.

## TRANSFORMED THE WILDERNESS

The great retail emporium of Victoria is the Hudson Bay Company's store, and in Calgary, the metropolis of Alberta and the Canadian plains, the principal shopping place is the Hudson Bay store.

Since the opening of the Northwest Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan by the Dominion Government, about two years ago, the boom has been continuous. The country is becoming one of the most prosperous and up-to-date in America. And yet today, as two centuries ago, the Hudson Bay Company is the greatest of fur-trading corporations, and fur trading is today a principal source of its profits.

As in the early days, the Indians come now to the stores with their pack of skins on their backs, to be traded for tobacco, sugar, corn, cooking utensils, lodge furnishings and money.

And today, as of yore, the scouts and agents of the company penetrate to the homes of the more isolated tribes, buy up their skins and "tote" them to the trading post on their backs or by dog team. But they are not the picturesque old fellows with tomahawk and moccasins and muskets and quaint accoutrements; they are prosaic-looking individuals.

Like the commonplace, present-day cowboy on the western ranch, they have become simply ghosts of vanished romance.

## SOME CURIOUS FACTS

THERE is a special examination in Austria cities for female barbers, who are yearly growing more numerous.

In France it is a penal offense to give any form of solid food to babies under a year old, unless it be prescribed in writing by a properly qualified medical man.

Turkey will not allow typewriters to be sold in the Balkan provinces that still remain subject to her control, alleging that they are used to "print" revolutionary literature.

A pretty table observance in Danish families is for children, even little ones who can scarcely toddle, to go gravely after dinner to salute their parents and say, "Tak for mad" ("Thanks for the meal"). Even visitors shake hands with their host and hostess and go through the same formality. In German families that hold to tradition the same custom prevails. When the evening meal is ended the party stand up around the table and each shakes hands with the neighbor, saying, "Gesegete Mahlzeit"—blessing the food.

A quaint ceremony is witnessed in parts of Norway twice a year. It is the "blessing of the beasts." The cows, asses, and a few thoroughbred horses, which are raised in that part of France, are brought together in front of the church, whence issues a procession of gaily dressed peasants to the sound of a chant sung by the priest and people. Then the pastor sprinkles a few drops of water on the head of each animal. Sometimes as many as a couple of hundred peasants take part in the ceremony, but not a trace of levity is to be seen on their faces. When the ceremony is completed the procession passes through the village singing, and then disperses.

The custom of adoption is universal in Japan, where it is practiced to keep a family name from becoming extinct. Indeed, there is scarcely a family in which it has not at some time or other been observed. A person who has not male issue adopts a son, and, if he has a daughter, often gives her to him in marriage. A youth, or even a child, who may be the head of a family, occasionally adopts, on the point of dying, a son older than himself to succeed him.