



Hudson Bay Company's Route.

no one, except luckless travellers, at Edmonton cares a rap about intermittent electric lights, or railroads that run passengers on a freight schedule, so long as they do not affect the fur trade. Fur was originally the *raison d'être* of Edmonton's existence, and continues the principal excuse of its being. In the last three years the settlement of a strip of land south and of one to the north has created a farming or ranching contingent, but to date of my visit canned goods appeared to remain the chief article of sustenance, as furs were certainly the main topic of conversation. Edmonton may in time develop the oasis upon which it is built, between the arid plains immediately to the south and the great lone land to the north, into something notably agricultural; but for many years the town will be, as it is to-day, the gateway of the well-nigh boundless fur-producing country to the north, and the outlet for the numberless "packs" gathered by the great Hudson Bay Company.

And what a company is this!—with the power of a king and the consideration of a partner. A monopoly that does not monopolize, it stands alone a unique figure

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SARCEE BELLE.



WINNIPEG DRAGOON.



WAPITI-HUNTER.

in the commercial history of the world. Given its charter by the impecunious Charles II. in 1670, the pioneers of this "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay" sailed for the southern shores of St. James Bay, where they set up their first post and took possession of the new country in the name of Prince Rupert. Here they found a rival French company, with a previous charter granted by Louis XIII., and an equally keen sense of Indian barter, so that for

many years there was more fighting than trading. When Wolfe, on the Heights of Abraham, crushed the power of France in Canada, the French company entered upon a decline that finally ended in dissolution. But in their stead came numbers of Englishmen, pushing their way westward, eager to trade for the furs of which they had heard so much and seen so little. Thus many trading-posts came into being, and eventually (about 1780) combined to form the Northwest Fur Company, the longest-lived and most determined rival that ever disputed trade with the Hudson Bay Company. It is not my purpose to fill space with historical research, but a