

of new fields of adventure and profit, ascended the St Lawrence and Ottawa rivers to their sources, and formed establishments on the Great Lakes. From the north-western end of Lake Superior, they threaded the intricate communication which leads by lakes, rivers, and portages to Lake Winnipeg, and from thence penetrated some distance up the great stream of the Saskatchewan, 'the Mississippi of the north.' Their most distant establishment was on the banks of that river, in latitude 53 degrees north, and longitude 103 degrees west. This place was situated at a distance of upwards of 2000 miles from the colonised part of Canada; the route to it was through a country occupied by numerous savage tribes, where the means of subsistence were scanty, and the navigation unfit for any other craft than frail birch-rind canoes. Yet we have evidence that 'at this distant establishment considerable improvements were effected; that agriculture was carried on, and even wheel-carriages used; in fact, that they then possessed fully as many of the attendants of civilisation as the Hudson's Bay Company do now, after the lapse of a century.*' The author of *Astoria* presents us with a lively picture of those palmy days of the French fur-trade in Canada:—'Every now and then, a large body of Ottawas, Hurons, and other tribes who hunted the countries bordering on the great lakes, would come down in a squadron of light canoes, laden with beaver-skins and other spoils of their year's hunting. The canoes would be unladen, taken on shore, and their contents disposed in order. A camp of birch-bark would be pitched outside of the town, and a kind of primitive fair opened, with that grave ceremonial so dear to the Indians. An audience would be demanded of the governor-general, who would hold the conference with becoming state, seated in an elbow-chair, with the Indians ranged in semicircles before him, seated on the ground, and silently smoking their pipes. Speeches would be made, presents exchanged, and the audience would break up in universal good-humour.

'Now would ensue a brisk traffic with the merchants, and all Montreal would be alive with naked Indians running from shop to shop, bargaining for arms, kettles, knives, axes, blankets, bright-coloured cloths, and other articles of use or fancy; upon all which, says an old French writer, the merchants were sure to clear at least 200 per cent. There was no money used in this traffic, and after a time, all payment in spirituous liquors was prohibited, in consequence of the frantic and frightful excesses and bloody brawls which they were apt to occasion.

'Their wants and caprices being supplied, they would take leave of the governor, strike their tents, launch their canoes, and ply their way up the Ottawa to the lakes. . . . The French merchant at his trading-post, in these primitive days of Canada, was a kind of commercial patriarch. With the lax habits and easy