

*The Pre-Selkirk Settlers of Old Assiniboia*

By REV. GEORGE BRYCE, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.C.

(Read May Meeting, 1918)

The story of the Selkirk Settlers of Red River (1812-70) has been told by the writer and others, but it is important to notice that half a century before Lord Selkirk's colony took root, the Traders of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company of Montreal had put their foot on the far interior of Rupert's Land. Founded in 1670, for a century the English company carried on their trade on the shore of Hudson Bay, but as the Montreal Company led by Joseph Frobisher penetrated the waters of the interior for trade in furs, and built the Fort of Sturgeon Lake, the Hudson's Bay Company men led by the distinguished Samuel Hearne, faced Sturgeon Lake Fort by a rival post—Fort Cumberland. These hostile establishments were at Poskoiac, or as we call it to-day "The Pas," on the great Saskatchewan River. Hearne's men were chiefly Orkneymen, engaged on the Orkney Islands, the last place of call made by the London ship as it came up the east coast of Scotland and crossed the North Sea to York Factory. The Nor'Wester voyageurs and workmen were chiefly French Canadians from Canada and their leaders of Scottish origin from Montreal. The employees of the two companies largely intermarried with the Indian women of the Cree nation. They rarely returned to their homes from the far West, and their children grew up a sturdy, agile, and daring race—the autochthons of the Interior, and like the Randolphs of Virginia, who claim descent from Pocahontas—the Indian Princess—boastful of the land of their birth. These children of the wilderness were in some cases sent for their education to Montreal or even at times to Edinburgh and Aberdeen. In most cases, however, whole families when their trading days were done, as Governor Archibald used to say, floated down the streams to the "Paradise of Red River" to make their homes alongside the Selkirk settlers—to enjoy schools and churches—the well known "Fiddler Library" and the society of the Selkirk colonists.

This paper will give an account by the writer of men and manners, as he saw them, on his making his abode under the shadow of Fort Garry in the year 1871.

The descendants of those of Orkney blood and those of French Canadian ancestry—while differing in temperament, speech, and