

exposed to the hostility of the natives, and generally were within reach of supplies from the settlements. There is, perhaps, no class of men on the earth who lead a life of more continued exertion, danger and excitement; and who are more enamored of their occupations, than the free trappers of the wild regions of the west. No toil, no danger, no privation, can turn the trapper aside from his pursuit. If his meal is not ready in time, he takes his rifle—hies to the forest—shoots his game—lights his fire, and cooks his repast. With his horse and his rifle he is independent of the world, and spurs its restraints. In vain may the most vigilant and cruel savages beset his path—in vain may rocks, and precipices, and wintry torrents oppose his progress; let but a single track of a beaver meet his eye, and he forgets all danger, and defies all difficulties. At times he may be seen, with his traps on his shoulder, buffeting his way across rapid streams amidst floating blocks of ice: at other times may he be seen, with his traps slung on his back, clambering the most rugged mountains—scaling or descending the most frightful precipices—searching, by routes inaccessible to horse, and never before trodden by white man, for springs and lakes unknown to his comrades, where he may meet with his favorite game. This class of hunters are generally Canadians by birth, and of French descent; who, after being bound to serve the traders for a certain number of years and receive wages, or hunt on shares, then continued to hunt and trap on their own account, trading with the Company like the Indians; hence they are called *free men*. Having passed their youth in the wilderness, in constant intercourse with the Indians, and removed from civilized society, they lapse with natural facility into the habits of *savage life*."

The "voyageurs" resemble the "arrieros" in Spain, with this difference, that instead of traveling by land with mules, the voyageurs go by water with "batteaux or boats, and canoes." They are the most indispensable class of functionaries in carrying on the fur trade:—

"Their dress is generally half civilized, half savage. They wear a capot, or outside coat, made of a blanket—a striped cotton shirt—cloth trousers, or leather leggins—mocassins, or deer-skin shoes, without a sole, and ornamented on the upper; and a belt of variegated worsted, from which are suspended a knife, tobacco-pouch, and other implements. Their language is of the same piebald character, being a French patois, embroidered with Indian and English words and phrases."

Steam, it appears, is making encroachments on the "vocation" of the voyageurs as well as on everything else. Having described the settlement at Red River, and the manner of buffalo hunting, the author gives us a clear and interesting account of the Company's principles of dealing, and the mode of traffic with the Northern Indians:—

"The principle universally acted on throughout the Company's territories, which have been now reduced, considering their vast extent, and the many difficulties to be encountered, to a state of astonishing quiet, peace, and good government, is, that the true interests of the native Indian and the white resident are indissolubly united; and that no immediate advantage, or prospect of

it, is to stand in the way of improving the condition of the natives. The following extract from the standing orders of the Company will convey an idea—though a faint one—of the wise, humane, and liberal spirit by which it is actuated:—"That the Indians be treated with kindness and indulgence; and mild and conciliatory means resorted to, in order to encourage industry, repress vice, and inculcate morality—that the use of spirituous liquors be gradually discontinued in the few districts in which it is yet indispensable; and that the Indians be liberally supplied with requisite necessities—particularly with articles of ammunition, whether they have the means of paying for them, or not." Since these general orders were issued, the Company, finding the success of this humane and judicious policy gradually answering the proposed aim, has at last adopted the bold and decisive course of abolishing altogether the use of *spirituous liquors* as articles of trade with the natives. They have not only done this in the territories within their own jurisdiction; but have, by a new article introduced into the treaty of commerce, entered into with the Russians by Sir George Simpson, stipulated that the Russians should act, in their trading with the natives, on the same principle. So that henceforward one source of demoralization will be dried up. \* \*

So far has it been the wish or policy of the Company not to acquire an undue influence over the Indians by loading them with debts, that repeated attempts have been made to reduce the trade to simple barter; and they have often cancelled the debts of whole tribes—for instance, since the junction of the two companies in 1821, the debts of the Chippewyans have been twice cancelled. But from the peculiar disposition and customs of the Indians—especially the *northern* Indians—these good intentions have not yet produced all the hoped-for good, although they are gradually working out their object. The Chipewyans have a custom which, until eradicated, must operate as a check on their progressive prosperity. On the death of a relative, they destroy guns, ammunition, blankets, kettles; in short, everything they possess; and conclude the havoc by tearing their huts to pieces. When these transports of grief have subsided, they find themselves reduced to utter want, and are obliged to resort to the nearest establishments for a fresh supply of necessities; and thus their debts are renewed, and their wants periodically kept alive. In some parts of the Indian territory, the hunting grounds descend by inheritance among the natives; and this right of property is rigidly enforced. But where no such salutary law prevails, their main source of wealth—the beaver—would soon be exhausted by the eager search of the hunters, if the Company had not adopted judicious regulations to prevent the havoc; for they have, for several years past, used every effort, through their officers, to exhort the natives to spare the *young* of that animal. \* \*

But the attempt will be easily understood to be one of extreme difficulty, in consequence of the passion for depriving the animal creation of life so strongly implanted in the breast of the North American Indian, that it costs him a pang to pass bird, beast, or fish, without an effort to destroy it, whether he stands in need of it or not. The tendency to destructiveness is a vehement instinct of their nature. Near York Factory, in 1831, this propensity, contrary to all the remonstrances of the Company's servants at that place, led to