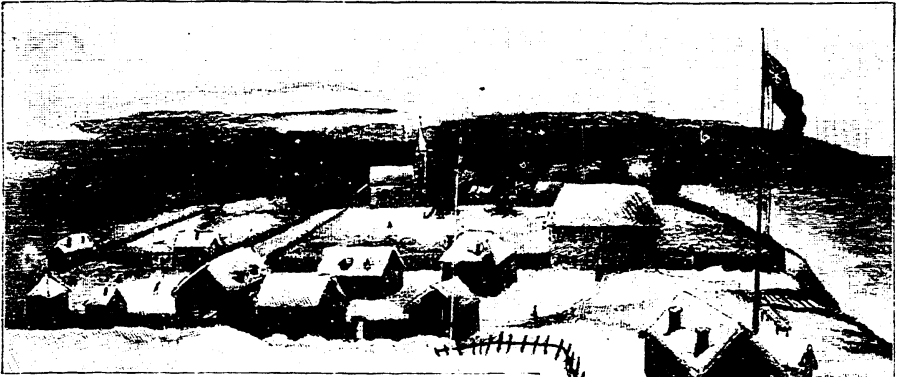


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FORT SIMPSON IN WINTER.

THE ROMANTIC STORY OF A GREAT CORPORATION.

(THE HUDSON'S BAY TRADING COMPANY.)—PART I.

BY J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

THERE has been a romance of commerce no less than a romance of war. Men have shown an equal enterprise and daring in enlarging incomes as in extending the bounds of empire, and gold has run close rivalry with glory in adding brilliant pages to the world's history.

Unquestionably the most striking chapters in the romance of commerce relate to two remarkable corporations, which, though having much in common in their constitution and powers, were singularly dissimilar in the nature of their domain and character of their product. They both had their birth in England in the seventeenth century. They both were nominally mere trading associations, having nothing more ambitious in view than the securing of large dividends for their shareholders, yet in reality held almost imperial sway over uncounted leagues of territory. They were both the subject of fierce attacks that at times put their very existence in jeopardy, and in the end they had both to succumb to the resistless march of civilization, which in these latter days, when the ends of the earth are drawing nearer together, could not tolerate the idea of commercial corporations keeping to themselves vast landed possessions fit to be the homes of nations. So much had these two mighty corporations alike; but while the one bargained, intrigued, fought, and waxed opulent under the burning rays of an Oriental sun, the other pursued a quieter though hardly less prosperous career amidst the snowy wilderness of this western world. It is the story of the latter which I shall attempt to outline on the present paper.

It was in the merry days of the Restoration, when the second Charles might well be lavish toward those who had faithfully served his father "of sacred memory," that to a hero of many battles, retired upon his laurels to spend a well-earned furlough in fascinating if not particularly fruitful chemical experiments, appeared one Des Groseliers, an enterprising Frenchman who had traveled much in North America, and made acquaintance with the Indian tribes inhabiting the southern part of the Hudson Bay region. Monsieur Des Groseliers' story was calculated to fire the heart of a less adventurous being than Prince Rupert, whose attention had, indeed, been already drawn to that *terra incognita*, by reading in Marco Polo how the renowned Venetian traveler found in the tent of the Grand Khan of Tartary furs and sables "brought from the North, the land of darkness," and had thereby stirred within him the thought of what a splendid scheme it would be to put forth an organized effort to tap this treasury of precious peltries. The Frenchman found an interested listener; and the sequel was that after an