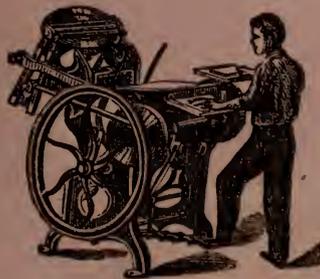


REMARKS
ON THE
GREAT NOR'-WEST,
BY THE AUTHOR OF
TWENTY - FIVE YEARS SERVICE
IN THE
HUDSON'S BAY TERRITORY.



1869:

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TO THE READER.

At the request of the Editor of a paper, recently started here, I wrote a Series of Articles on the Nor'-West Territory, in which I have sketched, briefly, the Manners and Customs of the different Tribes of Natives with whom I became acquainted, in the course of my perigrinations, character of the soil and climate, of the various portions of the Territory which I had visited, and remarks on the Hudson's Bay Company, and the turn which matters have taken in consequence of the negotiations that have, to all appearance, been concluded in reference to the transfer of the Territory to Canada. On reviewing these articles, some of my friends suggested the advisability of collecting them in a pamphlet form, to which I consented, and they are now published, in the order in which they appeared in the paper.

JOHN McLEAN.

Elora, 1st May, 1869.

SCRAPS FROM THE PORTE FOLIO OF A NOR'-WESTER.

Jan. 29, 1869.

Not many years ago the Nor'-West Territory was "a sealed book" to the People of Canada. This is no longer the case. We are now as familiar with the terms Red River, Saskatchewan, and Assiniboine, as we are with the surrounding Townships, and, possibly, in a few years more, a trip to Red River may be a thing of daily occurrence—Had not our wretched "political necessities" stood in the way, that valuable Territory would have been opened up for settlement long since, and the distress that prevails to so fearful an extent in the Colony, would never have occurred. Some ten or twelve years ago, the State of Minnesota was invaded by "an army of locusts," but generally speaking, the evil led to no serious consequences. These destructive creatures, move along in a solid phalanx, devouring "every green thing," while in the parts immediately adjacent to their line of flight, nothing is felt of their presence. It thus happened that the portion of Territory that had escaped the calamity in Minnesota possessed ample means of relieving those who had suffered. Unfortunately for the isolated colonists of Red River, when the narrow belt of territory they occupied along the banks of the river became a prey to the locusts, they had no neighbors to bring relief.

Our early settlers in Canada had many difficulties to contend with, formidable difficulties undoubtedly, but they were as child's play compared to those which the pioneers of the Nor'-west had to encounter. In the winters of 1810-11, if I mistake not, Lord Selkirk passed the winter in Montreal, where he found the glorious Northwest Company at the height of their power. Their dominion in the Indian Territory extended nearly from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. They were, in a word, the Merchant Princes of the day, and the stranger who visited Montreal was sure to find, in their hospitable mansions, the most generous and friendly treatment. Lord Selkirk experienced this hospitality to the fullest extent. Appearing very anxious to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Indian Territory, manners and customs of the natives, and the Company's mode of dealing with them, everything was explained to his Lordship, with a frankness that shewed how completely he had insinuated himself into the confidence of his guileless hosts whose ruin he was contemplating, while partaking freely of their hospitality. Lord Selkirk, having gained the end he had in view in visiting Montreal, return-

ed to England the following spring, and finding the Hudson's Bay Company's stock selling at a very low figure, purchased a sufficient amount to give him the control of affairs. Armed with the imaginary power, conferred by the charter, he now proceeded to carry out his plans against the North West more fully. He dispatched his agents to different parts of the Highlands of Scotland, to procure settlers for his intended Colony at Red River. He had no difficulty in procuring as many as he wanted, for the Celt of our day, whether from the sterile mountains of Scotland or from the fertile valleys of Ireland, cheerfully embraces the first opportunity that presents itself to quit a land that is associated in his mind with hunger and rags, and oppression, and seek a home elsewhere, and whether under the scorching sun of the tropics, or in the gelid regions of the North, it matters not. He can scarcely fail to improve his condition. Well, these Highland "adventurers into Hudson's Bay" were forwarded to Gravesend, and there placed on board the Company's ships, for their destination. After a rough and very tedious passage, they finally landed at York Factory, the Company's Depot in Hudson's Bay, where, to their dismay, they found scarcely any provision had been made for their reception, and the surrounding country already presenting the appearance of winter while they were still at least 500 miles from their final destination. The prospect, indeed, was most cheerless and disheartening, but no time could be spared for vain regret. Dire necessity demanded immediate action. Enfeebled by sickness, as many of them were, in consequence of being so long confined on board ship, and but very indifferently supplied with clothing to suit the rigorous climate, they were huddled on board of boats, men, women and children, and despatched on their dreary journey. The sufferings the unhappy creatures endured beggar description. Suffice it to say that, after indescribable toil and misery, they forced their way through frost and snow to the Company's trading posts along the route, a few having dropt by the way. A very small number, only, made good their passage to Red River. On the opening of the navigation, the following Spring, means were adopted to forward them to their destination. They arrived too late, however, to think of sowing or planting that season. Nevertheless an abundant supply of provisions, fish, flesh and fowl was in store. They fared sumptuously, in fact, and were delighted with the appearance of

their future homes. And well they might for a more charming country is no where to be seen than Red River in Spring and Summer. The appearance of the country far exceeded the most flattering hopes they entertained of it, and the most pleasing anticipations were indulged in as to the future. These hopes were destined to be speedily dissipated. Lord Selkirk's plans were skillfully laid. While his military Colony (it was nothing else) at the Red River was founded with the intention of molesting the North West Company as much as possible in the North, his arrangements in the South were of a far more formidable character. At the conclusion of the war with the United States, a Regiment of Mercenaries, principally Swiss, was disbanded in Montreal. His Lordship enlisted about a hundred of them to serve in his intended operations in the Indian Territory. A portion of these men was embarked in large canoes at Lachine, ostensibly for the purpose of engaging in the peaceful pursuits of trade in the Interior, but really with the intention of making war on the North West Company.

Feb. 4th.

Lord Selkirk's plans to effect the ruin of his former hosts did not escape their notice. They saw through his designs, and calmly prepared to meet the impending storm. The Nor'-west adventurers were the pioneers in the Indian Territory, and it was through their instrumentality the remotest, and by far the richest portions of it were explored, and laid open to commercial enterprise. They visited distant Tribes, at great risk to their lives, and at great expense, and just as they were beginning to reap the advantages, their enterprising spirit had gained for them, we may imagine the feeling of indignation with which they viewed the arrangements that were being made to deprive them of the fruit of their labor.

As already observed, Lord Selkirk having despatched a portion of his people in canoes, by the Ottawa route, embarked with the remainder himself on boats, intending to proceed by the River St. Lawrence, and the Lakes to Fort William, the Northwest Company's Depot at the head of Lake Superior. To this point, the Company forwarded all the supplies, required for their trading operations, in the far interior. Here the Directors from Montreal, met the managing partners, from the Interior, and after due deliberation in Council, made such arrangements as were deemed advisable for carrying on the trade. As an instance of the unequalled energy and enterprise which characterized the management of these men, I may mention here, that goods, shipped on their canoes at Montreal, in Spring, reached New Caledonia, on the Western slope of the Rocky Mountains, the same season, a dis-

tance of at least 3000 miles! While the Nor'-westers were thus engaged in their peaceful avocations, they were startled, one fine morning, by the astounding intelligence that an armed force was approaching the Fort. Orders were given to close the gates, but the "Philistines were upon them" ere they had time to move. Lord Selkirk had taken advantage of a dark night, and effected a landing unperceived. The place was taken at a rush. In a few minutes his Lordship found himself in possession of the Depot, with all the valuable property it contained, the furs that had just arrived from the Interior being still on hand,—and the Directors and partners prisoners of war in his hands! Lord Selkirk achieved a very easy conquest. It will be admitted, however, that the laurels he gathered, on the occasion, scarcely entitle him to a niche in the Temple of Fame, unless, indeed, it be the fame of the lawless freebooter, who sets public opinion at defiance, and laughs at the restraints imposed upon him by the laws of God and man. While our noble adventurer was congratulating himself on the success that had hitherto attended the acts of Aggression and Spoilation, of which he was guilty, legal proceedings were being instituted against him in the Courts, and golden harvest was ripening for the lawyers, who were retained by both sides to maintain the wordy contest. The Nor'-westers being liberated on bond, and an Inventory of the property taken, and delivered to the conquerors, under protest, his Lordship set about providing comfortable quarters for himself, in which to enjoy the fruit of his conquest. Having settled this important matter to his satisfaction, he despatched an expedition to the Interior, for the purpose of capturing all the N. W. Company's trading posts along the route to Red River. Arrived there, his Lordship calculated, on apparently sure data, that the Mercenaries and the Colonists united, would be able to drive the N. Westers to—nobody could tell where.—One post after another fell into the hands of the Marauders, without the slightest resistance. Having at length advanced to within a short distance of Red River, they were locking forward, exultingly, to the crowning triumph of all their schemes. We shall leave them to indulge in these reveries, for the present, and turn our attention to the state of affairs at the Colony.

The Colonists had passed the Winter in comfort. Buffalo abounded in the vicinity. An abundant stock of provisions had thus been secured, so that, even if the crops had failed, no serious inconvenience would have been felt. The condition of things, in fact, was as satisfactory as could possibly be expected, and the people were congratulating themselves on

the realization of their brightest hopes, little expecting that a storm was ready to burst over them, which was destined to scatter those hopes to the wind.

The North West Company's Depot was only a few miles distant from the Fort which Lord Selkirk's people occupied. As may well be supposed, the intercourse between them was not of the most friendly character. No blood had as yet, been shed, however, and although both parties carried on the trade with arms in their hands, there was evidently a desire to avoid the responsibility of striking the first blow on both sides. While matters were in this state of suspense, an event occurred which brought on a crisis. All the provisions required for carrying on the trade were collected by the Nor'-westers, at their Depot, and thence sent overland to a post on Lake Winnipeg, and there distributed to the different "brigades of canoes" as they passed on their way to the Interior. Preparations were made for carrying out this arrangement, as usual, when a report reached the ears of the North West Company's officers, that, the Hudson's Bay people intended to attack the party conveying the provisions, and seize them for their own use. After all that had already happened, the Nor'-westers had no difficulty in believing this report, and as the loss of the provisions would have entailed the most disastrous consequences, measures were adopted to protect them at all hazards. Accordingly a body of men well armed, was detailed as an escort to the stores. The officers in command were ordered to proceed on their way peaceably, but, in the event of their being attacked, to defend the property they had in charge to the last drop of their blood. They had not proceeded far on their journey, when they perceived the Hudson's Bay men advancing towards them with Governor Semple at their head and taking up a position "in line of battle" across their path.

February 11th.

The hostile attitude assumed by the *ipse dixit* Governor left no room to doubt as to what his intentions were. Still bent on acting under the ægis of the law, the Nor'-westers dispatched a flag of truce, to demand of his *Excellency* by what authority he barred their way, or whether he desired Peace or War. The bombastic utterance which fell from the infatuated man, and the haughty dictatorial manner in which he spoke of *terms*, convinced the Nor'-west officer that the question at issue could only be decided by an appeal to arms, and so took leave. He had scarcely reached half the distance between the lines, when the report of a musket was heard. Whether the shot was fired by the Hudson's Bay or Nor'-west people, is a subject of doubt that

has never been satisfactorily cleared. Be that as it may, the shot *was* fired, and immediately after, the Nor'-westers, who on forming line dismounted and placing their horses in front opened fire with the most deadly effect—for they took deliberate aim over the backs of their horses so that not a shot missed its mark. All the Hudson's Bay officers fell, either killed or wounded, and their men, after firing a few random shots, threw down their arms and fled for their Fort, hotly pursued by the Nor'-westers, both parties, the victors and the vanquished, entering pell-mell together. No one could be surprised, considering the oft repeated provocations they had received, if the victors, while their "blood was up," had gratified their revenge on their enemies, now completely in their power. To their lasting credit be it said, nothing of the kind was attempted. It must be admitted, however, that no particular distinction was made between property marked H. B. [Hudson's Bay] and P. P.—private property—but then due allowance must be made for their ignorance, for few of them—with the exception of the officers—could read. It is easier to imagine, than to describe the scene that presented itself within the Hudson's Fort, when it fell into the hands of the Nor'-westers. In a few short minutes, every woman had become a widow, every child an orphan,—all that passed on the battle field was clearly seen from the bastions, it may well be imagined, the impression which that fearful scene made on the minds of the wretched spectators. But when the contest was over, and they beheld the victorious half breeds rushing upon them, death would have been far more acceptable than the fate they apprehended. Their fears proved groundless, however. Far from offering them the slightest injury, these dusky warriors, semi-barbarians as they were, sympathised so deeply with the distress they witnessed, that many of them were moved to tears. Everything was done, in fact, which circumstances permitted, or the dictates of humanity suggested, to ameliorate the condition of the wretched sufferers. Some were provided with a passage to Canada, on the Nor'-west Company's canoes, some returning to their Native Country on board the Hudson's Bay Company's ships; and a few remained in the Colony. Those of the men who survived were allowed to dispose of themselves, in any way they saw fit. The greater number having made some progress in farming, chose to remain. A few only left for the United States and for Canada. Never was a victory more complete. Never did victors use their triumph more generously than the Nor'-Westers exhibited on this occasion.

Reverting to the battle field, for a moment, I may mention, that Governor

Simple was but slightly wounded, and the leader of the Nor'-westers, happening to pass where he lay, he (the leader) took him under his charge, and promised him his protection. His attention being diverted for an instant, to something else, an Indian warrior rushed up to the wounded man, and shot him dead. The leader, Mr. Grant, turned round, and, on seeing what had happened, remonstrated with the Indian on the cowardly deed he had committed. "Why!" he exclaimed, "the bad dog, all the blood that has been shed to-day, was through him. It served him right!" Immediately after the battle—if the miserable encounter can be dignified with the name of battle—when all the fighting was on one side—the Hudson's Bay people sent word to the party advancing from Fort William to apprise them of the disaster that had befallen their master's cause, and they hastened to bring him the unwelcome tidings. That first shot, to which I have referred, sounded the death knell of Lord Selkirk's grand projects. The Empire, he had dreamt of founding in Central America, vanished like the evanescent form of a "Castle in the Air," and finding the laws he had so long trampled under foot with impunity, beginning to hem him in on all sides, and a hasty retreat or a gloomy prison the only alternative remaining for him, he chose the former, and fled to the States in disguise, whence he made the best of his way to England, where his mad career was terminated, soon after, by death. Leaving his Lordship to repose quietly in his grave, let us cast a glance at the state of things which his visit to Canada produced. Lord Selkirk spoke the French language fluently. His high rank, his courtly manners, and his polished address soon won the hearts of those with whom he associated. The French Canadians espoused his cause with enthusiasm. What though the Nor'-West Company expended upwards of a million dollars, in the City of Montreal annually! What though many of the partners, some of the officers and all the lands were French. These considerations weighed but lightly in the scales compared with the polite attentions of a *live* "Milor" who danced with the ladies, and chatted French over his wine with the gentlemen. So complete was the ascendancy which Lord Selkirk had acquired, over the minds of the French by his *finesse*, during his sojourn amongst them, that when the Nor'-west Company brought their cause against him in their courts, in Montreal, they found the current of popular prejudice running so strongly against them, that they were compelled to change the "Veneue" to Quebec. Here again they were met by the same adverse influences. They finally changed to Toronto, known at that time by the humble and not very epho-

nious appellation of "dirty little York"—where they obtained the justice which was denied them elsewhere, and recovered damages against their rival to the amount of £300,000,

Feb. 25th.

Although Lord Selkirk was "gathered to his fathers," the spirit he had evoked did not die with him. On the contrary, it seemed to have acquired additional strength. His Lordship had so thoroughly ingratiated himself with his Franco-Canadian friends, that even after his death, they adhered to his cause with unabated constancy. From Gaspe to Windsor, "the Nor'-West question" became the leading topic of the day. In Upper Canada, the subject was discussed in a tone of moderation, utterly unknown in the Lower Province. Here the question presented a most anomalous aspect. The French sustained the English company, with all their might against their own, while the English fought for the Canadian. A more glaring picture of the perversity of human nature was never witnessed, than the part which the French acted on the occasion. While the quarrel was confined to words in Canada, a petty cut-throat warfare prevailed in the Indian Territory, which threatened to involve the parties engaged in it in utter ruin. Although no battles had taken place after the Red River affair, duels between the officers, and pugilistic encounters between the men were of daily occurrence. The Hudson's Bay people, having set the law at defiance from the outset, the Nor'-westers were compelled in self defence, to pursue the same course or quit the field. The fearful losses they had sustained, in maintaining the long continued contest, reduced their splendid profits of the more prosperous days of the trade to a cypher. Finally, the balance sheet exhibited an amount on the debit side that proved truly alarming. Murmurs first expressed in whispers by the wintering partners, finally found utterance, in tones sufficiently loud to be heard by the Board of Directors in Montreal, who were charged—very wrongfully—with wasteful extravagance in their management of affairs. The fact is, the contest demanded an enormous expenditure, which admitted of no curtailment under the circumstances, and the Directors suffered fully as much in proportion to their interest in the concern, as those who found fault with them. However that may have been, the Directors had made preparations, on a more extensive scale than ever, to 'carry the war into Africa,' and, by one desperate effort more, crush their rivals, or perish in the attempt. Thus the matter stood between the parties, in the winter of 1820 and 21, when, to the astonishment of every one, it was announced that a coalition had been form-

ed between the rival companies in London! This very unexpected event was brought about by the wintering partners, who, seeing the contest continue with such ruinous consequences, and no prospect for improvement in the future, determined on opening a communication with the committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, independently of their own Board—not a very honorable transaction, certainly—but which, nevertheless, led to the most happy results.

All parties were heartily tired of the struggle, so that an understanding was soon arrived at. The terms, on which the rival companies joined interests, were, upon the whole, as liberal as could be expected. The Nor'-west company allowed their own honored name to be merged in that of their former rival. Canada lost one of her most valuable staples by this arrangement, and Montreal ceased to be the Emporium of the fur trade forever! Thousands of people were thrown out of employment by the coalition, most of whom removed to the United States, where tens of thousands have gone since, to strengthen the hands of those who, at any moment, may become our bitterest enemies, and whom we have never had any cause to reckon among our warmest friends. In return for the marked partizanship of the French Canadians, the Hudson's Bay Company adopted a policy demonstrative of their gratitude! The goods required for the trade were shipped direct from England to York Factory, officers and men were engaged in Britain, and in the course of a few years, so rigidly and successfully was the policy of *non-intercourse* with Canada carried out, that the Nor'-west Territory became almost as much of a *Terra incognita* to the people of Canada as the interior of Africa! Having disposed of the Nor'-west company, let us again direct our attention to our self-exiled countrymen at Red River, who, since the unhappy encounter with the Nor'-westers, were allowed to pursue their peaceful occupation of "tilling the ground," without let or hindrance from any quarter. For some years, every thing went on prosperously, the unequalled richness of the soil enabling them, with little labor, to supply themselves abundantly with all the necessaries of life. Horned cattle were introduced from the States, pigs, poultry and sheep soon followed, and the poor Highlanders were beginning to enjoy comforts to which they had been total strangers in their native land, when lo, the dread scourge of grasshoppers visited the settlement, and, in a few days, the luxuriant crops disappeared! So plentiful had been the harvest of former years, however, that this visitation, grievous as it undoubtedly was, led to no very serious inconvenience. A year or two afterwards, the River overflowed its banks and flood-

ed the whole settlement. A good many cattle were lost on the occasion, and the operation of sowing was retarded thereby to a later period than usual, nevertheless, the crops turned out well, and no one suffered from want. It would be as tedious, as uninteresting, to narrate the alternations of prosperity and adversity which characterised the history of that isolated colony, from its early settlement until now. Suffice to say that, during a period of nearly seventy years, the grasshoppers have made their appearance three or four times, and the floods have occurred about as often.

Those were serious evils, undoubtedly, yet the European settlers were strangers to want. The cry of distress we hear from that quarter does not emanate from them. It comes from those who only think of providing for the present, allowing the future to take care of itself. Still they are our fellow men, and humanity, to say nothing of our duty as christians, demands of us that we extend a helping hand to them in this their hour of distress.

March 4th

In proportion to numbers, the population of Red River represents a greater variety of nationalities, I should think, than any other Colony subject to the British Crown. Here we find English, Irish, Scotch, Swiss, French, Americans Half-breeds or *Metifes*, as they are generally called in that Country, and Indians of different Tribes. Then, as to languages. The catastrophe at Babel did not produce a greater "confusion of tongues," than one hears in this mongrel community. Cree or I should say a *lingua franca*, in which that language predominated, was for a time the medium of communication between the different races. The Highlanders had acquired this jargon, and might be heard conversing with their neighbours in Gaelic, or Cree, while unable to utter a single word in English! The French costume of the olden times was introduced by the Canadian "voyageurs"—a term applied to the Nor'-west Company's servants—and has been adopted by all others, as the best suited to the climate, and to the circumstances of the people. It consists of a coat, which reaches to the knees, and overlaps in front, and is secured by a worsted belt, generally of varied colors, wound round the loins. It is an exceedingly comfortable article of dress, especially for winter wear. Moccasins are in general use, both in summer and winter. The hat or cap worn by the *Metifs* is adorned with feathers and tinsel cords. The European settlers do not follow this fashion, however. The *ladies* had their national costume, as well as the *gentlemen*, in days by gone, but it has been laid aside long since. At the present time, there seems to be as eager a desire to figure in the latest fash-

ions as anywhere else. Whatever changes our circumstances undergo, or wherever we establish our home, human nature still continues the same, unchanged and unchangeable.* One is astonished to notice the respectable appearance which the different congregations present on the Sabbath, or when they meet at their social gatherings. On these occasions both men and women appear as neatly and comfortably attired, as people of the same class in any part of the civilised world—a sure sign of the comfortable circumstances in which they are placed, notwithstanding the evils with which they are visited, from time to time, in the shape of floods and grasshoppers. The Colony is well supplied with schools, and education is encouraged by high and low. Besides common schools, there is a Seminary, well provided with male and female teachers, who are qualified to discharge the duties of their responsible office, in an efficient manner. This excellent Institution has been in existence for a length of time, and I need scarcely remark how great a boon it has proved to the settlement. All who can afford it, send their children to the Seminary, to finish their education.

A stranger, visiting this “Tadmor in the Desert,” is no less gratified than surprised, to find young ladies and gentlemen, who had never gone beyond the limits of the Colony, not only well posted in the higher branches of literature, but also shewing no mean proficiency in the more refined accomplishments of polished life in other Lands.

Religious instruction is also well provided for, through the voluntary contributions of the people, and the different denominations mingle together on terms of true christian fellowship and perfect equality. The Church of Rome was the first to occupy the field, and never was more worthily represented in any part of the world. From the highest dignity, to the lower individual connected with her ministrations, all have proved themselves worthy of their high calling. Whatever we may think of their faith, their exemplary conduct is beyond all praise. The Church of England followed the Church of Rome, and exerts a very salutary influence in the Colony. The Bishop of Rupert Land proves himself to be a worthy “successor of the Apostles,” not indeed through the apocryphal lineage, which some of his brethren claim, but through his truly christian character, and the sound apostolic doctrine he teaches. The Presbyterians have been the last to enter the field. Although a minister of that faith has been there only a few years, a congregation has been gathered, which is said to be in a very flour-

ishing condition. As regards the characteristics of the different races, the descendants of the Highland adventurers, in all that relates to industry, sobriety and thrift, are far ahead of their hybrid neighbors. Our friend “Tonal” is by no means a paragon of sobriety, however. He rather likes a wee drap on an occasion, but never gets “roarin’ fou.” The “gajer” has not yet found his way into Red River. All are free to brew “a peck o’maut,” without any interference by the “powers that be,” a privilege which, I fear, is far from having a beneficial effect on the morals of the people.

In the French Metifs, we easily recognise the characteristic of the different races from whom they are sprung. In their treatment of their captives at Red River the gallantry and generosity of their French progenitors were nobly exemplified, while their want of forethought and their unconquerable aversion to manual labor, betray their Indian affinity. The wretched patches of ground they cultivate, produce even in favorable seasons, but a very scanty supply of food; when the crops fail, however, and the buffalo hunt proves unsuccessful, they are reduced to the most dreadful extremity. The Indians look upon the Metifs as interlopers who rob them of their natural rights, and never miss an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance upon them. This opportunity seldom occurs, for the Metifs are as cautious in guarding against danger as they are brave in facing it when necessary. The ill feeling engendered by the arbitrary conduct of Lord Selkirk’s officers, manifested itself for some years afterwards in the treatment which the poor Highlanders experienced at the hands of their dusky neighbors. Of late years that feeling has completely vanished. The Highlanders returned good for evil. When their neighbors suffered from want they were ever ready to assist them, and thus overcame their enmity on true christian principles.

March, 18th.

Our friends at Red River hold their lands under the charter of the Hudson’s Bay Company, the sovereign Lords of Central America. The validity of these grants may possibly never be called in question, and, if they should, there may be trouble in store for the present occupants. The farms have only a frontage of six chains, and extend a mile back from the river. The dwelling houses of the inhabitants, being only divided by those narrow strips of land, the settlement presents the appearance of a continuous village, which extends some 70 or 80 miles, on both sides of the river. The alluvial soil is of the very richest description, yielding from forty to sixty bushels of wheat to the acre, for several years in succession. This extraordinary

*Non animus sed cœlum mutant qui trans mare currunt.

fruitfulness might reasonably be doubted, if the fact were not attested by eye witnesses whose veracity is beyond suspicion. A certain clerical writer has favored the public, lately, with a description of the valley of Red River, which it is impossible to reconcile with established facts. Scientific men from Europe and America, have visited the country, within the last few years, and they all agree as to the fertility of the land, and as to the unbounded resources of the Territory at large. If our rev. traveller found "peat bogs or ridges of rock" at Red River, it is very certain that nothing of the kind could be found there twenty-five years ago. But wonders never cease. They may have "grewed" since then. It cannot be denied, however, that the floods and the grasshoppers prove serious drawbacks, and it is time to direct public attention to other parts of the Territory, where those evils have never existed. The valley of Red River forms so insignificant a portion of Central North America, that, if it were swallowed up by an earthquake, it would scarcely be missed from the vast Territory. The population only numbers about 10,000 souls. It is generally admitted that the whole territory is capable of sustaining a population of from thirty to forty millions. Why, then, give so much prominence to Red River when we have the whole Land before us? There is the valley of the Saskatchewan, for instance, some fifteen hundred or two thousand miles in length, with its inexhaustible beds of coal, its unlimited agricultural resources, its deposits of gold, and possessing a climate unsurpassed in salubrity. In addition to these advantages, this magnificent Territory has hitherto been exempt from the grasshopper scourge, and never flooded. We have a goodly heritage, unquestionably, but have not the manliness to secure it. There is the fact. We allow that bug-bear, the Hudson's Bay Company, to bar our way with their bit of parchment, which only requires to be kicked aside to show how ineffectual a barrier it is, when properly dealt with. We are frightened by a phantom, which is only formidable when viewed from a distance. Grapple with it, and you find you are fighting with a myth, which, the moment you lay hands upon it, vanishes into thin air. The colonists have proved this to be the case. Some years ago they were fined and imprisoned, for engaging in trade with the Indians. They submitted to this treatment for a time. The monopolists becoming still more tyrannical, however, the people rose in their might, and snapped their bonds asunder. Ever since then, their freedom of action has not been interfered with. Let us look again at the settlement recently formed at Portage des Prairies. Here the company's fictitious *privileges* are absolute-

ly ignored, although the settlement is within the limits claimed under the charter—claimed without a shadow of law or equity to sustain them.—The people appoint their own magistrates, make their own laws, and manage their own affairs, both private and public, without the Company daring to interfere. The position which the company occupies at present, at Red River, and the ridiculous pretensions they set up, remind one of John Bunyan's giant, who, when enfeebled by old age and infirmities, stood in the door of his cave, brandishing his bludgeon at the "passers by," and threatening them with his vengeance, unless they came to be *devoured*, without his having the trouble to go for them. We, in Canada, act towards the monopolist giant, now also overtaken by the decrepitude of old age, as if he were still possessed of the strength and vigor of his youth. He has only to brandish his charter at us, and we stand aghast at the sight—not, indeed, through fear of the parchment, but through fear of offending England, by dealing with her pampered protegee as he ought to be dealt with. What stronger proof of our loyalty could possibly be given, than is afforded by the fact, that we have submitted so long to the vacillating policy of the Mother Country, on a question of such vital importance to our future welfare, without a word of remonstrance? It cannot be denied, however, that a feeling of bitter disappointment exists on this question, which is not confined to one party more than another. We may have our *tiffs* at election time, and in the excitement of the moment, employ language too strong to be courteous, perhaps, still there is not a man amongst us who would think, for a moment, of sacrificing his country's weal on the shrine of party politics. We have politicians who are base enough—I blush to confess it—to sell themselves and their party, but not their country. At least it is to be hoped not. What say you, Mr. Editor!

The colonial policy of England is now the very opposite to what it was fifty years ago. She seems, in fact, to have got a surfeit of Colonies, and rather disposed to contract than to extend her Colonial Empire. This appears to be the case, at least, on this side of the Atlantic. We see with what indifference the splendid Territory of Oregon and our North-eastern frontier were sacrificed, and unless we are up and doing, the same indifference may deprive us of Central America.

Well do our American Cousins understand the value of that great country which England prizes so lightly. Their own Prairie lands in the West are rapidly filling up. At the rate immigration pours in upon them from Europe, in another quarter of a century, the human tide must, inevitably, take au-

other direction, unless Jonathan finds some means—fair or unfair, he cares not which—to enlarge his borders. The Nor'-west Territory would meet his views exactly, and possibly a war with England would not be considered too high a price for it.

March 25.

According to the latest accounts from England, our Delegation to the *Court* of the Sovereign Lords, at Fenchurch Street, has proved as unsuccessful as all other missions of the same character have done. Our venerable Mother seems bent on subjecting our filial regard for her to a rather severe test in the matter. To-day the Conservatives are in power. To-morrow the Liberals. As far as the settlement of the Nor'-west question is concerned, it matters not, apparently, what party is in or out of power. Under some pretence or other, we are still put off "to a more convenient season," and the interests of a Nation are sacrificed to the insatiate greed of the "pampered proteges," some of whom are aliens by birth and possibly aliens at heart also, and a Territory, sufficiently extensive to form an empire, is assigned to the grasp of the "alien and the stranger" as a hunting preserve from which civilization is to be forever excluded—that is to say, if they have the power to exclude it, which they certainly have not. Civilization is on the march towards that region now, and the efforts of the monopolists, even if backed by the Power that patronises them, cannot retard its progress. The remarks which fell from the New President of the United States a few days ago, are not without a meaning. Money cannot compensate for the injury inflicted on the United States by the ravages of the Alabama. If not money, what else? One little word answers the question—*Territory*—and we all know where the Territory is to be found that Jonathan has his eye upon. Let him obtain possession of it, and thousands immediately rush in, and, in the course of a few years the hunting preserve is converted into several powerful States. What follows? Just this. That as sure as the waters of the Great St. Lawrence flow into the Ocean, shall the annexation of these Provinces become an accomplished fact! No Power on earth could prevent it. The possession of the Nor'-west Territory, by the Americans, would necessitate the possession of the outlet to the ocean which nature has provided for it, and possession they would have, at whatever cost. Granted that Jonathan is not in a position, just yet, to measure swords with England, he feels that he loses nothing by delay. He sees plainly the game is being played so much to his advantage, that there is no occasion for precipitating events. As time wears on, his chances

of ultimate success increase. It is lamentable to observe the apathy that exists, even in Canada, in reference to this question. We cannot conceal from ourselves that if the Nor'-west Territory is lost to us, either through the supineness or the imbecility of British statesmen, or through our own criminal indifference, our autonomy on this continent is at an end. Confined to our extremely narrow limits, we can never become the powerful Nation which we need to be to cope with our neighbors, nor maintain our position as a Sovereign independent People.

The Monopolists have discovered it seems, that the charter, although stamped with the signature of the royal black-guard who granted it, has lost its terrors as a scarecrow, and, to prevent the movement now in progress, have fallen upon another device. The scalping knife and the tomahawk are to be invoked, to frighten old women who might be disposed to encroach on the sacred domain. The youth of Canada are not old women, however, and are not to be turned aside from their purpose by silly threats—the last resort of a desperate cause. We know that the monopolists dare not put their threats in execution, even if they had the power to do so, *which they have not*. The petty traders from Red River roam all over the Territory, never more than two or three together, yet so far are the natives from annoying them, that they receive them with open arms. But admitting the danger were all the monopolists represent it to be, can it be possible that our youth are to be deterred, by the idea of danger, from an enterprise which promises so rich a reward? It would be an insult to their manhood to dream of such a thing. When the sons of "old Gaul" first landed on these shores, they were confronted by Tribes who were then at the height of their power. The confederation of the Six Nations had just completed the subjugation of all the Tribes of the northern portions of this Continent, and presented an unbroken front of dauntless warriors to the invaders of their country. Many bloody encounters followed, but the gallant Frenchmen persevered amid dangers and difficulties of the most appalling character, and they succeeded. So it was with the British Colonists. They, too, had to fight their way against the hordes of warlike savages with whom they came in contact, and we have, as the result of their courage and perseverance, one of the most powerful Nations, on earth, occupying the place of these Tribes. In fact, both the English and French Colonists had the very flower of the aboriginal chivalry, so to speak, to contend with, whereas in the Nor'-west Territory, we find the mere remnants of Tribes who were at one time undoubtedly as powerful and warlike as their congeners elsewhere, but are now a

down-trodden, broken-spirited people. They have common sense enough to understand their utter helplessness to contend with Europeans, and that, if they attempted to interfere with the advance of civilization, the movement would roll over them and crush them. Let us treat the natives as our fellow men, and not as brutes, and we have nothing to fear from their "vengeance."

April 1st.

The Peninsula of Labrador forms the north-eastern extremity of Canada, and is of little value save for the fisheries along its shores, and is a dreary desolate region, destined by nature to be the perpetual home of savage men or savage beasts. Ridges of Barren rocks, or bogs and swamps constitute its main features. Clumps of trees, of very stunted growth, are scattered over the face of the country, and relieves the eye from the dull monotony that prevails around. These clumps consist of larch, principally, interspersed with birch and poplar. The Labrador tea flourishes luxuriantly in its native soil. A hardy species of Willow vegetates, nobody can tell how, amid the debris of rocks which cover the hills, and a variety of berries are produced in the low grounds. The disciples of Linnæus might possibly find *treasures* in natural history here, but to those who study the matter-of-fact aspect of things, the vegetable kingdom—whatever may be said of its geological features—as it appears in the interior of Labrador, possesses very little interest indeed. During a short period in summer, the whole of this dismal scene is changed into one of the most perfect loveliness. While the willows are in bloom, the hills appear clothed in the deepest verdure. The low grounds are covered with flowers of variegated hues, and the beautiful scene is diversified by innumerable small lakes, clear as crystal, that are seen in every direction. Towards the latter end of August all this is changed, as if by the magician's wand. By this time, the willows have shed their foliage, the flowers have disappeared, and the hills resume their former cheerless aspect. In the course of a few days the change takes place, and you hasten to quit the *enchanted spot*, with the impression on your mind that Dame Nature has been playing you here one of the most delusive tricks she ever contrived. The lakes teem with trout. How they came there, is a question which, I must admit, is beyond my ability to solve, for many of the lakes are completely isolated, and have no apparent communication with each other.

Game of every description is scarce, except reindeer, whose movements are so erratic that it is impossible to determine in what particular spot they are to be found at any time. Near the height

of land, there is quite a large body of water, which discharges itself into Esquimaux Bay, by Hamilton River. About seventy miles inland, one of the most extraordinary falls exists that is to be met with, perhaps, in any part of the world. Only a small portion of the fall is visible, being concealed from view by a sharp angle of the bank of the river, but, if not seen, it is felt. The sound is perfectly deafening, and an idea may be formed of the astounding force with which it plunges into the dark caverns underneath, when I state that a tremulous motion is sensibly felt, in the immediate vicinity of the fall, although the banks of the river are formed of granitic rock and rise to the height of from two to three hundred feet! Confined within these stupendous walls, the river rushes along in a foaming, raging torrent, the distance of from twenty to thirty miles. What time it might take to excavate the solid rock to that depth, and for that distance, by the action of the rushing waters, I shall leave to the philosophers to determine. A dense cloud of vapour hangs over the fall, that can be seen at a great distance in clear weather. The natives, who roam about in this desolate waste, are designated Nasopies. They are a branch of the Cree nation, and a vile degenerate branch they are. As to their vileness, when I state that they have not a word in their language to express the sensation of shame, need more be said? The word and the feeling are alike unknown! A custom obtains among these inhuman wretches which will be scarcely credited, but is a fact, nevertheless. When their aged parents are incapacitated, by old age, to provide for themselves, they are disposed of by strangulation, a son, or some near relation, acting the part of the executioner! As a sort of extenuation of the horrid deed they say it is only done at the request of the parent. What a gem of a biped man is, to be sure, when in this, his state of "primitive innocence and purity," and left to the unrestrained control of his own precious will! These *Animals* have scarcely any intercourse with Europeans, and retain the characteristics of their race, as they existed ere the pale faces set foot on their shores—yet how debased, how degraded, how brutal they are!

The whole coast of Labrador was formerly occupied by the Esquimaux. They have now withdrawn to the northern portion of the coast, leaving the southern portion to the possession of the renegade Europeans—most of them run-away English sailors—who have settled there. These outcasts took unto themselves helpmates, from amongst the native women, and their mongrel progeny have spread all along the coast. They are a harmless, inoffensive race, possessed of

none of the daring of the gallant Metifs of the Nor-west, but far more sober and industrious, and noted for their ingenuity. The men make their own boats, prepare their own fishing tackle, and build their own houses, and, strange to say, most of them can read and write. Both males and females seem to have an aptitude to acquire the customs of civilized life. The women prepare all the clothing required for the family, and are as expert with the awl as they are with the needle—in other words as good tailors as shoemakers. They are employed, during the summer season, catching salmon, which they dispose of for such necessaries as they require, and in autumn resort to the sea, to provide a stock of codfish for their own use.

April 8th.

The Labradorians prosecute the cod-fishery until late in autumn, and, on their return, proceed to the interior, where they pass the winter, trapping fur animals. The people, although little removed from a state of semi-barbarism, are kind and hospitable to a degree, cheerfully sharing their last morsel with those of their neighbors who may be in want, and exhibiting in this, as in many other respects, traits of character that would do credit to a more advanced state of civilization. When the cod-fishery fails, which sometimes happens, they are reduced to the most painful straits. In spots well sheltered from the northern blasts, potatoes and other vegetables are cultivated, with some success, in favorable seasons, but the crop is extremely precarious.

The Esquimaux who inhabit the northern shore have—through the indefatigable zeal of the Moravian Brethren—been converted to christianity. In proportion to the means at their disposal, and their numbers, the labors of the Brethren, in the missionary field, compare favourably with those of any denomination in Christendom. The difficulties which they had to encounter in this inhospitable region, in regard to “creature comforts,” and the stubborn resistance offered by the natives to every effort they made to instruct them, induced them finally, to relinquish the moral waste as hopeless, and all except one individual withdrew. For a period of seventeen years, this devoted christian *hero* lived among these savages, clothed as they were, lodged as they were, and living as they lived. At the end of this time, he had only succeeded in making one solitary convert! Without entering into details as to the success of subsequent labors, suffice it to say that, at this present moment, the Brethren have four different stations along the coast, around which the natives have assembled in villages, submitting to the gentle sway of their pastors in all

that relates to their temporal or spiritual interests. Within Hudson's straits, some seventy or eighty miles to the north of Cape Chudleigh, there is a narrow belt of Territory, to which the Moravians have given the name of Ungava, where the Huc's n's Bay Company had a trading establishment for some time. It is one of the most dreary, gloomy, inhospitable spots under the sun—in fact, no part of the Arctic regions could be more unfit for the abode of civilized man. The severity of the cold almost exceeds credibility. The thermometer often descends to 30° and 40° below zero, and has been known to range from 48° to 53°, for a whole week together, blowing furiously all the time. It is characteristic of the Arctic regions, that the severe cold is invariably accompanied by high winds, whereas in the interior it is always calm.

From Ungava the unhappy, to Behrings Straits, the coast is peopled solely by Esquimaux, who are distinct from all other native races as they are from Europeans—a peculiar type of the *genus homo* but approximating more to the European than to the Indian. Their views of religion are as peculiar as themselves. Their Paradise is beneath the great deep, where whales and seals abound, and are so easily caught that scarcely any exertion is required to secure them. Thus the happy spirit fares sumptuously without toil or labour on raw flesh and blubber throughout all Esquimaux Eternity. The wicked, on the contrary, are condemned to a “sea of trouble,” where none of the delicacies enjoyed by the blessed can be procured. The unhappy spirit is tantalised with the sight of whales, all around him, which allow it to approach, *almost*, to within striking distance, then disappear in an instant and, sad to relate, the naughty seals are not a bit more accommodating than their big brothers, the whales. Too bad! The doomed Esquimaux spirits have a hard time of it, truly, but then it might be harder. When an Esquimaux dies, all the property belonging to him while in the flesh is placed by the side of his grave—his kaik or skin canoe, his bows, arrows, harpoons and spears—so that he finds himself, on his arrival in the spirit world, independent of his neighbors. Doubtless his spirit friends think none the less of him for being independent of them. The Esquimaux pass their long, long winters close to the element which yields them their living—the sea—and to secure that object take up their abodes on the most exposed parts of the coast, where seals are the most likely to be found. No people in the world suffer more from want, and to save their lives, they are frequently compelled to have recourse to the most revolting expedients. The huts or ‘igloes,’ in which they *exist*, are formed of blocks of frozen snow, which present the appearances of large bee hives. The entrance

to the igloo is by a winding passage, which is closed up at night by a slab of ice. Another slab covers an aperture in the roof, which serves as a window. Two or three families congregate sometimes under the same roof, having separate *burrows* communicating with each other. An embankment of hard pressed snow around the edifice, well covered with skins, serves as a seat by day, and a bed by night. Within this snow built castle, our Esquimau is perfectly secure from the severest storm, and enjoys a degree of comfort even which the inmates of buildings of far higher pretensions might envy. The "domestic cookery" of the Esquimaux dispenses with the aid of fire or water. Nothing can be more simple. A steak, cut from the hind quarter of a deer with a piece of blubber by way of a condiment, is gobbled up without any further trouble. To be sure, they *warm* their food, in a stone kettle over a stone lamp, occasionally, just by way of a change but they relish a steak equally well when cut *warm* from an animal still quivering with life. Like other savages, the Esquimaux can bear hunger and gorge themselves afterwards, without appearing to suffer any inconvenience thereby.

April 15.

In their mode of capturing the white whale, or porpoise, the Esquimaux exhibit a good deal of ingenuity. A seal skin, inflated with wind, is attached to the harpoon, by a thong or string of leather about twenty feet in length. The moment the whale is struck, the seal skin is thrown overboard, which offers so great a resistance to its movements that it soon becomes exhausted. Our sportsman knows, from long experience, whereabouts his game is likely to rise to the surface, and, the moment it appears, approaches stealthily from behind, and plunges another harpoon into it. The whale is allowed to flounder about at will afterwards, and is finally despatched by a thrust of the spear. The sport is very exciting, even to a looker on. The canoe, or *kaiak*, employed on these occasions, is made of seal skin, and carries only one person. It is propelled by a double-bladed oar, which is held by the middle, and, by giving a stroke alternately on either side, the tiny craft glides over the water with the speed of the dolphin. Nothing escapes the Esquimau hunter, when thus equipped for his aquatic sports. To the south and west of the Nascopies, are groups of kindred Tribes, widely scattered over the sterile region that intervenes between the height of land which divides the waters flowing into the gulf, and into Hudson's Straits and Hudson's Bay. They are continually decreasing in numbers. At the rate they are *going*, they must disappear altogether, ere many years have past. The Santeux, or Ogibois Tribe, in-

habit the rugged country to the north of Lake Huron and Lake Superior, and their hunting grounds extend to Lake Winnipeg. Following the old Nor'-west route, from Fort William to Rainy Lake, the country still presents the same cheerless barren aspect, until we arrive at Rainy river, when a very great improvement takes place. The charming valley drained by this river has been so often described, by myself and others, that it would be a waste of time to expatiate on its beauties here. The late Sir George Simpson, when he wrote as a *patriot* and not as a *trader*, did the subject ample justice. The Ogibois Tribe have been in possession of this valley from time immemorial, and it is to be hoped the Government may respect their claims, when the time arrives for applying the land to a better purpose than retaining it as a *hunting reserve*. The Ogibois are far more industrious than their neighbors. When Canada was first taken possession of by the French, they found the Ogibois engaged, to some extent, in the cultivation of the land. They raised large quantities of Indian corn, or Maize, which they stored away carefully for future consumption. They were comfortably attired with deer skin habiliments, in the winter season, and in summer, well—the less said about their summer dress the better. I may just say, in a whisper, that it was pretty much the same as they had in Eden *after* the fig leaves were introduced. The forests abounded with game of every description, and the lakes with fish. No wonder if they do not look with a very favorable eye on the new order of things, that has deprived them of *material* advantages, for which the civilization offered to them, by the white intruder, compensates but very indifferently. Their religion, if not of a very refined or spiritual character, is far in advance of the gross superstitions of some other Tribes. The attributes which they ascribe to the Deity are of the most exalted kind. He is the Creator of all things—the Master of life. He is invisible himself, but he sees and knows all. His providence guides the footsteps of the starving hunter to the place where game is to be found. He rewards the good and punishes the evil. Their ideas of a future state are the same, in principle, as those of the Esquimaux. The spirit is rewarded with plenty or punished with want, according to its merit or demerit, when connected with the body. They believe in an evil spirit, who is continually engaged in thwarting the good the Master of Life does. Both the good and the evil spirit have subordinates, whom they employ to carry out their designs. They believe in the genii of lakes and mountains, and in the magical powers of their conjurers or Men of Medicine.

To the North of Lake Winnipeg, we find the same description of Territory as

to the North of Lakes Huron and Superior, and equally unfit for colonisation. The great river Saskatchewan discharges itself into Lake Winepeg. As we ascend the river, it expands frequently into lakes, and the country is well wooded, for two or three hundred miles inland. Then begins the glorious, boundless prairie, destined at no very distant day to become the home of millions of civilized men, although at present left to the occupancy of a few hordes of roving savages. The Crees have been advancing gradually from the north, for the last generation or two, and a portion of that Nation have established themselves in the lower parts of the valley, but they have no legitimate claim to the ownership of the soil, even on the grounds of Indian usage. The valley of the Saskatchewan has always been considered a "chemin de guerre," or war path, to which none of the Tribes have ever advanced any exclusive claim. The Scioux and Assiniboines follow the herds of buffalo, wherever they are to be found, and they are led by the chase to the banks of the Saskatchewan, occasionally, but they do not pretend to have the slightest claim to any portion of the Territory. The Scioux occupied the upper part of the valley of the Mississippi in former times, and their hunting grounds extended southward to the Missouri. A powerful, warlike tribe they were. The scourge and terror of their neighbors, but their evil genius prompted them to oppose their pigmy strength to the colossal power that encroached on their borders, and the unequal contest soon ended in their total ruin. The Scioux are the Arabs of Central North America, and are among the best horsemen known. Like their brother Arabs of another land, their hand is against every one, and everyone's hand is against them, but the American's are the special objects of their bitterest hatred. Although crushed and bleeding at every pore, and their numbers fearfully reduced, every attempt made by the Americans to conciliate them has hitherto proved ineffectual. The Assiniboines are not distinguished as warriors, their ambition lying in another direction.

April 22.

The Assiniboines are the most inveterate horse thieves the world ever saw. Stealing a horse is considered the most chivalrous exploit of which an Assiniboine brave can boast, and he incurs any degree of danger to obtain the distinction it confers—a crown of bears' claws, and the applause of his brother thieves. To show how very thinly the banks of the Saskatchewan are peopled, I may mention that the Company's boats frequently pass up and down from Fort Edmonton to Lake Winepeg, and *vice versa*, without meeting with or seeing a single soul

throughout the whole route, a distance of at least 1500 miles! the *enterprising* company have three trading stations on its banks, with a few acres of land under cultivation, and this constitutes the sum total of the improvements they have made for the last eighty years. They are a progressive people, truly, and have proved themselves worthy of the patronage which the Imperial Government bestows upon them! The English River route leads to Isle a la Crosse and Athabasca Lakes. The Company have trading posts at each of those Lakes, and farming has been carried on, at the former, very successfully. The country along this route is as well wooded and watered as any part of Canada. It is rather stony and rugged, however, and presents much the same appearance as the valleys of the Madawaska and Bonne Chere rivers, well known tributaries of the Ottawa. Peace River is about the same width as the Saskatchewan, but shallow and very rapid. It discharges itself into Athabasca Lake, and drains a magnificent prairie country, beautifully diversified with hill and dale. The land is more undulating than in the Saskatchewan country. The soil is of the same description, and the climate equally salubrious. Farming has been carried on at Fort Dunvegan, a post within sight of the Rocky Mountains, with unvaried success, for a number of years. The geological features of the Territory bordering on the head waters of Peace river being similar in every respect, to those on the western slope of the mountains, there can be no doubt as to the auriferous deposits, being equally rich. Unfortunately these "hidden treasures" are inaccessible, at present, on account of the great distance, supplies of every kind have to be transported. The English River country is occupied by the Parent-stock of the Grec nation, a gentle, harmless race, who have been always friendly towards the Whites. The Beaver Indians claim the valley of the Peace River as their hunting grounds. They are a warlike race, fiery and resentful, but noted for their honesty and truthfulness, and their kindly disposition towards strangers. Ascending Peace River, to near its source, the route to British Columbia strikes across the country about 80 miles to Stewart's Lake, one of the sources of the Fraser. Peace River, as already observed, falls into Athabasca Lake which is, properly speaking, merely an expansion of the river. Athabasca and Great Slave Lakes are connected by Slave River, and Great Slave Lake may be considered the source of the McKenzie, one of the most magnificent streams to be met with in North America. It will thus be seen that Peace River, Slave River, the McKenzie and intermediate Lakes form a continuous water communication, of at least 2000 miles in length, draining an area of perhaps 150,-

000 miles. Unfortunately, a considerable portion of this area is perfectly worthless for settlement. The McKenzie is hemmed in on the west by the Rocky mountains, while to the east the country is a barren, sterile wilderness. The navigation opens generally about the latter end of May, and closes from the 15th to the 30th November. Let us now retrace our steps to Stewart's Lake in British Columbia. Few countries in the world present a more beautiful variety of scenery than the upper portion of this Territory, formerly known by the designation of "New Caledonia." Towering mountains, forest and lake and verdant plains, although of limited extent, are blended together in the happiest manner and from a commanding position, can be taken in by the eye at a glance. The climate of New Caledonia is exceedingly variable and the most extraordinary changes of temperature occur in the course of twenty-four hours. Both in summer and winter those changes are experienced. Lower down towards the Pacific coast, the climate is more steady and reliable. The physical features of the Territory, however, are not of a character to inspire the hope that British Columbia shall ever rank high as an agricultural country. Its mineral wealth must always be its main stay. However long or short a period that *stay* may last, time will determine. The Carriers or "Porteurs," may be reckoned amongst the most deeply degraded of human beings. The grossest imagination cannot conceive a vice, however revolting, to which these monsters are not addicted. They have not the slightest idea of a future state of reward or punishment, nor of a Supreme Being, nor beings of any kind, in fact, except those of a corporeal form. Need we wonder that a people whose views are so grovelling, so beastly, should have nothing human about them save the form? Their old people are generally afflicted with ophthalmia, and other loathsome diseases are also prevalent. Sir Alexander McKenzie and party were the first Europeans to make their acquaintance, and they learnt from them that those diseases had always existed among them. They pass the winter in hovels under ground. The confined smoke and tainted atmosphere of those abominable burrows are quite insupportable, for any length of time, and may, in part, account for the inflamed eyes of their inmates. These hovels are formed by digging a pit in the ground—then sticks are laid across and covered with turf, an aperture being left in the centre which serves for door, window, and chimney. A notched stick answers the purpose of a stair. At night the *stair* is removed, the aperture closed, and thus the inmates are secure against the attacks of savage neighbours.

The Carriers dispense with the use of canoes on their hunting excursions. The

wretched females are "the beasts of burden" on these occasions, and the loads they carry would stagger a camel. They subsist principally on salmon, which ascend the Fraser in immense shoals and a variety of edible roots, which appear to be nutritious and wholesome.

April 29.

It will have been seen by the foregoing remarks, how the vast extent of Territory which the English Monopolists had so carefully walled in from the knowledge of Mankind, fell under their exclusive control, by the coalition of 1821, and the gross violation of the laws of his country, by the notorious filibusterer, Lord Selkirk, which led ultimately to the downfall of our glorious Canadian Company (the Nor'-West Company), and to the total exclusion of our people from a Territory which was first opened up to commercial enterprise by the indomitable energy of their Ancestors. And when at length, the wall was torn down, by the persevering efforts of one of two individuals here, and in England, who had seen the "goodly land," and published to the World the incalculable treasures it possessed, the mean artifices which the company employed to depreciate the Territory in public estimation, are well-known. The approaches were impractical. The climate was intolerable. The soil was unfit for cultivation and the natives fierce and blood thirsty! Now all this is changed. The company declare, with admirable coolness, that all they had said in disparagement of the country had not the slightest foundation in truth! They swallow their own words, with the utmost complacency, while they admit that there is a "fertile belt," after all, containing about forty millions of excellent land, which in the exuberance of their generosity, they are willing to dispose of to Canada for the paltry consideration of \$1,500,000 in cash, a reserve of 50,000 acres of land in some of the most eligible and most valuable parts, one twentieth of all the land that is to be sold for the next fifty years, certain privileges in trade, exemption from duties on their importations, &c., &c. Evidently, these patriotic gentlemen are disposed to make every possible sacrifice for the good of their country!

When these fur traders talk of *conceding* "territorial rights," do they not assume attributes of Sovereignty, incompatible with their position as subjects? Whence do they derive their sovereign powers? It is all sheer moonshine. They are our fellow subjects, and have no right, on any rational ground whatsoever, to claim the high position they assume. As to the rights which they claim to Prince Rupert's Land, under the charter, some of the ablest legists in England dispute the validity of those "rights." Be that

as it may, they have not the shadow of a legal claim to the Nor'-West Territory, properly so called. Well, there can be no doubt as to the Nor'-west question being in "a critical position" at the present moment. Our *patriotic* friends are fully aware of the fact, and take advantage of it to drive a hard bargain with us. Under the circumstances, it might be advisable to comply with the demand in cash, extortionate and unjust as it undoubtedly is, but the granting such large tracts of land, involves considerations of far greater importance than the payment in money. It necessarily gives the Company a political position, which, from what we know of the influence which wealthy corporations exercise everywhere, may prove dangerous to the liberties of the people, and detrimental to the future progress of the colony. If we take the antecedents of the company, as a criterion whereby we may judge of the use they would make of their power in the future, it becomes a serious question whether the power ought to be continued in any shape or form. While the monopolist cornorants make such unreasonable demands, we cannot overlook the claims of the unhappy aborigines--the original lords of the soil. Doubtless, the Government will give the subject their most earnest attention. It depends very much upon the treatment we extend to the natives, at the outset--when we "go up and possess the Land"--whether they shall become our warmest friends or our bitterest enemies. The communication with Red River comes next under consideration. The Indian or old Nor'-west route between Fort William and Rainy Lake presents difficulties of so very formidable a character that it would appear advisable to abandon it altogether, and seek for a practicable overland route, as the cheapest and most available for the large traffic which the colonization of the Interior would create. The same remark applies to the "Riviere Blanche," or White River, which connects the Lake of the Woods with Lake Winnipeg. This river is so full of dangerous rapids, and portages, that it can never be rendered subservient to purposes of commerce by any outlay that can be made in improving it. This being the case, an overland road appears to be our only alternative. An ordinary waggon or train railroad might answer the purpose, for some years to come, and we ought not to begrudge the cost if at all within reasonable bounds, for it would

soon be reimbursed to us by the thousands of immigrants that would pass along our thoroughfares on their way to the "Land of Promise." As regards a railway across the continent, "on British Territory," I believe there are no Engineering difficulties in the way which money and science could not overcome, but the climate interposes a difficulty which it is not in the power of man to remove. In the gorges of the Rocky Mountains, the snow accumulates to an enormous depth. This circumstance, taken into account together with the fact that the country is unfit for settlement, on either side of the Mountains, for some distance, makes a communication with British Columbia by rail appear to be a very remote contingency; but admitting the circumstances were more favorable to the building of a railroad, the question then arises, would the admission of British Columbia into our Confederation at the present juncture be advisable? While the political machinery we have just created is *still on trial*, and its ultimate success undecided, it would appear as if the acquisition of so distant an *appendage* would add to the complications with which we have already to contend in our nascent constitution. While Britain makes any pretension to naval supremacy, she must maintain a strong footing in the North Pacific. Let her retain British Columbia, then, under her own fostering care, as a crown colony, and let us in the meantime rest satisfied with the Rocky Mountains chain as our western boundary. Ere I conclude these scraps, I would submit that the foregoing remarks are founded on personal observation. I have visited every part of the Territory which I have attempted to describe, and therefore know whereof I speak. I began to write on this subject about 19 years ago, when the people of Canada knew little of the Nor'-west Territory, and cared less. The value of the Territory is now perfectly well understood, and it affords me no small satisfaction to find that all who have visited the country since--Noblemen, clergymen, men of science, officers of the Army and Navy, have confirmed my report in every particular. In my former correspondence with the Press, I generally wrote over the signature of "Viator," but I see no reason why I should preserve my incognito any longer, and therefore subscribe myself,

Yours truly,

JOHN McLEAN.