

## TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS IN THE WILDERNES

confluence of the two great branches, but a British flag, hoisted in the middle of the Indian camp, planted there by Mr. Thompson as he passed, with a written paper, laying claim to the country north of the forks as British territory." The explorer continued his way down the Columbia, reaching its mouth July 15 or 16. Here had been founded a few months before the famous trading post of Astoria, immortalized in Washington Irving's delightful but somewhat inaccurate story.

Retracing his steps, Thompson reached Kettle Falls, by a roundabout route, toward the end of August. From here he wrote a letter to Daniel Williams Harmon, then stationed at Stuart's Lake, in Northern British Columbia. The letter went by what was known as the Indian post. Paul Kane, in his *Wanderings of an Artist*, describes this primitive form of mail delivery. "The gentlemen in charge of the various posts have frequently occasion to send letters, sometimes