

LIFE OF THE SETTLER IN WESTERN CANADA BEFORE THE WAR OF 1812.

HISTORY during the greater part of its conscious period has been a record of the exceptional and dramatic events of personal heroes and of dynastic and national crises. Written for entertainment rather than for instruction, it dealt mainly with strife and adventure—the tragic and unusual phases of life, not its every-day and prosaic course. We have not, of course, dropped the earlier aspect of history nor do we wish to do so, but with the rise of democracy interested in the welfare and development of all sections of the people, we have broadened the outlook and deepened the interest and insight.

We have still, however, to depend upon the records which have come down to us for the reconstruction of the past, and the actual records of the common people are not considered worthy of preservation by reason of any intrinsic interest. Such records as we have regarding the lives and interests of the common people were not intended for historical purposes. The information is nearly always incidental to what were considered the larger interests of life, or is to be obtained from records preserved for family reasons or for corporate or business needs. These unintentional witnesses are all the more independent of special coloring, but for the same reason they are fragmentary and uncertain, requiring much piecing together and considerable explanation and interpretation.

In dealing with the settlement of a new country like Canada, we find much difficulty as to adequate contemporary records, though interest in the pioneer period is certain to increase as it recedes from the newer generations. It becomes increasingly difficult to restore the daily life of the settlers and to understand at once the difficulties with which they had to contend, the means which they were forced to employ in overcoming them, and the success or failure which attended their efforts. Yet a somewhat detailed understanding of their circumstances is indispensable in estimating the influences which their lives and achievements have had upon the subsequent development of the country, its economic conditions and social and political institutions.