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THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT.

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Few chapters of history are more interesting than those which describe the progress of British colonization. They record scenes of as thrilling adventure, of as sublime daring, of as heroic valor as any ever witnessed on earth. The settlement of the Red River of the North is no exception to these remarks.

At the beginning of the present century the trade of the great fur-producing regions of the north and north-west was divided between the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies. Between those companies an intense and bitter rivalry existed—a rivalry that could be appeased only by the destruction of one of the other. About this time, Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, was the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. He was a man of indomitable energy, and of dauntless intrepidity. With the skill of an experienced general, he prepared for the inevitable conflict. He perceived that by obtaining control of the Red River, he would have a strong basis for future operations, and thus possess great advantages over his antagonists. For this purpose, he resolved to establish a colony of his countrymen in that important strategic point. The offer of free grants of one hundred acres of land each, and of the continuance of their civil rights and religious privileges—the latter an important consideration with a true North Briton—induced a large number of hardy Highlanders to seek their fortunes in the North-west.

In the year 1812, the first brigade of the colonists reached Red River. A stern welcome awaited them. Hardly had they arrived, when an armed band of North-westerns, painted and plumed in the Indian style, appeared upon the ground, and by their significant gestures (for their language was unknown) warned the colonists to depart. The latter were compelled, not only to submit, but to purchase, by the sacrifice

of their arms and trinkets, the services of their conquerors as guides to the town of Pembina, within the territory of the United States.

Undaunted by this failure, they returned in the spring to the Red River, built log-houses, and sowed their seed. They were undisturbed till the following year. By this time the decree had gone forth from the Councils of the North-West Company, *Delenda est Carthago*—the colony must be exterminated. It was done, but not without shedding of blood. The flourishing settlement became a heap of ashes, its inhabitants exiles in the wilderness.

Reinforced by a new brigade from Scotland, the banished settlers returned to their ruined homes. Many hardships ensued. Desertions became so numerous that the very existence of the colony was perilled. But in June, 1816, there fell upon it a more crushing blow than any that it had yet received. A body of three hundred mounted North-Westerns, armed to the teeth, and begrimed with war-paint, attacked the settlement. A little band of twenty-eight men went forth to parley. Twenty-one of them were slain, the settlement sacked and burned, and the colonists hunted from their own hearths like beasts of prey.

Hereupon Lord Selkirk assumed the offensive. With a battalion of Swiss mercenaries, whom he had brought from Europe, he marched against the head-quarters of the rival company at Fort William, on Lake Superior, which stronghold he captured, and then, nothing discouraged, led the exiles back to the thrice-forsaken colony, which he re-established on a new and solid basis, advancing agricultural implements, seed, grain, and stock. But the summer was already half gone. The harvest was scanty, famine was impending, and the hapless colonists fled southward to Pembina at the approach of winter. Their hardships were incredible. They were forced to subsist upon the precarious products of the chase. They suffered everything but death, and were reduced to the uttermost extremity.