

ROMANCE OF EXPLORATION

giving his name to the great river he discovered. This was reserved for another intrepid explorer, Alexander Mackenzie, of the North-West Company. In 1789 he started from Fort Chipewyan, on Lake Athabasca, in search of the "Western Sea." He, too, was confronted with great difficulties. Wild Indians told "of demon-haunted caves and impassable falls." Terrified by these tales, his Indians refused to go farther. With infinite patience Mackenzie induced them to continue seven days longer, and if in that time they did not discover the sea, he promised to turn back. Before the end of the week the mouth of the river was reached, and the explorer knew it was the Arctic Ocean he had gained instead of the Western Sea.

"It is hard," says Bishop Bompas, "to overpraise the intrepid courage, cool prudence, and inquiring intelligence of that noble traveller. . . . Sir Alexander Mackenzie took the greatest pains to conciliate all Indians whom he met by presents and promises of peaceful trade, and he energetically restrained all attempts at murder or rapine made by the Indians who accompanied him. He did not meet with Eskimo, and it is little wonder that these and the Mackenzie River Indians were shy of him, as it was then customary for the Athabasca Indians to make annual war expeditions down the Mackenzie for purposes of plunder, massacre, and rapine, as well as for the kidnapping of women and slaves."

In after-years many eminent explorers, such as Franklin, Richardson, Simpson, and Rae, entered the country, the accounts of whose journeys and thrilling adventures may be read elsewhere.

Several years after the discovery of the Mackenzie River trading-posts were established at various places along this stream and its tributaries. To these the Indians brought their furs, and a thriving business was carried on. For a time there was a keen rivalry between the Hudson's Bay