

## PREFACE.

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PRAISEWORTHY as the task is of unifying the scattered elements of our Canadian story, yet it will hardly be maintained that such historical studies ought not to be preceded by others of a more elementary character. Herein, then, are chronicled the annals of an institution coherent and compact—an isolated unit.

The Hudson's Bay Company witnessed the French dominion in Northamerica rise to its extreme height, decline and disappear ; it saw new colonies planted by Britain ; it saw them quarrel with the parent State, and themselves become transformed into States. Wars came and passed—European Powers on this continent waxed and waned, rose and faded away ; remote forests were invaded by loyal subjects who erected the wilderness into opulent provinces. Change, unceasing, never-ending change, has marked the history of this hemisphere of ours ; yet there is one force, one institution, which survived nearly all conditions and all *régimes*. For two full centuries the Hudson's Bay Company existed, unshorn of its greatness, and endures still—the one enduring pillar in the New World mansion.

In pondering the early records of the Company, one truth will hardly escape observation. It did not go forth amongst the savages with the Bible in its hand. Elsewhere, an old axiom, and true—first the missionary, then the soldier, then the trader. In the case of the Company, this order has been reversed. The French associations in Canada for the collection and sale of furs were preceded by the Jesuits—