

and the American Fur Company; the latter, founded by the celebrated Mr Astor, the originator of the ill-fated enterprise to which Washington Irving has given an enduring celebrity in his popular publication of *Astoria*. The American Fur Companies keep few or no established posts beyond the mountains; everything there is regulated by resident partners—that is to say, partners who reside in the tramontane country, but who move about from place to place, either with Indian tribes, whose traffic they wish to monopolise, or with bodies of their own men, whom they employ in trading and trapping. In the meantime, they detach bands or brigades, as they are termed, of trappers, in various directions, assigning to each a portion of country as a hunting or trapping ground. In the months of June or July, when there is an interval between the hunting-seasons, a general rendezvous is held at some designated place in the mountains, when the affairs of the past year are settled by the resident partners, and the plans for the following year arranged. To this rendezvous repair the various brigades of trappers from their widely separated hunting-grounds, bringing in the products of their year's campaign. Hither also repair the Indian tribes accustomed to traffic their peltries with the Company. Bands of free-trappers—the prototypes of Cooper's popular character of Hawkeye—resort thither also, to sell the furs they have collected, or to engage their services for the next hunting-season.

The employment of these free-trappers, in which the Hudson's Bay Company, along the frontiers, follow the example of their American rivals, has imparted a new character to the trade of this part of the country, and frequently converted the native tribes, some of them incorrigibly savage and warlike in their nature, from peaceful hunters into formidable foes. Some of these tribes, resenting the incursions of the trappers into their hunting-grounds, have long carried on a ruthless crusade against the white invaders of their soil, regarding the expeditions of the fur-traders only as grand objects of plunder and profitable adventure. To waylay and harass a band of trappers with their packhorses, when embarrassed in the rugged defiles of the mountains, has become as favourite and legitimate an exploit with these Indians, as the plunder of a caravan to the Arab of the desert. The Crows and Blackfeet are particularly the terror of the American fur-traders. They know the routes and resorts of the trappers—where to waylay them on their journeys, where to find them in the hunting-seasons, and where to hover about them in winter-quarters. The life of a trapper is thus a perpetual state-militant, and he must sleep with his weapons in his hand.

Many and marvellous are the stories related by American travellers of the hair-breadth 'scapes, and perils by flood and field of the trappers' life in the Far West. Of this kind is a story related by Farnham, in his Travels in the Rocky Mountains, of a trapper who had separated from his companion, and, travelling