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FUR AND THE FUR-TRADE. I.



"VOYAGEURS DES BOIS,"—CANADIAN FUR-HUNTERS.

At the present season of the year, when fur forms so beautiful and agreeable an addition to our customary out-door attire, a succinct account of the Fur-Trade may be acceptable to our readers. It contains so many lively and exciting details that while reading the various authorities necessary to our brief compilation, we have been tempted to pause, under the impression that the details belonged rather to fiction than to truth. That any set of men, accustomed to the usages of society, more or less civilized, should voluntarily abandon the comforts derived therefrom, and wander through wildernesses and sterile plains, the companions of wild beasts, or of men almost equally wild, does indeed seem strange. Yet it is not the less true. At this present moment there are many Englishmen, and a still greater number of Scotchmen, living in the remotest wilds of North America; hundreds, nay even thousands of miles distant from any regular town. They are not driven thither by disgrace; they are not influenced by that love of glory and national honour which excite the soldier or the sailor; they do not, like Humboldt and Bonpland, Audubon and Richardson, contend with hardships for the sake of extending the bounds of scientific knowledge; they are actuated by the same feelings as the merchant and the trader; they work for worldly wealth. The persons here alluded to are the agents and clerks of the fur-companies, and their office is to collect from the Indian fur-hunters the skins of fur-bearing animals, many of which being killed at a distance of three thousand miles from the regular European towns, the hunters could not forward the skins were it not that the agents of the companies are stationed at forts or posts, established at various parts of the interior of the continent. A system of barter is thus set on foot, the European agent giving blankets, guns, and other articles, in exchange for furs, the dealings being often conducted more particularly by

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a rude class of men, who are half Indian, half European. The details of this system are full of that which, were they not undeniably true, we should term romance; and it is our purpose to present a view of the subject in this and a succeeding Supplement. But in order to give more completeness to our object, we shall rapidly review the usages of society, in respect of wearing fur-dresses, usages which have given rise to the mode of life hinted at above.

SECTION I.

USE OF FURS FOR GARMENTS. VARIETIES OF FURS.

RESPECTING the first use of furs for clothing, Beckmann says:—"Men first ventured on the cruelty of killing animals, in order that they might devour them as food, and use the skins to shelter themselves from the severity of the weather. At first these skins were used raw, without any preparation, and many nations did not till a late period arrive at the art of rendering them softer and more pliable, durable, and convenient. As long as mankind traded only for necessaries, and paid no attention to ornament, they turned the hairy side towards the body, but as the art of dressing skins was not then understood, the flesh side must have given to this kind of clothing, when the manners of the people began to be more refined, an appearance which could not fail of exciting disgust: to prevent which the Ozolæ inverted the skins, and wore the hair outwards." From the time when, for appearance-sake, the hairy side of a furred skin was worn externally, may be dated; the use of furs in the sense which we now apply to the term. The custom was not universal, however, even in Imperial Rome, for Juvenal, when speaking of a miserly person, says,— "To guard himself against the cold, he does not wear the costly woollen clothing of the luxurious Romans, but the

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skins of animals, and these even inverted, that is to say, with the hairy side turned inwards, without caring whether the appearance be agreeable or not."

The sheep, whose wool forms the material for nearly all woollen clothing, came originally from Africa, where felted garments and tents were probably first introduced, and many centuries must have elapsed before the tender sheep could be conveyed to and reared in the northern countries, where thick and immense forests produced in abundance a great variety of those animals which were capable of supplying the best furs; where mankind increased but slowly, and applied principally to hunting; and where the people lived too widely scattered to be led soon to the cultivation of the manufacturing arts by a reciprocation of experience and invention. The northern nations, therefore, clothed themselves in the raw skins of animals, a long time after the southern tribes were acquainted with the spinning and weaving of wool. The earliest of the northern tribes which poured down upon Greece and Rome are described as being clothed in fur-dresses, of which the hairy side was turned inwards: but the later tribes of invaders appear to have made an advance towards a more cleanly appearance, having the hairy side of their fur-dresses turned outward. The chiefs among them even decorated their fur dresses with some taste, and the Romans acquired from them a taste for wearing furs, the scarcity of the supply, and the distance from whence it had to be brought, being sufficient to render furs a luxurious mark of distinction among people of rank.

A curious interchange of custom succeeded; the Romans gradually became accustomed to wear fur-dresses, such as the Northerners had worn, while the latter by degrees quitted their furs for the woollen garments which the Romans had taught them to make. In the year 397, however, the Emperor Honorius forbade Gothic dresses, especially furs, to be worn either in Rome or within the jurisdiction of the city, but such a law, as in most similar cases, appears to have been very little attended to. The steps by which the custom of wearing furs spread from country to country can with difficulty be now ascertained. A modern writer on the fur-trade states:—"We find that about the year 522, when Totila, king of the Visigoths, reigned in Italy, the Suethons, a people of modern Sweden, found means, by the help of the commerce of numberless intervening people, to transmit, for the use of the Romans, the precious skins of the sable. As luxury advanced, furs, even of the most valuable species, were used by princes as linings for their tents. Thus, Marco Polo, in 1252, found those of the Cham of Tartary lined with ermines and sables, the last of which he calls *sibelines* and *zambolines*: he says that these and other precious furs were brought from countries far north, from the 'land of darkness,' and regions almost inaccessible, by reason of morasses and ice. The Welsh set a high value on furs as early as the reign of Howell Dhu, who began his reign about 940. In the next age furs became the fashionable magnificence of Europe. When Godfrey of Boulogne and his followers appeared before the Emperor Alexis Comnenus, in their way to the Holy Land, he was struck with the richness of their fur-dresses." It has been remarked that the advance of luxury in France must have been very rapid since the time of Charlemagne, who contented himself with the plain fur of the otter. Our Henry the First wore furs, yet in his distress was obliged to change them for warm Welsh flannel. By the year 1337, the luxury had attained such a pitch that Edward the Third enacted that all persons who could not spend a hundred pounds a year should be absolutely prohibited the use of this species of finery: these furs, from their great expense, must have been brought from foreign countries, obtained through the medium of the Italian states, which carried on a great traffic at that time. It is a curious circumstance that the northern parts of Asia then supplied us with almost every valuable kind of fur, whereas at present we send, by means of our possessions in North America, furs, to an immense amount, to China, where this species of luxury is highly valued.

The kinds of fur employed in the manufacture of the various articles of dress in use among us, are very numerous. We shall first mention that of the ermine, or as it is called by way of pre-eminence, "the precious ermine." This animal is found in the cold regions of Europe and Asia. North America produces an animal, identical with the ermine, but whose fur is greatly inferior in value: this animal is called the stoat. The fur of the ermine is known by being of a pure white throughout, except the tip of the tail, which is black; these tails are fastened at intervals into

the skins and give the rich spotted appearance to the fur as it is worn among us. This is a small animal, the whole length from the nose to the tip of the tail being only about fourteen or fifteen inches, while the available part of the fur is not more than ten or twelve inches. The older the animal, the better is the fur it produces. The method of taking the ermine is by snares or traps, and sometimes they are shot, while running, with blunt arrows.

The sable is another animal much prized in the fur-trade. This is a native of Northern Europe and Siberia. The length of the animal is from eighteen to twenty inches, and the best skins are procured by the Samoieds, and in Yakutsk, Kamtchatka, and Russian Lapland. Some naturalists consider the sable to be merely a variety of the pine marten.

The marten is found in North America, as well as in Northern Asia, and the mountains of Kamtschatka; the European are more highly prized than the American skins, though many among the latter are rich and of a beautiful dark brown olive colour. The fiery fox, so called from its bright red colour, is taken near the north-eastern coast of Asia, and its fur is much valued in that part of the world. The fur of the young sea otter is very beautiful. It is of a rich brown colour, fine, soft, and close, and bears a silky gloss: in the older animal it becomes jet black. These animals were first sought for their fur in the early part of the eighteenth century, and were brought to Western Europe from the Aleutian and Kurile islands, where they are found in great numbers.

The South Shetland Islands were formerly resorted to by vast numbers of seals: in 1821 and 1822, the number of seal skins taken on these islands alone amounted to 320,000. Such, indeed, was the system of extermination that the animal is now almost extinct in that quarter.

The skins of various kinds of bear, fox, racoon, badger, lynx, musk rat, rabbit, hare, and squirrel, are procured in North America. The fur of the black fox, sometimes called the silver fox, is considered the most valuable. The red fox also is an article of export, especially to China, where it is used for trimmings, linings, and robes, and is ornamented in spots or waves with the black fur of the paws. The fur of the silver fox is of a deep lead colour intermingled with long hairs, white at the top, forming a lustrous silver grey. The hides of bisons, and of various kinds of deer, also form part of the fur-trade of North America.

One of the most valuable descriptions of fur is that of the beaver, an animal whose sagacity greatly tries the ingenuity of the hunter. By referring to the *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 181, the reader will find a short account of this animal. The method of taking the beaver in summer is by a process called trapping. In winter the plan followed is thus related by Hearne: "Persons who attempt to take beavers in winter, should be thoroughly acquainted with their manner of life, otherwise they will have endless trouble to effect their purpose, because they have always a number of holes in the banks which serve them as places of retreat when any injury is offered to their houses, and in general it is in those holes that they are taken. When the beavers which are situated in a small river or creek are to be taken, the Indians sometimes find it necessary to stake the river across, to prevent them from passing; after which they endeavour to find out all their holes or places of retreat in the banks. This requires much practice and experience to accomplish, and is performed in the following manner:—every man being furnished with an ice chisel, lashes it to the end of a small staff about four or five feet long; he then walks along the edge of the banks, and keeps knocking his chisel against the ice. Those who are acquainted with that kind of work, well know the sound of the ice when they are opposite to any of the beavers' holes or vaults. As soon as they suspect any, they cut a hole through the ice big enough to admit an old beaver, and in this manner proceed till they have found out all their places of retreat, or at least as many of them as possible. While the principal men are thus employed, some of the undertrappers and their women are busy in breaking open the house, which at times is no easy task, for I have frequently known these houses to be five or six feet thick, and one in particular was more than eight feet thick in the crown. When the beavers find that their habitations are invaded they fly to their holes in the banks for shelter; and on being perceived by the Indians, which is easily done by attending to the motion of the water, they block up the entrance with stakes of wood, and then haul the beaver out of his hole, either by hand, if they can reach it, or with a large hook made for that purpose, which is fastened to the

end of a long stick. In this kind of hunting, every man has the sole right to all the beavers caught by him in the holes or vaults; and as this is a constant rule, each person takes care to mark such as he discovers, by sticking up a branch of a tree, by which he may know them. All that are caught in the house, are the property of the person who finds it. The beaver is an animal that cannot keep under water long at a time, so that when their houses are broken open, they have but one choice left, either to be taken in their house or their vaults; in general they prefer the latter, for where there is one beaver taken in the house, many thousands are taken in the vaults in the banks.*

SECTION II.

RISE OF THE CANADIAN FUR-TRADE. COURREURS DES BOIS. LICENSED TRADERS. TRADING POSTS. TRADING COMMANDERS.

THE reader is probably aware that the first Europeans who made any settlement in Canada were the French, who founded a colony there considerably more than two centuries ago, and remained in possession of it till about eighty years since. The colonists soon found that the environs of Montreal and the other towns were plentifully stocked with animals coated with valuable fur; and the capture of these animals formed an occupation for many of the French colonists. By degrees, the supply near the towns ceased, through the active operations of the colonists; and the Indians of the interior were encouraged to penetrate into the country, accompanied generally by some of the Canadians, who found means to induce the remoter tribes of natives to bring the skins which were most in demand to their settlements, in the way of trade. At intervals large bodies of Indians would come down from the great lakes in a squadron of light canoes, laden with beaver, and other skins. The canoes were then unladen, taken on shore, and their contents arranged in order. A rude camp, made of bark, was then pitched outside the town of Montreal, and a fair opened between the Indians and the Canadians. An audience being demanded of the Governor, he proceeded to hold a conference with the chiefs of the Indians. This conference was conducted in a mode to which the Indians have always been well accustomed. The Indians ranged themselves in semi-circles, seated on the ground, and smoked their pipes in profound silence: speeches were then made: presents were exchanged; and the whole party then proceeded to business with mutual confidence. The Indians bartered their *peltries* (a general name in the fur-countries for all kinds of skins*) with the dealers of Montreal, for arms, kettles, knives, axes, blankets, bright-coloured cloths, and various minor articles; upon all which the dealers are said (and probably with truth,) to have cleared two hundred per cent. profit. Money was never employed on these occasions; and spirituous liquors, which formed at one time one of the articles given by the Canadians in barter for the skins, were afterwards interdicted, on account of the drunken and dissipated scenes which ensued. When the Indians had bartered away their skins, they took leave of the Governor, and paddled up the river Ottawa in their canoes towards the great lakes.

Such was the mode by which Montreal obtained its supply of furs for many years; and out of this system arose a remarkable class of persons, who have been instanced as an illustration of the fact, that it requires much less time for a civilised people to fall into the manners and customs of savage life, than for savages to rise into a state of civilization. This was the case with the *Courreurs des Bois*, or rangers of woods; originally men who had accompanied the Indians in their hunting expeditions, and made themselves acquainted with remote tracts and tribes; and who now became, as it were, pedlars of the wilderness. They were extremely useful to the merchants engaged in the fur-trade, who gave them the necessary credit to proceed on their commercial undertakings. Three or four of these *Courreurs des Bois* would form a joint-stock; purchase arms, provisions, &c., and put their property into a birch-bark canoe. This canoe they worked themselves, and either accompanied the natives in their excursions, or went at once to the country where they knew the furs were to be procured. At length, these voyages extended to twelve, fifteen, or even eighteen months, at the end of which the adventurers returned with rich cargoes of furs.

* When the skins have received no preparation but from the hunters, they are called *peltries*; but when they have had the inner side tawed or tanned, they then become *furs*.

During the short time requisite to settle their accounts with the merchants, and to procure fresh credit, they generally contrived to squander away all their gains, after which they returned to pursue their favourite mode of life: their views being answered, and their labours sufficiently rewarded, by indulging themselves in extravagance and dissipation during the short space of one month in twelve or fifteen.

This indifference about amassing property, and the pleasure of living free from all restraint, soon brought on a licentiousness of manners, which could not long escape the vigilant observation of the French missionaries, who were then in Canada, and who had much reason to complain of these *Courreurs* being a disgrace to the Christian religion: by not only swerving from its duties themselves, but by thus bringing it into disrepute with those of the natives who had become converts to it. They therefore exerted their influence to procure the suppression of this vagrant class of men.

These proceedings gave rise to another step in the machinery of the fur-trade. An order was issued by the French government, prohibiting all persons, on pain of death, from trading into the interior of the country without a licence; but, from the manner in which this licence-system was acted on, the old abuses were continued. The licences were at first granted in writing to persons of respectability; to gentlemen of broken fortunes; to poor but meritorious officers, and their widows. By the terms of each licence, the holder was allowed to fit out two large canoes with merchandise for the upper country; and no more than twenty-five licences were to be issued in any one year. But, by degrees, private licences were granted, and the total number greatly increased.

Many of the holders of licences did not fit out the expedition themselves, but sold the privilege to the fur-merchants, who thereupon employed the *courreurs des bois*, in the following manner:—"The merchant holding the licence would fit out two canoes with a thousand crowns' worth of goods, and put them under the conduct of six *courreurs des bois*, to whom the goods were charged at the rate of fifteen per cent. above the ready-money price in the colony. The *courreurs des bois* in their turn dealt so sharply with the savages, that they generally returned at the end of a year or so with four canoes well-laden, so as to ensure a clear profit of seven hundred per cent., insomuch that the thousand crowns invested, produced eight thousand. Of this extravagant profit the merchant had the lion's share. In the first place, he would set aside six hundred crowns for the cost of his licence, then a thousand crowns for the cost of the original merchandise. This would leave six thousand four hundred crowns, from which he would take forty per cent. for *bottomry*, (a kind of mortgage of a vessel, by which the owner is enabled to fit her out,) amounting to two thousand five hundred and sixty crowns. The residue would be equally divided among the six wood-rangers, who would thus receive little more than six hundred crowns for all their toils and perils."

As the employment of the wood-rangers led to scenes of lawlessness and debauchery similar to those before complained of, a farther change was made. Military posts were established at the confluence of the different large lakes of Canada; by which course the trade was protected, and the improper conduct of the wood-rangers was, in some measure, checked. Besides this, a number of able and respectable men, who had retired from the army, prosecuted the trade in person, under their respective licences, with great order and regularity, and extended their enterprises inland to an astonishing distance. These gentlemen denominated themselves *commanders*, and not *traders*, though they were entitled to both these characters; their general conduct was such as to secure the respect of the natives, and the obedience of the people necessarily employed in the laborious parts of this undertaking. Among these military posts, the chief was at Michilimackinac, situated at the strait of the same name, which joins Lake Huron to Lake Michigan. It became a great interior mart and place of deposit, at which establishments were formed by some of the regular merchants. This, too, was a rendezvous for the *courreurs des bois*, of whom one set were employed in bringing goods up from Montreal, while others were bringing down peltries from the interior. Expeditions for the north, the north-west, and the west, were fitted out at this fort or post; and the peltries thence derived were forwarded to Montreal. Michilimackinac, therefore, now filled in part the office which Montreal had formerly filled.

For a long series of years matters proceeded on the

system just sketched forth. No "fur-company" existed in Canada; but individuals embarked in the trade at their pleasure. The head-quarters were at the junctions of some of the great lakes, from whence repeated expeditions of a daring character were made into the interior. The Canadians, however, were not free from competitors. On the south of them the British merchants of New York entered on the field, and inveigled the Indian hunters, and *courreurs des bois*, into their service; while on the north, a more formidable competition was met with in the HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY, which was established by royal charter, in 1670. As this Company will occupy a share of our attention hereafter, we shall here confine our narrative to the proceedings of the Canadian adventurers.

SECTION III.

TEMPORARY DECLINE OF THE FUR-TRADE BY THE CESSION OF CANADA TO THE ENGLISH.—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NORTH-WEST COMPANY.—ITS CONSTITUTION.—PARTNERS AND CLERKS.—SYSTEM OF BARTER.—THE CANADIAN VOYAGEURS.—FITTING OUT AND DEPARTURE OF THE CANOES FROM MONTREAL TO THE LAKES.—DÉCHARGES AND PORTAGES.

No particular change occurred in the mode of conducting the Canadian fur-trade until the important transfer of Canada from the possession of France to that of England, in 1763; but at this period the old channels of communication were greatly disturbed. The trade gradually passed into the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company, who derived great advantages from it, for all the Indians westward of Lake Superior were now obliged to go to them for such articles of English manufacture as they had hitherto procured from the Canadians. But the total cessation of the Canadian trade with the Indians was of short duration; the immense length of the journey from Hudson's Bay to the regions of the Western Indians; the risk of property; the expenses attending such a long transport; and an ignorance of the language of those who, from their experience, must be necessarily employed as the intermediate agents between them and the natives—all conspired to make the maintenance of the traffic on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company, rather difficult. The old *courreurs des bois*, too, were slow to conform to the usages of the British traders, after having been accustomed to the freedom and familiarity of the French Canadian merchants.

In a few years time some of the Canadian houses at Michilimackinac resumed their expeditions from that town; sending off expeditions beyond the confines of Lake Superior, and gradually re-establishing a trade independent of the Hudson's Bay Company. Individual adventurers began to extend their trips to distances far beyond what had hitherto been attempted. One of these bold men, named Thomas Curry, determined to proceed as far northward as the frost would allow; and having procured guides and interpreters he proceeded as far as the Cedar Lake; whence he returned with a valuable cargo of furs. The success of this adventure induced Mr. James Finlay to undertake a similar expedition in the following year; he engaged four canoes; proceeded beyond the point attained by Curry; and returned with a very valuable cargo of furs. Mr. Joseph Frobisher was the next adventurer; he made two canoe voyages, still farther northwest than either Curry or Finlay, and made large profits by his speculations. Mr. Pond, another adventurer, was entrusted by others who entered into a joint-stock speculation, with the conduct of an expedition destined to penetrate farther than any which had yet been despatched. He succeeded in reaching Lake Athabasca, a spot about midway between Lake Superior and the Frozen Ocean; and like his predecessors, succeeding in obtaining from the Indians an exceedingly valuable supply of furs.

But notwithstanding these examples of individual success, the fur-trade was in a very unsatisfactory state among the Canadians. The Hudson's Bay Company had commenced their operations with an energy never before exhibited in that quarter; whereby trading-posts, belonging to the company, were established at nearly all the spots where the Canadian adventurers had posts. There were also other circumstances which had been thus explained by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, himself an enterprising agent in the fur-trade. "The trade was carried on in a very distant country, out of the reach of legal restraint, and where there was a free scope given to any ways or means in attaining advantage. The consequence was not only the loss of commercial benefit to the persons engaged in it, but of the good opinion of

the natives, and the respect of their men, who were inclined to follow their example; so that what with drinking, carousing, and quarrelling with the Indians along their route and among themselves, they seldom reached their winter quarters; and if they did, it was generally by dragging their property upon sledges, as the navigation was closed up by the frost. When at length they were arrived, the object of each was to injure his rival traders in the opinion of the natives as much as was in his power, by misrepresentation and presents, for which the agents employed were peculiarly calculated. . . . Thus did they waste their credit and their property with the natives, till the first was past redemption, and the last was nearly exhausted; so that towards the spring in each year, the rival parties found it absolutely necessary to join, to make one common stock of what remained, for the purpose of trading with the natives, who could entertain no respect for persons who had conducted themselves with so much irregularity and deceit."

Had matters continued to be conducted on this vicious system on the part of the Canadians, we should probably have had to record the rise of the Hudson's Bay Company to undisputed pre-eminence in the fur-trade of America; but a measure was set on foot which prevented this from taking place. In the winter of 1783-4, the Canadian merchants engaged in the fur-trade resolved to join interests and to form a company. This they accordingly did, and it was soon evident that mutual advantages would be derived by all through this arrangement; many of the traders, however, refused at first to join it, and a bitter and even sanguinary contest ensued between the parties, as to which should have the greater amount of traffic with the Indians. At length all this rivalry ceased, by the opposing adventurers taking shares in the company; and in 1787 was finally established the famous "NORTH-WEST COMPANY." The energy with which this company carried on its operations, the ability and daring perseverance of its agents, and the wide extent of country through which its traffic has been conducted, have combined to give this fur-company greater interest for the general reader than that of any other. We propose therefore, to enter somewhat minutely into the commercial machinery by which the affairs of the company were managed, and into the general mode of dealing between the Indian fur-hunters and the Canadian fur-traders. By so doing, we shall be enabled to pass over more briefly similar details respecting other companies. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was one of the earliest agents of this company; and to his account of the rise and progress of the fur-trade we shall be indebted for many of the details which follow.

The North-West Company was in spirit no more than an association of commercial men agreeing among themselves to carry on the fur trade, unconnected with any other business, although many of the parties engaged had extensive concerns altogether distinct from it. It may be said to have been supported entirely upon credit; for, whether the capital belonged entirely to the proprietor or was borrowed, it equally bore interest, for which the association was annually accountable. The joint-stock of the company consisted of twenty shares, unequally divided among the persons concerned. A certain proportion was held by people who managed the business in Canada, and were called agents of the company. Their duty was to import the necessary goods from England, store them at Montreal, get them made up into articles acceptable to the Indians, and pack them up, and forward them to the interior, and supply the funds that might be wanting for the outfits; for which they received, independent of the profit on their shares, a commission on the amount of the accounts, which they were obliged to make out annually. Two of them went annually to Fort William, the grand dépôt of the company on the western margin of Lake Superior, to manage and transact the business there. They finally received the furs, which they packed up and shipped for England. In fact they formed the monied and commercial partners of the company.

The other partners or shareholders were those who dwelt in the interior country, and who managed the business of the concern with the Indians. They were not supposed to be under any obligation to furnish capital or even credit. Some of them, from their long services and influence, held double shares, and were allowed to retire from the business at any period of the existing concern with one of those shares, naming any young man in the company's service to succeed him in the other, subject to the approval of the majority of partners. The great success which ultimately

attended the proceedings of the company is attributed greatly to the system pursued with respect to these working partners; after the company became once organized, admission into it was extremely difficult, and had to be obtained by steps which have been thus stated by Mr. Washington Irving.

"A candidate had to enter, as it were, 'before the mast,' to undergo a long probation, and to rise slowly by his merits and services. He began, at an early age, as a clerk, and served an apprenticeship of seven years, for which he received one hundred pounds sterling, was maintained at the expense of the company, and furnished with suitable clothing and equipments. His probation was generally past at the interior trading-post; removed for years from civilized society, leading a life almost as wild and precarious as the savages around him; exposed to the severities of a northern winter, often suffering from a scarcity of food, and sometimes destitute for a long time of both bread and salt. When his apprenticeship had expired, he received a salary according to his deserts, varying from eighty to one hundred and sixty pounds sterling, and was now eligible to the great object of his ambition, a partnership in the company; though years might yet elapse before he attained to that enviable station. Most of the clerks were young men of good families, from the highlands of Scotland, characterized by the perseverance, thrift, and fidelity of their country, and fitted by their native hardihood to encounter the rigorous climate of the north, and to endure the trials and privations of their lot; though it must not be concealed that the constitutions of many of them became impaired by the hardships of the wilderness, and their stomachs injured by occasional famishing, and especially by the want of bread and salt. Now and then, at an interval of years, they were permitted to come down on a visit to the establishment of Montreal, to recruit their health, and to have a taste of civilized life; and these were brilliant spots in their existence."

As the Indians who kill the fur-bearing animals have no use for money, and indeed are unacquainted with its value, they exchange the peltry with the white men for such articles as may be useful or agreeable. It is therefore a part of the fur-traders' business to provide a stock of such articles, and to convey them into the interior. At the period of which we are speaking, when no "Great Westerns" or "British Queens" crossed the Atlantic, and when no steamers voyaged on the great lakes of Canada, the traffic was conducted by the slower method of ship and canoe. One complete interchange of commodities consumed nearly four years to bring about by the following steps:—1st. Sending an order for the goods, from Canada to England; 2nd. Shipping the goods from London:—3rd. Their arrival at Montreal:—4th. Making them up into useful articles and packages at Montreal:—5th. Despatching them off to the interior, by canoe:—6th. Arrival in the Indian country:—7th. Barter with the Indians for furs:—8th. Arrival of the furs at Montreal:—9th. Shipment of the furs at Montreal for the London market. The articles usually ordered for trading with the Indians were such as the following:—Coarse woollen cloth; milled blankets of different sizes; arms and ammunition; tobacco, of various kinds; Manchester goods; linens and coarse sheetings; thread, lines, and twine; common hardware; cutlery and ironmongery of varied kinds; brass and copper kettles; silk and cotton handkerchiefs; hats, shoes and stockings; calicoes and printed cottons; together with numberless trinkets of a less useful but often more attractive kind, such as bells, beads, looking-glasses, &c.

The goods being sent to Canada, were there manufactured or altered into garments, and such other things as were likely to be most acceptable to the Indians. They were then packed in canoes, and consigned to the care of the *voyageurs* or canoe-men, a class of persons so remarkable and so unique as to be worthy of a somewhat minute description.

Canada, like Sweden and a few other countries, is so intersected with lakes, that a canoe can pass from one extremity of it to the other, with scarcely any interruption. Had this not been the case, the fur-trade would probably never have attained the importance which has marked it; for the furs could hardly have been conveyed to the sea-ports from the wild interior without the aid of river navigation. The *courreurs des bois*, formerly alluded to, were employed partly to row the canoes up the rivers, and partly to roam about with the Indians; but when the traffic assumed a more regular character, these men were superseded by others whose duties were more definite; the transactions on land

being intrusted to European agents and Indian hunters, and the management of the canoes being consigned to the *voyageurs*, who were nearly always French Canadians. When the old French trading-houses were broken up, after the cession of Canada to England, the *voyageurs* could but ill adjust themselves to the habits and usages of the conquerors, but by degrees they entered heartily into the service of the North-West Company, to whom they were ever valuable servants.

The dress of these people was a mixture of the civilized and the savage. They wore a capot or surcoat, made of a blanket, a striped cotton shirt, cloth trousers or leathern leggings, moccasins of deer skin, and a belt of variegated worsted, from which were suspended a knife, a tobacco pouch, and other implements. The language of the *voyageurs*, though originally French, became a strange mixture of French, English, and Indian. They seemed to inherit, with their French blood, much of the gaiety and lightness of heart which characterize that nation. They were full of anecdote and song, and ever ready for the dance. One of the most remarkable features in their character was, that instead of acquiring that hardness and grossness of behaviour which men in laborious life are apt to acquire, they had a fund of civility and complaisance; they were mutually obliging and accommodating, interchanging kind offices, and yielding each other assistance and comfort in all the vicissitudes to which they were so much exposed. They were universally submissive and obedient to their employers. They were capable of enduring hardships under which most other classes of men would have sunk, and manifested throughout their troubles an irrepressible cheerfulness. While on long and rough expeditions; while coasting lakes or toiling up rivers; while encamping at night on the borders, and bivouacking in the open air,—they were ever the same gay and care-killing band. As boatmen they were wonderfully expert and enduring; often rowing vigorously from morning till night with scarcely a moment's stoppage. Their French *chansons* formed a never-failing accompaniment to the movement of the oars; the steersman was wont to sing a song, with a regular burden or chorus in which all the rest joined, keeping time with their oars; and if on any rare occasion the men were observed to flag and droop in spirits, a song would immediately bring them back to their wonted joyous tone.

"The Canadian waters," says Mr. Washington Irving, who has described these scenes with his usual felicity of language, "are vocal with these little French *chansons*, that have been echoed from mouth to mouth, and transmitted from father to son, from the earliest days of the colony; and it has a pleasing effect, in a still, golden, summer evening, to see a *batteau* gliding across the bosom of a lake, and dipping its oars to the cadence of these quaint old ditties, or sweeping along, in full chorus, on a bright sunny morning, down the transparent current of one of the Canadian rivers." The same writer reminds us that these are scenes which are fast passing away. The march of mechanical invention is driving everything poetical before it. The steam-boats, which are fast dispelling the wildness and romance of the lakes and rivers, are proving as fatal to the race of the Canadian *voyageurs* as they have been to that of the boatmen on the Mississippi. The *voyageurs* are no longer the lords of the Canadian seas and rivers, and the navigators of the wilderness. Some of them may still occasionally be seen coasting the lower lakes with their frail barks, and pitching their camps, and lighting their fires upon the shores; but their range is fast contracting to those remote waters, and shallow and obstructed rivers, unvisited by the steam-boat. Occasionally, when some of our adventurous fellow-countrymen have penetrated to the Arctic Ocean, through the wilds of America, the Canadian *voyageurs* have been hired by them to navigate their canoes through the upper lakes and rivers: such a group we have represented in our cut, as sketched by Captain Basil Hall, shortly after their return from accompanying Captain Franklin on one of his bold and daring expeditions: but an occasional employment like this has no effect on the perpetuation of the race. The *voyageurs* will in the course of years disappear; their songs will die away like the echoes they once awakened; and the whole will be remembered only as themes for local and romantic associations.

But whatever now is, or hereafter may be, the condition of the Canadian *voyageurs*, they were an important and valuable set of men to the North-West Company; and we have now to follow them up the Canadian rivers and lakes. There were about eleven hundred of these men in the service

of the Company; of whom about three hundred and fifty were employed for the summer season, in going from Montreal to Fort William, on Lake Superior. They were hired in Montreal, and were absent from the 1st of May till the end of September. For this trip the guides had from eight hundred to a thousand livres, (a livre being equal to somewhat more than ninepence English,) and a suitable equipment; the foreman and steersman from four to six hundred livres; the middle-men about three hundred livres, with an equipment of one blanket, one shirt, and one pair of trousers. Independent of their wages, they were maintained during that period at the expense of their employers, and were also allowed to traffic on their own account. A portion of this number were engaged to proceed far beyond Fort William, and to winter in the interior country; and these had much higher wages than the others. The main body of the voyageurs were hired by the year, principally for the interior traffic, and were termed "north-men," or "winterers,"—the summer voyageurs being known as "goers and comers," or by the yet stranger name of "pork-eaters." The north-men had higher wages, and a more complete equipment of clothing, than the others, and were generally accompanied by a formidable array of Indian wives and children, who were maintained at the expense of the Company.

When all the goods, intended for the Indian trade, had been carefully packed at Montreal, a sufficient number of canoes were purchased at about three hundred livres each, and fitted out for the expedition. Each canoe carried eight or ten men, with their baggage: sixty or seventy packages of goods; six hundred weight of biscuits; two hundred weight of pork; three bushels of pease; two oil-cloths to cover the goods; gum, bark, and wapaté, to repair the canoe; a sail, an axe or two, a towing-line, and sundry small articles. "An European," says Sir Alexander Mackenzie, "on seeing one of these slender vessels thus laden, heaped up, and sunk with her gunwale within six inches of the water, would think his fate inevitable in such a boat, when he reflected on the nature of her voyage; but the Canadians are so expert that few accidents happen."

Montreal stands on the northern bank of the River Saint Lawrence, or, rather, on a small island near the north bank; and as the waters of the great Canadian Lakes are poured into this river, it might be supposed that the fur-traders proceeded at once through the lakes on their way to the interior. But there is a natural obstacle to this arrangement. If the reader inspect a map of Canada, he will perceive that the famed Falls of Niagara are situated between Lakes Erie and Ontario, the water of the former having to descend the falls before it can flow into the latter. To proceed up the lakes by this route is impracticable, and therefore a passage is sought in another direction. The river Ottawa flows into the Saint Lawrence not far from Montreal; and this river furnishes a convenient means, by the aid of a contrivance which we shall presently describe, for conveying a canoe to the upper lakes.

Before the canoes could proceed very far up the Ottawa, at the commencement of the journey falls and rapids were encountered, which gave a foretaste of what would often occur afterwards. Moore's beautiful "Canadian Boat-song" has for its scene this part of the Ottawa, and for its characters the Canadian voyageurs. The canoe-men were accustomed to call by the name of *Décharge* any part of the river where they could not row against the rapid stream. In such case they were obliged to unload their canoes, and carry the goods upon their backs, or, rather, suspended in slings from their heads. Each man's ordinary load was two packages; and the whole of them had to go and return a sufficient number of times for the transfer of all the baggage. The canoe itself was towed up by a strong line. At a place called *Chaudière*, some miles up the Ottawa, the river falls more than twenty feet, up which it is obviously impossible to tow a canoe. Such places, where the canoes as well as the goods had to be carried on the shoulders of the men, were called *Portages*, and occurred frequently in different parts of the fur-trader's route. The portage at Chaudière is about six or seven hundred paces in length; and the rock is so steep and difficult of access, that twelve men used to be required to lift each canoe out of the water. The canoe was then carried by six men, two at each end and two in the middle. This transfer was made to a spot where the current was sufficiently tranquil to embark again on the river. It seems hardly credible at the present day, but the historians of the fur-trade assure us that no fewer than forty of these *décharges* and portages occur between Montreal and Huron, at every one of which all the canoes had to be un-

loaded, the goods carried on men's backs, and the canoes either conveyed in a similar manner, or towed up against a strong current. It was in the performance of these laborious and harassing duties that the endurance and cheerfulness of the Canadian voyageurs were found especially valuable; not a murmur of discontent escaped them; but they proceeded with light hearts to accomplish that which could not be avoided.

After entering Lake Huron, the voyageurs coasted along its northern shore, amid innumerable small islands, and at length reached a fort or post at the entrance of Lake Superior. To this fort other goods were occasionally forwarded from Montreal by a totally different route: they were conveyed in boats from Montreal to Kingston at the entrance of Lake Ontario; from thence in ships to Niagara; then overland ten miles, to avoid the Falls; then again by boats to the entrance of Lake Erie; from thence by ship through Lakes Erie and Huron; then overland for a short distance to the entrance of Lake Superior; and lastly over this noble lake by ship. For these purposes the company kept two vessels on Lakes Erie and Huron, and one on Lake Superior, of sixty or seventy tons' burden. This method of conveying goods, &c., from Montreal to Lake Superior, was found to be a less expensive one than that which we have sketched above; but at the same time attended with more risk, and requiring a much longer period. The company therefore adopted one or other method according to the circumstances of the case.

SECTION IV.

FORT WILLIAM.—MEETING OF THE TRADERS.—STYLE OF LIVING.—INLAND JOURNEY FROM FORT WILLIAM.—TRAFFIC WITH THE INDIANS.—BEAVER TRAPPERS.—INDIAN FUR-HUNTERS.—THEIR CACHES.—PERILS OF THE FUR-HUNTERS.

THE company's chief central fort was Fort William, at the north-west shore of Lake Superior, and at a spot which the voyageurs called the Grand Portage, on account of the long distance which the canoes had to be carried after they reached this place. This portage is nearly nine miles over; and each voyageur had to carry eight packages of such goods and provisions as were necessary for the interior country. The company tried both horses and oxen at this duty; but it was found that from various causes the animals were not well adapted to the kind of labour and the nature of the country. Sir Alexander Mackenzie states, that the men became so injured to this duty, that he has known some of them set off with two packages of ninety pounds each, and return with two others of the same weight in the course of six hours, being a distance of eighteen miles over hills and mountains.

The arrangements of the company were so conducted, that the "pork-eaters," or "goers and comers" arrived at Fort William, from Montreal, about the time when the "north-men" or "winterers" arrived from the interior. Only a portion of the northmen, however, thus came in each year; the others remained in the interior; and a section of voyageurs from Montreal were despatched to Rainy Lake, with supplies for these hardy winterers. The northmen who came down to Fort William, brought with them all the furs which had been collected, during a whole twelvemonth; and hence a very busy scene of exchange ensued; the supply of goods being transferred from the Canadian canoes to those which were about to return to the North; while the valuable furs for the obtaining of which so much danger and hardship had been undergone, were made into packages of one hundred pounds weight each, and forwarded to Montreal.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who was one of the clerks of the North-West Company at its first establishment, gives a curious picture of the mode of living adopted by these numerous visitors at Fort William, during their brief but busy sojourn at that place. The period to which his narrative applies is about the year 1790. "The proprietors, clerks, guides, and interpreters, mess together, to the number of sometimes an hundred, at several tables in one large hall; the provisions consisting of bread, salt-pork, beef, hams, fish, venison, butter, pease, Indian corn, potatoes, tea, spirits, wine, &c., and plenty of milk, for which purpose several milch cows are constantly kept. The mechanics have rations of such provisions; but the canoe-men, both from the north and from Montreal, have no other allowance here or in the voyage than Indian corn and melted fat. The corn for this purpose is prepared before it leaves Detroit,

by boiling it in a strong alkali which takes off the outer husk; it is then well washed, and carefully dried upon stages, when it is fit for use. One quart of this is boiled for two hours over a moderate fire, in a gallon of water; to which, when it has boiled a short time, are added two ounces of melted suet; this causes the corn to split, and in the time mentioned, makes a pretty thick pudding. If to this is added a little salt (but not before it is boiled, as it would interrupt the operation,) it makes an wholesome palatable food, and easy of digestion. This quantity is fully sufficient for a man's subsistence, during twenty-four hours; though it is not sufficiently heartening to sustain the strength necessary for a state of active labour." Such was the simple and frugal fare on which the Canadian voyageurs chiefly subsisted.

Leaving the "pork-eaters" to return to Montreal with the cargo of furs, we will follow the "northmen" into the interior country. The traffic from Fort William northward was carried on in a manner somewhat different from that hitherto described. The canoes brought from Montreal were too large to be navigated in the chain of small lakes and rivers which extend north-west of Lake Superior; and therefore others about half the size were procured from the natives, and navigated by four, five, or six men, according to the distance which they had to traverse. These small canoes carried, on an average, a lading of about thirty-five packages; of which about two-thirds contained goods to be bartered with the Indians for furs; and one-third contained provisions, stores, and baggage. In each of these canoes was a foreman and a steersman; the one to be always on the look-out, and to direct the passage of the canoe; the other to guide the helm. The foreman had the command of the canoe, and was obeyed in all his directions by the middlemen or rowers. Independent of these, a conductor or pilot was appointed to every five or six canoes, whom they were all obliged to obey, and who was paid liberally, as a person of superior experience. The canoes, thus equipped and manned, embarked on the north side of the Grand Portage, on the river Autour.

Before they were many miles distant from Fort William, the canoemen had to commence a similar train of operations to those so often necessary near Montreal. At the Carreboef Portage, half of the lading of each canoe was taken on shore, and carried by half the crew; while the others rowed the canoe with the remainder of the cargo through a dangerous part of the river for a distance of four miles; then they landed the other half of the cargo, and returned to meet those who were toiling along the shore with the first-mentioned portion of the burden. These portages recur with very great frequency, and were surmounted by similar means, for a very long distance from Lake Superior.

When the canoes arrived at Rainy Lake, they met with one of the forts or factories of the company, at which was repeated, on a much smaller scale, the system of exchanges which had been pursued at Fort William. The canoemen from Fort William brought to Rainy Lake a supply of goods and provisions for the winterers in the Athabasca country, situated much farther north. These latter could not reach so far as Fort William, and return to Athabasca before the winter set in; and therefore a party of the "pork-eaters" or "goers and comers" were detached from the Montreal party, and sent to meet the "northmen" at Rainy Lake. This being done, and the exchange of goods effected, the former returned to Fort William, and from thence to Montreal; while the latter pursued their way towards the north.

To such an immense distance inland did the agents of the North-West Company pursue their traffic, even so early as the year 1790, that the journey onward from Lake Rainy—itsself situated far beyond the remotest confines of Lake Superior—occupied the canoes a period of two months. Up to this point little was done but toiling up the rivers and lakes, contending with rapids and portages at distances of every few miles; but at Lake Athabasca, the traders divided into different parties, for carrying on a trade with the Indians. Some embarked on the Peace River, to trade with the Beaver and Rocky Mountain Indians; some proceeded to Slave Lake, almost in the frozen regions of the north; another party proceeded to the country surrounding the Elk River; while the remainder trafficked with the Indians near Lake Athabasca.

The mode in which the traders were accustomed to carry on their dealings with the Indians was nearly as follows. In the fall of the year the natives met the traders at the forts, where they bartered the furs or provisions which they

had procured. They then obtained credit for ammunition, traps, &c., and proceeded to hunt the beavers, and other animals; not returning again to the forts till the beginning of the following year. At this time they were again fitted out in a similar manner; and returned a second time with a cargo of furs, about the end of March or the beginning of April. The greater part of the hunters then returned to their country; and lived during the summer with their relations and friends in the enjoyment of that description of plenty which is derived from numerous herds of deer.

The persons who actually kill and capture the beavers are not all Indians. Some of them, under the title of *trappers*, have European blood in their veins, and form a class which is perhaps unique in North America. Mr. Washington Irving has described this class of men with great clearness: and although his narrative relates to a different part of the North American continent, and to another period than that which here occupies our attention, yet the details are so nearly applicable to every phase of the fur-hunting occupation, that we shall avail ourselves of the description in working out our object.

The trappers are generally Canadians by birth, and of French descent, who have been employed for a term of years by some fur-company; but their term being expired, continue to hunt and trap beavers on their own account, trading with the company in the same manner as the Indians. Those who trap in the employ of the company are called simply by the name of trappers; while those who thus work on their own account are distinguished by the appellation of *freemen*. Having passed their early youth in the wilderness, separated almost entirely from civilized man, and in frequent intercourse with the Indians, they lapse into the habitudes of savage life with great facility. Though no longer bound by engagements to continue in the interior, they have become so accustomed to the freedom of the forest and the prairie, that they look back with repugnance upon the restraints of civilization. Most of them intermarry with the natives, and like the latter have often a plurality of wives. During their wanderings in the wilderness they lead a precarious and unsettled existence, faring better or worse according to the vicissitudes of the seasons, the migrations of animals, and the plenty or scarcity of game. By exposure to sun and storm, and all kinds of hardships, they come gradually to resemble the Indians in complexion as well as in tastes and habits. From time to time they bring the peltries they have collected to the trading-houses of the company in whose employ they have been brought up; and traffic them away for such articles of merchandize or ammunition as they may stand in need of. At the time when Montreal was the great emporium of the fur-trader, one of these freemen of the wilderness would suddenly return, after an absence of many years, among his old friends and comrades. He would be greeted as one risen from the dead; and with the greater welcome as he returned possessed of much money. A short time, however, spent in revelry, would be sufficient to drain his purse, and sate him with civilized life; and he would return with new relish to the unshackled freedom of the forest. Numbers of men of this class were during the palmy days of the North-West Company, scattered throughout the wilds of America. Some of them retained a little of the thrift and forethought of the civilized man, and became wealthy among their improvident neighbours; their wealth being chiefly displayed in the possession of large bands of horses, which covered the prairies in the vicinity of their abodes. Most of these "freemen," however, were prone to assimilate to the Indians, in their regardlessness of the future.

A few words ought also to be said here respecting the Indian fur-hunters, who are, or were employed by the companies much in the same manner as the trappers. These hunters were generally some of the aborigines of Canada who had partially conformed to the habits of civilization, and the doctrines of Christianity, under the earlier colonists of that country. "These half-civilized Indians," says Mr. Irving, "retained some of the good, and many of the evil qualities of their original stock. They were first-rate hunters, and dexterous in the management of the canoe. They could undergo great privations, and were admirable for the service of the rivers, lakes, and forests, provided they could be kept sober, and in proper subordination; but, once inflamed with liquor, to which they were madly addicted, all the dormant passions inherent in their nature were prone to break forth, and to hurry them into the most vindictive and bloody acts of violence." Though they generally pro-

fessed the Roman Catholic religion, yet it was mixed occasionally with some of their ancient superstitions; and they retained much of the Indian belief in charms and omens. Numbers of these men were employed by the North-West Company, as trappers, hunters, and canoe-men, but on lower terms than were allowed to white men.

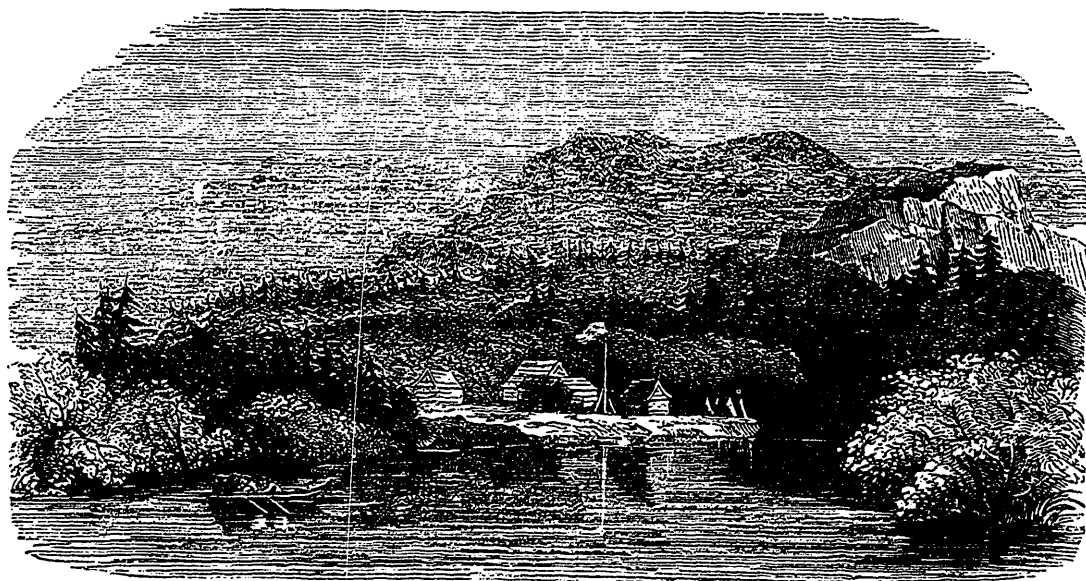
Some of these Indian hunters, in the depths of the wilderness, are hostile to each other; hence arise bitter scenes of strife and often of bloodshed. They are, under such circumstances, not slow in robbing each other's hoards when unprotected; and hence has arisen a singular mode of concealment, when one party of Indians is forced to leave a portion of their property in a spot liable to be visited by a hostile party. A receptacle called a *cache* is formed, so designated by the early French colonists, from the French verb *caché*, "to conceal;" although the method itself was probably known to the Aborigines before the arrival of the French.

The mode of constructing these caches illustrates in a curious manner the native cunning of the Indians. The first care is to seek out a proper situation, which is generally some dry, low bank of clay, on the margin of a water-course. As soon as the precise spot is pitched upon, blankets, saddle-cloths, and other coverings, are spread over the surrounding grass and bushes, to prevent foot-tracks, or any other derangements; and as few hands as possible are employed. A circle of about two feet in diameter is then cut in the sod, which is carefully removed, with the loose soil immediately beneath it, and laid aside in a place where it will be safe from anything that will change its appearance. The uncovered area is then dug perpendicularly to the depth of about three feet, being made gradually wider as it descends, till a conical chamber six or seven feet deep is formed. The whole of the earth displaced by this process, being of a different colour from that on the surface, is handed up in a vessel, and heaped into a skin or cloth, in which it is conveyed to the stream, and thrown into the midst of the current, that it may be entirely carried off. Should the cache not be formed in the vicinity of a stream, the earth thrown up is carried to a distance, and scattered in such a manner as not to leave the minutest trace. The cave, or cache, being formed, it is well lined with dry grass, bark, sticks, and poles, and occasionally a dried hide. The property intended to be hidden is then laid in, after having been well aired: a hide is spread over it, and dried grass, brush, and stones, thrown in, and trampled down until the pit is filled to the top. The loose soil, which had been put aside, is then brought, and rammed down firmly, to prevent its sinking: and the surface is sprinkled with water, to destroy the scent, lest the wolves and bears should be attracted to the place, and root up the concealed treasure. When the neck of the cache is nearly level with the surrounding surface,

the sod is again fitted in with the utmost exactness, and any bushes, stalks, or stones, that may have originally been about the spots are restored to their former places. The blankets and other coverings are then removed from the surrounding herbage: all tracks are obliterated: the grass is gently raised by the hand to its natural position; and the minutest chip or straw is scrupulously gleaned up and thrown into the stream. After all is done, the place is abandoned for the night, and, if all be right next morning, is not visited again until there be a necessity for re-opening the cache. Four men are sufficient in this way to conceal the amount of three tons' weight of provisions or merchandise, in the course of two days. Such are the extreme precautions which these people take, to preserve their property from deprecation in a land where the laws and usages of civilised life are unknown.

The privations and trials to which the trappers and hunters are exposed during their wanderings, are by no means confined to hunger, cold, and fatigue; they are frequently attacked by grizzly bears, whose enormous bulk, and tenacity of life, make them formidable antagonists. As an example of this, we will quote a passage from Mr. Irving, in which he details an adventure to which a hunter or trapper, named Cannon, was exposed in the heart of America.

Cannon had just had the good fortune to kill a buffalo, and as he was at a considerable distance from his camp, he cut out the tongue and some of the choice bits, made them into a parcel, and, slinging them on his shoulders by a strap passed round his forehead, as the voyageurs carry packages of goods, set out on his way to the camp. "In passing through a narrow ravine, he heard a noise behind him, and looking round, beheld, to his dismay, a grizzly bear in full pursuit, apparently attracted by the scent of the meat. Cannon had heard so much of the invulnerability of this tremendous animal that he never attempted to fire, but, slipping the strap from his forehead, let go the buffalo meat and ran for his life. The bear did not stop to regale himself with the game, but kept on after the hunter. He had nearly overtaken him, when Cannon reached a tree, and throwing down his rifle, scrambled up it. The next instant Bruin was at the foot of the tree; but as this species of bear does not climb, he contented himself with turning the chase into a blockade. Night came on. In the darkness Cannon could not perceive whether or not the enemy maintained his station; but his fears pictured him rigorously mounting guard. He passed the night, therefore, in the tree, a prey to dismal fancies. In the morning the bear was gone. Cannon warily descended the tree, gathered up his gun, and made the best of his way back to the camp, without venturing to look after his buffalo meat."



TRADING POST ON THE RIVER AUX RATS.

Fur Trade
Canada

THE

Saturday



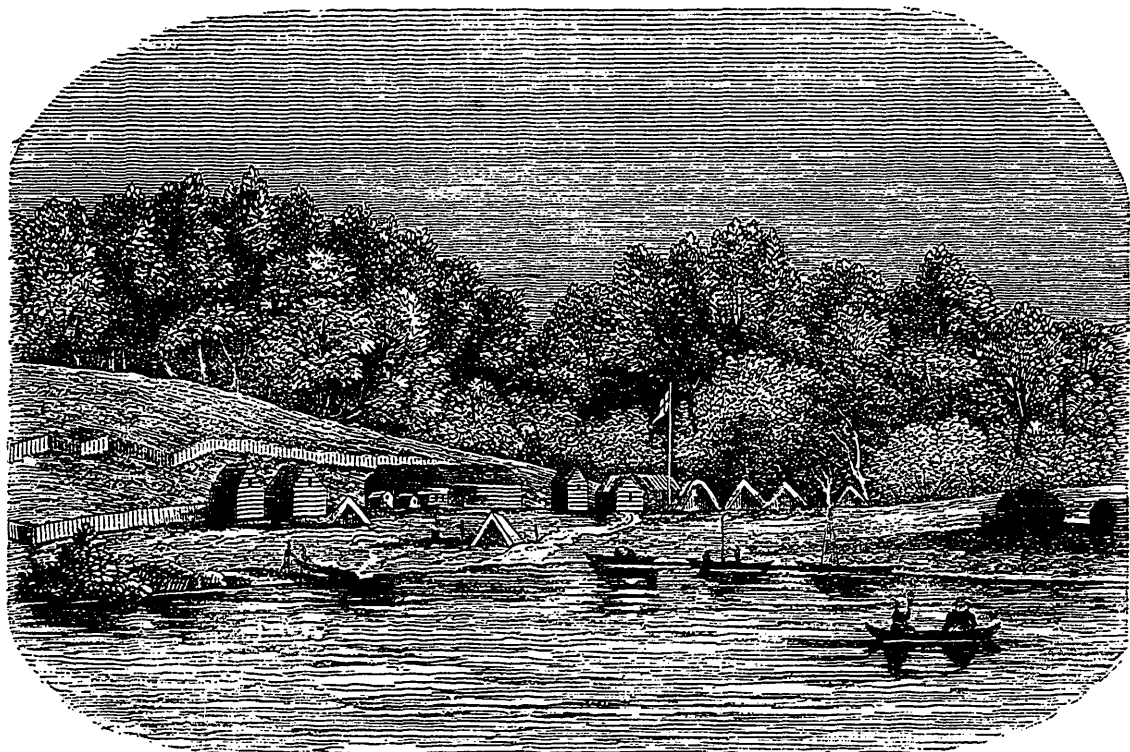
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DECEMBER, 1842.

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FUR. AND THE FUR-TRADE. II.



AMERICAN FUR COMPANY'S FACTORY, LAKE SUPERIOR.

At the commencement of the present year, when frosts and snow reminded us of the warmth and comfort of fur clothing, we gave a brief account of the rise, progress, and general management of the Canadian fur-trade, and at the same time promised to recur again to the subject. No time can perhaps be more appropriate for so doing than the present, and we shall therefore again direct the reader's attention to the wilds of America. In the former Supplement, we found it convenient to confine our details almost wholly to those enterprises, which were set on foot by the Canadians; from the time when the "coureurs des bois" traded with the Indians, down to the flourishing career of the "North-West Company." We shall now notice the proceedings of Companies whose chief depôts were respectively northward and southward of the above; viz., the "HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY," and three or four which have been established in the United States.

SECTION I.

RISE OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.—EXPLORING EXPEDITIONS.—HEARNE'S JOURNEY TO THE NORTHERN OCEAN.—DEER-HUNTING IN THE AMERICAN WILDS.—CONTESTS BETWEEN THE NORTH-WEST AND HUDSON'S BAY COMPANIES.—JUNCTION OF THE TWO COMPANIES.—DISCOVERIES OF MESSRS. DEASE AND SIMPSON.

A glance at a map of North America will show the relative positions of Hudson's Bay and the Canadian Lakes. The Bay lies considerably northward of the whole of the lakes, and is entered from the Atlantic, by way of Hudson's Straits, northward of Labrador. It was named after the English navigator who discovered it, and was explored by different persons, in the vain hope of discovering a passage thence to the Pacific Ocean. But although these projects were unsuccessful, the accounts brought home regarding the rich

furs of these regions, excited the attention of one Grosseleig, an enterprising individual, who undertook a voyage to survey the country, and laid before the French Government a proposal for a commercial settlement upon the coast. The ministry however rejected it as visionary; and Grosseleig, having obtained an introduction to Mr. Montagu the English resident at Paris, was introduced to Prince Rupert, who, struck by the probable advantages of the project, eagerly patronized it. By his interest with Charles the Second, Prince Rupert obtained the grant of a ship commanded by Captain Zachariah Gillam, who sailed with Grosseleig in 1668; and penetrating to the extreme southern point of Hudson's Bay, erected Fort Charles on the bank of Rupert river.

In the succeeding year Prince Rupert, with seventeen other persons, were incorporated into a Company, and obtained an exclusive right to establish settlements and carry on trade in Hudson's Bay. Their charter recites, that these adventurers, having at their own great cost undertaken an expedition to Hudson's Bay, in order to discover a new passage into the South Sea, and to find a trade for furs, minerals, and other commodities, and having made such discoveries as encouraged them to proceed in their design, his Majesty granted to them and their heirs, under the name of "the Governor and Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay," the power of holding and alienating lands, and the sole right of trade in Hudson's Strait, and the territories upon its coasts. They were authorized to fit out ships of war, to erect forts, make reprisals, and send home all English subjects entering the bay without their license, and to declare war and make peace with any prince or people not Christian. In the infancy of the establishment, these powers were deemed more nominal than real, but they gradually rendered the Company very powerful. Experience has shown that the obtaining of furs has been

the main, and almost the sole, source of the Company's strength; but it was at first expected that a valuable property in mines, and other sources of wealth, might accrue from the exertions of the agents of the Company. Hence there were not only numerous "factories," "forts," or trading posts established in the Indian country westward and southward of Hudson's Bay, but expeditions were despatched into remoter regions, to ascertain the real nature of the country. These expeditions, while they have furnished conspicuous incidents in the Company's history, have at the same time most powerfully aided in the exploration of the northern coasts of America, and in the settlement of many important problems relating to the "north-west passage."

A search for copper was one of the earliest proceedings of the Company, independent of their fur-trading. The natives who range over the large tract of land lying north-west of Hudson's Bay, having repeatedly brought to the Company's factories samples of copper, many of the Company's servants conjectured that the copper was found not far from their settlements; and as the Indians stated that the mines were not very distant from a large river, it was generally supposed that this river must empty itself into Hudson's Bay. At length in the year 1719, an expedition, consisting of two vessels under the command of Mr. Knight, was sent out from England, with orders to explore Hudson's Bay with a view to discover this supposed river, or any mineral riches which might fall in their way. The feeling with which the undertaking was entered on, may be judged from the fact that Knight took with him some large iron-bound chests to hold gold-dust, and other valuable commodities. Poor Knight and his companions were lost, by shipwreck or otherwise, on the coast; but it was not until nearly forty years afterwards, that the Company gained any intimation of the ships, or the fate of the crew, by seeing on a desolate shore guns, anvils, cables, anchors, &c., belonging to the missing ships, together with vestiges of a house built by the crews on shore. The Company sent a ship annually to the northern part of Hudson's Bay, to traffic with the natives for furs, to make observations on the surrounding country, and to search for their lost companions.

In 1742, and again in 1746, expeditions were fitted out by the Company, for exploring the north-west regions, having for one object the discovery of a passage into the Pacific; but without success. At length in 1768 an event occurred which led to the daring expedition of Samuel Hearne. Some Indians who came to trade at Prince William's Fort, brought further accounts of a "grand river," as it was called, and also several pieces of copper, as samples of the produce of a mine near it. This induced the Company to send out an enterprising man, to trace the river to its mouth, when he had once encountered it in any part of its course, to make a chart of the district he might walk through, and to observe well the nature of the country. Hearne was chosen for this purpose, as being a man of great hardihood and sagacity, bred in the employment of the Company, and possessed of a sufficient knowledge of the elements of science to understand the general character of the country and its features.

Hearne set off from Hudson's Bay on the 6th November, 1769, accompanied by two Englishmen and ten Indians. He was provided with ammunition for two years, some necessary iron instruments, a few knives, tobacco, and other useful articles. His wardrobe was simple enough; consisting of the clothes he wore, one spare coat, as much cloth as would make two or three pairs of Indian stockings, and a blanket for his bed. No sooner, however, did the expedition penetrate a little way into the country, than the Indians proved treacherous and left him, thus obliging him to find his way back again to the fort.

After making new and more careful arrangements, Hearne set off again with a new party in February of the following year, 1770, and made a second journey, which proved more disastrous than the first. He was plundered of everything by some Indians whom he met; and after enduring almost incredible hardships, he returned once more to the fort in November, after an absence of eight months. Nothing daunted by what he had undergone, he again offered his services; and on the 7th of December set off on that expedition which, from the light it threw on the geography of the northern parts of America, has gained for him so much renown, and which took him away from the dwellings of civilized man for more than eighteen months. We feel it necessary, in detailing the proceedings of the Hudson's Bay Company, to notice an enterprise so remarkable as this;

but the adventures partake too much of the character of Arctic exploration to demand more than a slight notice here. At the earnest recommendation of an Indian chief, Hearne, singular as it may appear, consented that several Indian women should be of the party; and he had no cause to regret this arrangement. The reasons which the chief gave for this suggestion were these:—"In an expedition of this kind, when all the men are so heavily laden, that they can neither hunt nor travel to any considerable distance, in case they meet with success in hunting, who is to carry the produce of their labour? Women were made for labour; one of them can carry or haul as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, and in fact there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or for any length of time, in this country without them; and yet, though they do everything, they are maintained at a trifling expense; for, as they always act the cook, the very licking of their fingers in scarce time is sufficient for their subsistence."

As deer-skins form part of the traffic of the fur-hunters and dealers, and the flesh furnishes a welcome food in the wilds of these regions, we may fittingly notice the mode adopted by the Indians who accompanied Hearne, to kill a number of deer by one stratagem, and which is generally followed by the Indians. Their mode of accomplishing this is to select a well-frequented deer-path, and enclose with a strong fence of twisted trees and brushwood a space a mile or more in circumference. The entrance of this inclosure or pound is not more than a common gate, and its interior is crowded with innumerable small hedges, in the openings of which are fixed snares of strong well-twisted thongs. One end is generally fastened to a growing tree; and as all the wood and jungle within the enclosure is left standing, it forms a complete labyrinth. On each side of the entrance, a line of small trees, set up in the snow fifteen or twenty yards apart, form two sides of an acute angle, widening gradually from the entrance, from which they sometimes extend two or three miles. Between these rows of brush-wood runs the path frequented by the deer. When all things are prepared, the Indians take their station on some eminence, commanding a prospect of this path, and the moment any deer are seen going that way, the whole encampment, men, women, and children, steal under cover of the wood till they get behind them. They then show themselves in the open ground, and drawing up in the form of a crescent, advance shouting. The deer, finding themselves pursued, and at the same time, imagining the rows of bushy poles to be people stationed to prevent their passing on either side, run straight forward till they get into the pound. The Indians instantly close in, block up the entrance, and whilst the women and children run round the outside to prevent the deer from breaking, or leaping the fence, the men enter with their spears and bows, and speedily despatch such as are caught in the snares or are running loose. Buffaloes are entrapped in a way almost precisely similar, as is related by Sir John Franklin in the narrative of his journey to the Arctic Ocean through the fur-hunting regions.

With respect to the result of Hearne's journey, we may state that he reached the "Coppermine River," respecting which so much had been said, on the 14th of July, after about seven months' foot travelling, diversified by all those incidents which such a mode of travelling, and in such a country, are likely to produce. He first saw the river near its mouth, and ascertained the important fact that the stream empties itself into an ocean, the existence of which, northward of America, had never before been clearly proved. As to the much vaunted copper-mines, Hearne found that they were nothing more than chaotic masses of rock and gravel, rent by an earthquake or some other convulsion into numerous fissures, exhibiting here and there very sparing specimens of copper-ore, wholly unworthy of the trouble of collection, even in a more favourable locality.

While these enterprises were going on on the part of the Company's agents, the traffic in furs continued uninterrupted, though fluctuating in extent according to circumstances. The mode of traffic was nearly analogous to that pursued by the "North-West Company," described in the last paper. The Hudson's Bay Company had a chief station in the western shore of the bay, at which the affairs with the Company in London were managed; and from this station as a centre, others were gradually established to the west, north-west, and south-west of it. Many of these were situated at a vast distance from the parent station, and were inhabited by a few agents who carried on barter with the

Indians, giving them for their furs such articles as were most likely to be serviceable to the rude and simple natives.

The company did not extend their operations to the Canadian regions until after a long period. But by degrees they came in contact with the "voyageurs" and "coureurs des bois," who had their grand *dépôt* at the head of Lake Superior; and then ensued much contest and rivalry between them. The company established several forts, such as Prince of Wales's Fort, Churchill Fort, Fort Nelson, and Fort Albany, most of which were on the southern and western shores of Hudson's Bay, and which were garrisoned by a sufficient number of men for ordinary purposes; but in May, 1782, the French Canadians took and destroyed these forts and settlements, which the company considered as a loss equal to half a million sterling. Notwithstanding this misfortune, a very steady and lucrative business was carried on; but still there continued to be an irregular trade effected by the Canadians, in the territory which (nominally at least) belonged to the company.

At length the "North-West Company" was established, by which the supremacy of the older company was seriously interfered with. We have in the former paper described the remarkable and energetic system followed by the infant company, and we may now state, that this system had the effect of driving the other company from many of their trading posts. The "North-Westers," as they were generally called, at first established posts adjacent to most of those owned by the rival company in the interior country, and afterwards secured some of these posts wholly to themselves by dint of superior energy and perseverance. By the year 1809, the North-Westers had numerous trading establishments at Athabasca, Peace River, the Slave Lake, New Caledonia, St. Columbia, &c., to none of which did the Hudson's Bay Company attempt to follow them. By these means the North-West Company became undisputed masters of the interior country, leaving to the Hudson's Bay Company the traffic with the natives nearer to Hudson's Bay.

Thus matters continued for a dozen years longer, that is, from about 1809 to 1821. The old company, from their long connexion with the country, and from the charter, which gave to their proceedings a certain appearance of legality, had many advantages over the younger association. But the latter more than made amends for the deficiency by their indefatigable industry. But this keen rivalry produced a multitude of evils, both to the companies and to the Indians. Each company had to keep an extra number of men in their employment, to collect the skins during winter; for everything depended upon who should get first among the Indians. The hunters, having obtained, either from the one or the other of these companies, a considerable payment in advance upon the success of their hunting exertions, were often strongly tempted to break through their engagements, by the statements and artifices of rival agents. The Indians, themselves often deceived, became deceivers in their turn; and not unfrequently, after having incurred a heavy debt at one trading post, they would move off to another, and pursue a similar plan. In some cases mutual agreements were entered into by both companies, to put a stop to these nefarious proceedings; but such treaties were no sooner made than they were indirectly violated by the zeal and cupidity of individual agents; so that they proved fertile subjects for disputes and differences, which were more than once decided by force of arms.

At length these matters extended to such a point, that the agents of the one company would attack and murder those of the rival firm, in the depths of the American wilderness; and these accumulated evils threatened ultimately to destroy both companies, and ruin the fur-trade altogether. Both parties, therefore, perceived that it would be for their interest to come to some amicable understanding. In 1821 they both combined and became one united company; and it has been stated as the result, that they have not only done more business than when separated, but have reaped larger gains. From that time to the present, the united company has possessed the most complete and undisputed monopoly of the fur-trade, in the regions northward and north-westward of the Canadian lakes.

In Captain Franklin's celebrated voyages to the Arctic Sea, through the northern regions of America, he was accompanied by some of the Canadian voyageurs who had been accustomed to these regions, and was greatly aided by the advice and assistance of the fur companies. At a later

period the Hudson's Bay Company (by which the united company is generally known) have taken still more decisive steps to advance our knowledge of the geography of these sterile regions. It will be remembered by those who have attended to the progress of Arctic discovery, that Franklin explored the northern coast of America from the mouth of the Mackenzie River, to a spot ("Franklin's farthest,") three or four hundred miles distant; and that at the very same time Beechey proceeded eastward from Behring's Strait, till he came within a distance of less than two hundred miles of the same spot. To explore this space of two hundred miles became a project of much interest; and it was successfully effected in 1837, by Messrs. Dease and Simpson, two enterprising individuals in the service of, and fitted out for this expedition by, the Hudson's Bay Company. In the summer of the following year, the same gentlemen made an endeavour to connect the discoveries of Franklin with those in a more eastern position; and succeeded in discovering a considerable extent of sea and sea-coast. In 1839, the same two enterprising men succeeded in effecting that which has been aimed at for three centuries, viz., showing that a passage exists from the Atlantic to the Pacific, northward of America. They were able to connect the discoveries of Franklin with those of Back, which had already rendered pretty certain the route eastward of Back's River. It is true that the existence of open sea from Back's River to the Atlantic has not been actually proved; but those who know the subject best have now no doubt on the matter; and Messrs. Simpson and Dease, following out the exploration of Beechey and Franklin, have clearly shown that there is open sea, (that is, an ocean, however much blocked up with ice) from Back's River to the Pacific.

It is right that these expeditions should be mentioned here; for they have been planned by, and executed at the expense of, the Hudson's Bay Company, by whom the results have been communicated to the Royal Geographical Society. It is pleasant to see a commercial body thus contributing to the advancement of science, a course which must win for the company a considerable share of respect.

SECTION II.

RISE OF THE FUR-TRADE IN THE PACIFIC.—COOK'S VOYAGES.—PRIVATE ADVENTURES.—RUSSIAN-AMERICAN FUR COMPANY.—OVERLAND JOURNEYS OF CAPTAIN CARVER AND SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE.—CAPTAIN GRAY DISCOVERS THE COLOMBIA RIVER.

We have now arrived at that part of our subject where it becomes necessary to direct our attention towards a somewhat different part of the North American continent. It will be remembered that in our former article we confined our attention to the "North-West Company," making that the groundwork for a general description of the mode of conducting the traffic between the Europeans and the native Indians. In the present paper we have detailed the more prominent points in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company. But we have next to state that several other companies have been at different times established, having for their scene of action a portion of America generally southward of that to which our notice has been hitherto directed. To understand some of the changes in these companies it will be desirable to bear in mind these two historical facts: that Canada, which formerly belonged to the French, was transferred to the English in 1763; and that the United States, which formerly belonged to England, became independent in 1776.

During Captain Cook's last voyage to the Pacific, he opened a new source of wealth to future navigators, by trading for valuable furs on the north-west coast of America. The first vessel which engaged in this new branch of trade was equipped by some gentlemen in China. It was a brig of 60 tons burden and navigated by 20 men, commanded by Captain James Hanna. She arrived at Nootka Sound, on the American coast, in August, 1785. Soon after her arrival, the natives, whom Captain Cook had left unacquainted with the use of fire-arms, tempted probably by the diminutive size of the vessel, and the small number of the crew, attempted to board her in open day; but they were repulsed. Captain Hanna's conduct on this occasion appears to have been very judicious; he cured such of the Indians as were wounded; an unreserved confidence took place; they traded fairly and peaceably; and after having procured a valuable cargo of furs, Captain Hanna departed homeward a month or two afterwards.

In the following year, 1786, Hanna sailed again to

Nootka Sound, arriving there in the month of August. He traced the coast from thence as far as 53° north latitude, and carried on a lucrative trade with the natives, principally for sea-otter skins. The same year another vessel, commanded by Captain Peters, started from Macao on a similar enterprise; but it was never afterwards heard of, and is supposed to have been lost. In India, too, the spirit of speculation became similarly excited. Two coppered vessels were fitted out at Bombay, in 1786, under the direction of Mr. Strange, who was himself a principal owner. They proceeded in company from the Malabar coast to Batavia; passed through the Straits of Macassar, where one of the vessels ran upon a reef, and was obliged to haul ashore at Borneo for repairs. From thence they steered eastward of the Palaos Islands, and arrived at Nootka at the end of June. From Nootka, where they left the Surgeon's Mate to learn the language, and to collect skins by the time of their intended return, they proceeded to explore the adjacent parts of the coast; but it does not appear that the expedition succeeded in advancing the fur-trade to any great extent.

Without noticing the proceedings of an expedition despatched from Bengal, and another from Ostend, we may briefly sketch the voyage of the *King George* and the *Queen Charlotte*, commanded by Captains Portlock and Dixon. These vessels were fitted out by a society of gentlemen in England, who obtained a privilege to trade to the north-west coast of America. These vessels sailed from England in the beginning of September, 1785, touched at the Falkland Islands, and the Sandwich Islands, and arrived at Cook's River, on the American coast, in the month of August. From thence, after collecting a few furs, they steered, at the end of September, to Prince William's Sound, intending to winter there; but they were forced by the weather to winter in some other place. The storms and bad weather accompanied them till they arrived off Nootka Sound; when they were so near the shore that a canoe came off to them; but though thus near accomplishing their purpose, a fresh storm came on, and obliged them finally to bear away to the Sandwich Islands, where they remained during the winter. On the following year they returned to the coast, and made numerous geographical discoveries. They discovered Queen Charlotte's Islands, at a part of the coast supposed to be not more than eight hundred miles distant from the westernmost station of the Hudson's Bay Company. The two ships remained in those parts till they had collected full cargoes of valuable furs, which they sold in China.

Such was the excitement produced by the profits accruing from the trade thus laid open, that by the year 1792, no fewer than twenty-one vessels, under different flags, were plying along the north-west coast of America, and trading with the natives. The traffic was a remarkable one; for almost the only kind of fur sought for was that of the sea-otter, and almost the only customers the Chinese, who gave such enormous prices as to attract all the dealers thither. The greater part of these trading ships were American, and owned by Boston merchants. They generally remained on the coast and about the adjacent seas for two years, carrying on as wandering and adventurous a commerce on the water, as did the traders and the "trappers" on land. Their trade extended along the whole coast, from California to the high northern latitudes. They would run in near shore, anchor, and wait for the natives to come off in their canoes with peltries, (undressed furs.) When the trade was exhausted at one place, they would weigh anchor and set off to another. In this way they would pass the summer; and when autumn came on they were accustomed to depart to the Sandwich Islands, and winter in some friendly and plentiful harbour. In the following year they would resume their summer trade, commencing at California and proceeding north; and, having in the course of two seasons collected a sufficient cargo of peltries, would make the best of their way to China.

The people, however, who entered most effectively and extensively into the fur-trade of the Pacific were the Russians. Considerable success having attended certain Russian voyages to the Aleutian Islands, and along the north-western shore of North America, in the middle of the last century, two Russian mercantile houses, of the names of Schelikoff and Galikoff, projected, in 1785, the formation of a regular company, to encourage the fur-trade in those regions, under the denomination of the "Russian-American Fur Company." Schelikoff himself, the head of one of the establishments, was the commander of all their early expe-

ditions. They erected forts for the protection of a chain of factories on most of the islands; and induced a number of respectable merchants to join in their extensive and lucrative adventures at the expense of the natives, from whom they did not fail to take every opportunity of wresting the staple produce of the district. Many cruelties became by degrees charged against them; and the Emperor Paul was upon the eve of suppressing the association altogether; when the company pledged itself, through its active agent M. von Resanoff, to adopt more regular proceedings. In 1799 it was formally established with considerable privileges, and incorporated with a capital of two hundred and sixty thousand pounds sterling. The sovereignty of that part of the American continent along the coast of which the posts had been established was claimed by the Russian Crown, on the plea that the land had been discovered and occupied by its subjects. As China was the grand mart for the furs collected in these quarters, the Russians had the advantage over their competitors in the trade. The latter had to take their peltries to Canton, which, however, was a mere receiving mart, from whence they had to be distributed over the interior of the empire and sent to the northern parts, where there was the chief consumption. The Russians, on the contrary, carried their furs by a shorter voyage directly to the northern parts of the Chinese Empire; thus being able to sell them to the Chinese at a cheaper price by saving the expense of carriage.

As we shall not, perhaps, have occasion again to refer to the Russian-American Fur Company, we may make a few more observations thereon in this part of our subject. The company obtained, successively, the patronage of the Emperors Alexander and Nicholas; and the state minister, Romanzoff, introduced many useful changes in its constitution. The condition of the fur-collectors of the company is said, however, to be still miserably wretched, and only to be exceeded by that of the oppressed natives, who are in turn their slaves. The company's head-quarters are at Moscow; and the furs obtained are chiefly sold at three great fairs, viz., at Kiachta, in China, for the Chinese trade; at Nishnei Novogorod, between Moscow and Casan, for the Russian trade; and at Leipsic for the general European trade.

While Russia was thus consolidating and systemizing her fur-trading operations on the north-western coast of America, other parties were directing their attention to a portion of the coast further southward. As early as the year 1763, shortly after the cession of Canada to the English, Captain Jonathan Carver, who had been in the British provincial army, projected a journey across the continent, from the Canadian lakes to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. His objects were to ascertain the breadth of the continent at its broadest part, and to determine on some place on the shores of the Pacific, where government might establish a post to facilitate the discovery of a north-west passage: he also thought that a settlement on this extremity of America would disclose new sources of trade, promote many useful discoveries, and open a more direct communication with the English settlements in Asia. This enterprising man was twice baffled in individual efforts to accomplish this journey. On a third attempt he was joined by Richard Whitworth, who had wealth enough to engage a band of fifty or sixty hardy adventurers to accompany them. The Indians of the western regions of America had been often heard to speak of a great river, called by them the "Oregon," or the "river of the west," which flowed into the Pacific, and it was one part of Carver's plan to endeavour to reach this river. Unfortunately, however, the breaking out of the American revolution put an end to the scheme, just as he had obtained the sanction of the government; and he does not appear to have made another attempt.

Carver's want of success damped but did not extinguish the enterprise of others in the same quarter. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, one of the most energetic and talented of the "Nor-Westers," undertook a perilous journey across the continent to the Pacific, which he reached in 1793. He succeeded in tracing a river very nearly to its mouth at the Pacific, and thought this to be the Oregon; but it was afterwards found that the anxiously-sought river lay two hundred miles farther south. Mackenzie afterwards suggested the policy of opening an intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific, and forming regular establishments through the interior, and at both extremes, as well as along the coasts and islands. By this means, he argued, the entire command of the fur-trade of North America might be obtained from latitude 48° to the Pole,—excepting that portion held

by the Russians; for as to the American adventurers who had enjoyed part of the traffic along the north-west coast, they would soon disappear before a well-regulated trade. A scheme of this kind, however, was too vast and hazardous for individual enterprise; it could only be undertaken by a company, under the sanction and protection of a Government; and as there might be a clashing of interests between the Hudson's Bay and the North-West Companies, the one holding by right of charter, the other by right of possession, he proposed that the two companies should coalesce in this great undertaking. The long-cherished jealousies of these two companies, however, were too deep and strong to allow them to listen to such counsel. The project fell to the ground, and, as we have before stated, it was not till the year 1821 that the two great companies joined interests.

That which was unsuccessfully attempted by Captain Carver and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, was achieved by Captain Gray, of Boston. He was the first European who could give, from personal knowledge, any account of the great Oregon river of the Indians. In the year 1792, while exploring the north-west coast on a fur-dealing expedition, in the ship *Colombia*, he discovered the mouth of a large river, in latitude 43° 19' north. Entering it with some difficulty, on account of sand-banks and breakers, he came to anchor in a spacious bay. A boat was well-manned, and sent on shore to a village on the beach; but all the inhabitants fled, excepting the aged and infirm. The kind manner in which they were treated, and the presents given to them, gradually lured back the others, and a friendly intercourse took place. The natives had never before seen a ship or a white man. When they had first descried the *Colombia*, they had supposed it a floating island; then some monster of the deep; but when they saw the boat coming towards the shore, with human beings on board, they considered them cannibals sent by the great spirit to ravage the country and devour the inhabitants. Captain Gray did not ascend the river further than the bay in question, which continues to bear his name. After putting to sea, he fell in with the celebrated navigator Vancouver, and informed him of his discovery, furnishing him at the same time with a chart of the river. Vancouver visited the river; and his lieutenant, Broughton, explored it by the aid of Captain Gray's chart; ascending it upwards of one hundred miles, until within view of a snowy mountain, to which he gave the name of Mount Hood, which it still retains. The river itself was named after the ship which first anchored at its mouth, the *Colombia* or *Columbia*, and this is the name by which it is generally designated; the Indian name of *Oregon* being much less frequently applied. Intelligent geographers at the present day express a well-founded regret, at the custom which discoverers have adopted of discarding the names applied by the natives of a country, and substituting others; the aboriginal names are often highly significant, and might throw much light on the construction of language, and the affinities between different nations and races.

SECTION III.

NEW FUR COMPANIES IN THE CENTRAL DISTRICTS.—MACKINAW FUR COMPANY.—MR. ASTOR'S PROJECTS.—AMERICAN FUR COMPANY.—SOUTH-WEST COMPANY, ESTABLISHED BY MR. ASTOR, AND BROKEN UP BY THE WAR OF 1812.—EXPEDITION OF MESSRS. LEWIS AND CLARKE TO THE PACIFIC.

Before we proceed to detail the manner in which it was proposed to take advantage of the fur-trading facilities of the *Colombia* river, it may be well to advert to a few matters relating to the fur trade in the older or more eastern regions of America. The great success of the North-West Company, towards the latter part of the last century, stimulated to further enterprise in the immense regions of Central North America. The traffic of that company lay principally in the high northern latitudes; while there were immense regions to the south and west, known to abound with valuable furs, but which as yet had been but little explored by the fur-traders. A new association of British merchants, connected more or less with Canada, was therefore formed, to prosecute the trade in these two directions. They established their chief factory at a place called by the Indian name of Michilimackinac, situated near the junction of the three great Canadian Lakes of Superior, Michigan, and Huron. The association, by a convenient abbreviation of the name, called themselves the "Mackinaw Fur Company." While the "Nor-westers" continued to traffic in the extreme northern regions, this new company sent forth their

boats by Green Bay, Fox River, and Wisconsin River, to the mighty Mississippi, and down that stream to all its tributary rivers. They hoped in time to extend their exploration down the whole western side of the United States' territory.

These various enterprises gave some uneasiness to the government of the United States. The Declaration of Independence, by which the States threw off the supremacy of England, had severed the connexion between them; and the existence of a British Fur Company on the very confines of, and even within the American territory, gave rise to a wish to have an American establishment likewise. For this purpose the American government, in 1796, sent out agents to establish rival trading houses on the frontier; so as to supply the wants of the Indians, to link their interests and feelings with those of the people of the United States, and to divert the fur-trade into their own channel. This experiment, however, appears to have been unsuccessful; for the dull patronage of government was found to be no match for the keen activity of private enterprise.

A private individual, Mr. John Jacob Astor, took up the matter with singular energy and spirit, and his proceedings constitute one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of the fur-trade. This gentleman was born of humble parents at a small village in Germany; and after remaining in obscurity in his native town, and afterwards in London, went to America to "seek his fortune." He commenced buying and selling such commodities as his limited means placed within his reach; and afterwards embarked his little stock in dealing in furs, at New York. His first venture was a successful one, and from that time he continued in one career till he became one of the most wealthy merchants in America. He brought to the task, persevering industry, rigid economy, and strict integrity; to which he added, as Mr. Washington Irving eloquently expresses it, "an aspiring spirit that always looked upwards; a genius bold, fertile, and expansive; a sagacity quick to grasp and convert every circumstance to its advantage; and a singular and never-wavering confidence of signal success." For some considerable time after the American revolution, Mr. Astor was accustomed to purchase his furs from the North-West Company in Canada, and send them principally to London for sale; making annual journeys to Montreal for that purpose.

A treaty between Great Britain and the United States, in 1795, provided that the military posts, occupied by the British within the territorial limits of the United States, should be surrendered. Accordingly, Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, Michilimackinac, and other posts on the American side of the Lakes, were given up. An opening was thus made for American merchants to trade on the confines of Canada, and within the territories of the United States. In this direction Mr. Astor, some few years afterwards, embarked some of his now largely accumulated capital; but he soon found that the Mackinaw Company possessed power and influence too great for him to contend against, they having engrossed most of the trade within the American frontier, although not strictly in accordance with the spirit of the treaty between the two governments.

Under these circumstances, and knowing it to be the wish of the American government that the fur-trade within its boundaries should be in the hands of American citizens, Mr. Astor offered, if aided and protected by government, to turn the whole of that trade into American channels. He was so far countenanced by the government, as to obtain, in 1809, a charter, incorporating a company under the name of the "AMERICAN FUR COMPANY," with a capital of one million of dollars, with the privilege of increasing it to two millions. The whole of the capital was subscribed by Astor himself! Indeed he constituted the company in his own person; but, with a sagacious policy, he preferred having the name and influence of a board of directors to support his proceedings, rather than carry on his enterprises as an individual.

Astor's first step had relation to the Mackinaw Company. As this company still continued its rivalry, and as the trade in that quarter would not advantageously admit of competition, he made a new arrangement in 1811, by which, in conjunction with certain partners of the North-West Company, and other persons engaged in the fur-trade, he brought out the Mackinaw Company, and merged that and the American Company into a new Association, known and recognised by the American Government as the "SOUTH-WEST COMPANY." By this arrangement, Mr. Astor became proprietor of one half of the Indian establishments and goods

which the Mackinaw Company had possessed within the territory of the Indian country in the United States; and it was understood that the whole was to be surrendered into his hands at the expiration of five years, on condition that the American Company would not trade within the British dominions. What might have been the success of this commercial association, if the war of 1812 had not broken out between the two countries, cannot now be known, but this war occasioned the dissolution of the company, composed as it was of persons, and interests, and establishments in the two rival countries.

For a few years previous to the war just alluded to, events of a very remarkable kind were occurring in the fur districts bordering on the Pacific; and to these we must now revert.

The discovery of the Colombia by Captain Gray, led the American Government to seek to establish a communication with that remote river, both as an opening for the prosecution of the fur-trade in that quarter, and as a means of inquiring into the condition of the Indians on the banks of the Missouri. Accordingly in 1804, Messrs. Lewis and Clarke were despatched on a very venturous expedition, and succeeded in effecting, what had been tried before by Captain Carver, but had been accomplished only by Mackenzie, viz., the journey overland from the European states on the eastern side of America to the Pacific. These gentlemen departed from the United States to the northern parts of the Mississippi, thence to its great feeder the Missouri, and all up the latter to the Rocky Mountains, a lofty ridge which divides the rivers flowing into the Atlantic, from those which flow into the Pacific. Having crossed these mountains, they came to and explored the upper parts of the Colombia river, and followed the stream down to its mouth, where their countryman Captain Gray had anchored about twelve months before. Here they passed the winter, and returned across the mountains in the following spring. The reports published by them of their expedition demonstrated the practicability of establishing a line of communication across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

We have seen how energetically Mr. Astor tried to establish an American Fur-trading Association in the interior regions of America; and we shall now see how his fertile mind was prompted to form projects in reference to the new field laid open by the researches of Messrs. Lewis and Clarke. Mr. Washington Irving, the eminent American writer, was in later years a friend of Mr. Astor's, and wrote an account of that gentleman's proceedings in reference to the fur-trade; from this source, and from the narrative of Mr. Ross Cox, who joined in one of the fur-hunting expeditions, we shall chiefly draw our rapid sketch of Mr. Astor's proceedings.

SECTION IV.

RISE OF THE PACIFIC FUR COMPANY.—MR. ASTOR'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT.—UNSUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION WITH THE NORTH-WEST COMPANY.—EXPEDITIONS BY SEA AND LAND.—ESTABLISHMENT AND SPEEDY DOWNFALL OF "ASTORIA."—SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS OF THE FUR COMPANIES.—CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

It was after the publication of Lewis and Clarke's researches, that the idea presented itself to the mind of Mr. Astor, of grasping, with his individual hand, the great enterprise of a Pacific Fur Company, which for years had been contemplated by powerful associations and governments. For some time he revolved the idea in his mind, gradually extending and maturing his plans, as his means of executing them augmented. The main feature of his scheme was, to establish a line of trading posts along the Missouri and Colombia, to the mouth of the latter, where was to be established the chief trading-house or mart. Inferior posts were to be established in the interior, and on all the tributary streams of the Colombia to trade with the Indians: these posts would draw their supplies from the main establishment, and bring to it the peltries they collected. Coasting craft were to be built and fitted out, also at the mouth of the Colombia, to trade at favourable seasons all along the north-west coast, and return with the proceeds of their voyages to the great emporium, at the Colombia. Thus all the Indian trade, both of the interior and the coast, would converge to this point.

Thus far, as to the relations between the great station and the subordinate establishments. To maintain a communication between the Colombia and the United States, where

the owners of the project would reside, a ship was to be sent annually from New York to the Colombia. This would take reinforcements, supplies, and merchandize suited to the traffic; and would then take on board the furs collected during the preceding year, carry them to Canton, invest the proceeds in the rich merchandize of China, and return thus freighted to New York.

It will be seen that the provisions of this plan involved many striking differences from those of the Atlantic Companies. Instead of making the principal fort near Hudson's Bay, as the Hudson's Bay Company did, or at Fort William at the extremity of Lake Superior, as the North-West Company did, or at Fort Michilimackinac at the junction of the Lakes, as the Mackinaw Company did, and proceeding thence westward, Mr. Astor's plan involved the feature of making the chief fort at the shore of the Pacific itself, and making all the more eastern forts subservient to it. As, however, in thus extending the American trade along the coast to the northward, it might be brought into the vicinity of the Russian Fur Company, and produce a hostile rivalry, it was part of the plan of Mr. Astor to conciliate the good will of that Company by the most amicable and beneficial arrangements.

The Russian establishment was chiefly dependent for its supplies upon transient trading vessels from the United States; but these vessels were often of more detriment than advantage to the company; since, being owned by private adventurers or casual voyagers, who cared only for present profit, and had no interest in the permanent prosperity of the trade, they were reckless in their dealings with the natives, and made no scruple of supplying them with firearms. In this way several fierce tribes, in the vicinity of the Russian posts, or within the range of their trading excursions, were furnished with deadly means of warfare, and rendered troublesome and dangerous neighbours. The Russian Government had made repeated representations to that of the United States, of these malpractices on the part of its citizens, and urged to have this traffic in arms prohibited; but as it did not infringe any municipal law, the American Government could not interfere. Yet still it regarded with some solicitude a traffic, which, if persisted in, might give offence to so powerful a country as Russia; and in this dilemma applied to Mr. Astor, as one conversant with this branch of trade, for information that might point out a remedy for the evil.

Mr. Astor thence thought that he might advance his own plan, and win the good offices both of his own government and that of Russia, by some such plan as the following. He conceived the idea of supplying the Russian establishment regularly, by means of the annual ship that should visit the settlement at the mouth of the Colombia; by which means the casual vessels would be excluded from those parts of the coast where their malpractices had been so injurious to the Russians.

The whole of this vast scheme did Mr. Astor work out in the privacy of his own thoughts, before he ventured to announce it to any one. He appears to have been actuated by something more than mere motives of individual profit; he aspired to that honourable fame which is awarded to men of similar scope of mind, who by their great commercial enterprises have enriched nations, peopled newly-found lands, and extended the bounds of civilization. He considered his projected establishment at the mouth of the Colombia as the emporium to an immense commerce; as a colony that would form the germ of extended civilization; and that would carry American influence across the Rocky Mountains, and spread it along the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

As Mr. Astor, by the magnitude of his commercial and financial affairs, and his general vigour and talent, had become a conspicuous citizen of the United States, and in communion and correspondence with leading statesmen, he communicated his plans to President Jefferson, and solicited the countenance of government. In a reply to this communication, Jefferson stated that he considered as a great public acquisition "the commencement of a settlement on that point of the western coast of America, and looked forward with gratification to the time when its descendants should have spread themselves through the whole length of that coast, covering it with free and independent Americans, unconnected with us but by the ties of blood and interest." The government joined with Mr. Jefferson in warm approbation of the plan, and held out assurance of every protection that could, with consistency be afforded.

Thus encouraged, Mr. Astor prepared to carry his scheme

into prompt execution. He had, however, some strong competition to apprehend and guard against. The powerful North-West Company had pushed one or two advanced trading posts beyond the Rocky Mountains, in a tract of country visited by Mackenzie in his overland journey, and lying between the mouth of the Columbia and the Russian territory. Had the North-West Company persisted in extending their trade in that quarter, their competition might have interfered seriously with Mr. Astor's plans, and have led to those evils which had proved so detrimental under similar circumstances in Canada.

Under these circumstances Mr. Astor divulged his plans to the North-West Company, and proposed to entrust them to the extent of one-third, in the trade thus to be opened. Some correspondence and negotiation ensued. The company were aware of the advantages which would be possessed by Mr. Astor, should he be able to carry his scheme into effect; but they had been led to anticipate a monopoly of the trade beyond the mountains; and were loth to share it with an individual who had already proved a formidable competitor in the Atlantic trade. They hoped, too, by a timely move, to secure a station at the mouth of the Columbia before Mr. Astor would be able to put his plans into operation; and that Key to the internal trade once in their possession, the whole surrounding country would be at their command. After some negotiation and delay; therefore, they declined the proposition that had been made to them; but they subsequently despatched a party to the mouth of the Columbia, to establish a post there before any expedition sent out by Mr. Astor could arrive. This was certainly a deviation from the honourable course of fair commerce.

Mr. Astor, finding his overtures rejected, proceeded fearlessly to execute his enterprise in the face of the whole power of the North-West Company. He looked with confidence to the ultimate success of his plan, as soon as his main establishment was once planted at the mouth of the Columbia. He proceeded with all diligence to procure proper agents and coadjutors, habituated to the Indian trade and to the life of the Wilderness. Among the clerks of the North-West Company were several of great capacity and experience, who had served out their probationary terms, but who had not been promoted; and of these three accepted the overtures of Mr. Astor.

All these arrangements occupied many years in bringing to a working form, so that it was not till June, 1810, that articles of agreement were signed by Mr. Astor, with those who were willing to form the nucleus of a company, to be called the "PACIFIC FUR COMPANY." According to the terms of the company, Mr. Astor was to be at the head, and to manage the affairs of the company at New York. He was to furnish vessels, goods, provisions, arms, ammunition, and all other requisites, at cost price, to an extent not exceeding four hundred thousand dollars. He was to receive half the entire profits of the company, and the other half was to be divided among the other partners. A general meeting of the company was to be held annually at the Columbia River, for the investigation and regulation of its affairs. The association, if successful, was to continue for twenty years; but otherwise might be dissolved in five years. Mr. Astor was to bear all losses for the first five years. The other partners were to exert their whole personal energies in the north-west regions of America, and gave this as a substitute for capital, in the joint-stock of the company.

This remarkable scheme was forthwith put in operation, under difficulties of a most trying and diverse character. Two expeditions were planned; one by sea, to carry out the people, stores, ammunition, and merchandize, requisite for establishing a fortified trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River; the other by land, to proceed up the Missouri and across the Rocky Mountains to the same point, exploring a line of communication across the Continent, and noting the places where interior trading posts might be established. We shall speak first of the sea expedition.

A fine vessel called the *Tonquin*, of 290 tons burden, was provided. Besides the captain and crew of twenty men, the *Tonquin* carried out four of the partners of the company, twelve clerks; (whose office was somewhat similar to that of a cadet or writer in the E. I. C.'s service,) several artisans, and thirteen Canadian "voyageurs." The ship also carried an assortment of merchandize for trading with the natives, together with the frame of a schooner to be employed in the coasting trade. Seeds also were provided for

the cultivation of the soil; and nothing was neglected for the necessary supply of the establishment.

After many difficulties, in which Mr. Astor was in some respects disappointed as to the Voyageurs, and the North-Westers, the *Tonquin* set sail on the 10th September, 1810. No sooner had they left the land, than disagreements arose between Captain Thorn, the commander of the vessel, and the partners of the company; they considering that he was merely engaged to convey them to the Pacific, and he conceiving that he was lord and master in the ship. Hence bickerings and violent altercations occurred during the whole voyage. On the 4th December, they touched at the Falkland Isles, doubled Cape Horn on the 25th, and came to the Sandwich Islands on the 11th February, 1811, where they remained seventeen days. Setting sail again, they arrived at the mouth of the Columbia river, on the 22nd March.

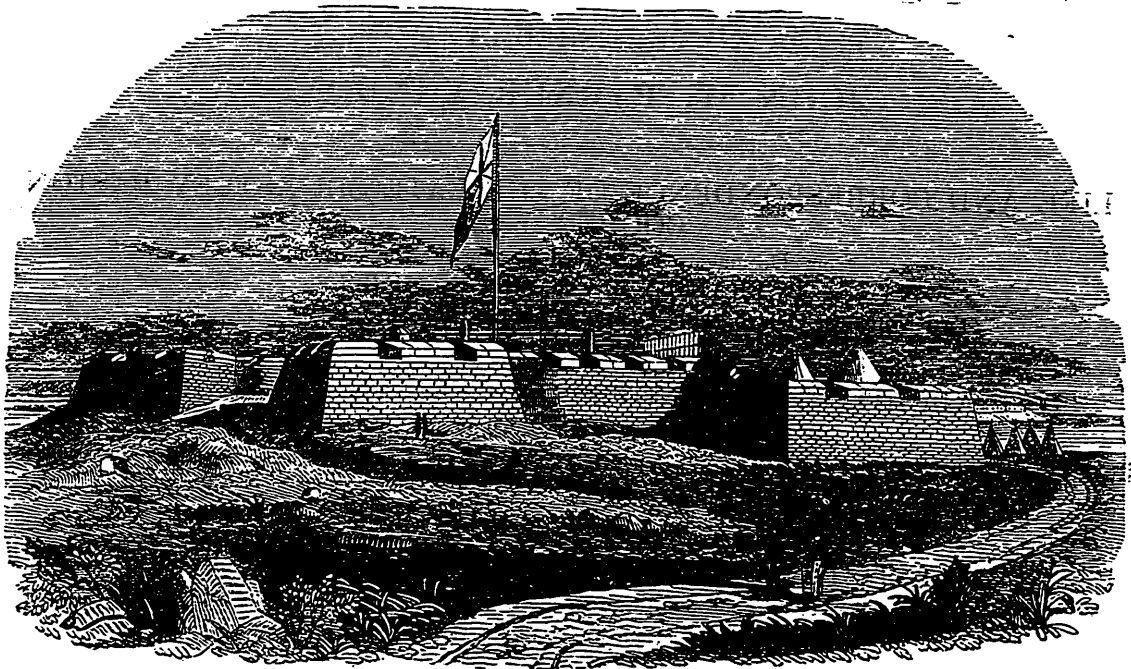
After proceeding some distance up the river, and trading occasionally with the Indians on either shore, they founded their fort or parent establishment, to which they gave the name of ASTORIA, in compliment to the enterprising man, who had set the project on foot. The partners gave themselves certain tasks to perform; some to remain at the station and open communication with the natives; some to proceed far into the interior, to establish subordinate posts, and others to sail in the *Tonquin* along the north-west coast for the establishing of further enterprises. The ill-fated vessel sailed from Astoria on the 5th of June, with twenty-three persons on board, all of whom were murdered, and the ship destroyed, by a hostile party of natives encountered on the coast.

During the remainder of the year 1811, the little band at Astoria, discouraged by the loss of their friends in the *Tonquin*, and hearing nothing of the overland party, passed their time as well as they could, establishing posts in various parts and opening a trade with the natives. Thus they wintered; and the year 1812 came upon them before they had news of the land expedition.

This expedition had been placed by Mr. Astor under the direction of Mr. Hunt, a gentleman of integrity and talent, who proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for their journey. Mr. Hunt repaired to Montreal, in July, 1810, to procure the requisites for the expedition. He engaged Canadian voyagers, bought a large canoe fitted for the ascent of the American rivers, and provided the arms, provisions, and other necessaries. Mr. Hunt proved to be unequal to many of the tricks and manoeuvres to which he was subjected in his progress through Canada, being rather a gentlemanly man, than a rough traveller. He, however, succeeded in reaching by the end of the month, the trading post of Michilimackinac, at the confluence of the great lakes. Here he found it necessary—or rather he was persuaded by others—to augment his party to sixty, with whom he set off from the lakes on the 12th of August.

The course of the expedition was, from the Lakes to the Mississippi, from thence to St. Louis, where the Missouri joins it, and up the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. The party arrived at St. Louis on the 3rd of September, and there they found that a number of fur-traders had joined themselves into a Company, under the name of the "MISSOURI FUR COMPANY." This circumstance does not seem to have been known at the time to Mr. Astor, and gave rise to most vexatious annoyances to Mr. Hunt. The company enticed away some of his men, threw difficulties in the way of his dealings at St. Louis, and gave him all sorts of false information as to the nature of the route from thence to the Rocky Mountains. The numerous delays were such as to prevent him from reaching the Rocky Mountains that year; but to avoid the expense of wintering at St. Louis, Mr. Hunt determined to push up the Missouri as far as possible to some point above the settlements, where game was plentiful, and where his whole party could be subsisted by hunting, until the breaking up of the ice in the spring should permit them to resume their voyage.

In October, 1810, they started on the Missouri, and by November 16th, arrived at a spot which they selected for their winter quarters. After a winter of very chequered events, the party broke up their encampments and proceeded up the Missouri. What they suffered in this journey by the upsetting of their canoes; the attacks of the natives, the opposition of the agents of the Missouri Company, and the varying features of the country through which they passed; Mr. Washington Irving has described with great vividness. It must suffice here to say, that after expending the summer in ascending the Missouri, the adventurers



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."