

their ancient and their lively foes. The French were swarming all around the outer limits of the company's field, taking first choice of the furs, and even beginning to set up posts of their own. Canada was French soil, and peopled by as hardy and adventurous a class as inhabited any part of America. The *courriers du bois* and the *bois-brûlés* (half-breeds), whose success afterward led to the formation of rival companies, had begun a mosquito warfare, by canoeing the waters that led to Hudson Bay, and had penetrated 1000 miles farther west than the English. One Thomas Barnett, a smith, said that the French intercepted the Indians, forcing them to trade, "when they take what they please, giving them Toys in Exchange; and fright them into Compliance by Tricks of Sleight of Hand; from whence the *Indians* conclude them to be Conjurers; and if the *French* did not compel the *Indians* to trade, they would certainly bring all the Goods to the *English*."

This must have seemed to the direct, practical English trading mind a wretched business, and worthy only of Johnny Crapeau, to worst the noble Briton by monkeyish acts of conjuring. It stirred the soul of one witness, who said that the way to meet it was "by sending some *English* with a little Brandy." A gallon to certain chiefs and a gallon and a half to others would certainly induce the natives to come down and trade, he thought.

But while the testimony of the English was valuable as far as it went, which was mainly concerning trade, it was as nothing regarding the life of the natives compared with that of one Joseph La France, of Missili-Mackinack (Mackinaw), a traveller, hunter, and trader. He had been sent as a child to Quebec to learn French, and in later years had been from Lake Nipissing to Lake Champlain and the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Quinipigue (Winnipeg) or Red River, and to Hudson Bay. He told his tales to Arthur Dobbs, who made a book of them, and part of that became an appendix to the committee's report. La France said:

"That the high price on *European* Goods discourages the Natives so much, that if it were not that they are under a Necessity of having Guns, Powder, Shot, Hatchets, and other Iron Tools for their Hunting, and Tobacco, Brandy, and some Paint for Luxury, they would not go

down to the Factory with what they now carry. They leave great numbers of Furs and Skins behind them. A good Hunter among the *Indians* can kill 600 Beavers in a season, and carry down but 100" (because their canoes were small); "the rest he uses at home, or hangs them upon Branches of Trees upon the Death of their Children, as an Offering to them; or use them for Bedding and Coverings: they sometimes burn off the Fur, and roast the Beavers, like Pigs, upon any Entertainments; and they often let them rot, having no further Use of them. The Beavers, he says, are of Three Colours—the Brown-reddish Colour, the Black, and the White. The Black is most valued by the Company, and in *England*; the White, though most valued in *Canada*, is blown upon by the Company's Factors at the Bay, they not allowing so much for these as for the others; and therefore the *Indians* use them at home, or burn off the Hair, when they roast the Beavers, like Pigs, at an Entertainment when they feast together. The Beavers are delicious Food, but the Tongue and Tail the most delicious Parts of the whole. They multiply very fast, and if they can empty a Pond, and take the whole Lodge, they generally leave a Pair to breed, so that they are fully stocked again in Two or Three Years. The *American* Oxen, or Beeves, he says, have a large Bunch upon their Backs, which is by far the most delicious Part of them for Food, it being all as sweet as Marrow, juicy and rich, and weighs several Pounds.

"The Natives are so discouraged in their Trade with the Company that no Peltry is worth the Carriage; and the fine t Furs are sold for very little. They gave but a Pound of Gunpowder for 4 Beavers, a Fathom of Tobacco for 7 Beavers, a Pound of Shot for 1, an Ell of coarse Cloth for 15, a Blanket for 12, Two Fish-hooks or Three Flint for 1; a Gun for 25, a Pistol for 10, a common Hat with white Lace, 7; an Ax, 4; a Billhook, 1; a Gallon of Brandy, 4; a chequer'd Shirt, 7; all of which are sold at a monstrous Profit, even to 2000 *per Cent*. Notwithstanding this discouragement, he computed that there were brought to the Factory in 1742, in all, 50,000 Beavers and above 9000 Martens.

"The smaller Game, got by Traps or Snares, are generally the Employment of the Women and Children; such as the Martens, Squirrels, Cats, Ermines, &c. The Elks, Stags, Reindeer, Bears, Tygers, wild Beeves, Wolves, Foxes, Beavers, Otters, Corcajeu, &c., are the employment of the Men. The *Indians*, when they kill any Game for Food, leave it where they kill it, and send their wives next Day to carry it home. They go home in a direct Line, never missing their way, by observations they make of the Course they take upon their going out. The Trees all bend towards the South, and the Branches on that Side are larger and stronger than on the North Side; as also the Moss upon the Trees. To let their