

PREFACE

THE Hudson's Bay Company! What a record this name represents of British pluck and daring, of patient industry and hardy endurance, of wild adventure among savage Indian tribes, and of exposure to danger by mountain, precipice, and seething torrent and wintry plain!

For two full centuries the Hudson's Bay Company, under its original Charter, undertook financial enterprises of the greatest magnitude, promoted exploration and discovery, governed a vast domain in the northern part of the American Continent, and preserved to the British Empire the wide territory handed over to Canada in 1870. For nearly a generation since that time the veteran Company has carried on successful trade in competition with many rivals, and has shown the vigour of youth.

The present History includes not only the record of the remarkable exploits of this well-known Company, but also the accounts of the daring French soldiers and explorers who disputed the claim of the Company in the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth century actually surpassed the English adventurers in penetrating the vast interior of Rupert's Land.

Special attention is given in this work to the picturesque history of what was the greatest rival of the Hudson's Bay Company, viz. the North-West Fur Company of Montreal, as well as to the extraordinary spirit of the X Y Company and the Astor Fur Company of New York.