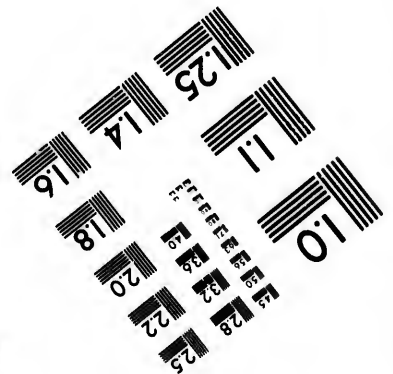
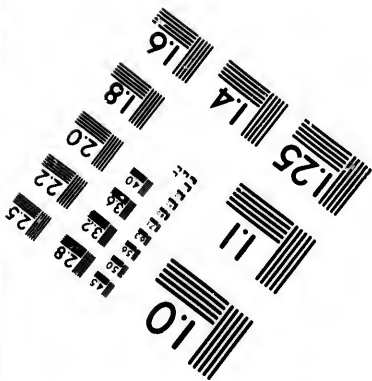
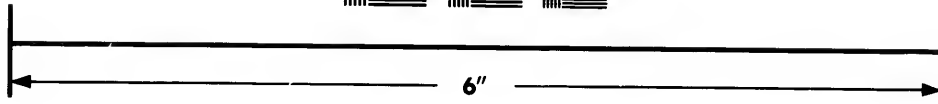
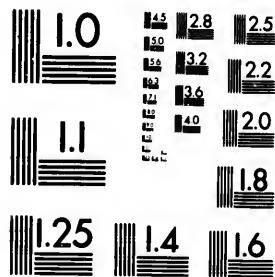


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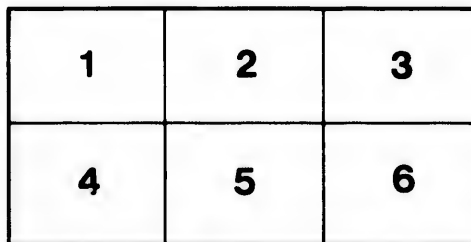
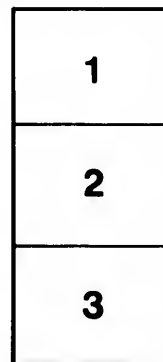
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Romance of the Fur Trade: The Companies.

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ROMANCE OF THE FUR TRADE: THE COMPANIES.

GOLD and furs have colonised the Americas. Wherever they were to be found or sought, Europeans have subjugated or exterminated the native races. In the quest of gold the Spanish conquistadores led the way in the torrid south, and De Soto in his hunt after the fabled El Dorado found a grave in the waters of the Mississippi which he had discovered. He was followed by Raleigh and the English adventurers who went to Guiana on the same bootless errand. The gains of the later gold-seekers were great, and they enriched the world at the cost of cruelties and sufferings unspeakable. Since Pizarro pillaged the Incas and Cortez freighted the galleons with the treasures of the Montezumas, down to the shooting at sight in the mining-camps and gambling saloons of the Far West, the gold-hunters have always held lives cheap, indifferent to their own and careless of those of others. But perhaps the great fur trade has been at least as lucrative, and there is a broader variety of wild romance in it. Certainly it has done more for civilisation and exploration, for it was the making of the great Canadian Dominion, as it opened up America west of the Mississippi to settlement by the States of the south and the seaboard. From the first, the fur-hunters have pursued a gainful but desperately speculative traffic, in the face of unparalleled hardships and perils. As the capitalists who financed the trade staked their hopes of fortune on contingencies they could neither foresee nor control, so each separate career of the retainers in their service was one

of suffering, cheered and enlivened only by adventure. Familiarity with death became second nature. For the fur-bearing animals were to be found only in regions of lonely desolation, stretching northward towards the Arctic circle, where the musk-ox barely got a living in the winter by scraping for lichens beneath the snow; or, farther to the south, in a wilderness of mountains and waters, swarming with hostile savages, who fiercely resented their intrusion, where they scaled stupendous ranges, threaded gloomy gorges almost impracticable, or in frail canoes followed the course of rivers raging over an alternation of shoals and cataracts. We say nothing now of the rigours of the northern climate, though sometimes, so far south as the Saskatchewan, the temperature falls to -62° , or 94° of frost—and the blast of a blizzard is sudden death.

It was the French in Canada who originated the fur trade. We must own that France has had ill luck in colonisation: she did much in days when her population was more redundant, and she has some reason to be jealous of British successes. We shouldered her out of India, when, with the genius of a Dupleix, the result of the struggle seemed a toss-up; and after Montcalm had fallen gloriously on the Heights of Abraham, we entered into the fruits of her spirited enterprise in the Canadas. Colbert and other French Ministers at home, with such statesmen as Talon and the Marquis de Frontenac, when sent abroad to administer the great transatlantic colony, saw that the Indian traffic must be the foundation of its

prosperity. Agriculture was to come in due course, but for long it could be barely self-supporting. Meantime the sole exports from the unexplored Indian country were its peltries. There are no more exciting or pathetic stories of adventure than those of the exploring missionaries of the French occupation. La Salle, after a hundred years, re-discovered the Mississippi. Joliet and Marquette had traced the chain of the Great Lakes, and Father Hennepin had been the first European to hear the roar of Niagara. La Salle confidently believed that the Mississippi would lead him to the Californian Gulf, whence he could sail to China, which shows how little these daring pioneers knew of the adventures they courted. There were two conflicting influences ever at work, and it is hard to say which of the two inspired the more indomitable resolution. The Church had asserted its supremacy over the State both at Quebec and Montreal. The priests had Louis XIV., Madame de Maintenon, and the zealous rivalry of contending orders behind them. Like modern French missionaries in China, they went to America—or at least the rank and file—with a single-minded longing for the conversion of the heathen. It is true they were content with faint signs of Christianity; but for themselves they were vowed to self-sacrifice, and rather ambitious than otherwise of the crown of martyrdom. Not a few expired in cruel tortures, chanting with their last breath the litanies of their Church, and praying like their Saviour for the forgiveness of their tormentors. Yet it must be remembered that all those Catholic missions were supported by the profits of the fur trade.

The convents and their generals, with the governors of the State, were active promoters of fur companies. On the other hand were the secular adventurers, pure and simple, of whom La Salle was the least selfish and the most ambitious. Perhaps we may compare him to Cecil Rhodes, for he chiefly valued wealth as the stepping-stone to power or fame. But the missionaries and statesmanlike heroes alike paved the way for the trafficking explorers, as bold as themselves, who trode emulously in their footsteps. The governors, who looked to the furs to fill their coffers, and who were in a manner responsible for the lives of those adventurous men, began to establish fortified posts on the lakes for their protection and for the due regulation of the trafficking. The commandants had a difficult and dangerous task. For when the whites and the half-breeds met the savage Indians, bringing canoe-loads of peltries from distant regions, among the first articles of barter were spirits, powder, and knives. The carouse beginning in good-fellowship was apt to end in bloodshed, and so there were endless vendettas beyond the frontier, which were forever renewing the eternal strife.

The trade was virtually a close monopoly. The licences were to be obtained from the governor, and they were granted on his own terms, either for hard cash or from political considerations. At first they were given only to traders who personally conducted the expeditions, afterwards they came to be sold to the middlemen, who retailed them at an enhanced price. But the result was that all the manhood and spirit of the colony either hired themselves to the capitalists or went adventuring on their own account. Agriculture

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and lumbering were almost brought to a standstill. It was even a more serious consideration that the settlements around the cities were left exposed to the attacks of the Indians. The Government was driven to severe measures, yet arbitrary legislation only made matters worse. Moreover, other causes were simultaneously at work. The Catholic Church has generally been supposed to encourage gaiety and innocent dissipation. But it is a curious fact that at that time the rule of the priests in Quebec and Montreal was almost as austere as that of the Puritans in Boston and Philadelphia. Chiefly, and not without very good reason, the Church set its face against the drinking habits, which were universal among men suffering habitually from cold and hardships. Licence was only tolerated, and involuntarily tolerated, in Montreal at the great annual fur fair, when all the townsfolk with their savage guests had been in the habit of getting drunk from time immemorial. But neither the trappers when they came home to squander their gains in holiday-making, nor the loafers of the cities to whom they willingly stood treat, could suffer these intolerable restrictions. Consequently, and in spite of edicts and penalties, there was a general stampede of the male population to the woods. It was then, as we are inclined to believe, that for the first time the French trappers, hunters, and canoe-men got the name of *coureurs de bois*, which they retained ever after when in the service of the companies. In fact, the woods and the back-waters began to swarm with bands of lawless vagabonds who were literally bushrangers, and who dare not show their faces in the settlements under pain of arrest and punishment. Outlawed and desperate,

they infested the precincts of the frontier posts, uniting the worst vices of civilisation to the savagery of their Indian allies. So it was that French Canada had been rather embarrassed than helped by her best manhood when Montcalm succumbed to Wolfe, and England effected the conquest. Then began the embittered rivalry of two great fur companies, when free-fighting went on far beyond reach of the law, and crimes could be perpetrated with practical impunity.

When the settlers of La France Nouvelle were developing their fur trade under official encouragement, the Hudson Bay Company had been established. Charles II. had granted a charter to his cousin Prince Rupert, giving away a vast territory which was not his to bestow. In 1670, when the Company was founded, Charles had no legal rights in America. By the treaty of St Germain-en-Laye in 1632 the English had conceded to the French all their claims on New France. So late as 1697, by the treaty of Ryswick, the cession of these claims was confirmed. It is true that "spheres of influence" beyond the Atlantic were little respected in those days, for France herself had encroached on the rights of Spain, though solemnly sanctioned by papal bull. Virtually, nevertheless, the Hudson adventurers were trespassers. Yet for a time the Government of the Canadas did not move in the matter. With limitless territories of their own to *exploiter*, with a European population of scarcely 60,000 souls, it could hardly have seemed worth while. The cold of the Canadian winter is intense, but it is little to that on the inhospitable shores of Hudson Bay, enveloped in fogs and darkness for three-fourths of the year. The very name was of sinister omen, for Hudson had

come to unknown grief in the gulf he had discovered. Wonderful were the courage and self-denial of the handful of hardy pioneers who first stockaded a fortalice on that forbidding coast, where they had to fetch the timber by ships from afar and bore into the frozen ground with gigantic gimlets. The illimitable wastes around, still known as the Barren Grounds, were intensely depressing. The silence was seldom broken, save by the screams of the sea-fowl flying landward before a storm. The musk-ox—more of a sheep by the way—was the only animal of any size that made its home there. The wolf, the moose, or the reindeer would sometimes stray thither in the short summer, but they were always prompt to quit with the first sprinkling of the snows. The settlers had cut themselves loose from society and civilisation. Still the communications with the depots at Fort York, Fort Albany, and Fort Moose are only kept up by a single annual vessel, and if the arrival is unduly delayed, the lonely garrisons in fear of starvation are in a fever of anxiety. Even as fur-preserves heaven-forsaken territories could not compare with the wealth of the vast sub-Arctic forests lying farther to the south, which stretch northward from the Saskatchewan, down the valleys of the Mackenzie and Fraser rivers, with their swamps and muskegs, where all fur-bearing animals, from the beavers and grey foxes down to the musk-rats, had from time immemorial multiplied in security.

Yet from these small beginnings the Company expanded till it had annexed a territory as large as Europe. That is, of course, but an approximate guess, for those wastes will never be surveyed. But when compelled to transfer its domains to the Canadian Dom-

inion, it owned everything from the Arctic circle to the Red River including Labrador, Prince Rupert's Land, what are known now as the North-West Territories, British Columbia, and Vancouver Island. The expansion and the display of British spirit were in some respects more marvellous in their way than that by which another great commercial company gave England the empire of India. Clive and those who followed in his footsteps, stiffening their native levies with mere handfuls of disciplined troops, scattered countless hosts of warlike Orientals. The fur-hunter had to contend with the forces of nature, with immense distance with utter desolation, and the cruel severity of the climate. Yet the wilderness was not absolutely unpeopled—when the Company sold their territory the other day they were believed to have 100,000 native subjects in that vast expanse—and the natives were naturally inclined to resent their invasion. As they advanced their unfined frontiers, they had to intrench their positions. The Hudson Bay post was not only an outlying trading station, but the symbol of the strong Company's continuance. It was backed up by an unknown and mysterious power; and it was by prestige that the two or three whites, with some half-dozen half-breeds by way of bodyguard, held their own among the scattered tribes. To begin with, two of these posts were established on the shores of James and Hudson Bays. These were to be the permanent bases of operations. In 1869 there were upwards of 150 occupied and garrisoned by chief factors and chief traders, 150 clerks, and 1300 inferior servants. The posts were more or less formidable according to t

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everything from the Red River, Prince Rupert, and the Northwest Territories and Vancouver. The spirit was marvellous, and the empire and those who followed it, stiffened with military discipline. The fur-hunters, with the forces of the Hudson Bay Company, had to intrude only an outlying party of bodyguards among the scattered operations. The Hudson Bay Company had 1300 infernal posts were according to

importance of the district trade and the value of the contents, but all were of much the same character. The foreign luxuries—the powder and spirits—stored in the magazines were inestimable treasures in the eyes of the Indians, who were freely admitted under certain conditions. These posts were safe against surprise, and could stand a prolonged siege against enemies only armed with bow and tomahawk. A parallelogram was surrounded by stockades of tree-stems about thirty feet in height. There were bastions pierced for guns at the corners, like the turrets of the old Scottish embattled castle. Galleries loop-holed for musketry ran all around the fortification. The only entrance was by a gateway strongly secured, raked and commanded by light pieces of ordnance. Within were the magazines, the residences of the men, and sometimes a piece of garden-ground where hardy vegetables were raised. The victualling was necessarily precarious at best, and sometimes the inmates were reduced to dire extremity. In the far north, where game was scarce, it was always an ascetic life, and when not actually constrained to fast, the garrison had often to fall back upon a fish diet. Farther to the south the living was luxurious enough in a fair hunting season, and the lonely men revelled in rough plenty. The rude tables of rough-hewn planks groaned under a superabundance of good cheer—buffalo humps, ribs, and marrow-bones, saddles of the moose, and haunches of venison. The best were sun-dried and stored against the winter. But there were seasons when the roving bands of buffalo stopped short and turned back in the periodical

migration, when moose and deer were scarce and shy, or when the savages spoiled the white man's chase. These men of enormous appetites and incredible powers of digestion took up hole after hole in their belts, till they were wasted to walking skeletons, and had barely strength to shoulder their guns. As for what we call the essentials of civilisation, they loved them passionately, but learned often to dispense with them. Coffee, sugar, and salt came once a-year with the letters and papers from the annual ship, and there was no reckoning with possible accidents to the canoes or the dog-sledges. For tobacco, which was even more indispensable, they found an unsatisfactory substitute in birch-bark or the insipid leaves of a shrub, which tantalised them by provoking painful comparisons.

Latterly all the *employés* were caught young: only lads born in the solitudes of the Highlands could habituate themselves to the life of loneliness; only constitutions of iron, hardened under hereditary conditions, could endure so tremendous a strain. It was essential that the brain-power of the factors should be unimpaired, and that their energies should rise superior to the depressing surroundings,—in fact, that the man must be all there when a sudden call was made on his mental resources. It may be assumed that the first adventurers consisted chiefly of Englishmen, although the Scottish invasion of England had set in with the accession of King James. But it is certain that afterwards, both with the Hudson Bay Company and its great Canadian rival, the names of factors, traders, and prominent partisans, with scarcely an exception, were Scottish. The story of

trade and discovery in the North-West reads like a muster-roll of the clans, and mainly of the northern clans of the second order. There are MacTavishes, MacGillivrays, M'Kays, M'Lellans, M'Dougalls, with Frasers and Stuarts and the French Frobishers. A Mackenzie, a Fraser, and a Thompson gave their names to as many mighty rivers. That came in the natural course of things. The Company found its best recruiting-grounds in the Highlands, and enlisted the martial spirit of the mountaineers for a country where local feuds were forgotten. It was different altogether when civil war broke out between the companies, and then the clansmen fought like fighting-cocks. But for the youth from Assynt or Applecross solitude had few terrors, as hardships had always been familiar. He had been born in some isolated glen and cradled in the mountain mists. He changed the soil but scarcely the climate, and as for the new circumstances, they opened a career to his ambition. He looked forward to promotion and increasing pay: in the North-west Company he drew profits on the co-operative system, and so he cast in his lot for life with the land of his adoption. He had little inducement to ask leave of absence for home, and such a request would probably have been answered by summary dismissal. Naturally a young man will turn to thoughts of love, but in that country there were few maidens of his own blood. And if he desired to be well considered by his superiors, he could do no better than get hand-fasted with a native. The Company, though chiefly Scottish by race and Presbyterian by religion, winked at these illicit connections, for settlements removed several thousand miles

from headquarters were not what Mr Squeers would have called the savages' workshops for morals. But the managers encouraged mixed marriages for commercial and political grounds, for they deemed that an aged man could do better business as a family connection of some Dogrib or Loucheaux chief.

The territory was autocratically administered, and the subordinate limits, within almost absolute discretion. Removed beyond the reach of the law, they were left unto themselves. The agents were not partners, as in the North-West Company; but they were assured of advancement and a competence if enterprising and resourceful. And it is admitted that the government, though arbitrary, was admirable, so far as the Indians were concerned. It contrasted very favourably with that of the south of the international line where parties were organised and sent out on the war-path, premiums offered for the Indian scalps, irrespective of sex or age. In the north the innocent never made to suffer for the gains sought out and hunted down. Subsequently outrages came to almost unknown, and latterly posts might almost have been unstockaded. But being commercial, the Company's policy based on commercial selfishness. No intrusion was permitted to their boundless preserves. A portion had been guaranteed charter or trading licences, the monopoly was everywhere secured by distances and definition. To the west of the lakes, down the Mississippi and the Missouri, the solitary voyager or *coureur de bois* might live his gun and by barter, if he chose risk having his hair raised by

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 it degenerated into a ruinous
 competition. The sale of spirits
 the Indians had been forbidden
 the French; now they were
 aunched by adulterated fire-
 water, and swindled into shameful
 gains when intoxicated. Mur-
 ders and outrages were of constant
 occurrence, and bloodshed was
 readily avenged by bloodshed.
 en some of the principal Mon-
 treal merchants combined, and the
 English, or rather the Scots, entered
 partnership with old French
 onists to save the trade from
 destruction. The result was the
 formation of the North-West
 mpany, in which the names
 the leading partners were
 Gillivray, MacTavish, and Fro-
 her. For long it exercised un-
 equaled authority over the woods
 waters to the west of the
 adas. Thanks chiefly to the
 nob element, it soon rallied to
 flag the scattered hordes of
 reurs de bois who had been

trapping for their own hands since
 the conquest. These men became
 devoted to their new masters, and
 served their interests with the
 same unreasoning and unswerving
 fidelity as the clansmen of a High-
 land chieftain or the spearmen of
 a Border chief. But for half a
 generation they had been used to
 bushranging, nor was it easy to
 break them in to the loosest disci-
 pline. Moreover, the tribes in the
 districts where they trapped were
 numerous and warlike. So the
 Company established a chain of
 forts through the lake district,
 otherwise armed and defended from
 those of the Hudson Bayers. Here
 it was no case of a few sturdy
 Scots trafficking with a handful
 of pacific barbarians. The head-
 quarters of the Company were
 established at Fort William on
 Lake Superior, and it was a really
 formidable sylvan fortress, with
 regular works and a heavy arma-
 ment. There every year was held
 a solemn meeting, when the wealthy
 lords of the flourishing corporation
 made a demonstration to terrorise
 their savage allies and dependents.
 Washington Irving has described
 it graphically. The pomp and
 luxury of the city met the feudal-
 ism of the wilds. Wealthy partners
 from Montreal ascended the rivers
 in state barges, freighted with
 wines and delicacies, and carrying
 cooks and confectioners. Descend-
 ing the rivers from remote stations
 came weather-beaten Highlanders
 dressed in deerskins, with moccas-
 ins that were masterpieces of
 bead-work. These hardy veterans
 had mustered their Celtic tails,
 and came in equal but more bar-
 baric state with their pipers. They
 met for business, like shareholders
 in the Cannon Street Hotel, but
 the chief business seems to have
 been revelry. In a lofty baronial
 hall, with rough wooden walls and

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rafters, the ponderous tables were laden with sylvan and civic dainties, and with wines mingling with Scottish whiskey and old Jamaica: they kept it up till most of them slipped down. Irving, who assisted at some of those carouses, speaks of the old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blasts. Outside the merriment was at least as boisterous, where bushrangers and boatmen, Indians and half-breeds, were regaling without stint, though upon coarser fare.

It was inevitable that the competing companies should clash sooner or later. They were divided by blood and religion as well as by trade jealousy. The *employés* of the Northern company were Scottish almost to a man; those of the Southern association were chiefly French Canadians or half-breeds, and superstitiously Catholic. When they did come together at last, they were always ready to fight, employing all the arts of Indian warfare. That most of the partners of the North-West were also Scottish did not tend to ameliorate matters, as they showed when Lord Selkirk's unfortunate Highland settlers on the Saskatchewan were ground to pieces between the upper and the nether millstone. It was on the Saskatchewan that the companies first came to blows. The case was something like our present troubles with pushing foreign neighbours in Africa. The North-Westers were in actual possession of the Saskatchewan valley, and claimed, besides, the legitimate succession to the old French explorers. The Hudson Bay Company held to a sort of hyperborean Munroe doctrine, which gave them all the unsettled territory they could grasp. If forgotten graves could give up their secrets, they could

tell many a tale of violence, a treachery between Fort Garry and the Jasper House, on the eastern slope of the Rockies. Naturally the Company cared to keep records of that ignominious and disgraceful warfare, when ambuscades, surprises, and slaughter swayed the balances and paid the dividends. Forts were fired and stores destroyed or emptied. I do not we can surmise something of the trade from the historical accounts of the unprovoked assaults of the North-Westers on the Selkirk colonists. Then men were killed sacred, and women were spared, by ruffians, subsidised, and rewarded, before chants of position and mentioned "respectability." The settlement was broken up for a time solely to preserve the fur monopoly, and its founder died at Pauquon broken heart.

In the beginning of the century except for the Russians in Alaska, the American fur trade was a British monopoly. The North-West Company, in possession of all the borderland, had been opening their enterprise far into territory belonging to the United States. Only nominally belonging, beyond the Mississippi they had done nothing to explore their dominions or assert their rights. When commercial treaties had been signed with Canada, the Americans turned their attention seriously to furs. The Mackenzie Company was formed, and it was a brisk import business. It was the German emigrant, John Astor, who had the idea of himself a millionaire, and developing to the profit of his country the vast internal trade grounds of the unknown. He had started as a shopkeeper in a small way of business, and chance meeting on a sea-ward Pacific

ale of violence with a retail furrier suggested
 een Fort Garry venture in Canadian peltries,
 on the eastern side which paid him well; and then
 Naturally he began to cherish dreams of his
 d to keep receiving as a prince of commerce.
 ous and discrete profits of his fur trading were
 when ambushed in building lots in New
 slaughter work, and so he gradually built
 and paid the a gigantic fortune. But Astor,
 were fired and ugh a keen man of business,
 ed or emptied. l nothing of the pettiness of
 se something o trader. He was a patriot and
 ical accounts bitious; his audacious schemes
 ed assaults of e matured with cool calcula-
 rs on the Sea; and, like Louis Napoleon,
 en men were knew how to wait, for he had
 women were re than his share of disappoint-
 ans, subsidised, its and reverses.
 rewarded by before 1804 the Californian
 position and ungt was separated from Man-
 tability." The stan and Boston by something
 oken up for a a six months' voyage round
 rve the fur mono: Horn, supposing the weather
 er died at Pau e favourable. The land route
 e country marked "unexplored"
 nning of the cen never been attempted, and was
 e Russians in Al considered impracticable. Trap-
 n fur trade was, and hunters had penetrated
 nopoly. The Nin sight of the Rockies, visible
 any, in possessio many hundred miles in that
 land, had been sparent atmosphere, and had
 erprise far into ight back evil reports of the
 g to the United Stendous barrier. Imagination
 lly belonging, foled it, like the mythical
 ississippi the ntain of the Moon, with
 hing to explore ous horrors. If the horrors
 e assert their r fabulous, the perils were real
 nercial treaties, gh, as Lewis and Clarke
 with Canada, d in 1804, when, ascending
 rned their atte Missouri to its mountain
 urs. The Mackes, they forced the passes and
 s formed, and ended on the Californian Gulf.
 ort business. I now that the way had been
 man emigrant, eered, and the vague terrors
 ad the idea of me Unknown dissipated, future
 illionaire, and nunications became possible,
 e profit of his ad only a question of time. Astor
 ast internal traf the first to realise that, and it
 the unknown ced him to enlarge a daring
 ted as a shopprise he was meditating. He
 way of business meant to organise a fur trade
 ing on a sea-ue Pacific, establishing regular

connections with the lucrative mar-
 kets in Canton. Captain Cook,
 among his many discoveries, may
 be said to have discovered the sea-
 otter. It is only to be found on
 the shores of the Northern Pacific,
 and its fur is the most valuable of
 all, not excepting the silver fox.
 The Californian gold deposits were
 as yet unsuspected, and the wealth
 of the sea furs had only been pre-
 cariously *exploité* by the Russians
 and by some enterprising mariners
 from New England. Astor founded
 a company, with a capital of a
 million dollars—said to have been
 mainly provided by himself—and
 he obtained a charter from the
 State of New York. He was to
 establish his Pacific headquarters
 in some safe anchorage. An annual
 ship was to bring supplies
 from New York, and transport the
 furs to Canton. The freight was
 to be collected by a flotilla of ten-
 ders, touching everywhere along
 the coast and landing agents to
 traffic with the Indians. A great
 company would have the advantage
 of its petty rivals, and he proposed
 to get rid of Russian competition
 by offering what was virtually a
 sleeping partnership. He under-
 took to supply their Alaskan posts,
 for the difficulty of victualling was
 their great drawback; they, on the
 other hand, were to carry his furs
 direct to the northern Chinese
 ports, where they were chiefly in
 demand. Thus he would be spared
 the cost of land-carriage from Can-
 ton, which was the sole distribut-
 ing centre for other European
 traders. His plans promised to
 work out satisfactorily; he had
 almost come to an understanding
 with the Russians; he had already
 floated the Mackinaw Company,
 and was making overtures to the
 great corporation of the "North-
 West," when these, after long
 hesitation, were rejected. The

North-West Company had already been throwing out feelers towards the Columbia river, and now they decided on attempting to anticipate Astor and secure the Pacific trade for themselves. Probably it was that unexpected refusal which provoked him into extending his schemes. He would no longer be content with trading along the coast, and picking up what furs were consigned at the mouths of the rivers. He would embrace in his operations the unknown expanse which had been penetrated at the centre by Lewis and Clarke; his posts should extend from the Oregon estuary to St Louis, and be scattered about the upper waters of the Columbia on the one side, along the Missouri and its innumerable tributaries on the other. And to a great extent he realised his dream, although obstacles unforeseen delayed its fulfilment. The opposition of the North-West Company he must have anticipated. When they rejected his overtures it was a declaration of hostilities, and he knew what such warfare meant among fur-hunters. But he was not prepared for the quarrel between America and Great Britain, which broke out at a most unlucky moment for him, nor could he reasonably have counted on the exceptional catastrophes which must have daunted a less determined man, and drained less ample resources.

He had the spirit of enterprise in excess; he had provided the capital, but he had to hunt up agents with practical knowledge. There the hostile Association came to his aid. The North-West Company was a close corporation, and necessarily a limited one. Some of the best men they had trained were disappointed and resentful. These officials had

either thrown up their em- blements or been dismissed. Se in of them had come to the Awc can States in quest of occup as Impecunious or in debt, and ele out from the Canadian mondl b Astor found it easy to consta terms with them—the rather Co he behaved with great generost They signed on as partners i go new undertaking, but they cond uted little but their experiensel o

Had there been confidencipa cordiality between the prary and his partners, his enter would still have seemed spa. tive almost to folly. His so to as we have said, was tute. He looked forward to openis i America west of the Missoe g his trade; but at first his n a ments on the Pacific were the on a sea-basis. The region tem he intended to establish his he quarters was still in dispu To tween England and the s, ye When at length his plansden: matured, war appeared inews, an He was bound to come i. I understanding with his Kwale rivals, who ruled in Alaska its military despotism. The sgger of his settlement and the sed l which were the currency led v commerce depended on the seam of the single ship, which ! thei weather the storms and icebsan the Horn and run the gsans of the perils of the coast fr An Straits of Magellan to the Sco bars of the Columbia. Faibles arrive after prolonged seaten might lead to disorders, desrons. or mutiny. s-pun

But assuming that all were a bl and the season's trading waquin perous, the whole profits dhe year must be staked on anise hazard. We have always te. T that Monte Christo was ing c venturesome when he stowe Shet all the treasures of his grots rag

own up their bark and steered out upon a sea dismissed. Se infested by pirates; but the had come to the Astor proposed to do much in quest of occupation same year after year. The was or in debt, and unless furs can be packed in the Canadian month bulk; and the ship that was and it easy to command across once a-year from them—the rather Columbia to Canton would be d with great generosity as well worth plundering ed on as partners in gold-laden galleon homeward t-taking, but they cond from Carthage. Yet the but their experiences carrying the fortunes of the ere been confidence company only incurred extraor- between the proary sea-risks, and might have partners, his enter insured at proportionate ll have seemed spe. As for the adventurers st to folly. His so took the untrodden overland ave said, was true, we doubt whether a first- l forward to open insurance company would west of the Missoe granted them life policies ; but at first his n any terms.

the Pacific were the enterprise was floated in basis. The region tember 1810 with the sailing ed to establish his the Tonquin from New York. was still in dispu Tonquin is described as a fine England and the s, yet she was only of 290 tons length his planden: she mounted ten tiny war appeared iners, and was manned by twenty bound to come l. Laden almost down to the nding with his wale, she carried all the ele- no ruled in Alaska its of trouble. There were despotism. The siggering Canadians, soon pro- tlement and the ed by sea-sickness, and ere the currency led with supreme contempt by e depended on the seamen. When the *voyageurs* ngle ship, which their sea-legs, squabbles were he storms and iceberant. There were American and run the gans who sided with the sailors. ils of the coast fr American captain detested f Magellan to the Scottish partners, and the he Columbia. Faibles came to a head when he ter prolonged stened to put his employers d to disorders, derona. In short, a comedy of s-purposes had nearly turned uming that all was bloody tragedy when the eason's trading waquin cast anchor off the shores e whole profits the Columbia. The land of t be staked on anise gave no hospitable wel- We have always te. There was a rush of con- ate Christo was ing currents, like the roots of me when he stowe Shetlands, and the breakers easures of his groe raging furiously on the bar.

Nevertheless the passage must be attempted, and two boats were sent in to take soundings. One was never heard of again; the other was swamped, and most of the crew perished. But at last a landing was effected, after more than the usual quarrelling, and a site was selected for the fort. It was stockaded, armed, and slenderly garrisoned, and the natives, though pilferers, were not unfriendly. The future of the little settlement was to be a checkered one, and the fort was more than once to change proprietors; but the fate of the Tonquin was soon decided. Soon after she sailed for the north sinister rumours alarmed Astoria, to be confirmed on the return of a native interpreter, the sole survivor of a lamentable catastrophe. The Tonquin had come to grief in a harbour of Vancouver's Island. Though the natives in these seas were notoriously treacherous, they had been permitted to board the vessel in considerable numbers. More foolishly still, though their bearing was insolent, the knives which were in special demand were freely bartered for furs. Too late the captain took alarm, and ordered the ship to be cleared. He was answered by a war-whoop, followed by a massacre. The seamen though surprised fought desperately, and four escaped to barricade themselves in the deck-cabin. They opened a musketry fire that cleared the decks, and then, manning the deck-swivels, they scattered the canoe fleet. Had they stuck to their ship they might have saved themselves, but, seeking to escape, were overtaken in the darkness and put to death with horrible tortures. One man, mortally wounded, had remained on board: he had foretold the fate of those who abandoned

him, assuring them at the same time that they should be amply avenged. With daybreak the savages were seen again putting off from the shore. Then Lewis managed to drag himself to the bulwarks, and with friendly signals invited them on board. Greedy for pillage, they accepted, and once more the decks were crowded. Then the train that had been laid to the powder-magazine was fired, and the air was filled with shattered timber and corpses. The calculated vengeance was complete, but it did not facilitate Astor's trading operations.

The garrison at Astoria detached parties up the river to establish connections with the Indian tribes. These parties were so many forlorn-hopes, who courageously faced the dangers they vaguely realised. A single example may give an idea of the hardihood of the ventures. One of the partners with eight followers had established himself in the far interior. In the autumn a canoe arrived at Astoria, bringing back four of the adventurers. The news were good; the trade was promising, but food was scarce and hard to come by. With famine staring him in the face, the leader calculated that five men might struggle through where nine must starve. So rather than abandon the enterprise he decided with only four companions to brave the rigours of the winter, and risk the probabilities of massacre.

That post was 700 miles from the fort. Remote enough, the distance was relatively nothing to that which had to be traversed by the land expedition through regions for the most part unexplored. We can only rapidly trace its fortunes. The chosen leader was a certain Mr Hunt, who seems

to have shown on a small scale qualities of a great captain. He was not the least of his difficulties that he had to deal with a set of untrained men, who had been accustomed to the wilderness by sheer recklessness, and whose independence resented the point of departure was Montreal. Reckless as they were, the voyageurs and free trappers were not to enlist for an enterprise that was hazardous beyond their experience. The older companies were all in their power to discourage them. By incredible exertions, by flattering their vanity and charging their debts, Hunt got the necessary number together, and a motley and turbulent party they were. He stiffened them afterwards by some good measures, picked up, returning from the trapping expeditions on the banks. From Montreal they took their way by water to St Louis, the Mississippi, then the capital of western pioneering and the basis of operations. Thence, with hard drinking and excitement, the adventurers started in search of erant spirits. So they began the ascent of the Missouri, which a course of 3000 miles from sources in the mountains shed. As the stream was shallow, the progress was slow, and the boatmen, toiling with oars and poles, were in constant peril of shipwreck from shoals, snags, and drifting timber. Often the narrow channel swept round the overhanging bluffs, where they were at the mercy of wandering bands of savages, armed with as well as bows and arrows. More than once they were in imminent danger, and only escaped by flight and paying the river toll. For even when they were detained in villages none

ndly, the chiefs laid the trad-
 under contribution, like the
 robber barons of the Rhine.
 roover, it became a race with
 er whites for the hunting-
 ands of the Pacific slopes. An
 nt of the Missouri Fur Company
 followed close on their heels,
 although amicable relations
 e ostensibly kept up, he missed
 pportunity of intriguing against
 m.
 When compelled to winter in a
 age of the Aricaras, they had
 e little more than make a fair
 t. Hitherto though the boat-
 had been toilsome, the travel-
 had been relatively safe, and
 y had needed neither guides
 r interpreters. Now they were
 xchange their boats for horses,
 t strike into the unknown. It
 s like venturing without com-
 s or rudder on an ocean swarm-
 with pirates. Immediately
 ore them lay the country of the
 like Sioux; beyond these were
 Crows and the Blackfeet, who
 ked in the gorges and ravines
 the Black Hills and the Rocky
 untains. All these savages
 re equally eager for scalps and
 nder; all fiercely resented the
 rsion of the whites on their
 ating-grounds. The obstacles
 roposed by nature were to the
 s formidable. First came
 great American desert, stretch-
 from the Missouri to the foot
 the Rockies. Even in the
 ing the streams begin to shrink
 dry up, and as the herbage
 hers the game shifts its quarters.
 el there is none in that treeless
 ste; an . ny cooking, when
 re was anything to cook, de-
 ided on the chance of finding
 Falodung. Beyond the desert
 l the outlying range of the
 ack Hills was the barrier of the
 ckies. By dint of indomitable
 severance and resolution that

barrier was at last surmounted.
 After quelling mutiny and coun-
 terplotting treachery by a judic-
 ous mixture of tact and determin-
 ation, Hunt struck a stream flow-
 ing towards the Pacific, and looked
 down upon a chaos of bleak deso-
 lation. A dreary outlook it was;
 nevertheless their exhi!ration was
 great, and they had little fore-
 boding of the troubles in store
 for them. It was now the end of
 September; they had been travel-
 ling for fourteen months, and
 another winter was approaching.

Time was precious, and yet haste
 was impossible. Their horses were
 wellnigh worn out with hard work
 and low feeding, and when they
 reached a river that seemed fairly
 navigable they were inclined again
 to betake themselves to canoes.
 So it was decided, and it was an
 unhappy mistake. Invaluable time
 was lost in getting the timber and
 building. Then they neglected
 the warnings of friendly Indians,
 and launched their frail craft upon
 the Mad river, which well de-
 served the name. It brawled
 between precipitous banks, plung-
 ing down here and there in im-
 practicable cataracts. The canoes
 had to be abandoned, and the
 party, reverting to land travel,
 regretted the horses left behind.
 Fortunately, perhaps, the numbers
 had been considerably reduced.
 It was characteristic of the hard
 conditions of the fur trade that
 when the adventurers, as they
 hoped, were within reach of their
 goal, the arrival of some of them
 should be indefinitely delayed.
 Sundry couples were detached
 with traps and guns to hunt in
 the hill tributaries of the Colum-
 bia in valleys hitherto untrodden
 by Europeans. If they saved
 their lives and the trapping was
 successful, they were to find their
 way as they could to the fort of

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Astoria. What the difficulties were may be surmised from the experiences of their comrades, under capable leaders and comparatively well equipped. The main party started again with provisions for only five days. They must have been at least 1200 miles from their destination, and autumn was drawing on towards winter. They cached their goods to lighten the loads, keeping only a little for occasional barter. But for two hundred miles they did not meet a living soul. They separated in search of bare sustenance, only to come together again when both parties were reduced to extremity of emaciation. When they did happen upon scattered bands of Indians, they found them in little better case than themselves. All were half-starving; they had buried their dried salmon, and their first proceeding was to drive away the horses which they could not be tempted to part with. At a critical moment the expedition was only saved by taking a camp by surprise and forcibly seizing half-a-dozen of horses. Some days they supported nature on diluted portable soup; other days they went altogether without food; now and again they had such a stroke of luck as to trap a beaver, which they stewed down with hips and blackberries. It shows wonderful vitality and powers of endurance that they were still struggling forward when the snowstorms set in with December. At length they struck the Columbia river, where Indian settlements were more frequent. Even then their sufferings were not at an end, as they had fondly fancied. For days as they followed its sinuous

course, as it flows between precipitous banks, they were on point of perishing of thirst without sound and sight of the water. Finally they succeeded in hiring a couple of canoes, and paddled down-stream to the mouth of the river, where they were welcomed as men who had been given up for dead. The journey from St Lawrence to the Pacific lasted for nearly two years.

A few sentences must bring the story of the companies to a close. The North-Westers reached Columbia soon after Hunt's expedition, and they had suffered similarly, though somewhat thanks to greater experience and better organisation. The war between Britain and America had broken out. To anticipate capture by a British squadron, the party in command at Astoria sold stock and furs to the North-West Company for less than a third of their value. To the disappointment of our officers, who had been hoping for prize-money, they found nothing but the dismantled fortalice to take over, when it changed name from Fort Astor to Fort George. In Columbia and Oregon the North-West Company rendered what they could of the harvest which Astor and his agents had been sowing the seed, till by the treaty of Ghent in 1818 the United States again became American and was once more known as the United States. Then most of the Canadian traders returned to the katchewan and the Lakes, three years later, on the death of Lord Selkirk, the rival north-western companies buried the war-hat. They amalgamated in 1821, and the North-West merged its name in that of the older association.

TOPICS OF THE DAY.

Economics.

- Phy and the Newer Sociology.** By Professor CALDWELL. *Contemporary Review*, September.
- ant Education.** By GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE. *Nineteenth Century*, September.
- are of the Boys.** By B. PAUL NEUMAN. *Fortnightly Review*, September.
- urn of the Jews to Palestine.** *Nineteenth Century*, September.
- women and Agriculture.** By VIRGINIA M. CRAWFORD. *Contemporary Review*, September.
- ocial Manslaughter.** By Miss GERTRUDE TUCKWELL. *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- ney-Lending Inquiry.** By T. W. RUSSELL, M.P. *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- ation of Ground Values.** By Sir EDWARD SASSOON, Bart. *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- ade and Foreign Policy.** By J. A. HOBSON. *Contemporary Review*, August.
- Social Evolution!** By HERBERT SPENCER. *Nineteenth Century*, September.

Colonial Expansion and its Lessons.

- geone Troubles.** By H. R. FOX BOURNE. *Fortnightly Review*, August.
- are Empré in the Far East.** By the Author of "1920." *Contemporary Review*, August.
- ade and Foreign Policy.** By J. A. HOBSON. *Contemporary Review*, August.
- ippine Islanders.** By LUCY M. J. GARNETT. *Fortnightly Review*, July.
- o the Philipinas.** By CLAES ERICSSON. *Contemporary Review*, June.

Art.

- Treasures of America.** By WILLIAM SHARP. *Nineteenth Century*, September.
- Moreau; the Modern Mind in Classical Art.** By C. I. HOLMES. *Contemporary Review*, September.
- ard Burne-Jones.** By FORD MADOX HUFFER. *Contemporary Review*, August.
- Byrne-Jones.** By WILLIAM SHARP. *Fortnightly Review*, August.
- ab.** By CLAUDE PHILLIPS. *Nineteenth Century*, July.
- ascott Press and the New Printing.** By ALBERT LOUIS COTTON. *Contemporary Review*, August.
- gion of Mr. Watts's Pictures.** By JOHN FOREMAN. *Contemporary Review*, July.

Life and Manners.

- or the Better Teaching of Manners.** By Mrs. HUGH BELL. *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- nd Girls.** By H. R. HAWES. *Contemporary Review*, July.
- of Letter Writing.** By HERBERT PAUL. *Nineteenth Century*, July.
- of Blackmail.** *Contemporary Review*, August.
- manity.** *Westminster Review*, August.
- France.** By MARY JAMES DARMESTETER. *Contemporary Review*, July.
- ersity of Oxford in 1898.** By the Hon. GEORGE C. BRODERICK. *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- "Yellow Journalism."** *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- ve Years of East London.** CANON BARNETT. *Contemporary Review*, August.
- as a Social Force.** By T. H. S. ESCOTT. *Fortnightly Review*, July.

English Leaders.

- one and his Party.** By Sir WEMYSS REID. *Nineteenth Century*, August.
- Morley.** *Fortnightly Review*, August.
- erlain as Foreign Minister.** *Fortnightly Review*, August.
- Berry and his Followers.** *Fortnightly Review*, June.

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