



## No. 3

### When Fur was All in All

FOR two hundred and fifty years after Jacques Cartier ascended the St. Lawrence Canada's important contribution to the world's wealth consisted entirely of Fur. For sake of Beaver skins and Freedom, and contrary to laws and prayers, men forsook civilization and relapsed, singing, into savagery—men, many of them born to the refinements of the most luxurious period in the history of luxury-loving France.

Some of these wild Coureurs des Bois it was who built the first stores in Upper Canada—mere huts of round, unbarked logs, set on the shore of a lake. Once a year, perhaps, these free-trading Coureurs des Bois came to Montreal to sell a canoe load of furs and to swagger in barbaric holiday finery.

Never again on this continent will such a picture of contrast live and move as the streets of Montreal presented at the season when the Fur Canoes came down—Ladies in silks and satins, Bush-runners in buckskin and beads, Town Gentlemen in gorgeous doublets and cloaks of European fashion, Farmers, Tradesmen and Mechanics in the peasant and bourgeois costumes of Normandy; Soldiers in blue and scarlet, Indians naked of limb and cloaked in trade blankets or the skins of wild animals. From Montreal again would set out the great freight canoes for the big licensed Companies trading in the far North-west, laden to the gunwales with guns, powder, shot, knives, axes, beads, blankets, and brandy, manned by half-wild Voyageurs, under a Commander who had probably served half his life as an army officer of France. And by stealth—for free-trading was for long illegal—would set forth again singly, or by twos and threes, the smaller canoes of the reckless Coureurs des Bois. Fur was the universal quest—beaver, otter, mink, fox, wolf, lynx, martin, fisher, buffalo, and the all-pervading muskrat.

And thus to the Conquest of Canada by the English, and practically thus long, long after the Conquest, when Yankee, British and European free-traders shared the spoils, and Scotchmen re-organized the trade of the great North-west. To-day, on the errands of the Fur Trade, there are men still living who have journeyed from Montreal to Vancouver by birch-bark canoe.

