

had progressed to such a point of exacerbation between the two companies, that the Northwesters, with the unscrupulous ferocity which such a life as they led among the Indians inevitably produces, even in men of the best early training and education, had waged a vengeful and unsparing partisan war against the posts of the rival company. Sometimes they contented themselves with driving away their inhabitants; at others they cut off their means of support; again they would lie in ambush, and murder them in their routes; and finally, in the year 1814, they organized a powerful expedition against the Red River Settlement, which, after a war of two years, characterized by circumstances of barbarity and scoundrelism, which rivalled or surpassed that of their Indian allies and friends, the war was terminated by the cruel massacre of Mr. Semple, the governor of the colony, with all his intimate companions, and a total expulsion of all the survivors.

This is a brief outline of a course of conduct so lawless, so bloody, so ferocious, and so utterly unprincipled, that we marvel how the imagination of Mr. Irving could so far delude his judgment as to induce him to speak of such men and such atrocities, in language applicable only to deeds of heroism performed for noble ends. It is provoking to have the murders and robberies of a gang of outlaws, whose lives were scarce redeemed by one virtuous trait, and whose acts, if perpetrated within any civilized community under the sun, would have elevated them to the gibbet a thousand times over—celebrated by stooping genius as deeds worthy to be compared to the sublimest age of chivalry, when—if the ends were wrong—they were at least deemed by their pursuers, and the world, the noblest to which heroic valor could devote itself. The fact only shows, (if proof were needed,) that individuals of high genius and brilliant imagination may be totally blinded by the very excess of light; and that it is thus possible to sympathise deeply and sincerely with the guilty actors in the most atrocious deeds, and at the same time wholly overlook the suffering and the bloodshed of their innocent and unoffending victims.

This crowning outrage of the Northwest Company rendered it perfectly obvious that this contest between the two companies must result in the entire ruin of one or both of them. Their differences were brought before the British Parliament in June, 1819, and a debate ensued, in the course of which the conduct of the parties was minutely investigated. The Ministry then interposed its mediation and a compromise was at length effected, by which the Northwest Company was merged in that of the Hudson's Bay. At the same time, and in connection with this arrangement, an act "for regulating the fur trade and establishing a criminal and civil jurisdiction in certain parts of North America," was passed, containing every thing requisite to give stability and efficiency to the Bay Company. The contract between the two companies was signed in London in March, 1821.

Under the provisions of the above mentioned act, the King granted to the "Governor, and company of Adventurers, trading to Hudson's Bay, and to a number of persons representing the Northwest Company, the exclusive privilege of trading for twenty-one years, in all