

come to unknown grief in the gulf he had discovered. Wonderful were the courage and self-denial of the handful of hardy pioneers who first stockaded a fortalice on that forbidding coast, where they had to fetch the timber by ships from afar and bore into the frozen ground with gigantic gimlets. The illimitable wastes around, still known as the Barren Grounds, were intensely depressing. The silence was seldom broken, save by the screams of the sea-fowl flying landward before a storm. The musk-ox—more of a sheep by the way—was the only animal of any size that made its home there. The wolf, the moose, or the reindeer would sometimes stray thither in the short summer, but they were always prompt to quit with the first sprinkling of the snows. The settlers had cut themselves loose from society and civilisation. Still the communications with the depots at Fort York, Fort Albany, and Fort Moose are only kept up by a single annual vessel, and if the arrival is unduly delayed, the lonely garrisons in fear of starvation are in a fever of anxiety. Even as fur-preserves heaven-forsaken territories could not compare with the wealth of the vast sub-Arctic forests lying farther to the south, which stretch northward from the Saskatchewan, down the valleys of the Mackenzie and Fraser rivers, with their swamps and muskegs, where all fur-bearing animals, from the beavers and grey foxes down to the musk-rats, had from time immemorial multiplied in security.

Yet from these small beginnings the Company expanded till it had annexed a territory as large as Europe. That is, of course, but an approximate guess, for those wastes will never be surveyed. But when compelled to transfer its domains to the Canadian Dom-

inion, it owned everything from the Arctic circle to the Red River including Labrador, Prince Rupert's Land, what are known now as the North-West Territories, British Columbia, and Vancouver Island. The expansion and the display of British spirit were in some respects more marvellous in their way than that by which another great commercial company gave England the empire of India. Clive and those who followed in his footsteps, stifling their native levies with meretricious handfuls of disciplined troops, scattered countless hosts of warlike Orientals. The fur-hunter had to contend with the forces of nature, with immense distances with utter desolation, and the cruel severity of the climate. Yet the wilderness was not absolutely unpeopled—when the Company sold their territory the other day they were believed to have 100,000 native subjects in that vast expanse—and the natives were naturally inclined to resent their invasion. As they advanced their unfined frontiers, they had to intrench their positions. The Hudson Bay post was not only an outlying trading station, but the symbol of the strong Company's continuance. It was backed up by an unknown and mysterious power; and it was by prestige that the two or three whites, with some half-dozen half-breeds by way of bodyguard, held their own among the scattered tribes. To begin with, two of these posts were established on the shores of James and Hudson Bays. These were to be the permanent bases of operations. In 1869 there were upwards of 100 occupied and garrisoned by fifty chief factors and chief traders, 150 clerks, and 1300 inferior servants. The posts were more or less formidable according to the

importance of the place, and the all-weather powder magazines in which the who were certain were stored could be used against the snow and the telegraph stockade thirty feet high, with bastions at the corners, and the Scottish series of look-outs all around. Only the entrance was strongly guarded. Within the residence there were a number of the victuaries, the precarious in the extreme, and the asceticism of the garrison upon a frontier though in the north, though the roughness of the life was not to be feared. The less heat was against the sea, the more of the world's business was turned back.