

familiarity of his race, he had a little world of self-indulgence and misrule around him. He had his clerks, canoe-men, and retainers of all kinds, who lived with him on terms of perfect sociability, always calling him by his Christian name. He had his harem of Indian beauties, and his troop of half-breed children; nor was there ever wanting a louting train of Indians hanging about the establishment, eating and drinking at his expense in the intervals of their hunting expeditions.'

It is not necessary to investigate the cause, but experience has shewn, that it requires much less time for a civilised people to degenerate into the manners and customs of savage life, than for savages to rise into a state of civilisation. Such was the event with the *coureurs des bois*, who, after accompanying the natives on their hunting and trading excursions, became so attached to the Indian mode of life, that they lost all relish for their former habits and native homes. For this very reason, however, these peddlers of the wilderness were extremely useful to the merchants engaged in the fur-trade, who freely supplied them with the necessary credit to proceed in their trading excursions. Three or four of these people would join stock, embark their property in a birch-bark canoe, which they worked themselves, and making their way up the mazy rivers that interlace the vast forests of Canada, commit themselves fearlessly to the first tribe of Indians they encountered. Sometimes they sojourned for months among them, assimilating to their tastes and habits with the happy facility of Frenchmen, adopting, in some degree, the Indian dress, and not unfrequently taking to themselves Indian wives. These voyages would extend often to twelve or fifteen months, when they would return in full glee down the Ottawa, their canoes loaded with rich cargoes of furs, and followed by great numbers of the natives. Now would ensue a period of revelry and dissipation, a continued round of drinking, gaming, feasting, and extravagant prodigality, which sufficed in a few weeks to dissipate all their gains, when they would start upon a fresh adventure, to be followed by fresh scenes of riot and extravagance.

The influence of such conduct and example could not but be pernicious to the native Indians, impeding the labours of the missionaries among them, and bringing into scandal and disrepute the character of the Christian religion among those natives who had become converts to it. As a check upon these loose adventurers, the missionaries prevailed upon the government to prohibit, under severe penalties, all persons from trading into the interior of the country without a licence. These licences were at first granted only to persons whose character could give no alarm to the zeal of the missionaries, but they came in time to be bestowed as rewards for services to officers and their widows, and others, who having the power of selling them again to the merchants, who again, in their turn, employed the *coureurs des bois* as their agents, the abuses of the old system were very soon revived and continued as