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PREFACE.

Even amongst our own people, how little is known of the early history of British Columbia! That the Fur Traders were the first white men to take up permanent residence in the wilds of the unknown Interior land lying between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, is common knowledge, but, with that, error creeps in and with the very phrase "The Fur Traders" is associated the idea that by it is meant the Hudson's Bay Company, an idea at once prevalent and erroneous. Established by Royal Charter in 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company gradually extended their field of operations westward, but it was the North West Company, formed in 1787, that first pushed their way west of the Rockies. These rival companies swept the North, the South being harvested by a later concern known as the Mackina Company. Then came the founding of the American Fur Company by John Jacob Astor, of New York, in 1809, and his absorption of the Mackina Company two years later. With the whole South field in his control, Mr. Astor turned his eyes Westward, beyond the Rockies, to the Oregon or Columbia River, and formed the Pacific Fur Company, with headquarters at Astoria, afterwards Fort George when the Nor'-Westers secured possession, at the mouth of that great waterway. Thence traders branched out Northward even as the Nor'-Westers made their way South. That both these companies should reach what is now Kamloops about the same time, is, therefore, scarcely a matter for wonder, and when the vigorous Northerners devoured the Pacific Fur Co., the Farther West, rich in the coveted pelts, was theirs alone, and so remained, so far as the Interior was concerned,

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