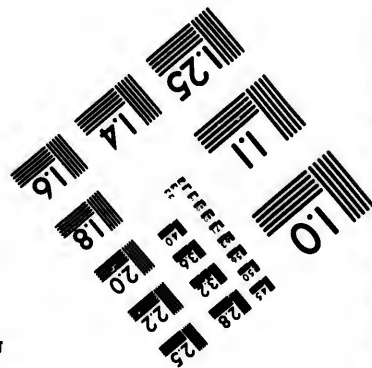
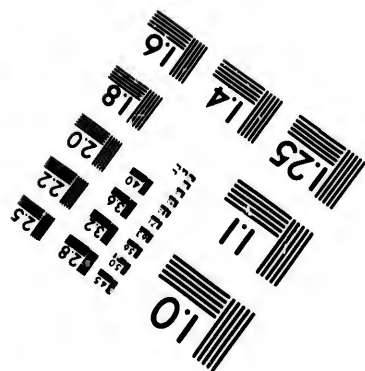
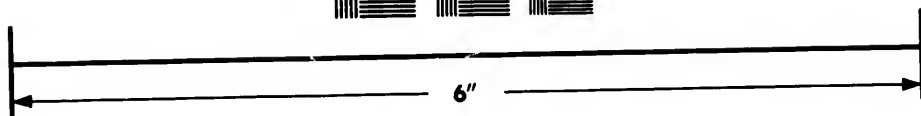
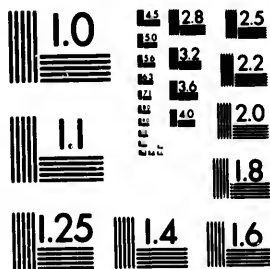


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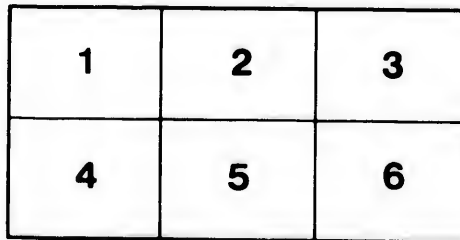
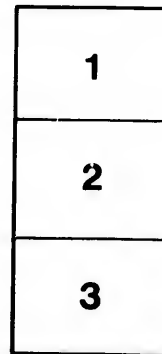
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THE
CANADIAN MONTHLY
AND NATIONAL REVIEW.

VOL. 5.]

APRIL, 1874.

[No. 4.

A FRAGMENT OF CANADIAN HISTORY.*

BY PROFESSOR BRUCE.

THE writer of the History of the Dominion of Canada has a great work before him. It is as great a task as the explorer of a great river has when entering its embouchure he sails up to diverge and examine one branch, to return and repeat his quest in another, and after all to leave unvisited a hundred rivulets which go to make up the stream. The History of Canada must start from such different sources as the discovery of the Prima Vista in 1497; the Nouvelle France of Jacques Cartier in 1535; the Acadie of the heroes of "Evangeline" in 1604; the Rupert's Land of the Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay in 1670, and extending westward until it embraced—from Hudson's Straits to Vancouver's Island, discovered in 1762—all the country not possessed by any

other Christian Prince or State; the British Canada of the soldiers of Wolfe of 1759; and the refuge of the United Empire Loyalists from 1783 to 1812. Starting from such different sources, the History of Canada comes down to the present time, when British North America is beginning to realize her unity under the Canadian Confederation. This paper is a fragment of such history, torn from the volume that must be written by some patient and earnest investigator who can make the whole subject a life-work. It is an imperfect sketch of the history of the Hudson's Bay Company and its opponents, from their adventurous beginning to the year 1821, when all united in one great company bearing the name of the oldest, though not most vigorous partner. The embarkation of English gentlemen in foreign trade was the result of the successful voyages of Drake and his contemporaries, when, as a species of freebooters, they sailed the seas with the motto of the brave Robin

* Sir Alexander McKenzie's Travels; Hargrave's Red River; Neill's History of Minnesota; Reports of the British House of Commons; Ross's Red River Settlement.

Hood. Among the Company of Adventurers to whom King Charles granted a charter was the fiery Prince Rupert, who is acknowledged as "our dear and entirely beloved cousin, Count Palatine of the Rhine," &c., and to him, already noted for his buccaneering life in the West Indies, and for exploits of a more patriotic kind against the Dutch, was given the honour of naming a territory which only five years ago lost the title of "Rupert's Land." His old friend, the Duke of Albemarle, familiar to the reader of English history as the brave and reticent restorer of Charles II., General Monk, died in the year of the granting of the charter; and his son Christopher stands second on the list of those to whom was given the monopoly of the country lying within the "entrance of the Straits commonly known as Hudson's Straits, together with all the lands, countries and territories upon the coasts and confines of the seas, straits, bays, lakes, rivers, creeks, and sounds." It is not at all strange to read of "old George, the King-maker," who had filled almost every office, military and civil, leaving his heir with instructions to prosecute, even so wild and adventurous an enterprise as the trade with Hudson's Bay; nor does it surprise us to see the ruling spirit of King Charles' reign, Dryden's Achitophel, Lord Ashley, the unworthy ancestor of our good Earl of Shaftesbury, taking part in this quest of the "Golden Fleece," bearing, as he did, the character:

"A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

Lord Arlington, another of the members of the celebrated Cabal, is found among the traders, and with fourteen others—knights, baronets, esquires and citizens—completed the corporation organized under Prince Rupert, the first Governor. The pleasure-loving king deserves well of us, when we look at his wise and generous policy of encouraging the trader and the voyageur, giving up to them the fisheries of "whales,

sturgeons and all other royal fishes," and even the "gold, silver, gems and precious stones," requiring only yearly to himself and successors, as often as they should enter the territories, the payment of "two elks and two black beavers." The love of sea-adventure, which was then strengthening in the bosom of the Englishman, was but the revival of the old Norse instinct which the struggles of the barons and the Wars of the Roses had very much deadened. It was this same spirit that led Drake and Raleigh and Frobisher to make their flying visits to almost every part of the unknown world, and the explorers of the inhospitable quarters of Hudson's Bay had to incite them the additional charm of whales and icebergs and fierce wild beasts. For a hundred years the Company sent out its ships to escape, with battered keels and sometimes dismayed vessels, the dangers of a channel open only two months in the year; but, besides having their love of adventure gratified, they had the consolation of securing a very profitable cargo of the peltries of the frozen land. Not long after their establishment, it is true, their rudely built forts on the border of Hudson's Bay were visited and captured by French expeditions. The great Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 100 years before, had turned on edge the teeth of all the Protestant nations against the foes of the reformed doctrines, and war was being waged at this time between "Le Grand Monarque" and the English, who sympathized with the struggling and devoted inhabitants of the Low Countries. In these struggles the young Company received its share of trials; its forts were occupied, its trade interrupted and its energies weakened time after time until the Peace of Ryswick in 1697 put an end to the difficulties that beset the traders; yet during all this period, taking full account of losses, the proprietors comforted themselves every few years with a dividend of 50 per cent. To one who has never experienced the peculiar cold of Rupert's Land it seems intoler-

able to endure for several weeks together a temperature of so great intensity, and yet the traders gathering furs for their vessel, coming out in the short northern summer, passed with much cheerfulness, and even pleasure, their sojourn year after year. From far and near came the tribes of Indians inhabiting the vast region to the west, which the traders thus found it unnecessary to visit. Without leaving their so-called forts on Hudson's Bay, they could receive for a trifle of goods, or some paltry trinket, the most valuable furs; and Fort Churchill and the shores of the inland sea of the north became the centre of attraction for the many tribes of the great Crees or Algonquins of the South-east, as well as the Chippewan nations of the North-west. To the romance of the trade was added the feeling of superiority which their knowledge and their goods gave the traders over the Indian—astute enough as to honour, but simple as a child in trade. There is a grim humour in the motto of the Hudson's Bay Company: "Pro pelle cutem," (skin for skin) adopted as embodying the results of a thousand successful transactions. Yet there was evinced on the whole a sagacity and tact in dealing with the savage, even in the early days of the Company, that has been seldom equalled. Coming down with his bundle of furs upon his back, from the shores of some of the innumerable lakes stretching to Lake Winnipeg over four hundred miles, or reciting the strange stories of far-off Athabasca, the Indian hunter did not fail to return with his powder, shot and Queen Bess musket to wake the echoes of his quiet home. Had the North-west been hospitable, no doubt the influx of other traders brought by the news of the great profits would soon have made it impossible for the traders to retain their monopoly, and settlements such as those of Manhattan Island and Nouvelle France would have followed in the wake of the fur hunters. But the rigour of the climate, the sterility of the soil, the difficulties of approach and the

threatenings of a monopoly, retained in a most unexampled manner the country for its first masters, who found their mine of wealth not in the soil, but in the animals which civilization banishes. Encroachments, however, came from a most unexpected quarter. New France had, from its very beginning, become the resort of the fur trader. The Saguenay, with its clear waters and its rugged banks, gave good returns to the trader; and Tadoussac, at its mouth, became the fur *dépôt* for many a year. The Ottawa, too, in turn yielded its share of northern wealth, and the enterprising French voyageurs continued their North-western course until crossing the watershed they reached the plateau of Red River and the Saskatchewan. Trapping and trading, the hardy descendants of the men from Norman France followed the genius of the race that left its northern fiords to carry vigour to Western Europe, and sent off the captain of St. Malo on his adventurous quest to the new world. M. de la Verandrye, a French seigneur, was the first white man who penetrated the solitudes of the North-west, and to him is given the honour of having, in 1731, discovered Lake Winnipeg and its affluents. His success was the occasion for a score of other adventurers seeking out the new land, and the Indians of the region west of Winnipeg soon found another set of traders nearer to their native lakes than Fort Churchill, on whom they looked at first with suspicion, but who at length won their confidence. For twenty or thirty years were the strangers from Nouvelle France courting the favour of the Indian hunters, and their persistent efforts were so successful that the English Company of more than a hundred years standing, cut off from inland supplies, were compelled to meet their rivals by leaving the coast and journeying westward. The French trappers had now the co-operation of such stirring spirits of the army of Wolfe as had settled in Canada, after, in 1759, it became British.

To meet the increasing force of this powerful combination, the Hudson's Bay Company penetrated inland more than four hundred miles, in the year 1774, to a point somewhere in the vicinity of Cumberland House. Now began the great struggle for supremacy between the old British combination and the Franco-British traders of Canada: the one possessed of the strength and confidence which large dividends and established transactions had produced, the other having all the energy and determination characterizing the Canadian, born amongst, and thoroughly accustomed to, the hardships of Colonial life. As being firmly established inland, the Canadian traders more than held their own, and with them five thousand employés. Crossing even to the Pacific Ocean, they increased in strength and drew wealthy men to them till, in 1783—nine years after the meeting of the two rivals—when freed from the threatenings and assaults of the new-fledged Republic on the South, which in that year, by the great Peace of Paris, secured its independence, the Canadian traders combined into the celebrated "North-west Company of Montreal." From this time the trading with the North-west loses much of its romance, and settles down into the routine work of a Company. The trade was now beginning to have its effect. Many of the wild and daring men scattered throughout the country among the ignorant and degraded Indian tribes, formed alliances with them. From these unions sprang the large class of "Boisbrûlés," "Métis," or Half-breeds, which has formed such an important element in all the events of North-western history. The traders and hunters of the North-west Company were a promiscuous collection of these Half-breeds, Frenchmen, Highlanders and Indians. They consisted of interpreters, clerks, canoe-men and guides, and made up the two classes—those who did the inland trade and those who carried from the meeting-place to Montreal. The former brought their booty

to the neighbourhood of Fort William, on Lake Superior, which was long the chief station of the North-west Company. They lived on the fresh meat of the buffalo on the plains, on the prepared meat called "pemmican" on their "trips," or upon the fish and game found in such profusion in the country they traversed. The voyageurs who brought the goods from Montreal by the toilsome route of the Ottawa, Lakes Nipissing, Huron and Superior were called "coursiers des bois." These, on account of their route failing to supply them with the requisite food, lived on the dried provisions they carried with them, and were regarded as less favoured than their North-western comrades; this class, consequently, comprised most of the "raw hands" of the Company. The winterers who, on account of their coming into contact with the Indians, were of a wild and roving disposition, gave the name to their associates, which still prevails for novices in the North-west, "mangeurs de lard" (pork-eaters). The departure of the voyageurs from Montreal on their long and perilous journey was a scene of great interest and beauty. Leaving Lachine, the dépôt of the North-west Company, in their slender canoes, they skirt the Island of Montreal, until they reach Ste. Anne's, within two miles of its western extremity. Laden so heavily that they sank to the gunwale, their canoes would rise on the crest of a wave and, guided by the expert Canadian, few accidents ever occurred. Their cargo was very general. For trade they carried "packages of coarse woollens, blankets, arms, ammunition, tobacco, threads, lines, cutlery, kettles, handkerchiefs, hats and hose, calico and printed cottons," and it is to be feared, a supply of the curse of the Indians—spirituous liquors. To this they added biscuit, pork and peas, for their own subsistence, and the utensils necessary for their voyage, but not a pound of useless freight. Early in May they prepared to leave Ste. Anne's. Probably few are aware

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that it is the scene of these brave and hardy voyageurs leaving, that Moore has described in the well-known "Canadian Boat Song." At Ste. Anne's rapid they were compelled to take out a part of their lading, and once past this, they bade good-bye to the associations of home, for at Ste. Anne's was the last Christian church, and this church dedicated to the tutelary saint of the voyageurs. The great combination working from far-off Montreal, to a point west of the Rocky Mountains, carried on their operations so vigorously that they were rewarded by the highest dividends ever made by a similar Company in America. But, as is so frequent, success and ambition brought dissension; and a small section, among whom were the Right Hon. Edward Ellice, M. P., since so famous in connection with the Hudson's Bay Company, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the traveller, broke off dissatisfied, and formed the X. Y. Company. Three rival companies made the country a scene of constant warfare, sometimes of bloodshed; and Indians and whites were frequently brought into collision at the imminent risk of the total extermination, should the animosity of the savage tribes become general, of the whole three companies. In 1811, matters had reached a very unsatisfactory condition, when a new element entered into the circumstances and completely changed the aspect of affairs. In this year Lord Selkirk, who is described by an American writer as a "wealthy, kind-hearted, and visionary nobleman of Scotland," joined the Hudson's Bay Company and obtained a controlling power in it. Whether he was not more shrewd than visionary is a question on which very much might be said; that his plans did not all succeed is but the experience of many a speculator. The waning influence of the Hudson's Bay Company and decreasing dividends rendered a bold and vigorous policy necessary. The North-west Company had a longer season, more active and more experienced agents, and had gained a pres-

tige fully equal to that of the Company, which had reached an age of a century and a half. To meet the power of the rivals it was necessary to gain a stronger foothold in the country, to have numbers who might be appealed to in case of necessity, and moreover to produce agricultural supplies at a point nearer even than Canada to the great fur-bearing region of the North. The courage of a man who could take a colony of men, women and children, after a sea voyage of thousands of miles, to winter on the frozen shores of Hudson's Bay, and then proceed five hundred miles inland, to settle fifteen hundred miles from the nearest white settlement, must have been considerable, the object he had in view an important one, and the necessity for such a course very great. Moreover the willingness of a colony of settlers to leave the old world and begin life in a land that they believed was infested by "wild beasts and wilder men" must ever seem strange. At this juncture, fortunately for Lord Selkirk's scheme, an expatriated people had the choice of going abroad or of being drowned in the German Ocean. One of those harsh and selfish acts which have made many a colonist look back to the home of his childhood—in other respects a pleasing recollection—with the feeling of bitterness and retaliation, drove forth from the estates of the Duchess of Sutherland thousands of poor exiles to find homes in the New World. Lord Selkirk visited the hapless community and induced a number of them to colonize the land he had procured from the Hudson's Bay Company by purchase.

It is not the object of this paper to enter with any minuteness into the history of this colony. Suffice it to say that the privations they endured were rarely if ever equalled in the early settlement of any country. Women carrying helpless children were compelled to walk with bleeding feet over the frozen earth; strong men gave way, overcome by hunger and melancholy, and the poor settlers

seemed the victims of every man and beast. The enmity of the North-west Company, the arrogance and threats of the Indians, the clouds of locusts that devoured their first hard-won harvests and the ordinary and inevitable hardships of the first settlers joined to make their condition most miserable. In 1812 came an additional force of immigrants; but with each new arrival the enmity of the North-west Company increased. The traders attacked the settlers, and drove them southward with the evident intention of compelling them to leave the country. The brave Highlander could have fought, but his broadsword had grown rusty: the inspiring notes of the pipes of his native hills would have roused his enthusiasm, but there was no heart strong enough to sound the pibroch. The North-west Company, organized and daring, were too strong, and the poor colonists found themselves compelled to leave their new home. Disguised as Indians the traders induced the settlers to take refuge at Pembina, about sixty miles to the south. The soi-disant Indians made use of their opportunities as guide, to the unfortunates to despoil them of whatever articles of value they possessed. One woman was compelled to give up the marriage ring placed on her hand in her native lanu, and a warlike Highlander must surrender the trusty claymore his father had carried at Culloden. So the contest between the two companies increased in intensity. In 1814 an organized effort was made by the Nor'-westers to rid the country of the Hudson's Bay Company settlers. Two fellow-countrymen of the settlers were sent to gain the confidence of the Highland colonists. One of them writes, as he is going forward on his mission, "Nothing but the downfall of the colony will satisfy some by fair or foul means. So here is at them with all my heart and energy." The more crafty of the two emissaries taking advantage of the well known partiality of the Highlander for his clansman ingratiated himself with

the simple-minded settlers, and by degrees undermined the allegiance of many to their absent patron the Earl of Selkirk. This work accomplished, an outbreak took place, and the fair words of an enemy were found to have severed the ties of origin, old recollections, and common interest which had hitherto made the struggling band a unit. The unfaithful settlers and their new-found friends sacked Fort Douglas, a rude stronghold of the Company, standing a mile below the present Fort Garry; possessed themselves of the few small guns stored there; shortly after attacked the Governor's house; killed several of its inmates, and carried away the Governor himself a captive to Montreal. Numbers of the unfortunate settlers, harassed and annoyed, set out in company with those who had proved false to their allegiance, determined to leave the country. It was a long and weary journey for the exiles, taking with them their women and children. For four long months their journey lasted. From Red River over what is now the Dawson Route to Fort William, along the rugged shores of Lakes Superior and Huron the wanderers toiled until at last they reached the lonely military station of Penetanguishene. In the settlements they formed in the London District and in the County of Simcoe, in Ontario, may yet be found the old men—few in number now—who accomplished this tedious four months' voyage in 1815. The fugitives, though suffering much, escaped many of the severe trials of those who remained behind; for both Companies, now that hostilities had commenced, began to put forth most strenuous efforts. At one time the remnant had not only resolved to return to Britain, but had actually gone several hundred miles on their way to Hudson's Bay. Met at this point by a representative of the Hudson's Bay Company they were induced to return; and on their reaching Red River the Nor'-wester agent, who had sown the seeds of dissension among them, was seized and sent off to

England for trial. Lord Selkirk, hearing of the sad condition of his infant state, hastened out by way of Canada to relieve the colonists. The messenger despatched to assure them of his sympathy and to promise assistance never reached his destination. The Nor'-westers scattered over the interior were, however, unwilling to leave the key of the country in the hands of their foes, and so organized an expedition of the Half-breeds and Highlanders at Qu'Appelle River, and coming eastward, they attacked the re-established colony now under the rule of Governor Semple. On the 16th of June, 1816, as Châteaubriand the French writer, who was travelling at that time in Canada, facetiously remarks, just a year after the Battle of Waterloo, French and English again met in conflict, this time on the prairies of the North-west, and this time to see the French the victors. The Bois-brûlés had passed Fort Douglas, when Governor Semple, poorly attended, sallied out to reconnoitre. After passing the Fort they captured three of the Selkirk settlers, known to them as "the men of Orkney." They hastened back to meet the Governor, when his want of tact seems to have ended disastrously; for a volley from the Nor'-westers laid low nearly the whole of the body-guard, and killed the rash and hasty man as well.

A fragment, perhaps the only fragment of Bois-brûlés' literature, unless it be the Rebellion proclamation of Louis Riel, the President of the unfortunate Red River Provisional Government of 1869, has come down to us. The fragment, with its bad French and grandiloquent strains, is something of a curiosity in its way:—

CHANSON ÉCRITE PAR PIERRE FALCON.

"Voulez-vous écouter chanter un chanson de vérité :
Le dix-neuf de Juin, les 'Bois-brûlés' sont arrivés
Comme des braves guerriers.
Ont arrivons à la Grenouillère,
Nous avons fait trois prisonniers
Des Orcanais ! Ils sont ici pour piller notre pays.
Etant sur le point de débarquer,

Deux de nos gens se sont écriés—
Voilà l'Anglais qui vient nous attaquer !
Tous aussitôt nous nous sommes devirés
Pour aller les rencontrer.

"J'avons cerné la bande de Grenadiers,
Ils sont immobiles ! ils sont démontés !
J'avons agi comme des gens d'honneur
Nous envoyâmes un ambassadeur.
Gouverneur ! voulez-vous arrêter un petit moment
Nous voulons vous parler.

"Le gouverneur qui est enragé,
Il dit à ses soldats—Tirez !
Le premier coup l'Anglais le tire,
L'ambassadeur a presque manqué d'être tué.
Le gouverneur se croyant l'Empereur
Il agit avec rigueur.
Le gouverneur se croyant l'Empereur
A son malheur agit avec trop de rigueur.

"Ayant vu passer les Bois-brûlés
Il a parti pour nous épouvanter.
Étant parti pour nous épouvanter
Il s'est trompé : il s'est bien fait tué
Quantité de ses grenadiers.

"J'avons tué presque toute son armée
De la bande quatre ou cinq se sont sauvés
Si vous aviez vu les Anglais
Et tous les Bois-brûlés après !
De butte en butte les Anglais culbataient
Les Bois-brûlés jetaient des cris de joie !

"Qui en a composé la chanson ?
C'est Pierre Falcon ! Le bon garçon !
Elle a été faite et composée
Sur la Victoire que nous avons gagnée !
Elle a été faite et composée
Chantons la gloire de tous ces Bois-brûlés."

SONG WRITTEN BY PIERRE FALCON.

"Come listen to this song of truth !
A song of the brave Bois-brûlés,
Who at Frog Plain took three captives,
Strangers come to rob our country.

"When dismounting there to rest us,
A cry is raised—the English !
They are coming to attack us,
So we hasten forth to meet them.

"I looked upon their army,
They are motionless and downcast ;
So, as honour would incline us,
We desire with them to parley.

" But their leader, moved with anger,
Gives the word to fire upon us ;
And imperiously repeats it,
Rushing on to his destruction.

" Having seen us pass his stronghold,
He had thought to strike with terror
The Bois-brûlés ! ah ! mistaken,
Many of his soldiers perish.

" But a few escaped the slaughter,
Rushing from the field of battle ;
Oh, to see the English fleeing !
Oh, the shouts of their pursuers !

" Who has sung this song of triumph ?
The good Pierre Falcon has composed it,
That the praise of these Bois-brûlés
Might be evermore recorded."

Such was the triumphant spirit of the Nor'-westers ; but their triumph was a short one. The death of Governor Semple served to hasten on the Earl of Selkirk, who with his band of soldiers of the old De Meuron regiment took Fort William, and in due time reached the scene of the unfortunate collision. The skirmish of "Seven Oaks," which Pierre Falcon commemorates, has had its effect on all subsequent affairs in the Red River region and, while giving a prestige to the Bois-brûlés element in the North-west, has done much to encourage that lawlessness which has so disfigured the country since. The wide extent of territory, the facility this gave for escape, and the difficulty of detection have made it easy for bodies of men to accomplish, by a coup-demain, what they might never be called to account for, and which only involved the risk of the encounter itself. It is a danger-

ous thing for a country when this is the case ; and it is to be hoped that, under Canadian rule, a more settled state of affairs may follow, and that the conviction may grow in the popular mind that, though justice may be long delayed, yet a Nemesis is certainly and unremittingly pursuing the guilty. The few years succeeding hostilities were spent by the settlers in overcoming the natural difficulties of their situation and in gaining a foothold in the country. It will be the duty of the future historian to tell of their privations, of their betaking themselves to the chase of the buffalo and deer, and of their losses by the locust ; to recount their journeyings to the United States for supplies, and to tell of the state of comparative tranquillity, if not inertia, which succeeded their fiery trials, occasionally interrupted by the floods which have alarmed or the internal dissensions which have disturbed them. Lord Selkirk, the founder of the colony, died in 1821, after which, at the instance of the British Government, the Companies, both reduced to the verge of bankruptcy, brought their tedious negotiations to an end and, uniting heartily, formed the Hudson's Bay Company, which, with all its faults, has been a respectable, energetic and honourable Corporation, and has performed the signal service to Canada and the British empire of keeping a vast extent of territory, in danger of being Americanized, true to its allegiance, and of making every Indian respect the Scotch bonnet and the trader known to be one of King George's men. The history from 1821 to the present is a subject full of interest to the Canadian.

MANITOBA.

