

An earlier traveller had described the territory as "without almost any vegetation, scarcely a tree, shrub or plant to be seen, except a few dwarf willows and great patches of lichens." Here he spent thirteen quiet years, but uneventful though they seemed, the manner in which they were passed affords a key to his subsequent marvelously successful life. Most of his time, of course, was taken up with trading with the Indians, who brought furs to the posts. But he had a great deal of leisure time on his hands, which he filled up with canoeing, boating, and shooting and fishing for recreation in summer. The long nights of the eight months' winter, when the thermometer often reached 50° below zero, he employed in reading, with an occasional journey on snowshoes or on dog-sledges to outlying parts of the territory adjoining the main stations of the company. On one occasion, it is stated, that he ventured on a winter journey all the way to Montreal, to seek medical treatment for an affection of the eyes, without leave of the governor, but was brusquely sent back with a reprimand to the vacant post of duty, encountering untold hardships on the way. The life spent so largely in the open air, and all the exercises which he underwent in his early manhood contributed to build up the rugged frame and to knit compactly the muscles of the man as he was known in after years. His splendid physique was a fit instrument for the very capable intellect which it embodied. Most young men in his circumstances would have succumbed to ennui and quitted the monotonous life he was compelled to live; but Donald, the name which he was reluctant to relinquish when made a peer, the name by which he was endeared to his mother while she lived, and which he loved to hear from the lips of Lady Strathcona to the end, found delightful and profitable occupation in the library which the company had stocked with standard works on every subject. He not only read the books but digested their contents very thoroughly, and thus developed the well furnished mind