



FORT GARRY, RED RIVER.

son to undertake the management of so great a concern, to reconcile men who had been in arms against each other, and to bring their trade from the brink of ruin to a successful issue. Yet for forty years he remained at the helm, and with such marked success as to have the honor of knight-hood conferred upon him, in token of his services. He was the virtual ruler of about half of North America, and, though an autocrat, held the reins of power to the last with unslackening grasp. Small in stature, he was of indomitable perseverance, albeit somewhat impatient in temper. It is told of him—and one may say of the story '*si non é vero*;' it is at least '*ben trovato*'—that, on one occasion, while passing through the Lake of the Woods, and urging his crew overmuch, a powerful French voyageur, his right-hand man, became so incensed at his unreasoning demands that he seized him by the neck, lifted him over the gunwale, plunged him into the water, and then drew him dripping in again, to be, for the re-

mainder of that voyage, a more considerate master."

Under Sir George Simpson's sway, the story of the company was one of peace, prosperity, and progress. The infusion of North-West blood and capital gave it most vigorous life, and each year witnessed extending operations, until, in 1860, its ledger showed one hundred and fifty-five establishments, in charge of twenty-five chief factors, twenty-eight chief traders, one hundred and fifty-two clerks, and one thousand two hundred other servants, besides a legion of subject natives. The trading districts were divided into four departments, covering the country from ocean to ocean, from Ungava, on the bleak Labrador coast, to Fort Victoria, on the fiord-pierced shores of British Columbia—an empire hardly smaller than the whole of Europe, though but thinly populated by some one hundred and sixty thousand Indians, half-breeds, and Esquimaux.

Hardly was the Dominion of Canada well born than its statesmen began to look with longing eyes upon the boundless prairies of the North-West, and to demand in no uncertain language from the mother country the abrogation of the charter giving the Hudson's Bay Company a monopoly of that promised land. But, of course, the company could hardly be expected to yield up so splendid a property without adequate compensation. Negotiations were accordingly entered into, which, in the year 1869, resulted in a bargain being effected. The company surrendered its proprietary rights, and in return therefor received the tidy sum of three hundred thousand pounds sterling, and one-twentieth of the land within the fertile belt, as well as fifty thousand acres in immediate proximity to its posts.

As a monopoly the Hudson's Bay Company then ceased to exist. As a commercial corporation, trading upon just the same basis as other corporations, and still practically free from troublesome competition in the more northern territories, holding vast landed estates, ever increasing in value as the country opens up, and able to pay a decent dividend, capital now swollen to two millions of pounds, the "Honorable Company of Merchant Adventurers Trading into Hudson's Bay"