

clude that neither race may blamelessly point the finger of reproach at the other.

Any variations in detail from actual occurrences as seen by my own eyes are solely for the purpose of screening living descendants of those whose lives are here portrayed from prying curiosity; but, in truth, many experiences during the thrilling days of the fur companies were far too harrowing for recital. I would fain have tempered some of the incidents herein related to suit the sentiments of a milk-and-water age; but that could be done only at the cost of truth.

There is no French strain in my blood, so I have not that passionate devotion to the wild daring of *l'ancien régime*, in which many of my rugged companions under *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* gloried; but he would be very sluggish, indeed, who could not look back with some degree of enthusiasm to the days of gentlemen adventurers in no-man's-land, in a word, to the workings of the great fur trading companies. Theirs were the trappers and runners, the *Coueurs des Bois* and *Bois-Brûlés*, who traversed the immense solitudes of the pathless west; theirs, the brigades of gay *voyageurs* chanting hilarious refrains in unison with the rhythmic sweep of paddle blades and following unknown streams until they had explored from St. Lawrence to MacKenzie River; and theirs, the merry lads of the north, blazing a track through the wilderness and leaving from Atlantic to Pacific lonely stockaded fur posts—footprints for the