

formerly grew on the prairie, and will grow again if prairie fires are checked.

It may well be asked, How was this great fertile country kept locked and sealed till recently? Why was it not opened up long ago, and formed into one or more Colonies? One reason, certainly, was its inaccessibility, but the chief reason was that the interests of the Hudson Bay Company demanded its being kept as a preserve. The Company did what all Corporations do,—looked to its own interests solely. What had it to do with the welfare of the masses, or Imperial interests! Hence it came to pass that little was known about the real resources and capabilities of the North-west. Whose business was it to write about them, or urge the subject on the Imperial Government? Agents of the Company could not be expected to undertake such a work, for it would have amounted to a crusade against their masters and themselves. Missionaries to the Indian tribes received protection and assistance from the Company on the understanding that they were to “mind their own business.” A few tourists or travellers told what they had seen of the beauty and fertility of the land, but their accounts were set down as “travellers’ tales,” and disposed of by counter-statements about locusts, hailstones, eight months winter, early frosts, Indians, want of wood and water, rocks, bogs, and such like amenities. He who thinks that I am exaggerating may refer to an article in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1859, in which the proposal to form the Red River and Saskatchewan country into a Crown Colony is conclusively proved to be a wild and monstrous notion, or to the evidence that Sir George Simpson gave before a Committee of the House of Commons,—evidence that should be read in connection with his own previously published descriptions. Any one who visits the North-west is sure to hear corroborative evidence in abundance from individual missionaries, traders, and others. But it is not needed; *litera scripta manet*.

Only a very decided patriot, however, has the right to find fault with the Company for its action—or inaction. And if “patriotism is the best refuge of a scoundrel,” a man should be very sure that he comes into court with clean hands when he draws up an indictment against the great Company. It did what all mercantile bodies, all joint-stock companies, all monopolies, and most men and women do. It looked to itself, to its own objects and