

Pioneers in the Development Of Canada

With Special Reference to the Part Played Therein by Scotsmen.

At the Caledonian Club on Thursday evening, February 11, the lecturer was the Hon. J. A. Mathieson, C.J. He spoke as follows:—

The task has been set for me to write upon "Scotland's part in the development of Canada," and one hour is assigned as the limit of time; an over-crowded hour, I fear.

It detracts nothing from the credit that is due to the men of Scottish birth and race to accord to men of other races the just meed of praise.

The first place as pioneers must be accorded to the French; first as discoverers, explorers and settlers, and first as the founders of Christian civilization among the savage tribes who inhabited the wilderness. The first permanent settlement of white men in what is now the Dominion of Canada was made by Champlain and De Monts, at Fort Royal, 1605. The establishment of civil government followed in due course both in Acadia and Quebec, and from these bases, especially the latter, their missionaries, explorers, trappers and traders penetrated deep and far into the west and north, exploring the northern shore of Lake Superior and the waters and plains west to the sources of the Mississippi. Exploration and missionary work were the chief interests of Champlain, and to such men the fur trade was only of value as it helped them to accomplish these purposes.

The history of the French occupation is rich in deeds of daring, of resourcefulness, and self-sacrifice. It merits the careful and sympathetic study of every one who desires to be a good Canadian.

In examining the records of these early days I became so deeply impressed by the high qualities and aims of the French pioneers as to risk the fulfilment of this mission, which is to express some appreciation of the nation building attributes of another race which has always longed to have a better opinion of itself than it has—if that be possible.

The English may claim that especially in early days they furnished as builders of Canada men skilled in the science of Government according to British standards, the Irish that they have contributed their proportion of talent and vigor to the general fund, and the United Empire Loyalists that they have always been true to name; and they can all prove these claims and much more. Let them when their time comes. Tonight we are otherwise engaged.

The limitations of my subject carry us directly past the period of French dominion down to the fall of Quebec which resulted in the passing to the British Crown of the whole of the territory of France within the present bounds of Canada. That territory extended as far west as the eastern boundary of Manitoba. The vast regions lying to the west and north of this ancient boundary of Quebec, out of which have been carved the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia, came to the British Crown, and thence to Canada, either wholly or chiefly through the agency and activities of the Hudson Bay Company.

Britain's admitted claim to any part of Canada apart from conquest had its origin in the discovery by Henry Hudson in 1609 of the Bay which now bears his name. He, like other famous explorers and discoverers, was seeking not what he found but something quite remote and commercially useless—a north west passage to the coast of Asia and the South Sea. He died on the desolate shores of that Bay, deserted by his crew at his utmost need, his enterprise apparently a disastrous failure. But that discovery was pregnant with results far surpassing the hopes that failed. It laid the first of a train of events which resulted in the acquisition by the British Crown of more than three-quarters of the territory of the Canada of today. The train of events took more than two centuries to complete:—1st, discovery with its extension into exploration; 2nd, establishment of trading posts, and 3rd, settlement. But in the final test of title by possession the greatest of these is settlement.

For sixty years after Hudson's discovery no attempt at penetration of the country appears to have been made, but on the 2nd of May, 1670, there came into existence by Royal charter that historic English Company officially named "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay," commonly known as The Hudson Bay Company. The charter sets forth as the objects of the Company the discovery of a passage into the South Sea and for the finding of some trade for furs, minerals, etc., "by means whereof there may arise great advantage to us and to our Kingdom." The Royal charter goes on to grant to the Company and their successors "the sole trade and commerce of all those seas, bays, rivers, creeks and sounds that lie within the straits called Hudson's Straits, together with all the lands, countries and boundaries upon the coasts and confines of the seas, etc., which are not now actually possessed by any of our subjects or by the subjects of any other Christian Prince or State," together with the fisheries and mines, and appointing the Company absolute lords and proprietors of all the territories within the grant. This charter was held to vest in the Company the absolute ownership of all the land which drained into Hudson's Bay and was thenceforth known as Prince Rupert's Land, named after Prince Rupert, cousin of King Charles II., the brilliant cavalry leader, admiral and scientist, the first Governor of the Hudson Bay Company. (The second Governor, it may be noted, was another of the Scottish line of Kings,—James II.) The territory thus granted has been described as a Continent within a Continent; it comprised all the Prairie Provinces except the McKenzie Basin together with the northern watersheds of Ontario and part of what is now the Province of Quebec. By terminal leases granted and renewed from time to time the Company was given exclusive trading rights over practically all the remaining parts of British North America outside of the established Colonies, so that their trading posts were scattered from Labrador to Vancouver Island and from far south of the present International boundary to the Polar Sea.

The Company, as its name implies, had for its object profitable trade. It avowed no other purpose, but in pursuance of that purpose and within its chartered powers it built up a system of Government wonderfully adapted to serve its vast extension and the needs of the wild people over whom it operated. There was always a great driving power behind it. Its wisdom and its courage were shown throughout its history. It has been described as "the greatest trading company the world has ever seen." Lords of half a continent, its success depended upon the wise selection of the men who set up and maintained the trading posts, dealt with the Indians and established means of transportation of furs and supplies in circumstances of such difficulty as would have overcome any but the bravest, strongest and most resourceful.

Early in its history the chartered company had discovered the merits of the men of North Britain, bred in a rugged country, where Nature had few gifts to make to the idler, or the coward. In process of time one Scotchman attracted another until at length the day arrived when not only were the principal trading posts manned by Scottish factors but the controlling interest in the stock of the Company itself passed into Scottish hands.

Except on the shores of the Bay there had been peace and order within the Company's borders, but troublous times lie near ahead. Here we may pause to view the world outside the wilderness, the civilized world, and are deeply shocked to find that it has been much engaged in the business of war. The incident that most concerns us is that Quebec, the last stronghold of the French power in British North America, had been captured by the British; and with its fall the whole of the French possessions in what is now Canada had passed into British hands. The New England Colonies that from their infancy had been cherished and protected by England against the power of France and the menace

of Indian wars, now that the citadel of French power on the continent had fallen, saw in that and in the mighty forces arrayed against the motherland in Europe the opportunity to achieve their independence and by the same process to repudiate all their debts and obligations to their mother land incurred for their protection. England in gaining Quebec lost the New England Colonies. The gain may have overmatched the loss.

Incidentally out of the British regiments disbanded at Quebec not a few Scottish adventurers decided to remain in the new British dominions. Some settled around Quebec, married French wives, and are accountable for many descendants with Highland names. Others found their way up the St. Lawrence to Montreal and formed the nucleus of the Scottish settlement there which has played such an important part in Canada's early and later development.

The fur trade of the North and West Country offered the greatest attraction to fortune hunters. As early as 1774 (a century after the Hudson Bay Company charter) a number of Scottish merchants and adventurers in Montreal formed themselves into a Company to engage in the fur trade. They were a bold and resolute band with the spirit of the Highland clans who had fought at Culloden. They did not hesitate to challenge the right of the Hudson Bay Company to monopolize the trade of the West even within the confines of the land included in the Royal charter. The success of the first led to the formation of rival companies until three powerful companies were operating from Montreal as a base. The names of the leaders—McGilvray, Cameron, McTavish, Alexander McKenzie, Roderick McKenzie, Fraser, Finlay Campbell, Ballantyne, and many "Macs," leave little to imagine as to their place of origin. They sought not only fortune but fame, both of which many of them attained. They first gave Montreal its pre-eminence in wealth and trade and have left their names attached to the great rivers and mountains of the West which they were the first white men to explore. They were not all perfect, these men. In the fierce rivalry that developed between the opposing companies blood was shed and commercial ruin threatened them until amalgamation, first between themselves and lastly with the Hudson Bay Company in 1821, brought peace and great prosperity—after fifty years of strife.

Conspicuous among the men of Montreal was a young Scotchman, Alexander McKenzie, attracted to Canada by the fur trade in 1779. He was but sixteen years of age when he arrived from his home in Stornaway in the Isle of Lewis, fairly educated, and at the age of twenty-one was appointed to lead an expedition through Upper Canada, through the region where the United Empire Loyalists were seeking new homes under the British flag. After a year in the trading post at Detroit he continued his expedition to the far North-west, and establishing trading posts at each point of advantage, passing west and north to the Peace River, which flows into Lake Athabaska, where he established a fort dominating at this point the Eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Later, leaving his post in charge of his cousin Roderick McKenzie, he set out on the voyages and discoveries on which his fame chiefly rests. He had heard Indian tales of a great river rivaling the Saskatchewan flowing north into unknown regions. The Indians told McKenzie fabulous tales about the River which he had now determined to explore. It would take so long, they said, to reach its mouth that old age would have overtaken him before he could return. There were impassable barriers across the way guarded by evil spirits and frightful monsters. His brigade started on June 3, 1779, and on the 12th of July met the tide waters of the Arctic Ocean. Their return journey was completed on the 12th of September, having traversed a distance of upwards of 3,000 miles. 102 days in all were occupied in this amazing performance which besides widening the knowledge of the men helped to fix the sovereignty of Britain over the areas drained by this mighty river.

With ambition further aroused by his success McKenzie determined to fit himself better for his work, and accordingly spent a winter in Britain perfecting himself in the technical knowledge necessary to enable him to fix with accuracy the location of each point in the land to be explored; and this being done he proceeded to explore the Peace River. Leaving his post again in charge of his cousin Roderick he began his voyage, May 9, 1793. The difficulties were incredible—often with the utmost efforts they were able to make not more than a mile a day—but at length he reached the height of land, a lake in a mountain jungle at the summit of the great divide between the waters drained by the Peace River, east and north, into the McKenzie Basin, and thus reaching the Polar Sea; and the waters flowing west and south into the Pacific Ocean.

Partly by river and partly by land the expedition worked its way westward until they met the Pacific tides, and upon a memorial stone was inscribed: "Alexander McKenzie from Canada by voyage was completed and the great explorer's work was well nigh done. He was the first white man north of Mexico to cross the Rocky Mountains and to view the Pacific Ocean from the penetrated the mainland of British Columbia, it had been to the coast had been visited by Spain, Russia, England and France. The immense areas of land drained by the McKenzie River with all its tributaries lay outside of Prince Rupert's Land and its exploration therefore became a most important factor in securing it to the British Crown.

It is not possible within the fixed limits of time to examine with equal care the empire building work of many other men whose continued efforts have enlarged the knowledge of the world they lived in and opened up for trade and settlement vast regions of its unknown lands. The place names on the map of Canada show in some measure who the great pioneers were. Such names as Leod, McKenzie, and Douglas, are at least suggestive of their nationality.

The policy of the Hudson Bay Company, as we have seen, and also of the Montreal companies of which the principal was the North West Company, was to discourage the agricultural development of the West except to the very limited extent necessary to serve the fur trade. At the opening of the 19th century there was not one white settlement in British North America between Upper Canada and the coast of British Columbia,—over 2,000 miles of empty lands.

It was a perilous situation. Regions so vast, so rich in actual and potential resources, perpetually unoccupied and undefended, offered temptations to any powerful and aggressive neighbor, while it left the British Colonies in North America totally segregated the East from the West. If the British dominion in North America were ever to be consolidated and saved to the Empire the vacant habitable lands must be settled with loyal pioneers.

There was at the same time great distress among the British people as the result of long continued wars, but accentuated in the Highlands of Scotland by the policy adopted by the great and lesser tenants in order to make wide sheep runs for rental to a few proprietors who with large capital might better develop the resources of their estates. In these circumstances Thomas Douglas—Earl of Selkirk, a scion of one of the noblest Scottish families—as ever brought to this Island in 1803 as fine a group of colonization plan to meet by one process the needs of the evicted crofters for land and of the North-west for settlers. Encouraged by the success of the Island colony he continued to importune the British Government and the Hudson Bay Company, but met with scant encouragement. Britain, having suffered such losses of men in her continuous wars in Europe and America, was unwilling to lose men by emigration, while the Hudson Bay Company had always been averse to colonization within its bounds. He succeeded with the Government by influence and argument and overcame the opposition of the Hudson Bay Company by acquiring with his

friends a controlling interest in its stock. This was accomplished in 1811. He immediately proposed the purchase of a tract of Prince Rupert's Land lying east and west of the Red River of the North on condition that he should settle within a limited time a large colony on the lands acquired, and assume the expense of transport, of outlay for the settlers, of government, of protection and settlement of Indian titles. The territory was to contain 110,000 square miles, being larger than the original area of Manitoba which it comprised, but extending into what is now the U. S., so as to include the present States of Dakota and Minnesota. Selkirk immediately issued his prospectus and called for emigrants to join the enterprise. He undertook to provide transport, to give the means of livelihood for a time, and to grant to the settlers suitable parcels of land. He declared for freedom of religious opinion—a unique example of liberal views contrasted with the puritan standards in the New England States. Three ships were chartered to convey the emigrants and their supplies to Hudson Bay, the only means of access to the land.

By the middle of July, 1811, the little fleet called at Stromness and Stornaway, where its passenger list was completed—seventy-six men. This ship reached York Factory in Hudson Bay after a stormy voyage of sixty-one days.

Their late arrival made it impossible to reach their destination that year. Accordingly they spent the winter in temporary dwellings erected for the purpose on the shore of the Hudson Bay. By June 1, 1812, the ice had moved from the mouth of the river and the long journey of 700 miles to the future home began. A weary and dispirited party, they at length arrived where the city of Winnipeg now stands, having spent thirteen months on their journey.

Several small parties followed in 1813 and 1814. In 1816 the strongest party of all arrived, namely, 100 Highlanders from the parish of Kildonan, in Sutherlandshire. In all the colonists numbered about 300, and of those a considerable number found their way to Upper Canada. This was the foundation of the Selkirk Colony in Manitoba. For a time it was presided over by Robert Semple, who was recognized as the Governor of the Colony. Many distressful days lay ahead of them,—hunger, cold and violence; but they had in them the stuff of which heroes are made, and it was well for the Canada of today that they were able to triumph over obstacles that would have broken the hearts of common men. The tale of their suffering is long and can only be referred to now in a few words; but it could be read at length with great advantage by the pessimists of today.

It was said of the first New England Colonists that their only welcome was the roaring of the rocking pines of the forest, and their lonely fate brought tears to many childish eyes; but what of these pilgrims to the Red River? There were no rocking pines there to roar, but they were met on their arrival and halted by a roaring band of armed men dressed like savages, and in fact ordered them to quit their country. Scarcity of food did compel them for a time to cross the present boundary into the United States, following the buffalo herds upon which they had to depend for their winter food and largely for their clothing. They were wintered in Pembina. Time and again they were forced by violence or famine to remove from their settlement and seek refuge outside its bounds. The North West Company of traders were convinced that the success of the Selkirk Colony would eventually mean the destruction of their fur trade and they practically declared war upon the colonists; their poor houses were burned, their cattle driven away, and they were faced with utter ruin. Finally, an attack was made upon the colony by an armed force of half-breeds. Governor Semple and about twenty of his men were slain and their bodies mangled with savage rites. But relief was on the way; Selkirk, who had not as yet visited the colony, had reached the head of Lake Superior with a force of 4 officers and 80 soldiers, and on his arrival peace was restored, though outbreaks of lawlessness occurred in the years 1817 and 1818.

But these were not the only troubles that fell upon the harassed settlers. In 1817 and again in 1818 they were forced to migrate to Pembina because of a plague of grasshoppers which devoured every green thing, and they would assuredly have perished but for the aid of the H. B. C.

The wars between the rival companies ended in 1821 by a merger into the Hudson Bay Company, and from that time forward, except for the Riel Rebellion, and an occasional raid from the South, they enjoyed peace and attained in time great prosperity. Seventy years after the arrival of the vanguard of these Colonists it was my fate to live in a village of Manitoba inhabited chiefly by their descendants and there to hear on many a winter evening the history and traditions of hardships, heroism and fable of that unconquered band of pioneers.

But that is another story. A considerable proportion of the Colonists brought with them their wives and children. Their settlement formed a nucleus around which assembled the retired factors and traders of the Hudson Bay Company with their wives and children, most of these having Indian blood. Hence the so-called English half-breeds, most of whom bear Scottish names. Of these not a few have risen to high position.

The establishment of the Red River settlement was an occupation and assumption of control which certainly preserved the country for the Empire and formed a barrier against the lawless elements on the United States frontier who sought to foment disturbances between the two countries.

The colony prospered but Selkirk returned to Scotland in 1818, wrecked in health and fortune, to die two years later, in his 49th year. Like Lord Durham, of later days, he was a martyr to his prophetic vision and exalted patriotism.

Twenty-seven days after the death of Selkirk, Sir Alexander McKenzie died. It was his book which had aroused Selkirk's interest in the country, but he was also the strongest opponent of Selkirk's scheme of colonization. Each had rendered indispensable service to the Canada that was to be, but Selkirk had the wider, clearer vision and the more varied gifts.

A year after the death of these two great opponents the North West Company was absorbed by the Hudson Bay Company, and thereafter the old company reigned supreme. The man chiefly instrumental in effecting the actual union was George (afterwards Sir George) Simpson, a young man of Scottish birth a year before the legislative union of the companies. He thus writes of the conditions of life which he entered into in the West both whites and Indians live in wasteful abundance on venison, buffalo meat, fish and game of all kinds while at other times they are reduced to the last degree of hunger, often passing several days without food. In the year 1820 our provisions fell short in the establishment, and on two or three occasions I went for several days and nights without a morsel of food; but then again I was one of a party of eleven men and one woman which disposed at one meal of no less than three ducks and twenty-two geese.

The young governor found the affairs of the united companies in great confusion. With skill and courage and furious driving power he conciliated or over-rode the enmities and jealousies still alive and burning between the employees of the companies which for fifty years had been bitter rivals, closed up unprofitable and duplicating posts and quickly brought order and prosperity to enterprises which had been on the verge of ruin. It is true that he had endured without the aid of any armed force over peoples so difficult to govern and in a territory so vast. For forty years his hand was at the helm.

The head officers of the Company who served under Simpson consisted of twenty-five chief factors and twenty-eight chief traders, selected, half and half, from the former employees of the now united companies. The factors and chief traders of the Company known as the wintering partners, were partners in fact. Forty per cent. of the annual profits of the Company was divided between them on a fixed basis. Prominent names in this distinguished list were:—

PRINCE EDWARD Today at 3, 7 & 8.45 Matinee—16c, 11c. Night—26c, 21c, 11c. JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD'S GREATEST STORY OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS "The Ancient Highway" S—The dynamite blast free the log jam; E—The thrilling rescue during the explosion; E—The battle between the lumber jacks; the giant tree crash on the lumber camp; DANGER! ROMANCE! EXCITEMENT! "SUNKEN SILVER"—Chapter 4 MONDAY AND TUESDAY MILTON SILLS in The MAKING of O'MALLEY A First National Picture

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PRINCE EDWARD Wed. — Thurs. Next A Roman Holiday Beautiful Christian girl martyrs sang while the flames enveloped them — to make sport for Nero and his patricians. QUO VADIS WITH Emil Jannings The new gigantic production taken from the famous novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz and produced in Rome on the exact historical spots by Unione Cinematografica Italiana. A First National Picture 3 Shows Daily, 3.15, 7 and 8.45 MATINEE—26c, 16c. NIGHT—37c, 26c, 16c. CORNS Lift Off—No Pain! FREEZONE Doesn't hurt one bit! Drop a little "Freezone" on an itching corn, instantly that corn stops hurting, then shortly you lift it right off with fingers. Your "Freezone" sells a tiny bottle of "Freezone" for a few cents, sufficient to remove every hard corn, soft corn, or corn between the toes, and the foot calluses, without soreness or irritation.