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THE LORDS
of the
LAKES and FORESTS

Compiled and Edited
by
AUGUSTUS MOORE

Limited to
100 Copies
Number.....31.

To the

Brave Hearts and Buoyant Spirits

Of The Personnel Of

The Northwest Company

Whose Names Are But Memories

. . . If They Are Even Remembered

INTRODUCTION

I have not the slightest idea why I have undertaken the work of compiling this little book. Of course my friends persuaded me. Theirs is the fault and it really does not matter in as much as they will not be friends after they have mentally eaten the ill-flavored potlatch that I have cooked up.

It is a presumption on my part, for I should have known — and they did not realize — that writing is a profession, and requires natural ability, hard work and long practice.

However, "here goes" and I am slightly encouraged in as much as, so far as I know, no concise book has been written portraying the every day life of an early fur trader (1760-1825) from the time of his enlistment in the company until his retirement, and showing every phase of his daily existence. This is that which I hope to do. The book is not for sale for I fear me greatly, as I shoot the unknown rapids of literature, a hidden rock of copyright may split my poorly-made bark canoe. I am writing solely for the information of my friends, and I hope for their enjoyment, and I further trust that their pleasure in reading will equal mine in writing these multitudes of words.

And finally should some armchair critic think that I am drawing a long bow in describing events — many of which I have seen — I have only this to say: — Be good enough to take up your objections with the men who really lived that life; in a shorter or longer period of time when you have crossed the Stygian Flood and have wandered over the glowing slag heaps of the Nether World, you will doubtless

encounter many of these fur traders, cosily ensconced in a snug fort somewhere along the banks of the Cocytus, and with them you can argue to your hearts content.

And now, "Gentle Reader", if you are able to finish this book, still in the ring and on your feet and then should you wish to know more — which you won't — about the subject, the sky is the limit for further study and for your information I have placed a bibliography in the back of the book — but you must be a glutton for punishment.

Augustus Moore
New Year 1950

I

"Arma Virumque Cano"

(VIRGIL)

"HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF". This time-honoured "wise-crack" was perpetrated by some long-ago sage, whose name I have forgotten—If I ever knew it. However, this text will suffer a complete emendation at the very outset of our discourse, for I will repeat history.

The Scriptures remark "there is no new thing under the sun". Which remark has so preyed upon my mind and disheartened me at the very beginning that I will not even attempt to be original, but will quote "ad lib" from many historians, plagiarizing most shamelessly, and acting as a sort of clearinghouse for a great mass of historical "data" which I will try to make as interesting as possible. The scenario of this my talk was framed by many writers—theirs is the play, and I, merely the actor—"the poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more: it is a story told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".—(Macbeth)

The early history of the furtrader in North West America is also the natural history of this continent; and more than that, even the history of human life during the period covered. It runs the whole gamut of human emotions—from the sparkling highlights of romance and adventure, down to the lowest depths of sordidness and horror. "For the annals of American adventure may be searched in vain for more picturesque pages than those inscribed with the daring and thrilling explorations of the pioneers in penetrating and in occupying that vast region which may be styled the Great Northwest".

We are indeed fortunate that some of these furtraders had a leaning toward the pen, putting their thoughts on paper, and recording their experiences "for the gun was oftener than the pen in the hands of even those whose souls soared above a beaver skin. An always sordid and not seldom nefarious environment, during dreary months of isolation and desolation, alternating with periodical journeys of immense extent; conditions of extreme personal peril from hunger, cold and savagery; experiences whose deadly monotony was modified mainly by deadlier danger: such are not circumstances conducive to literary accomplishment. But when one of these does speak for himself, we can but listen to his words. The world is never too busy to hear a genuine adventurer's own story of his adventures.

The greatest explorers of the fur trade were the "Northmen"—as they used to be called—that is, those of the celebrated old North West Company of commercial adventurers, whose restless activities and indomitable energies covered a continent with the most formidable rivals the Hudson's Bay Company ever encountered. Living in isolated posts, they were engaged in the humble routine of traffic with the Indians, whom they cheated and debauched as a matter of course, with assiduity and success, upon strict business principles and after the most approved methods. At their leisure — that is, when they were not serving their coppery customers with diluted alcohol or other articles they desired to secure at fabulous prices — they kept a journal. Some of them persisted in this literary side line, and these veracious chronicles, in which nothing whatsoever is extenuated, are at our service if we care to read. They may not be of heroic order, but they mirror life in a way that Samuel Pepys might have envied, and English, Scotch, French, Halfbreed and Indian characters are shown up under their unterrified hands". (Coues)

"They were a remarkable body of men. Great as financiers, wonderful as explorers, facile as traders, brave in their spirits, firm and tactful in their management of the Indians. Looking back, we marvel at their daring and can well say with Washington Irving: — The feudal state of Fort William is at an end; its great council chamber stands silent and desolate; its banquet hall no longer echoes to the auld world ditty; truly the lords of the lakes and forests have all passed away". (Bryce)

II

"An Always Sordid Existence"

THE FUR COMPANIES were at first associations of merchants, but as they became more developed, admission into them became increasingly difficult. A candidate began at an early age as a clerk, serving 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 equipment. His probation was generally passed at some interior trading post; removed for years from civilized society, leading a life as wild as the savages themselves, exposed to the rigors of a northern winter and often destitute of food.

When his apprenticeship had expired he became a Trader and received a salary varying from eighty to one hundred and sixty pounds sterling, and was now eligible to the great object of his ambition — a Factor and a Partner in the Company. "Bourgeois", they were called and formed the aristocracy of the fur trade, living in lordly and hospitable style and travelling in great state, like Highland chieftains visiting their subject domains.

Their lives were such that news of the outside world reached them only at long intervals and the only regular methods of communication that could be depended upon were the periodical despatches. A canoe started from the Pacific on April first and reached Fort William (on Lake Superior) July first. It waited there until July twentieth when

it returned, reaching the mouth of the Columbia October twentieth. There was also a canoe from the mouth of the Columbia River to Montreal which made the distance in one hundred days.

"Clerks and Traders had charge of Posts. Factors, or as they were more generally called, Bourgeois, ruled over Districts. Naturally the ambition of a Clerk was to become a Bourgeois. He first learned to obey, then to command, and at all times much was expected of them. Generally speaking it was a long time — if ever — before their hopes were realized, but, at length some of them arrived at the long-wished for goal and became Partners, entitled to vote in all weighty decisions of the Council; henceforth they were styled "Esquires".

A Bourgeois lives in comfort, if not in luxury; he rambles at his pleasure, enjoys the dance or a game; his morning ride, his fishing rod, his gun, his dog, the hunt. He is the greatest man in the land. The buildings of the Fort are both neat and commodious. The apartments are divided into bedrooms, ante chambers and closets. There are also the counting room, mess room, kitchen, pantry, cellars, and the Indian Hall. It is not surprising, therefore, that the roving Northwester, after so many rural enjoyments, and a residence of twenty years, should feel more real happiness in these scenes, than he can hope for in any other country". (Ross)

Employees carried on their duties according to the season of the year, as these two extracts from a journal will show.

(In the spring) "Men calking and gumming the canoes; others finishing the small house; others digging the ground

for turnips, Lussier hauling wood for the kitchen. I sent four men in a boat to collect stones for our chimneys. Mosquitoes very large and troublesome. All the women appear to be busy, stretching buffalo hides, dressing skins, slicing meat for drying and working robes with straw and porcupine quills".

(And in the fall of the year) "Indians sober". (Ed. note. Evidently the Indians had run out of furs which they might exchange for "Hootch".) "Desjarlais hunting. Seven men out to raise dog trains, four laying up canoes and cleaning the fort, (Ed. note. Can you imagine that!) one making a wood train, one off for meat, one cutting wood, one carting and one making kegs". (Henry)

III

"And not Seldom Nefarious Environment"

Ross Cox states that there were three descriptions of men on the Company's service: — The White Canadians, the Half-breeds and the Iroquois Indians.

"The first are the descendants of the original French settlers and are usually engaged for five years, receiving salaries ranging from twenty to forty pounds sterling a year, with an equipment, which means a suit of clothes and a large carrot of tobacco annually. The rations allowed them seem enormous — eight pounds of meat apiece (and each member of their family) daily, and ten pounds if there be bone in it. but it must be recollected that these rations are accompanied by nothing else. At Christmas and New Years they are served out flour to make puddings and each man receives a half pint of rum. There is not, perhaps, in the world a more thoughtless or improvident race of people than the Canadian voyageurs. Every article of extra clothing or finery they want must be purchased at exhorbitant prices at the Company's store, and these with the expenses attending their Indian wives, buying horses, gambling, etc., their wages quickly vanish. I know of no people capable of enduring so much hard labor as the Canadians. They commence work at daybreak, and from thence to night-fall, hard paddling and carrying goods occupy their time without intermission. They are remarkably good natured and affectionate to each other, calling their comrades, 'mon frère' or 'mon cousin', whether related or not. Their songs soften down the severity

of their laborious duties, in the midst of which they display the same elasticity of spirits by which their vivacious French ancestors were so much distinguished". (Cox)

"The Half-breeds or Bois Brulés (from the color of their skin) are good canoe-men and excellent hunters, remarkably active either on horseback or on foot; brave, daring, rather passionate, and while they possess all the vivacity of their father, they at times manifest a slight symptom of Indian ferocity, especially when an insulting allusion is made to their mixed origin". (Cox)

"The third description of men are the Iroquois, engaged for a limited term as canoe-men or hunters. Strong, able-bodied, good hunters and well acquainted with the management of canoes. They are immoderately attached to the use of ardent spirits, quarrelsome, revengeful and insubordinate, and during their periods of intoxication, the utmost firmness is necessary to check their ferocious propensities". (Cox)

Alexander Ross is not so complimentary in regard to the Half-breeds and Iroquois, so we will listen to him.

"Half-breeds, as they grow up, resemble in almost every respect, the pure Indian, with this difference, that they are more designing, more daring, and more dissolute. They are indolent, thoughtless and improvident; unrestrained in their desires; sullen in their disposition; proud, restless, clannish and fond of flattery. They alternately associate with Whites and Indians, acquiring all the bad qualities of both". (Ross)

Regarding the Iroquois, he writes: — "Among the people employed by the Company, are a set of civilized Indians from Montreal, chiefly of the Iroquois nation, brought in to act

in the double capacity of canoe-men and trappers. They are sullen, indolent, fickle, cowardly and treacherous. An Iroquois arrived at manhood is as wayward as a lad of other nations at fifteen. They are brought up to religion, it is true, and sing hymns oftener than paddling songs, but as soon as I hear them start on the hymns, I double the watch, and give strict orders to observe their actions, as the singing of hymns by these hypocritical wretches is a sure sign of disaffection". (Ross 1823)

Among the picturesque figures of the fur-trade were the Coureurs de Bois, literally 'runners of the woods', brought over from France by a legislation which insisted rather upon quantity than quality for the settlers of the New World. Their ranks were reinforced by those who for whatever purpose were dissatisfied with steady work. It was intended that they should marry French women of their own station, cultivate the farm and act with sober dignity. Instead, they tramped off into the woods, took Indian wives, hunted the deer, speared the salmon and laid traps for any animal with fur on its back. Charlevoix, the Jesuit historian, tells us that these men did not do nearly as much to civilize the Indians as the Indians did to barbarize them. Freemen they were sometimes called when they were not regularly employed by some company. One of the furtraders in his diary remarks: — "Much plagued with my hunter, Joseph Cyr. Those freemen are a nuisance in the country and generally scoundrels. I never yet found one honest man among them". (Henry)

This opinion, however, was not shared by the Coureurs themselves, who seemed to be perfectly satisfied with their lives and most pleased with themselves. One of them, out-

lining his autobiography, viva voce, modestly broadcasts: — "I have been forty-two years in this country. For twenty-four I was a light canoe man. No portage was too long for me. My end of the canoe never touched the ground until I saw the end of it. Fifty songs a day were nothing to me. I could carry, paddle, walk and sing with any man I ever saw. I had twelve wives in the country and was once possesser of fifty horses and six running dogs, trimmed in the first style. No Bourgeois had better dressed wives than I; no Indian chief finer horses; no white man better harnessed or swifter dogs. I beat all Indians at the race, and no whiteman ever passed me in the chase. Five hundred pounds, twice told, have passed through my hands, although now I have not a spare shirt to my back, nor a penny to buy one. Yet, were I young again, I would willingly spend another half century in the same fields. There is no place where a man enjoys so much variety and freedom as in the Indian country. Hurrah pour le pays sauvage!". (Ross)

When such un-fettered characters are turned loose in a town, after long and dreary months in the vast seas of mountain and prairie, I greatly fear that they would not be overly welcome at a red-hot revival meeting. Fort William and Montreal may have been over-noisy on the return of a fur brigade but from all accounts Mackinaw bore the palm alone. Alexander Ross is at the "mike": — "Mackinaw was the great outfitting mart of the south — the center and headquarters of all those adventurers who frequented the Missouri and Mississippi waters in search of furs and peltries. These different parties visit Mackinaw but once a year, and on these occasions make up for their dangers and privations among

the Indians, by rioting, carousing, drinking and spending all their gains in a few weeks, sometimes in a few days, and then return again to the Indians and the wilderness. Here it was necessary to recommence the recruiting service as at Montreal, with the difference, however, that the Montreal men are expert canoe-men, the Mackinaw men expert bottle-men. In the morning they were found drinking, at noon drunk, and in the evening dead drunk, and in the night seldom sober. Every nook and corner in the whole island swarmed, at all hours of the day and night, with motley groups of uproarious tipplers and whisky hunters. Mackinaw resembled at this time a huge bedlam, the frantic inmates running to and fro in wild forgetfulness. In this manner these dissolute spend-thrifts spin out, in feasting and debauchery, a miserable existence, neither fearing God nor regarding man, till the knife of the savage, or some other violent attack, dispatches them unpitied". (Ross 1810)

IV

"Living in Isolated Posts"

FURTRADING POSTS ranged in type from a one room log cabin to very pretentious structures. All posts were dignified by the name of "Forts" and some of them were so in reality. The following description of Fort Nez Percés, on the Columbia River, will serve as an example of a typical establishment in a country where the Indians were more or less troublesome. Alexander Ross is again broadcasting.

"For the purpose of protection, as well as trade among Indians, the custom is to have each establishment surrounded with an enclosure of pickets. The palisades of Fort Nez Percés were all made of sawn timber, in pieces twenty feet long, two and one half feet broad and six inches thick. With these ponderous planks the establishment was surrounded, having on the top a range of balustrades four feet high, which served the double purpose of ramparts and loop holes, and was smooth, to prevent the natives from scaling the walls. A strong gallery, five feet broad, extended all around. At each angle was placed a large reservoir sufficient to hold two hundred gallons of water, as a security against fire; the element we most dreaded in the designs of the natives. Inside of this wall were built ranges of storehouses and dwelling houses for the hands; and in front of these buildings was another wall twelve feet high, of sawn timber also, with port holes and slip doors, which divided the buildings from the open square inside. Thus should the Indians at any time get in, they would see nothing

but a wall before them on all sides; they could have no intercourse with the people in the fort, unless by their consent, and would therefore find themselves in a prison, and infinitely more exposed to danger than if they had been on the outside. Besides the ingenious construction of the outer gate, which opened and shut by a pulley, two double doors secured the entrance, and the natives were never admitted within the walls, except when especially invited on important occasions. All trade with them was carried on by means of an aperture in the wall, eighteen inches square, secured by an iron door, and communicating with the trading shop; we standing on the inside and the Indians on the outside. On all other occasions, excepting trade, we mixed with them outside; differing, in this respect, from most other posts.

Our weapons of defence were composed of four pieces of ordnance, from one to three pounds, beside ten wall pieces, sixty musquets and bayonets, twenty boarding pikes, and a box of hand grenades. The fort was defended by four strong bastions, and a small mortar above the gate; it was therefore the strongest and most complete fort west of the Rocky Mountains, and might be called the Gibraltar of Columbia". (Ross)

More pretentious was Fort Churchill, as was necessary for a site open to attack by civilized forces from the sea. Fort Churchill, or as it was more often called, Fort Prince of Wales, was built in 1688 (rebuilt in 1721) at or near the mouth of the Churchill River on the west side of Hudson's Bay. It was well fortified with a ravelin and four bastions, the walls measuring twenty-seven feet in thickness. It mounted forty cannon and the place was deemed impregnable; yet notwith-

standing all its apparent strength, it was captured by La Perouse (August 8-9, 1782), without any trouble and nearly all razed to the ground.

A fur trader, writing in 1829, says of it: — "About the Fort are now to be seen decaying carriages without guns and rust-eaten guns without carriages, cannon balls, broken down walls and dilapidated stores. The governor's house is the only place in any way habitable. I would prefer residing in one of our square-built little boxes on the Columbia, than in this melancholy remnant of departed greatness. It was from this place that Hearne set out on his Arctic Ocean hunting expedition, but I think he says enough about this place not to weary you further. Suffice it to say that Churchill is a rascally, disagreeable, cold, unsocial, out-of-the-way, melancholy spot and I don't care how soon I am changed. No hunting, horse-racing or any of the other sports we enjoyed on the Columbia, which once I thought was bad enough". (A letter to Ross Cox and signed: — J.....)

From every point of view, a furtrader's life was either a feast or a famine, as these two quotations might suggest.

"No other people, who pursue business to obtain a livelihood, have so much leisure as we do. Few of us are employed more, and many of us less, than one fifth of our time in transacting the business of the Company. The remaining four fifths are at our own disposal". (Harmon)

And again: — "Trading went on by fits and starts: for days no one, then the Indians would come and not an hour of the day passed but some insolent fellow and frequently fifty at a time, interrupted us. A fellow raps at the gate,

calling out "I want to trade": when you attend his call, he laughs in your face, and has nothing to sell. In short they think nothing, talk nothing but war, horse-racing and gambling and when tired of these, idleness is their delight. On every little hill they are to be seen all day in groups, with a paper looking glass in one hand and a paint brush in the other. Half their time is spent at the toilet. In their own estimation they are the greatest people in the world, despising us to the bottom of their hearts and looking at all of us who labor as slaves, and call us such. I laid down a rule, that no matter how sudden the call might be, I never answered it, until I had walked, backwards and forwards, across the fort twice. Nothing then surprised me, or ruffled my temper, and I found the benefit of the plan". (Ross)

It seems astounding that one of these furtrading forts should have been the site of the first track athletic training in the New World! This episode took place at Fort Benton on the Missouri River. Trader Hardisty is now on the "air waves".

"One day a solitary and adventurous Cree, made his appearance at the Fort, on foot. Shortly after his arrival, a body of mounted Blackfeet arrived, and, discovering the presence of one of a hostile tribe, clamorously demanded that he should be given up to them to be tortured and scalped. The trader in command of the fort was anxious to save the life of the Cree, yet afraid to refuse to surrender him, for the Blackfeet were numerous and well armed, and had already been admitted within the stockade. After much discussion, a compromise was agreed to, the white men engaging to keep the Cree in safe custody for a month, at the end of which time

the Blackfeet were to return to the fort, and the prisoner was to be turned loose, with a hundred yards start of his pursuers, who were bound to chase him only on foot, and with no other arms but their knives.

The Blackfeet took their departure, and the Cree was immediately put into hard training. He was fed on fresh buffalo meat, as much as he could eat, and made to run around the fort enclosure, at full speed, for an hour twice every day.

At the expiration of the stipulated month, the Blackfeet came to the fort, according to their agreement. Their horses were secured within the walls, all their arms except their knives were taken from them, and then the expected victim was escorted to the starting place by the whole staff of the establishment, who turned out on horseback, to see fair play. The Cree was placed at his post, one hundred yards ahead of his bloodthirsty enemies, who were eager as wolves for their prey.

The word was given, and away darted the hunted Indian, the pursuers following with frantic yells. At first the pack of Blackfeet gained rapidly, for terror seemed to paralyze the legs of the unfortunate Cree, and his escape seemed hopeless. But as his enemies came within a few yards of him, he recovered his presence of mind, shook himself together, his training and fine condition began to tell, and, to their astonishment and chagrin, he left them with ease at every stride. In another mile he was far in advance, and pulling up for an instant, shook his fist triumphantly at his baffled pursuers, and then quickly ran out of sight". (Milton and Cheadle).

Now before we say farewell to furtrading forts, merely as such, we will rub Aladdin's Lamp and visit Fort Edmonton in the year 1825.

"Fort Edmonton is a large, compact establishment, with good buildings, palisades and bastions, pleasantly situated in a deep valley. An extensive and profitable trade is carried on with the warlike tribes of the Assiniboines and Crees. Attached to this place are two large parks for raising grain, and the soil, being good, it produces large crops of barley and potatoes, but the spring and the fall frosts prove injurious to wheat which seldom comes to maturity. Adjoining the fields, is a very fine level race ground of two miles in length, horse-racing being one of the chief amusements of the place during the summer season, and here are some of the best horses the country can produce. An abominable custom is prevalent among the traders on this side of the mountains — the keeping of so many starving dogs about the establishment in summer for their imaginary services in winter. There were no less than fifty-two snarling and growling curs and they are said to be very useful and profitable animals. In former days, dogs might have been useful as runners to bring in furs and in by-gone days the emulation among men for dogs as runners was so great that all their hard earnings were spent on them, and the tawdry paraphernalia, required to ornament a first rate train, was as expensive as it was foolish. The wife might go without her blanket, but the husband must have his dogs and the dogs their scarlet ribbons and their bells. The nuisance of these dogs in the fort is beyond endurance. They are the terror of every woman and child after dark, and, worst of all, the place is kept like a kennel and, in wet weather, the horrid

stench is intolerable. These animals are, in general, of the wolf breed, and are said to be vigorous and long-winded — a hundred miles a day is a common journey for them. They are not generally reared about the establishment, but purchased from the natives for a mere trifle when young. When trained, they sell among the whites as high as five pounds sterling — double the price of a horse.

From Edmonton, a brigade of boats makes a trip to York Factory (on Hudson's Bay) and back every year, carrying out the annual stock of furs, and, bringing back the supplies required for the trade. This trip generally takes four months and a half to perform. The boats in this quarter are considerably larger and stronger built than those in use on the Columbia. New boats here will cost twenty-five pounds sterling. They are propelled with oars, are roomy and comfortable, and carry from eighty to one hundred pieces of ninety pounds each". (Ross)

V

"The Humble Routine of Traffic with the Indians"

TRADING with the Indians was either done directly, that is, by giving so much value in goods in exchange for furs at the time of the deal so that all concerned in the transaction could see what they were getting, or, it was done on a credit system called "debts". That meant that a hunter or Indian was issued, on trust, goods to the value of a certain number of "skins", each skin signifying the value of one beaver skin which was the monetary unit of trade.

Henry enters in his journal: — "I equipped my hunter with clothing for himself and his wife, and then gave out to the Indians their necessaries for debts to the amount of twenty skins each and an assortment of small articles gratis, such as one scalper, two folders and four flints apiece to the men, and to the women, two awls, three needles, one seine of net thread, one fine steel, a little vermillion, and a half fathom of tobacco". (Henry)

Very often these debts had to be written off as bad, owing to the debtor's dishonesty, disability or death, but the profit was such as to cover the loss — as in most cases. Here is a specimen page from a fur trader's ledger: —

"House expenses for seventeen persons		1500 skins
I gave out to the Indians in debts	982 skins	
Rec'd. from the Indians in payment	618 skins	
Loss	364 skins	364 skins
Total cost		1864 skins"

He remarks however: — "Notwithstanding this heavy expense and loss, amounting to 1864 skins, mostly prime goods, and although I was strongly opposed by a neighbor of the 'T' Association from Montreal, I had a clear profit of upward of seven hundred pounds, Halifax currency, on the outfit of loading one and one half canoes, containing forty pieces of goods". (Henry)

A "piece" or pack of furs or goods almost invariably weighed ninety pounds. A recognized standard to facilitate carrying and portaging. There would be fifty to sixty beaver skins in a "piece".

Here is an entry in a journal dated 1761, the place being Michilimackinac, which of course is Mackinaw: — "When this (the whitefish) fails, they (the personnel of the fort) have recourse to maize, but this is very expensive. I bought more than a hundred bushels, at forty livres per bushel. Money is rarely received or paid at Michilimackinac, the circulating medium consisting of furs and peltries. In this exchange, a pound of beaver skin is reckoned at sixty sols; and other skins at six livres; and marten skins at thirty sols each. This is only one half of the real value of the furs, and it is therefore always agreed to pay either in furs at their actual price at the fort, or in cash, to double the amount, as reckoned in furs". (Henry Sr.)

The above-noted coins would, fairly accurately, work out in this way, taking into consideration that the "sol" is the modern French "sou". Therefore: —

24 sols=1 livre=1 franc=1 shilling=1 quarter.

This reckoning is good enough for our purpose and I am not a financial expert — not much better than our international bankers in these parlous times. Liquor was a staple article of trade, and a quart of such contained about a gill of alcohol, the rest being water. About the year 1800, along the Red River, it was not uncommon for an Indian to give five or six prime beavers for a quart of "Indian liquor", as it was called.

Other prices were more or less in proportion. In 1780 a gun brought twenty beaver skins, a blanket ten, an axe three, a half pint of gun powder one, ten bullets one, and a foot of tobacco twist, one. There is a record of one transaction where the Indians traded one hundred and twenty beavers for two three-point blankets, eight quarts of "Indian liquor" and a pocket looking glass. These goods rated at $30.00, cost probably $15.00 and sold in Montreal for $400.00. A canoe of furs was generally considered to be worth in cost price $2,640.00, of which amount $640.00 was for transportation.

Alexander Ross tells of a deal in the winter of 1812: — "During one hundred and eighty-eight days I have procured 1550 beavers, beside other peltries, worth in the Canton market 2250 pounds and which on an average stood the concern but 5½ pence apiece, valuing the merchandize at cost, or in round numbers 35 pounds sterling. A specimen of our trade among the Indians". (Ross)

Sometimes a trader would go about among the Indian tribes to secure furs, just as a commercial traveler would set out "on the road". This was styled going "en derouine", and goods for barter were taken along, to be exchanged for furs.

Outside of trade, the Company augmented its takings by sending out trapping parties themselves. These varied from a few men to large parties. Alexander Ross gives the usual routine of trapping for a large party: — "A safe spot is selected near wood and water for the camp. The chief stays with the property, as it is often exposed to dangers and sudden attack. The trappers start out in all directions every morning, in small parties, ranging the distance of twenty miles around. Six traps were the usual allowance for each hunter, but to guard against wear and tear, the complement was more frenquently ten. These were set every night and visited every morning. The beaver taken were always brought to camp, skinned, stretched, dried, folded up with the hair on the inside, laid by, and the flesh used for food. As the enemy is generally lurking about, the hunter has to keep a constant lookout and the gun is often in one hand and the trap in the other. When several trappers are together, one half set the traps and the other half keep watch, yet notwithstanding all precautions, many of them fall victims to Indian treachery". (Ross)

The personnel of trapping parties was, to say the least, hybrid. Ross remarks: — "On assembling my people, I had to smile at the medley, the variety of dresses, habits, ideas and languages: there were two Americans, seventeen Canadians, five half-breeds, twelve Iroquois, two Abnakes, two Nipisings, one Salteur, two Crees, one Chinook, two Spokanes, two Kootenays, three Flatheads, two Callispels, one Palooke and one Snake slave. The Iroquois were good hunters, but plotting and faithless; as for the nineteen natives, they were only of use as far as numbers went, so upon the whole we could count on no more than twenty trappers at any time".

An experienced person, in the Indian countries, with only one or two men, their guns and a few loads of ammunition, would think no more of travelling from the Atlantic to the Pacific than the ordinary man in crossing a country parish. His equipment would be: — a half a dozen pairs of mocassins, blanket, axe, knife, fire steel, awl, needles, thread, tobacco and a pint pot, whether the journey be for a day, a month or a year. We depend upon our guns for our subsistence". (Ross)

The custom and ritual of trading among the different tribes varied but slightly one from another and we will merely glance at a few instances just to fix such ceremonies in our minds.

"Their (Okinagan) manner of trading resembles that of most other tribes. A party arrive at the fort loaded with the produce of their hunt, which they throw down, and around which they squat themselves in a circle. The trader lights the calumet of peace, and directing his face first to the east, and then to the other cardinal points, gives at each, a solemn puff. These are followed by a few short, quick whiffs, and then he hands the calumet to the chief of the party, who repeats the same ceremony. The chief passes it to the man on his right, who only gives it a few whiffs, and so on through the whole party until the pipe is smoked out. The trader then presents them with a quantity of tobacco to smoke ad libitum, which they generally finish before commencing their barter, being, as they say themselves, "A long time very hungry for a smoke". When the smoking terminates, each man divides his skins into different lots. For one he wants a gun; for another ammunition; for a third a copper kettle,

an axe, a blanket, a tomahawk, a knife, ornaments for his wife etc., according to the quantity of skins, he has to barter. ..... They are shrewd, hard dealers, and not a whit inferior to any native of Yorkshire, Scotland or Connaught, in driving a bargain". (Cox 1816)

Now we will hear from Ross in regard to the opening rite of trading.

"And one of the greatest pleasures consists in doing homage to the great. A chief arrives; the honor of waiting on him in a servile capacity falls to your share, if you are not above your business. You go forth to meet him; invite him in; see him seated; and, if need require it, you untie his shoes, and dry his socks. You next hand him food, water and tobacco; and you must smoke along with him. After which, you must listen with grave attention to all he has got to say on Indian topics, and show your sense of the value of his information, by giving him some trinkets, and sometimes even articles of value in return. But the grand point of all this ceremony is to know how far you should go in these matters, and when you should stop. By overdoing the thing, you may entail on yourself endless troubles". (Ross)

Henry is more ironical:— "The master of the fort is always expected to go out and shake hands with them a short distance from the gates, and the further he goes, the greater the compliment. This ceremony over, he walks at their head and conducts them to the Indian hall. The chief is seated in the most conspicuous place. The pipe is then lighted, given to the chief, who takes a few puffs, and passes it to the others in rotation following the course of the sun. All having taken a few whiffs of the trader's pipe, the chief

produces his own. If the Indians are numerous their own pipes are brought out, and the more pipes in circulation the greater is the compliment. After the first round (of pipes) we give them each a half a gill of Indian liquor, beginning always with the chief, who is as ceremonious in taking a drink as he is in smoking. He dips his finger into the liquor and lets a few drops fall on the ground; then a few drops are offered above; but he drinks the rest without further delay. Every chief has some particular ceremony to perform before tasting his first glass, but after that he gets drunk as fast as possible. The drinking match continues all day until about midnight, when they all fall asleep". (Henry)

Beside free liquor every once in a while, a chief was "oiled up" in other ways, either every year or on very especially important occasions. In fact a chief might be considered as a "V.G.D.I.P." Here is a typical gift for services either rendered or hoped for: —

"Scarlet coat
Gingham shirt
Pair of Trousers
Dimity vest
Braided hat and feather
One pair of woolen hose
Slippers
Silk Négligé
Four Canton plates
One six pound bar of iron
One half pound of vermilion
Ten pounds of flour
Five pounds of bread

Four bottles of molasses
Four bottles of rum" (Henry)

The question naturally arises as to the return of the fur trade so we will return to our old friend and mentor, Alexander Henry for a little more coaching. Here are the returns of outfit of 1805, receipted at Kamanistiqua 1806. This does not include the Mackenzie District.

"Beaver	100031
Muskrats	51033
Martens	40440
Otters	6143
Minks	4328
Fishers	2268
Loup cerviers (Lynx)	1131
Black bears	1591
Black bears cubs	529
Brown and Grizzly bears	272
Cubs	53
Deer Skins	4065
Dressed original skins	3497
Kitts	2508
Wolves	4502
Wolves, damaged	582
Raccoons	745
Carcajoux (Wolverines)	798
Red and cross foxes	1746
Silver foxes	26
Cariboux skins, dressed	173
Deer skins, damaged	906
Buffalo robes	1135

The above were the contents of 2250 packs of 90 pounds each". (Henry)

The fur traders were constantly trying to prevent the different Indian tribes from making war on each other; not necessarily on account of altruistic reasons but fundamentally because wars interfered with trade. Sometimes it cost the trader some goods as a sort of "pour boire" — but they probably charged the expense to "profit and loss". Bearing all this in mind the following entry is interesting: — "at sunset, peace between themselves (Cayouses) and Snakes was decreed, and consent for us to pass and repass unmolested. Then they threw down their war garments into the midst of the circle as if to say, 'We have no further need of these garments'. This manoeuver had a double meaning. It was a broad hint for a new suit as well as a peace offering!". (Ross)

"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes". (Virgil)

VI

"Improbe Amor! Quid non mortalia pectora cogis?"
(VIRGIL)

WHEN John Rolfe married Pocahontas, there is a trust-worthy account that King James the First of England was "mightily annoyed", that Rolfe had dared to marry into a royal family without first consulting his own sovereign. In the imagination of that day Wa-hun-sun-a-kok, chief of the Pow-hat-tans, figured as a sovereign, and when European feudal ideas were applied to the case, it seemed that under certain circumstances, that a son of Rolfe and Pocahontas might become King of Virginia!

This reasoning to us may seem naive, to put it mildly, but it may be all in a man's point of view. Practically without exception, all the fur traders made what was called a "country marriage" or as the voyageurs termed the transaction — as transaction it was — "à la façon du pays". This meant, that a fur trader took an Indian or half-breed girl for his wife but with the understanding that when he retired from the company's service she would be left in the country and would be free to marry again if she wished. It was also the custom she should be left provided for by the company as to her living and comfort. Also it must be understood that the wife was *bought* from her father by the fur trader. The arrangement was considered satisfactory all around and the trader received all the furs of the tribe and its friendship and protection. Let us hear how it worked out from those who knew.

"Mr. D. McDougall, this afternoon, completed the payment for his wife to Comcomly, whose daughter she was. He gave five new guns and five blankets two and one half feet wide, which makes fifteen guns and fifteen blankets, besides a great deal of other property, as the total cost of this precious lady. This Comcomly is a mercenary brute, destitute of decency". (Henry)

"Payet, one of my interpreters, has taken one of the daughters of the natives for a wife, and, to her parents, he gave in rum, dry goods, etc. to the value of two hundred dollars". (Harmon)

Ross gives a whimsical account of business playing a part in marriage. It appears that the company was not getting the monopoly of trade in the district, so at last a remedy was found. Here is the story.

"It was discovered that the chief — How How — had a daughter, both lovely and fair, the flower of her tribe. Her ochre cheeks were delicate, her features incomparable, her dress surpassed in lustre her person, her robes were the first in the land, her feathers, her bells, her rattles, were unique, while the tint of her skin, her nose bob, her girdle and gait were irresistible. A husband of high rank had to be provided. Negotiations were instituted and How How, with his fascinating daughter and train of followers, arrived in their robes of state at headquarters. The bridal dress was beyond compare. Prince How How now became the father-in-law of a white chief and a furtrader became the happy son-in-law of Prince How How. We mention by the way the happy couple were joined together in holy matrimony on the first of April. After

the ceremony a peace was negotiated, and this after all, was the main point". (Ross)

Now let us examine a hard-shelled New England conscience beating up against a head sea and heavy wind conditions. Daniel Harmon was from Vermont, and evidently fought the good fight. Incidentally, should anyone not know, a New England conscience is one that does not prevent you from sinning; but it prevents you from enjoying it.

September 11th, 1802. "On the 9th inst. a Chief among the Crees, came to the fort, accompanied by a number of his relations, who appeared very desirous that I should take one of his daughters to remain with me. I put him off by telling him that I could not then accept of a woman but probably might in the fall. He pressed me, however, to allow her to remain with me, at once, and added 'I am fond of you, and my wish it to have my daughter with the white people; for she will be treated better by them, than by her own relations'. In fact he almost persuaded me to keep her; for I was sure that while I had the daughter, I should not only have the father's furs, but those of all his band. This would be for the interest of the Company, and would therefore, turn to my own advantage, in some measure; so that a regard to interest, well nigh made me consent to an act, which would have been unwise and improper. But happily for me, I escaped the snare". (Harmon)

But let us continue the story. Yes, you guessed it! "The flesh is bruckle, the Feynd is slee: Timor mortis conturbat me". (Dunbar)

October 10th, 1805. "This day, a Canadian's daughter, a girl of about fourteen years of age, was offered to me and

after mature deliberation concerning the step I ought to take, I have finally concluded to accept of her, as it is customary for all gentlemen who remain for any length of time in this part of the world, to have a female companion than to live a lonely life, as they must do, if single. If we can live in harmony, my intention now is, to keep her as long as I remain in this uncivilized part of the world, and when I return to my native land, I shall endeavor to place her under the protection of some honest man, with whom she can pass the remainder of her days more agreeably than it would be possible for her to do, were she to be taken down into the civilized world, to the manners, customs and language of which she would be an entire stranger. Her mother is of the tribe of Snare Indians".

Harmon evidently found this tie a pleasant one for on February 28th, 1819, he enters in his journal: —

"Next summer I intend to visit my native land and to take my family with me that they may be educated in a christian manner. The mother of my children will accompany me and if she shall be satisfied to remain in that part of the world, I design to make her regularly my wife by formal marriage. It will be seen by this remark, that my intentions have materially changed since I first took her to live with me, and, as my conduct in this respect is different from that which has generally been pursued by the gentlemen of the North West Company, it will be proper to state some of the reasons.

Having lived with this woman as my wife, and having had children by her, I consider that I am under moral obligation not to dissolve the connection, if she is willing to continue it. Our union has been cemented by long and mutual perform-

ance of kindly offices; I have taken pains to instruct her in the doctrines and duties of christianity; how could I spend my days in civilization and leave my beloved children in the wilderness; how could I tear them from a mother's love; how could I think of her in such circumstances, without anguish? On the whole, I consider the course I design to pursue, as the one religion and humanity would justify". (Harmon)

The end? Harmon took his wife east and lived with her happily the rest of his life on Lake Champlain.

Henry is quite a different character — the hard-boiled variety of trader so we will "dial in" on him. "This evening I was offered a wife, but refused. The Indians are very officious in wishing to provide me with a wife, but my inclination does not agree with theirs in the least". (Henry)

But one can never tell just what is going to turn up and the bigger they come the harder they fall. Possibly New Years Eve had something to do with the way the Fates spun his yarn of life for here is his diary entry for January 1st, 1801. "Liard's daughter took possession of my room and the devil could not have got her out". Evidently his domestic stream flowed smoothly and he remarks on May 12th, 1803: — "My beau-père desired me to take his second daughter, saying one woman was not sufficient for a chief, and that all great men should have a plurality of wives, the more the better, provided they were all of the same family. He set a striking example of this himself, as he had for wives three sisters at that time". (Henry)

And the end of Liard's dynasty? "Kings must play a weary part, love, thrones must ring with wild alarms". (Tosti).

So listen to Henry, August 1st, 1805.

"Here (Pembina River Post) I received the unwelcome news that the Sioux had fallen upon a small camp of my Indians on Tongue River, not many miles from the Fort, on the third of July, and killed and taken prisoners fourteen persons — men, women and children. My beau-père (Liard) was the first man that fell, about eight o'clock in the morning. He had climbed a tree, to see if the buffalo were at hand, as they were tented there to make dried provisions. He had no sooner reached the top than two Sioux discoverers fired at the same moment and both balls passed through his body. He had only time to call out to his family, who were in the tent about one hundred paces from him, 'Save yourselves'! The Sioux are killing us!' and fell dead to the ground, his body breaking several branches of the tree as it dropped. The noise brought the Indians out of the tent; when, perceiving their danger, the women and children instantly ran through the plains toward an island of wood on the Tongue River, about a mile distant, and, on a direct line to the fort. The men took their arms and made off also, keeping in the rear of their women and children, whom they urged on. The four surviving men had not gone more than a quarter of a mile when they saw the main body of the war party, on horseback, rushing down upon them. Crossing Tongue River, and in a few moments coming up with them, the Sioux began to fire. The four men by expert manoeuvres and incessant fire, prevented the enemy from closing in on them, while the women and children continued to fly, and the men followed. They were within about two hundred paces of the wood, and some of the most active had actually entered it, when the enemy

surrounded and fell upon them. Three of the Salteurs fled in different directions; Grande Gueule escaped before they were completely surrounded, but the other two were killed. The one who remained to protect the women and children was a brave fellow — Acegnemanche, (Little Chief); he waited deliberately until the enemy came very near, when he fired at one who appeared to be the chief, and knocked the Sioux from his horse. Three young girls and a boy were taken prisoners; the remainder were all murdered and mutilated in a horrible manner. Several women and children had escaped in the woods, where the enemy had chased them on horseback; but the willows and brush were so intricate that everyone of these escaped. One boy about twelve years old, when a Sioux pursued, crawled into a hollow under a bunch of willows, which the horseman leaped over without perceiving him. One of the little girls who escaped tells a pitiful story of her mother who was killed. This woman having two young children that could not walk fast enough, had taken one of them on her back and prevailed upon her sister-in-law to carry the other. But when they got near the woods and the enemy rushed upon them with hideous yells and whoops, the young woman was so frightened that she threw down the child, and soon overtook the mother, who observing that the child was missing and hearing its screams, kissed her little daughter — the one who relates the story — saying, with tears streaming from her eyes: — 'Take courage, my daughter'. Try to reach the woods — and if you do so, go to your elder sister, who will be kind to you. I must turn back and recover your younger sister or die in the attempt. Take courage — run fast — my daughter!' Poor woman! She actually did recover her child and was running off with both children, when she was felled

to the ground by a blow on the head with a war club. She recovered instantly, drew her knife, and plunged it into the neck of her murderer; but others coming up, she was dispatched. Thus my belle-mère ended her days". (Henry)

If the red badge of courage be a title to nobility, in very surety Henry *had* married into a royal family!

VII

"The Evil that Men do lives after them"
(SHAKESPEARE)

"BRATS" have been very graphically described as "other people's children". This definition is charmingly ironic and to all intents and purposes 99 44/100% true. In the last chapter were described some of the "country marriages" and from these marriages we would naturally suppose that there would spring children, who in due course, reaped the benefit of their parents life insurance. Now let us see how this "Design for Living" worked out. Mr. Ross, please.

"I passed the winter in the Fathead country and was desired by Governor Simpson to try and procure two Indian boys to be educated at Red River Colony. After a council or two had sat, the chiefs set a striking example of their willingness by agreeing to let two of their own children avail themselves of this boon. When the ceremony of the business was over, the father of one of the boys made a harangue: —'You see', he said to me, 'we have given you our children not our servants or our slaves, but our own children. We have given you our hearts — our children are our hearts — but bring them back again before they become whitemen — we wish to see them once more Indians — and after that, you can make them whitemen if you like. But let them not get sick or die: if they get sick, we shall get sick; if they die, we shall die. Take them; they are now yours! The Chief then sat down, when all present broke out into lamentations; after which the chiefs rose, and putting the boys' hands into mine, we parted.

One of the boys was the son of a Kootenais chief and named Pelly after the Governor of the H.B.C. The other was the son of one of the Spokane chiefs and we called him Garry after one of the directors. They were both fine promising youths about ten or twelve years of age. We may mention that the boys reached their destination and were educated at the Missionary School. At the end of two or three years, however, Kootenais Pelly, after making progress in learning died. Some years afterward, Spokane Garry returned to his own country with a good English education and spoke our language fluently.

This boy, Spokane Garry, did not realize the expectations entertained of him on his return to his country men". (Ross)

Ross again has more to say on the ever new subject of education and this time his artillery is turned on the half-breed sons of Bourgeois. Hear him once again.

"Bourgeois were remarkable for indulging their children, and, instead of teaching their offspring industry and frugality, they allow them to run about the fort learning among Indians, freemen, voyageurs and others every vice that can degrade human nature. The father is a gentleman and so the son must be a gentleman too. None so great as he, for he can race horses, run dogs, smoke tobacco and shoot arrows, but he must not degrade himself with labor. While in the service this is all very well, but when the father leaves the service, so does the son. The son looks about and is disgusted with the drudgery of labor, and still hangs around his father, knows nothing, can do nothing, bows and arrows are more congenial than labor. The father sets him up in business, but he does not understand that, fails, and falls back on his half ruined

father. The father dies and the son lays hands on the root of all evil. His parent is scarcely cold in his grave when the last shilling is gone and the son an outcast. He returns to the country again — for they all must get back to the land of their nativity — his learning is useless; he tries bows and arrows again, but has forgotten even that aboriginal accomplishment, and is lost in the crowd". (Ross)

VIII

"Illium Fuit"
(VIRGIL)

TO BEHOLD the fur companies in all their state and grandeur, it would be necessary to see the annual gathering at Fort William on Lake Superior. Here two or three of the leading partners from Montreal proceeded to meet the partners from the various trading posts of the wilderness. Washington Irving's golden pen is now at its best.

"To visit the grand conference at Fort William was a most important event and the partners, with the eyes of their dependents upon them, considered the whole dignity of the company as represented in their persons and conducted themselves accordingly. Here in an immense wooden building, was the great council chamber and the banqueting hall, decorated with Indian accoutrements and trophies of the fur trade. The councils were held in great state, for every member felt as if sitting in Parliament, and every retainer and dependent looked up to the assemblage with awe, as to the House of Lords. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation.

These grave and weighty councils were alternated by huge feasts and revels. The tables in the banqueting hall groaned under the weight of hunters' delicacies, such as buffalo tongues, beaver's tails and luxuries from Montreal, all served up by experienced cooks brought for this purpose.

There was no lack of wine, for it was a hard drinking period, a time of loyal toasts, bacchanalian songs and brimming bumpers. While the chiefs revelled in the hall and made the rafters resound with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blast, their merriment was echoed and prolonged by a mongrel legion of retainers — voyageurs, half-breeds, Indian hunters and vagabond hangers-on, who feasted sumptuously without on the crumbs that fell from their masters' table, and made the welkin ring with old French ditties. Such were the fur companies in their powerful and prosperous days when they held feudal sway over their vast domain of lake and forest". (Irving)

Romance? Possibly. But listen to a few extracts from the journal of Alexander Henry. A spade was a spade to him and he goes on with equal pace to the murder of his mother-in-law or to sowing of garden seeds.

March 14th, 1801. "In a drinking match yesterday, Gros Bras, in a fit of jealousy, stabbed Aupusoi to death. Soon after, Aupusoi's brother, a boy of ten years, took the deceased's gun, loaded it with two balls, and went to Gros Bras' tent. Putting the muzzle of the gun through the door, the boy fired the two bullets into his breast and killed him dead. Little Shell finds Aupusoi's mother in her tent and instantly stabbed her. Ondainoiache then came in, took the knife and gave her the second stab. Little Shell in his turn, taking the knife, gave her the third blow. In this manner did these two rascals continue to murder the old woman as long as life lasted. This affair kept the Indians from hunting, as Gros Bras was nearly related to the principal hunters". (Henry)

It may be seen that Henry deprecates any prevalence of murder should it interfere with trade.

Again, February 22nd, 1804. "Grande Gueule stabbed Perdrix Blanche with a knife in six places; the latter in fighting with his wife, fell in the fire and was almost roasted, but had strength enough left, notwithstanding his wounds, to bite her nose off. He is very ill but I don't suppose he will die". (Henry)

"I gave Little Shell, a troublesome drunken Indian, one hundred and twenty drops of Laudanum in high wine, but it had no effect in putting him to sleep; he took it in doses of twenty drops in the course of an hour". (Henry)

This laudanum cocktail sometimes back-fired as Sir A. McKenzie notes in his journal. The locality of this incident was Eagle Hill Fort on the Saskatchewan River. Here is the story of the event. "Most of them who passed the winter at the Saskatchiwine, got to the Eagle Hills, where, in the spring of the year 1780, a few days previous to their intended departure, a large band of Indians being engaged in drinking about their houses, one of the traders, to ease himself of the troublesome importunities of a native, gave him a dose of laudanum in a glass of grog, which effectually prevented him from giving further trouble to anyone, by setting him asleep forever. This accident produced a fray, in which one of the traders, and several of the men, were killed, while the rest had no other means to save themselves but by precipate flight." (McKenzie)

Harmon also adds his bit to these seamy tales of the furtrade where "there were no souls above a beaver skin".

"To see a house full of drunken Indians, consisting of men, women and children, is a most unpleasant sight, for in that condition they often wrangle, pull each other by the hair and fight. At some times ten or twelve, of both sexes, may be seen fighting each other promiscuously, until at last they all fell on the floor, one upon another, some spilling rum out of a small kettle or dish, which they hold in their hands, while others are throwing up what they have just drunk. To add to this uproar, a number of children, some on their mother's shoulders, and others running about and taking hold of their clothes, are constantly bawling, the elder ones through fear that their parents may be stabbed, or that some other misfortune may befall them in the fray. These shrieks of the children form a very unpleasant chorus to the brutal noise kept up by their drunken parents, who are engaged in the squabble". (Harmon)

Good clean fun.

Not all of the happenings about the forts were as sordid as the above quotations but there was enough excitement to go round — at least what might pass as excitement for a man thoroughly wedded to an arm chair. Henry relates: —

"I quarrelled with Little Shell, and dragged him out of the fort by the hair. Indians very troublesome, threatening to level my fort to the ground and Tabashaw breeding mischief; I had two narrow escapes from being stabbed by him; once in the hall and soon after in the shop". (Henry)

And again: — "I took a mare from an X.Y. Indian in payment of a debt. This affair came near being attended with serious consequences as the fellow was a known villain. Some time ago I gave him a cruel beating and bunged up his eyes

so that he could not see for several days and he has been bent on revenge ever since, although he richly deserved the beating, having attempted to stab me *with my own knife*". (Henry)

This "own knife" business was going just a little bit too far, and evidently struck Henry as the most unsportsmanlike gesture in all the mayhem and murder tournaments in the Great North West; and Henry was not at all narrow minded, as this entry will show: —

"At ten o'clock, (P.M.) I came to the point of wood in which the fort was built, and just as I entered the wood at a gallop to take the road that led to the gate, a gun was fired about ten yards from me, apparently by a person who lay in the long grass. My horse was startled and jumped on one side, snorting and prancing; but I kept my seat, calling out 'Who is there?' No answer was returned. I instantly drew my gun from my belt and cocked her to fire forgetting she was not loaded and I had no ammunition. I again called out, 'Who is there?' 'C'est moi, Bourgeois!' It proved to be one of my men, Charbonneau. I was vexed with him for causing me such consternation". (Henry)

This word, "vexed", is charming under the circumstances.

For the edification of members of Temperance Societies — if any — who may read this book here is an entry dated November 9th, 1810, and the place Rocky Mountain House on the Saskatchewan: —

"No extraordinary news excepting the Act of Parliament prohibiting spirituous liquors among the Indians. This law may ease the trader but will not enrich him". (Henry)

Oyez! Oyez! Oh, Yeah!

IX

"Now, good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both!"

(SHAKESPEARE)

HAVING, possibly, laid too much stress on the seamy side of the fur trade, especially for fellow travellers of the head-hiding ostrich genus, let us continue the trader's general routine. We read, in the last chapter, of the feasts at Fort William and we have heard of Indian feasts, and possibly some of us may have been guests at these, so it may be interesting to attend one well over one hundred years ago.

"On being invited to a feast, the first thing that attracts attention is seven or eight bustling squaws running to and fro with pieces of greasy bark, skins of animals, and old mats, to furnish the banqueting lodge, as receptacles for the delicate viands; at the door of the lodge is placed, on such occasions, a sturdy savage with a club in his hand, to keep the dogs at bay, while the preparations are going on. A fire occupies the center of the lodge, around which are laid the eatables, the guests forming a close ring around the whole, holding between their legs a bark platter, filled top heavy with the most delicious melange of bears grease, dogs flesh, mingled with a profusion of other viands, roots and berries. Round the festive board, all the nabobs of the place are squatted in a circle, each helping himself out of his platter with his fingers, observing every now and then, to sleek down his hair by way of wiping his hands. Behind the banqueting circle sit, in

anxious expectation, groups of the canine tribe, yawning, howling and growling; these can only be kept in the rear by a stout cudgel, which each of the guests keeps by him, for the purpose of self-defense; yet it not unfrequently happens that some one of the more daring curs gets out of patience, breaks through the front rank, and carries off his booty; the unfortunate offender is well belabored in his retreat, for the cudgels come down upon him with terrible vengeance. The dog, however, has his revenge in turn, for the squabble and brawl that ensues disturbs all the dormant fleas of the domicile. This troup of black assailants jump about in all directions, so that a guest, in helping himself to the good things before him, keeping the dogs at bay and defending himself from the black squadrons that surround him, pays dearer for his entertainment at an Indian feast, than a foreign ambassador does in a London hotel". (Ross)

It is not the intention of the editor to go into details regarding the numbers of the fur traders who starved to death but the mention of such tragedies is a reminder that food was an all-important consideration in the Great Northwest. An Indian explained the necessity of eating better than most, in the words: — "He who does not eat heaps when he has lots is a fool, for many moons may pass before he has heaps again". Tomorrow's food was very often uncertain and even today's scarce. Meat was the principal — and sometimes the only — food. Fish ranked second and then roots, berries and certain kinds of moss depending upon the season.

"There are twelve persons in the fort and yet for the last fifteen days we have subsisted on what *was* scarcely sufficient for two people". (Harmon)

"During the last three days we have subsisted on tallow, and dried cherries. This evening my men returned with their sledges loaded with buffalo meat and the sight of it was truly reviving. Had this favor been withheld from us, in a few days longer we must have all miserably perished by famine". (Harmon)

There are more and more terrible things to be told regarding starvation but we will leave this subject and show the reverse side of the medal.

" We have now in our store twenty five thousand salmon; four in a day are allowed to each man. I have sent some of our people to take whitefish". (Harmon, September 11th, 1811)

"Our fishermen have returned to the fort, and inform me that they have taken seven thousand whitefish. These fish which singly will weigh from three to four pounds, were taken in nine nets of sixty fathoms each". (Harmon, September 16th, 1811)

When food was plentiful they "did themselves fairly well" as the saying went and in regard to which this entry may be enlightening: —

"Recapitulation of provisions consumed at Panbian (Pembina) River September 1st, 1807 to June 1st, 1808 by seventeen men, ten women, fourteen children and forty-five dogs.

112 cows (buffalo)	45,000 lbs.
35 bulls	18,000 lbs.
3 red deer (elk)	905 lbs.
5 large black bears	460 lbs.
	64,365 lbs.

and

4 beavers
3 swans
1 white crane
12 outardes (geese)
36 ducks
1150 fish of different kinds
775 sturgeon from 50 to 150 lbs.
410 lbs. grease
140 lbs. beat meat
325 bu. potatoes

An assortment of kitchen vegetables" (Henry)

Not bad at all for that number of boys and girls but the question may be asked as to where they got all the kitchen vegetables. The answer is quite simple. Around every permanent fort there was a vegetable garden of more or less size which was well kept and also it must be borne in mind that these traders were Scotsmen.

Henry was, I think, a shining light in the "Northwest Benevolent and Co-operative Mutual Garden Club", or at least was on the Board of Directors if this entry counts: —

"My men had gathered the following crops: —

1,000 bu. potatoes (produce of 21 bu.)
40 bu. turnips
25 bu. carrots
20 bu. beets
20 bu. parsnips
10 bu. cucumbers
2 bu. melons

5 bu. squashes
10 bu. Indian corn
200 large heads of cabbage
300 small and Savoy cabbage

All these vegetables are exclusive of what have been eaten and destroyed since my arrival". (Henry — Pembina River Post October 22nd, 1804)

In another entry Henry speaks of an onion twenty-two inches in circumference, a carrot eighteen inches long and the common weight of a turnip, without leaves, as nine to twelve pounds. He also speaks of the amount of vegetables stolen by the Indians and damage by rodents and here is crystalline gem of the very first water: —

"Two men in a small canoe arrived from Portage la Prairie with two kegs of potatoes and a cat for les souris". (the mice) (Henry, May 20th, 1803)

This is the only mention of a domestic cat in the Great Northwest that I have ever run across, and strangely enough — and please remember that I know Henry intimately and that he did not write this with his tongue in his cheek — the very next sentence is: — "We take plenty of catfish with a night line". Delightful, isn't it? I do not know what became of "kitty". Her biography begins, is contained and ends in those six words.

Wild rice was a staple article of food where it could be obtained and was very abundant in what is now Manitoba.

Rainy Lake. "On the margin of the waters, which connect this lake with Great Winipick Lake, the wild rice is found. This useful grain is produced in no other part of

the North West Country. It grows in water, about two feet deep, where there is a rich muddy bottom. It rises more than eight feet above the water; and in appearance bears a considerable resemblance to oats. It is gathered about the latter end of September, in the following manner. The natives pass in among it in canoes. Each canoe has in it two persons, one of whom is in each end, with a long hooked stick, in one hand, and a straight one in the other. With the hooked stick, he brings the head of the grain over the canoe and holds it there; while with the other he beats it out. When the canoe is thus sufficiently loaded, it is taken to the shore and emptied. This grain is gathered in such quantities in this region, that in ordinary seasons, the North West Company purchase annually, from 12 to 15 hundred bushels of it, from the Natives; and it constitutes a principal article of food, at the posts in this vicinity". (Harmon)

There were very few roots which were eaten by the Indians — and therefore by the fur traders — in the Northwest. Mushrooms are never mentioned. Of the roots, Wappatoo (Sagittaria variabilis) and Camass (Camassia esculenta) were those most generally used. Of the Wappatoo, Cox remarks: — "... below the rapids we got a quantity of excellent roots, called by the Indians Wappitoo. In size they resemble a small potato for which it is a good substitute when roasted or boiled. It has a very slight tinge of bitterness, but not unpleasantly so". (Cox)

Regarding the Camass: — The (Calapooya) Indians preserve their camas much better than the others. They make it up in cakes of about ten pounds weight, three inches thick, in which state it keeps fresh and moist". (Henry)

"Poor Mr. McTavish could not partake of our most dainty fare, which was pancakes made with seal liver oil, the greatest luxury we Columbians know". (Henry)

Here is an interesting entry: — "The Natives in a part of the country called Nipigon as well as in some other parts of the country, are frequently obliged by necessity to subsist on a kind of moss which they find adhering to the rocks and which they denominate, As-se-ne Wa-quon-nek. (In English this is called "Rock Eggs" and in the French of the North-west "Tripe du rocher"). This moss when boiled with pimican dissolves into a glutinous substance and is very palatable". (Harmon)

This moss is not especially common but is well known to woodsmen.

X

Fish and Chips

BERRIES helped out the furtraders' larder, for a variety, such as strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, wild cherries, etc., and here is a description of another well-known berry in the Northwest: —

"Different kinds of berries are now ripe such as strawberries, raspberries and what the Canadians call paires, which the Natives denominate Me-sas-qui-to-min-uck. The last, if they are not the same in kind, exactly resemble, in shape and taste, what in the New England states are called shad berries. When they are found in the prairies they grow on bushes, four or five feet high; but in the thick wood they often reach to the height of fifteen or twenty feet. Of this wood the Natives always make their arrows. These berries, when properly dried by the sun, have an agreeable taste, and are excellent to mix with pimican. The Natives generally boil them in the broth of fat meat; and this constitutes one of their most dainty dishes, and is introduced at all their feasts". (Harmon)

The above noted berries are what we call Saskatoons which is the nearest approach to the Cree Indian word Mi-sas-qui-to-min-uck that white man could encompass.

Fish were a great source of food in the Northwest and there were many kinds, depending on the locality, such as trout, suckers, bass, pike, etc., but sturgeon and more especially salmon and whitefish were the staples. Therefore we will

go into a few details of these three fish, writing just what these followers of Izaak Walton put down, bearing in mind that then as now, the strict insistence upon truth was the first research of his disciples.

(Lake Nipigon 1811) "Great numbers of whitefish are taken out of the lake particularly in the fall of the year. These are hung up by their tails in the open air and are preserved good in a frozen state during the winter. Most people prefer those that have been thus kept, to fish that are taken immediately out of the water". (Harmon)

"Whitefish are sometimes speared which weigh twenty-two pounds". (Harmon at Grand Portage on Lake Superior)

(Sault Ste. Marie 1762). "The rapids are beset with rocks and are full of whitefish — weighing, in general, from six pounds to fifteen. — The fish are often crowded together in the water, in great numbers; and a skillful fisherman, in autumn, will take (with scoop nets) five hundred in two hours. — They cure them, by drying in the smoke and lay them up in large numbers". (Henry Sr.)

"We have now in our store twenty five thousand salmon. Four in a day are allowed to each man. I have sent some of our people to take whitefish". And five days later: — "Our fishermen have returned to the fort and inform me that they have taken seven thousand whitefish. These fish which singly will weigh from three to four pounds, were taken in nine nets of sixty fathoms each". (Harmon, September 1811)

The reader will kindly remember that the dogs had to be fed. Each dog's ration was usually one whitefish a day and he was fortunate if the fish weighed over three pounds.

Now let us look over the salmon fishery which, I am told, is somewhat of an industry today in British Columbia.

"This being the salmon season, (July), Indians were flocking in from all quarters and the quantity taken must have been immense, not less perhaps, than twenty thousand daily, although this was not the great fish rendezvous.

— I expected the chief would have invited me to supper and to pass the night in his tent; but supperless and houseless we had to pass the night in the open air, in a camp stinking with rotten fish and pestered with snarling dogs; the night being warm the stench was horrible". (Ross. Among the Snake Indians on the Columbia River 1816)

"These people (Chinooks, on the Columbia River) live by fishing and hunting. The Columbia salmon, of which there are two species, are, perhaps, as fine as any in the world. The largest caught in my time weighed forty-seven pounds". (Ross)

"Here my old friend, Joseph Felix Larocque, Esq., an old Northwester, and formerly of Columbia, was in charge; and with his usual kindness, treated us to a dish of very fine titameg or whitefish, the first of the kind I had ever seen. The whitefish here is considered in point of quality, in the same light as salmon on the Columbia, the finest fish in the country; and many an argument takes place whenever parties east and west of the mountains meet, as to which is the best. The Columbians, as a matter of course, argue in favor of the salmon; while the adverse party advocate as strongly the titameg or whitefish. Delicious, however, as we found the titameg, there was nothing either in the taste or flavour to

induce me to alter the opinion I had formed. I give preference to the good old salmon as the king of all the piscatory tribes on either side of the mountains". (Ross on Athabasca River 1825) "Titameg" is a horrible mutilation of the Cree Indian word, At-tick-cum-mick, (genus Coregonus).

Perhaps it would be of interest to measure a few sturgeon.

(Lake of the Woods). "During our journey a sturgeon almost jumped into my canoe; his head struck the gunnel near one of the men who, instead of taking hold of him, gave a scream, and the fish fell back into the water again". (Henry)

(Columbia River 1813). "The months of August and September furnish excellent sturgeon. This fish varies exceedingly in size; I have seen some eleven feet long; and we took one that weighed, after the removal of the eggs and intestines, three hundred and ninety pounds. We took out nine gallons of roe". (Franchere)

(Columbia River 1816). "Sturgeon are very abundant and of common size; many of them weighing upward of seven hundred pounds and one caught and brought to us, measured thirteen feet nine inches in length and weighed eleven hundred and thirty pounds". (Franchere)

"Within a few days past, we have caught in our nets, made for the purpose, of strong twine, three sturgeon one of which measured ten feet and three inches in length, and four feet and one inch round his middle". (Harmon, 1812 at Stuarts Lake)

Now you may tell one.

XI

"A Northwest Kennel Club and Horse Show"

"As our provisions were nearly consumed we were obliged to purchase twenty dogs from the Indians. It was the first time I had eaten any of the flesh of this animal, and nothing but stern necessity could have induced me to partake of it. The president of our mess called it mutton, which it somewhat resembles in taste. We generally had it roasted but the Canadians preferred it boiled and the majority of them seemed to think it superior to horse flesh. In this, however, I entirely differ from them, for the latter is a cleaner animal and in taste bears a stronger resemblance to beef than the dogs do to mutton. — I remained at Spokan and passed a rather agreeable winter. The deer were not so numerous as in former seasons and we chiefly subsisted on horses. Toward the latter end of January carp became plentiful in the Spokan River and about a month later the trout fishing commenced. We took large quantities of both which afforded us excellent amusement and from that period until late in the spring we generally breakfasted on fish, and dined on horse". (Cox on Columbia River 1816)

"The Indians frequently eat the flesh of the dog and our Canadian voyageurs are as fond of it as of any other meat. I have frequently eaten of them myself and have found them as palatable as a young pig and much of the same flavour. These dogs are small and in shape very much resemble a wolf. The large dogs are of a different breed and their flesh

always has a rank taste but this is never the case with the small kind". (Harmon 1811)

Horse flesh is so much eaten all over the world today that we can dismiss the subject after reading two entries in the journal of our old friend, Ross Cox. He, very evidently, is a gourmet and when it comes our turn to buy on the horse exchange, his advice may come in handy.

"Custom had now so far reconciled us to the flesh of this animal, that we often preferred it to what in Europe might be regarded as luxuries. Foals or colts are not good, although a few of our men preferred them. A horse for the table should not be under three years or over seven. The flesh of those which are tame, well-fed and occasionally worked, is tender and firm, and the fat hard and white: it is far superior to the wild horse, the flesh of which is loose and stringy, and the fat yellow and rather oily. We generally killed the former for our own table; and I can assure my readers that if they sat down to a fat rib, or a rump-steak off a well-fed four year old, without knowing the animal, they would imagine themselves regaling on a piece of prime ox beef". (Cox)

The next entry I think will be more palatable to my readers and to me at least is intensely interesting.

"The number of horses among the various tribes on the Columbia differs with the circumstances of the country. Among the Flatheads, Cortonais, Spokans, etc., whose lands are rather thickly wooded, there are not more than sufficient for their actual use and every colt on arriving at the proper age is broken for the saddle. But in the countries inhabited

by the Wallah-Wallahs, Nez Percés and Shoshonés which chiefly consist of open plains, well-watered and thinly wooded, they are far more numerous and thousands are allowed to go wild. Their general height is about fifteen hands. We have seen from seven hundred to a thousand wild horses in a band and some of the party who crossed this continent by the Missouri route, told me, that in parts of the country belonging to the Snake Indians, bands varying from three to four thousand were frequently seen and further to the southward they are far more numerous. The Spaniards at St. Francisco informed our traders, that in the year 1812, they were obliged to kill upward of thirty thousand horses in California in order to preserve sufficient grass for the buffalo, the fat of which forms an article of exportation". (Cox 1816)

But enough of horses and dogs and many other kinds of food, that are not within the compass of this book, and we will look over the buffalo herds which, to do them justice, would require not only a chapter but a book or two. However, I will condense the subject to what concerned our fur traders to the greatest interest — food.

XII

Bos Americanus

PROBABLY the first white man to describe the buffalo was Pedro de Castaneda, who, writing in 1540 remarks in part: — "I wish to describe the appearance of the bulls. There was not one of the horses that did not take to flight when he saw them first, for they have a narrow, short face, the brow two palms across from eye to eye, the eyes sticking out at the side, so that when they are running, they can see who is following them. They have very long beards, like goats, and when they are running, they throw their heads back with the beard dragging on the ground. There is a sort of girdle round the middle of the body. The hair is very woolly, like a sheep's, very fine, and in front of the girdle the hair is very long and rough like a lion's. They have a great hump, larger than a camel's. The horns are short and thick, so that they are not seen much above the hair. They have a short tail, with a bunch of hair at the end. When they run, they carry it erect like a scorpion. In May they change the hair in the middle of the body for a down, which makes perfect lions of them. They rub against trees in the ravines to shed their hair, and they continue this until only the down is left, as a snake changes his skin".

The number of buffalo existing at one time on the Great Plains is problematical — any way innumerable thousands — and two entries from Henry's journal will suffice. "I took my usual morning view from the top of my oak and saw more

buffaloes than ever. They formed one body, commencing about half a mile from camp, whence the plain was covered on the west side of the river (Park River, a branch of the Red) as far as the eye could reach. They were moving southward slowly, and the meadow seemed in motion". (Henry 1802)

And again: — "At daybreak I was awakened by the bellowing of buffaloes. I got up, and was astonished when I climbed into the S.W. bastion. On my right the plains were black, and appeared as if in motion, S. to N. Opposite the fort the ice was covered; and on my left, to the utmost extent of the reach below us, the river was covered with buffalo moving northward. Our dogs were confined within the fort. which allowed the buffalo to pass within a few paces. I dressed and climbed my oak for a better view. I had seen almost incredible numbers of buffalo in the fall, but nothing in comparison to what I now beheld. The ground was covered at every point of the compass, as far as the eye could reach, and every animal was in motion. All hands soon attacked them with a tremendous running fire, which put them to a quicker pace, but had no effect in altering their course". (Henry, Park River Post January 14, 1801)

Every post had a hunter, sometimes two or three, to keep the fort in meat as the rest of the staff were occupied with other duties. Henry remarks: — "I settled with Petite Grue (Little Crane) to hunt for me. I promised that if he would behave well, and kill as many animals as I might require for the season, I would pay him sixty skins, furnish a gun and ammunition, and give a clothing to himself and wife". (Henry)

The buffalo were as a rule cut up into about a dozen pieces: — The four legs, two sides of ribs, the backbone, the

brisket, the neck, the rump, the hump and shoulder blades. Also there were the "dépouilles" which were the layers of fat just under the skin. The tongue usually belonged to the hunter who also, at times when he was paid only for what he killed, received a royalty on buffalo, deer and elk but very little, if anything, on bear and smaller animals. Of course at a "starving post", that is, where animals were few, other arrangements were made.

Furtraders, like the Indians were also wasteful during plentiful times. Hear Henry. "Having plenty of meat in the camp we took only the tongue, leaving the animal for the wolves and crows — (same afternoon) — we took the tongue of the animal only and left him for the wolves to devour. On our way home killed two more bulls". (Henry)

After the hunt, the carcasses were skinned, cut up and packed on horses or travois by the women and taken to the fort or camp. The hides were stretched on the ground by pegs to dry, or if woods were near, on a frame. The flesh was removed from the hide with a scraper made from a bone. After the hide was thoroughly dry, a coating of tanning material — which was usually a mixture of one part of brains to two parts of well-cooked liver, with a little fat added, was spread over the inner surface of the hide, which was then rolled up and allowed to remain two or three days, when the tanning material was washed off. A rope was then stretched between two trees or stakes and the hides pulled back and forth over it (of course by the squaws) until they were dry and pliable. Usually the finished hide was smoked over a fire of dry, rotten wood or hung up in the top of a teepee, which gave it a brown color and the property of drying out soft should it get wet.

The meat was carefully cut up in thin strips, suitable for drying, and laid upon a frame work of poles, under which a smudge was lighted to keep off the blow-flies while the flesh was exposed to the sun and air. When the side of the meat exposed to the sun became dry enough to roll or crumple, it was placed on the ground upon a skin and beaten with billets of wood until completely flattened out. Then the other side was exposed and the process repeated until the meat was completely dry. The object of this beating was to preserve the meat in the best form for packing in bales for transportation.

Pemmican, was another staple food and it may be interesting to some of my readers to know how it was made one hundred years ago and is still being made by practically the same process. For pemmican, the dried meat (as described above) was toasted over a fire until crisp and was then pounded as fine as possible with a stone hammer. In the old days a shallow hole was dug in the ground and a skin covering made from buffalo hides was staked over the hole. This formed a sort of skin dish, into which the meat was thrown to be pounded. The hide was that from the neck of the buffalo. (the toughest part of the skin and the same as used for making shields) and the only part that would stand the wear and tear of the hammer. In the mean time the marrow bones were split open and boiled in water until all the grease and oil rose to the top, when it was skimmed off and poured over and mixed with the pounded meat. As soon as the mixture cooled it was packed tightly into skin bags called "taureaux", or often into the paunch of a buffalo, and then sewed up. Pemmican thus prepared, will keep indefinitely. The general proportion was 60 pounds meat to forty pounds grease.

The name, pemmican, comes from the Cree language and means something made with fat or grease.

The Indians believed that the buffalo were made by the "Great Mystery" especially for their use and when they were plentiful they could get along with little else. From the hides they made robes, lodges, ropes, par-fleche sacks, saddles, shields, gloves, moccasins, leggings, shirts, quivers, knife scabbards and innumerable other things. From the horns: — spoons, cups, dishes, powder horns, arrow heads and bows. From the sinew: — bow strings, twine and thread for every conceivable use. From the bones: — arrow and axe heads, shovels, meat scrapers, traps and sleds. The trachea was used as a sack for paints — the tail for a knife scabbard and a handle for war clubs, and medicine rattles — the pericardium and paunch for sacks — the brain, liver and fat for tanning — the rough skin of the tongue for a hair brush. These were just a few of the uses of the buffalo, and when we consider the above outline we should not be surprised at the Indian belief in their divine origin.

Although countless thousands of buffalo were killed every year by both whites and Indians, it must be remembered that, with a very few exceptions, every part of the animal was used and the herds apparently increased in numbers.

Nature also laid her hand heavily on the herds, and living as we do, such happenings do not come to our imagination. Here again we must turn to a fur trader's writings for such information.

"Red River clear of ice, but drowned buffalo continue to drift by in entire herds. It is really astonishing what vast

numbers have perished. They formed one continuous line in the current for two days and nights". (Henry, April 1st, 1801)

And again: — "Plains burned in every direction and blind buffalo seen every minute wandering around. The poor beasts have all the hair singed off, their eyes swollen and closed fast. It was really pitiful to see them staggering about, sometimes running afoul of a large stone, at other times tumbling down hill and falling into creeks". (Henry, November 25th, 1804)

And as a grand finale on this subject we will turn to Henry. "A trader — John McDonnell — writing in 1795 remarks that he saw many buffalo carcasses in the river (Qu'Appelle) and along its banks. 'I was taken up the whole day with counting them and to my surprise found I had numbered 7,360 drowned and mired along the river and in it. It is true, in one or two places, I went on shore and walked from one carcass to the other, where they lay from three to five files deep'". (Henry)

Bearing these quotations in mind, it is very probable that the total number of buffalo killed by man, in those days, was insignificant in comparison with the destruction by the warring of nature's elements against the poor brutes.

Before the Spanish brought the horse to North American, and also, before firearms were introduced at about the same time, the killing of buffalo naturally required greater exertion on the part of the Indians who had to resort to long-used stratagems. Sometimes they would crawl to the outskirts of the herd and kill the stragglers as they grazed, or they would

cover themselves with the skins of wolves or buffalo calves and thus be enabled to come close to the animals without causing undue attention.

The plains Indians were excellent horsemen and in the buffalo hunt their consummate horsemanship was displayed to the finest advantage. Without hesitating they would rush at full speed over the roughest ground into the midst of masses of buffalo which were surging along in the wildest confusion, single out and separate their victims, kill them and then repeat the manoeuvre. Riding at full speed they would overtake the selected animal, and just before coming abreast of it, discharge an arrow, endeavoring to hit it high in the back, between the hip and the small ribs, so that the arrow would take a course down and forward toward the heart. If abreast of the animal, the arrow would be loosed downward just back of the shoulder blade. An arrow could be sent with such force as to pass entirely through a buffalo, unless it should encounter a bone, and stick in the ground on the other side, but the general intention was to sink it full length in the body, as then its effect was more marked and the presence of the shaft would show to whom the carcass rightfully belonged.

In winter some of the tribes and traders used snowshoes, and after a heavy fall of snow, could easily overtake the herds wallowing helplessly along in the deep drifts and easily dispatch them with either spear or arrow. Buffalo killed at such a time of the year were usually thin and the meat tough, but meat was meat at any season, or however obtained.

By far the most popular method of killing buffalo was to organize in large parties and stampede the herd toward steep river banks or high cliffs, over which the animals would rush,

head over heels, to destruction. The young men of the tribe were sent out to collect and bring in the buffalo — a tedious task which required great patience, as the herd had to be started by slow degrees. This was usually done by setting fire to the grass. The buffalo, once started, were driven along toward the desired place, and near the cliff or "pound", the rest of the tribe would be gathered in two converging lines. As the herd approached these lines, they were driven faster and faster, the Indians on both flanks waving robes or blankets and shouting, in order to keep the buffalo on the right course until they came to the edge of the cliff over which they plunged, those in front being pushed over by the impetus of those behind. Many were killed by the fall, and the others were soon dispatched by the arrows and spears of the Indians stationed below at tactical points, until the whole herd was wiped out.

But enough of this buffalo business. I just heard the twelve o'clock whistle blow and you must be sick of the "Bos Americanus" by this time.

XIII

Higher Education and Medicine

As we delve into the occupations of our furtraders the question might come into our heads as to what interest they took in the affairs of the outside world and just how they employed their minds, especially during the long winter nights. This question has a ready answer as the Traders' journals will show.

"Our travelling library was too small and only consisted of one book of hymns, two song books, the latest edition of Joe Miller (humorist) and Darwin's Botanic Garden". (Cox)

"And if I could, it would afford me little satisfaction to converse with the ignorant Canadians about horses, dogs, canoes, women and strong men who can fight a good battle. Happily for me I have a collection of good books". (Harmon) Harmon evidently has the deep-rooted complex against "Colonials" which exists even today.

"I am comparatively alone but happily for me I have a few books and in perusing them I shall pass most of my leisure moments". (Harmon)

"As I had no other book, I read, during my stay there the greater part of the Bible". (Harmon, 29 August to October 9th, 1800 at Little Lake Winipick)

To the larger posts the Company sent each year a complete file of the "London Times" and Blackwood's Magazine.

I have a vivid mental picture of these dog-eared and wrinkled sheets mulled over and prized.

Now just one more thought before we close and lock our library door. "Indeed, the cause of taciturnity among the Indians, may be easily understood, if we consider how many occasions of speech, which present themselves to us, are utterly unknown to them; the records of history, the pursuits of science, the disquisitions of philosophy, the systems of politics, the business and amusements of the day, and the transactions of the four corners of the world. Among the Indians, the topics of conversation are but few, and limited, for the most part, to the transactions of the day, the number of animals they have killed, and of those which have escaped their pursuit; and other incidents of the chase". (Henry Sr.)

The trader at each fort, being a White Chief, was invested, in the Indian mind, with medicinal knowledge and power far beyond reality. Therefore a few "cures" may be enlightening.

"The wounds in Mr. Stuart's shoulder and side were healed up, but the latter had given him much pain, and formed an abscess which burst this morning, about four inches from the original wound; from the amount of inflammation there is reason to suppose the arrow was poisoned. He feels relieved now, and we hope for his speedy recovery. Poultices of biscuit and water have been and are still applied". (Henry)

"I was sick with a pain in the back and side, could scarcely crawl about; rubbed the parts with camphorated spirits and warm flannel which gave relief." (Henry)

"One of my men, in carelessly handling a knife, stabbed a companion near the ankle. It bled for a long time and nothing I could do stopped the flow until I applied red willow bark". (Cornus stolonifera) (Henry)

"One of my men was very ill with a colic. I gave him some essence of peppermint, but it did not cure him; soon after gave him some sweet oil, which he threw up; he was in great pain. I gave him a dose of jalap, which he soon threw up and his pain increased. I then gave him an extraordinary dose of Glaubers salts, which, after sometime, took its course, but did not appear to relieve him much. I gave him an emetic which worked well". (Henry) I imagine that this man finally recovered as "Dr." Henry reports upon his case on the second and twentieth days afterward as much better but goes on to say "another man had split his thumb in a shocking manner, and having neglected it, the wound was in a sad condition. I washed it in a sal ammoniac until it bled, when the poor fellow was dancing with pain and swore he would rather have cut it off." (Henry)

Now here is a northwest cure for a hang-over, also by Dr. Henry: — "The next morning after drinking they generally swarm into the house for medicine to relieve the effects of liquor, and we often have some diversion by assuming a solemn countenance and letting them smell or taste some kind of trash and the sharper the application, the greater faith they have in its efficacy." (Henry)

Sometimes, the traders' medicinal reputation was his own salvation, as this quotation will show: —

"The western tribes (along the Columbia) remember the small pox with a superstitious dread, which Mr. Mc-

Dougall took advantage. He assembled several of the chiefs, and showing them a small bottle, declared it contained the small pox; that although his force was weak in number, he was strong in medicine; and that on account of the treacherous cruelty of the Northern Indians he would open the bottle and send the small pox among them. The chief strongly remonstrated and told him that they were always friendly to the white people; that they would remain so; that if the small pox was once let out it would run like fire among the good as well as the bad people; and that friends should not be punished for crimes committed by enemies. Mr. McDougall appeared to be convinced by these reasons, and promised that, if the white people were not attacked or robbed in the future, the fatal bottle should not be uncorked. He was greatly dreaded by the Indians, who called him the Great Small Pox Chief". (Cox)

XIV

Travelogues

THOSE OF US who are Eastern bred, very naturally associate the birch bark canoe with the furtraders, and especially with the word, "voyageurs". This belief is correct for at least half of Canada, in as much that water was the highway for travel in that maze of rivers, creeks and lakes which run almost continuously from Eastern Canada to the western end of Lake Superior. As this waterway was often broken by land, goods had to be taken out of the canoes and packed by men across the neck or rise of land. Such a place was called a "portage". Also there was the term: — décharge. Here is the difference. "A décharge, in voyageurs' language, is a place where a canoe must be unloaded, wholly or in part, and can then be handed up or down by a rope, the cargo or part of it, being carried on land; but at a portage, everything is carried including the canoe". (Henry)

Harmon will now broadcast a little information on canoe travel as it appeared to him on his very first trip to the Great North West. "The goods intended for the interior or upper countries, are here (Point Clair) put on board of canoes. These canoes are constructed of the bark of the birch tree and will carry a burden of three and one half or four tons each; and are severally manned by eight or nine Canadians, who are said to manage them with greater dexterity than any other people. A rainy evening. For the first time in my life I am to pass the night in a tent. In the former part of the day,

I was employed in marking bales of goods, which are to be sent to the Grand Portage or General Rendezvous. (On Lake Superior). About twelve o'clock I embarked on board one of the canoes, destined for the above mentioned place. The whole squadron, which consists of thirty canoes, is divided into three brigades. One or two guides or Pilots, are attached to each brigade. Their business is, to point out the best course up and down the streams and through the lakes, and to take charge of the canoes and property on board. They attend to the repairs of the canoes, which are frequently broken, and have the same command over the men, attached to their respective brigades, as the commander of a vessel has, over the men on board. The voyageurs, as the men are called, have many of the customs of sailors. By all those on board, who have never passed certain places, they expect to be treated with something to drink, and should a person refuse to comply with their requisition, he would be sure of being plunged into the water, which they profanely call, baptizing him. To avoid such a disaster, I gave the people of my canoe a few bottles of spirits and porter, by drinking which they became very merry, and exhibited the reverse of their appearance a few days since, when, with heavy hearts and weeping eyes, they parted from their relations. During the day we have come up some difficult rapids, where many persons have been drowned either in coming up or going down. For every such unfortunate person, whether his corpse is found or not, a cross is erected by his companions, agreeably to a custom, and at this place I see no less than fourteen. This is a melancholy sight. — Came up a rapid where a few years since, two canoes in going down, were broken and several men were drowned; therefore we see more crosses erected. The Canadian voyageurs,

when they pass a place where a cross has been erected, have a custom of pulling off their hats and making the sign of the Cross, upon which one in each canoe repeats a short prayer. Those, therefore, who are in the habit of voyaging this way, are obliged to say their prayers more frequently perhaps, than when at home; for at almost every rapid which we have passed, since we left Montreal, we have seen a number of crosses erected, and at one I counted no less than thirty! — With such dismal spectacles almost continually before our eyes, we press forward with all the ardour and rashness of youth in the same dangerous path, stimulated by the hopes of securing a little gold". (Harmon April 1800)

"The man in the bow of the canoe was called the conductor or bowman. (ducent). Also there was a midman, or men, and a steerer or helmsman". (Henry)

At a décharge or in towing a canoe up a rapid the following was the procedure: — "Two men remained on board to keep the canoe straight, while the four (or more) middle men tackled themselves to the towing line by means of their portage straps. These are attached to the line and passed over one shoulder, across the breast and under the other arm, by which means, the men are able to exert all their strength and are also kept from falling during this tedious labour. Often the shore is rough and covered with large and small stones, and in many places issue springs near which the soil is nothing but mire. Into this the men sink knee-deep and then stumble on loose, round stones, so that they are in danger of falling or of breaking the line". (Henry)

The birch bark canoes were constantly in need of repair through running against snags or rocks and therefore "spare

parts" had to be carried along. This repair material consisted of squares of birch bark, spruce gum and "wattap" which was the fine fibrous roots of spruce or fir trees for lacing the bark patches over the holes in the canoe.

On the Pacific coast split cedar boards were used as Cox speaks of them in his travels on the Columbia. "We travelled in bateaux and light built wooden canoes". (Cox at Astoria 1812)

And here is a description of an Indian canoe or rather "dug-out": — "This canoe was built of cedar forty-five feet long, four feet wide and three and one half feet in depth". (Mackenzie)

Like the ever-continuing arguments on the superiority of salmon or whitefish between the fur traders on the west and east sides of the Rockies, we have the same wordy war in regard to the merits of the birch bark and cedar built canoes.

"After two hours delay, we said goodbye to Mr. Larocque, and embarking in two canoes, took the current down the Athabasca. Wherever there is a Northwester in this country, the birch-rind canoe is sure to be found. Although boats would have been far more safe and suitable for our purpose, yet we had to embark in these fragile shells to shoot a dangerous stream". (Ross)

"It is not easy to change the force of habit, and no set of men could be more wedded to old customs than the great nabobs of the fur trade. And I might here point out one instance. The description of the craft used on the Columbia by the Astor Company consisted of split or sawed cedar boats, strong, light and durable, and in every possible way safer

and better adapted to rough water than the birch-rind canoes in general use on the east side of the mountains. They carried a cargo or burden of about three thousand pounds weight, and yet, nimbly handled, were easily carried across portages. A great partiality existed in favour of the good old bark canoes of northern reputation; they being of prettier form and the kind of vessel of customary conveyance used by the Northwesters and that itself was no small recommendation. Therefore, the country was ransacked for prime birch bark more frequently than for prime furs; and to guard against failure in this fanciful article, a stock of it was shipped at Montreal for London and from thence conveyed round Cape Horn for their establishment at Fort George, in case that none of equal quality could be found on the waters of the Pacific!". (Ross)

We will now end our review of the Northwest navy and inspect the ground forces. Lake Winnipeg and Lake Superior practically end the waterways toward the west. True enough there are the Saskatchewan and Peace Rivers but they were, as far as the fur trade was concerned, like the main line of a railroad, in an uninhabited country, with no subsidiaries or "feeders". Therefore some method of land transportation had to be devised. The result was the use of the horse and dog. The horse was brought into North America in the early part of the sixteenth century. Before that dogs furnished the motive power. The Stony Indians, who belong to the Assinaboine branch of the Siouan linguistic stock, when they first saw the horse, called it "shonga wakan", or wonderful dog. Today a horse in their language is "shonga tonga" (literally, dog big). The Cree Indian word for a dog is "atim" and for a horse "mistatim" (big dog). And just to drive home the point

more graphically the sign for a dog in the Indian sign language is the 'travois" sign: — right hand brought under the left breast, back of the hand up, first and second fingers separated, extended and pointing to the left, thumb and other fingers closed. Draw the right hand horizontally about a foot across the front of the body. Before the introduction of the horse, dogs were used to draw the travois.

We now have Henry broadcasting again: — "Dogs are tackled to two straight poles about fifteen feet long, fastened together at one end, at the other spread about eight feet apart. Where the poles are lashed together, several folds of dressed buffalo skins, which answer for a saddle, are fastened and laid directly on the dogs' shoulders; a strip of leather, attached to this, is brought about the dogs' neck and made fast again to the meeting of the poles; then a hoop is laid across the poles a little behind the dogs rump and interwoven with leather thongs, and upon this the burden is laid". (Henry)

In winter sledges were used: — "Our goods were drawn by dogs. Each pair of dogs drew a load of from two hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds, besides provisions for themselves and their driver, which would make the whole load about three hundred pounds I have seen many dogs, two of which, would draw on a sledge five hundred pounds, twenty miles, in five hours. For a short distance, two of our stoutest dogs will draw more than a thousand pounds weight. In short, there is no animal with which I am acquainted, that would be able to render half the service that our dogs do, in this country, where the snow is very deep in the winter season. They sink but little into it, in following a person on snow shoes". (Harmon)

The next paragraph is of double interest: — "Some Assiniboines arrived, a notorious set of horse thieves. I had a long conversation with them on that subject: but as usual, none of those who were present had ever stolen a horse. I had the curiosity to count the Assiniboine dog travailles and found no fewer than two hundred and thirty". (Henry)

"The night afforded me but little sleep, so great was the disturbance, from noises of all kinds: feasting and dancing; the women chastising the dogs; the dogs of the two camps meeting and maintaining against each other, the whole night long, a universal war." (Henry Sr.)

Again: — "At daybreak, all was noise and confusion in the camp; the women beating and loading the dogs, and the dogs howling and crying. The tents were speedily struck, and the coverings and poles packed up to be drawn by the dogs. Soon after sunrise, the march began, the women each driving one or two, and some, five loaded dogs. The number of these animals, actually drawing loads, exceeded five hundred." (Henry Sr. Among the "Osinipoilles", that is, the Assinaboines, in 1763)

Most of us are more or less familiar with the horse travois but, just in case this is not so I quote the following: — "A travois is a sort of drag, and usually consists of two long poles, or several separate lodge poles whose upper ends are either fastened by rigging to the side of the horse or crossed over his back near the withers. The lower ends drag on the ground behind. The poles on opposite sides are connected by cross pieces lashed to the dragging poles in order to keep them apart. A net work of thongs, or a skin stretched between

the poles, form a litter to carry a person or children or other equipment". (Henry)

"Went to the hills with a horse and cariole, low and surrounded with parchment buffalo skin; it only weighed twenty pounds, but was large enough for one person and his bedding." (Henry)

"We have a new sort of cart, which facilitates transportation. They are about four feet high and perfectly straight; the spokes are perpendicular without the least bending outward (i.e. dishing) and only four to each wheel. These carts carry about five pieces (5 x 90 lbs. — 450 pounds about) and are drawn by one horse." (Henry)

The above description is a sort of "preview" of the famed "Red River Cart", known not only for its utility but for its "hundred dolorous sounds" as every part of it was wood, even the lynch pins and the groaning wheels could be heard a half mile away.

Henry paints a vivid picture of the starting out of one of his outfits, moving their "pieces" of goods from one fort to another: — "Payet, guide, leads the van, with a cart drawn by two horses and loaded with his private baggage, boxes, bags, kettles, etc. Madam Payet follows the cart with a child on her back, very merry. Bottineau, with two horses loaded with one and one half packs, his own baggage, and two young children with kettles and other trash hanging on to it. Dubord, goes on foot, with his long pipe stem and calumet in his hand. Madam follows on foot, carrying his tobacco pouch with a broad bead tail. La Pointe, with another cart and horses, loaded with two pieces of goods and baggage, belonging to many

others, and a kettle hung on each side. Madam Bottineau with a squalling infant on her back, scolding and tossing it about. Brisebois follows with only a gun on his shoulder and a fresh lighted pipe in his mouth. Jasmin next, with gun and pipe puffing out clouds of smoke. Pouliot, the greatest smoker in the Northwest, has nothing but pipe and pouch. Livernois, with a young mare, loaded with weeds for smoking, an old worsted bag, some squashes and potatoes, a small keg of fresh water, and two young whelps howling. Next appears Madam Cameron's mare, kicking, rearing and snorting, hauling a travois loaded with a bag of flour, cabbages, turnips, onions, a small keg of water and a large kettle of broth. Langlois, who is master of the band, now comes leading a horse that draws a travois nicely covered with a new painted tent, under which his daughter and Mrs. Cameron lie, very sick. Madam Langlois brings up the rear, following the travois with a slow step, attending to the wants of her daughter, who, notwithstanding her sickness, can find no other expression of gratitude to her parents, than by calling them dogs, fools, beasts, etc. The rear guard consists of a long train of twenty dogs, some for sleighs, some for game, and others of no use whatever, except to snarl and destroy meat. The total forms a procession a mile long and appears like a large band of Assinaboines". (Henry)

So away they go then, over the sun-drenched prairie, chattering like magpies, toward the green roll of the foothills, and beyond the foothills, a hazy-blue gap in the mountains, through which the silver thread of a river wends its way. The chattering dies away in the distance and our voyageurs disappear over a flower-flecked rise of the plain. We shall not see them again.

XV

Envoy

"Prince, n'enquerez de sepmaine
Où ills sont, ne de c'est an,
Que ce reffrain ne vous remaine:
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"

(FRANÇOIS VILLON)

AND WHAT WAS the Indian Summer of a furtrader's life? Alexander Ross says: — "There appears to be some fatality attending those of the fur trade. Few, very few indeed, of the hundreds who have retired from that trade, some with competencies, and some with moderate fortunes, have lived to enjoy their hard earnings. Shut out for so many years from civilized society, from all the endearments of social life, the furtrader is wholly unprepared for the wiles of designing persons, to whose devices he easily falls a prey or squanders his means so profusely as to be soon reduced to penury. If he be of economical habits, having spent the best part of his days in a country where money is little used, he becomes disgusted with a land where nothing can be procured without it and where its influence is all-powerful and he begins to pine and sigh for days gone by, never to return." (Ross)

"Oftentimes he has separated from his Indian wife, and thus disembarrassed arrives in Montreal or Quebec determined to enjoy the pleasures of married life with an educated female. His arrival is quickly known; invitations are numerous, the wealthy Northwester is universally admired; bronzed features. Oxford-grey hair, and a dégagé tout ensemble impart interest to his appearance. He is listened to with

breathless attention. Music follows, then a song and he retires in bewildered joy cursing the fortune that so long debarred him from the enjoyment of such happiness. His selection is quickly made, and he becomes a legal benedict. I believe that such unions are generally happy, but there are some envious scandal-mongers who allege that the unfortunate husband too quickly discovers that a bright eye, a fair face, a sweet voice or a tune on the piano is rather an empty compensation for the waste of hard-earned fortune. If he attempts to remonstrate against his wife's extravagance, his interesting bronze is compared to copper, the Oxford-grey assumes a whiter hue, the air dégagé degenerates into the air slovenly, and an English tongue, quite at variance with his idea of conjugal submission, reminds him that when all the officers in the garrison were dying for her, she was thrown away upon a weather-beaten, rheumatic, moss-chewing, dog-eating barbarian, whose habits were better adapted to the savage society of Indian squaws, than to that of the ladies of education." (Ross)

"When a young trader becomes united to an Indian or half-breed girl, he imagines he can easily dissolve such a tie. He is, however, much deceived. When the period which he had originally fixed for quitting the Indian country arrives, he finds that the woman who has been for many years a faithful partner cannot in a moment be whistled off. Children have grown up about him; the natural affection of the father despises the laws of civilized society; the patriot sinks in the parent, and in most cases the temporary union ends in a permanent marriage. Those so circumstanced, on quitting the Company, bring their families to Canada, where they purchase estates, on which they live in a kind of half Indian, half

civilized manner, and here we will leave them, constantly smoking their calumets, and railing at the fashionable frivolities of this great world." (Cox)

Bon voyage! Bon voyage, Mes Voyageurs!

A-Dieu!

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

Translations in English from Foreign languages, with apologies for appearing to be "high brow" — which is not really intended in as much as I am called a "roughneck" by many admiring acquaintances.

"Arma virumque cano". (Virgil) "Of arms and the man I sing".

"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes". (Virgil) "I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts."

"Improbe Amor, quid non mortalia cogis?". (Virgil) "O wicked Love to what wilt thou not drive mortal hearts!"

"A la façon du pays". "According to the custom of the country".

"Timor mortis conturbat me". (Dunbar) "The fear of death worries me".

"Illium fuit". (Virgil) "Troy was". That is, that it was at one time great but is now a memory.

ENVOY

"Prince, n'enquerez de sepmaine
Où ills sont, ne de c'est an,
Que ce reffrain ne vous remaine:
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?" (François Villon)

Ask not this week, Fair Sovereign,
Where they are now, nor yet this year,
But this refrain with you remain:
Where are the snows of yester-year?

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