

At the conclusion of protracted and diligent study I found myself in the possession of some 4,500 memorandum cards, alphabetically arranged by subjects, and collectively constituting a sort of private cyclopedia of information concerning the Northwest Company, the X. Y. Company, the fur trade of those days, the bourgeois, their voyageurs and other engagés, their Indian customers, their trading-posts, their canoe-routes—and what not in the way of biography, geography, ethnography, and natural history. Most of this material was found to fit in with Henry's narrative to a nicety; and even the residuum, touching points which Henry did not happen to bring up, was available for incorporation alphabetically in the Index to the work. Most of my information was drawn afresh from its original sources; but I also utilized the labors of modern historical authorities, such as Masson and Tassé, each of whom has recently given us an invaluable work upon subjects germane to our present enterprise. It is not probable that the name of any person, either of the Northwest or of the X. Y. Company, which appears in either of these authors, has escaped me, and it is certain that many more than have ever appeared in print before are given in the present work; so that the result, in this one biographical particular, represents a closer approach to a complete gazetteer of the personnel of the two companies, from the humblest of their engagés to the most redoubtable leaders of those great enterprises, than has hitherto been given to the public. The difficulty of identifying personal names in these old records is well known to be very great, for various reasons; most of those concerned in these affairs were obscure individuals, whose memory is now but a name, oftentimes so unsettled in orthography that a dream of the shadow of smoke were scarcely more elusive; and in the records which reach us, furthermore, it is often only a surname that appears, though it may have been, and usually was, borne by several different persons. I have taken the utmost pains in this particular; but I am sure that in my notes, as well as in Henry's