



PRINCE OF WALES' FORT, HUDSON'S BAY, AS SEEN IN 1777.

found it necessary to abandon their boats and nearly all their luggage, and proceed from the Rocky Mountains to Astoria on foot. They spent the winter, among the mountains, suffering almost every kind of privation which hunger, cold, and sickness could induce. At length in February, 1812, they reached Astoria, after having been absent from New York twenty months, and after the Astorians (if we may use the term) had suffered the loss of the ship.

When the two expeditions had thus far proceeded, and the various partners and agents joined, various plans were formed for prosecuting trade in the adjacent regions. Meanwhile Mr. Astor, who had heard nothing of either expedition, but who concluded that both had arrived at Colombia safely, sent a second ship, the *Beaver*, in 1811, fully provided with everything requisite. Accordingly the ship sailed in October, and after wintering at the Sandwich Islands, arrived at the Colombia in May, 1812.

Thus reinforced, the Astorians proceeded with vigour, trading with the natives, and collecting a considerable stock of valuable furs. Meanwhile Mr. Astor had been actively engaged making arrangements with the Russian Company respecting their mutual proceedings, and had sent out a third ship, the *Lark*, to Astoria. The war between England and America, however, which broke out about this time, put a stop to all these proceedings; for the North-West Company were encouraged by the Canadian Authorities to oppose the American fur-traders; and a British ship of war sailed to the mouth of the Colombia, took possession of the fort, and effectually put an end to the establishment. Some of the adventurers returned to New York by sea, some overland by way of the Missouri, some remained as trappers and fur-hunters in the Wilderness, and some died from the privations which they had undergone. What the losses of Mr. Astor may have amounted to, is not stated, but they must have been enormous.

On the termination of the war, the posts on the Colombia were rendered back to the United States, in whose possession they have since legally remained, although there is to the present time some disagreement as to the relative boundaries of the two territories in these regions. But although the posts were nominally restored to the United States, yet the North-West Company, whose agents had purchased the whole stock and property of the Astorians at a very low sum, continued to traffic along the entire course of the Colombia, in spite of the warnings of the Americans that the river was not longer politically open to them.

After the junction of the North-West and Hudson's Bay Companies, increased efforts were made to retain the traffic

beyond the Rocky Mountains; and it is said that they have succeeded in keeping the Americans out of that share of the traffic which seems fairly to have been their due. The "Pacific Company," established by Mr. Astor, failed, from the causes which we have narrated; and the "Missouri Company" seems also to have fallen to nothing. The "American Fur Company," which arose from an amalgamation of two or three older companies near the Canadian Lakes, still exists, and carries on a considerable trade in the central regions of America, though inferior, we believe, to the powerful union of the Hudson's Bay and the North-West Companies. The American Company commands the great Mississippi and Missouri rivers, and has introduced steam-boats on these rivers, for the conveyance of the furs and the commodities for which they are bartered.

Independent of the great companies, two minor ones, called, from the names of their projectors, Ashley's and Bonneville's, have been formed on the western coast; so that every part of the American continent westward of the Rocky Mountains is now ransacked for furs, northward by the Russian Company, then by the Hudson's Bay Company, and southward by the minor companies. Besides these companies, a number of individuals "trap" and "hunt" for themselves, in various parts of the American continent.

We are not aware that there are any fur companies, except those connected with North America. There are fur-bearing animals captured in Russia, in South America, and in other countries; but these enterprises partake more of an individual than of a joint-stock character. By far the largest portion of all the furs obtained in America find their way to London, either directly through the agency of the Hudson's Bay Company, or by commercial dealings on the part of other parties. From London large quantities are purchased by the merchants of Leipsic, who in their turn distribute the furs over the continent of Europe.

The following reasons have been assigned why, if the taste for wearing furs should continue, the supply must necessarily decline. "The advanced state of geographical science shows that no new (extensive) countries remain to be explored. In North America the animals are slowly decreasing, from the persevering efforts, and the indiscriminate slaughter practised by the hunters, and by the appropriation to the uses of man of those forests and rivers which have afforded them food and protection. They recede with the aborigines before the tide of civilization; but a diminished supply will remain in the mountains and uncultivated tracts of this and other countries, if the avidity of the hunter can be restrained within proper limitations."