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The Territory of the Hudson Bay Company and the North-West Passage.

[From la Revue des Deux Mondes.]

Some forty years ago, a great deal of excitement was occasioned by the appearance of a somewhat strange book, the interest of which was singularly blended with monotony. An American, by the name of Tanner, kidnapped in his youth by the Indians, had for many years led a very savage life amongst them, when he entered the service of the Hudson Bay Company. He gradually became civilized again, and had the fancy of writing or dictating the remembrances of his Indian life. At the time of which we speak, mankind was taking an interest in all that pertained to itself, and everybody was anxious to know the feelings of a savage, and to compare them with those of a civilized being. But, unhappily, as long as he had been a savage, Tanner had never been troubled with thoughts, and his remembrances were mere allusions to the days when he had plenty to eat, and those memorable dates when he had been very hungry and almost famished to death. The very incident of his marriage was far from offering poetical or interesting particulars: A woman came near, snatched the pipe from his mouth, took three or four whiffs, and returned it to him. This ceremony having been repeated, Tanner had a wife to mend his moccasins, and the Indian squaw, a husband to kill game for her. It is not true to say that animals would tell many interesting things if they were endowed with speech. One has nothing to tell, when one does not think, and the savage who lives by instinct, like the brute, can not describe himself. Civilized beings are the only ones who can relate their lives.

If this is true, the book we are going to give an account of does fulfill all the desirable conditions. Two highly civilized men, nay, two spoiled children of civilization, Lord Milton, the eldest son of Lord Fitzwilliam, that is to say, the heir to one of the largest fortunes in England, and a young physician, Dr. Cheadle, took it in their heads to go and live a savage life in the territory of the Hudson Bay Company. They spent a whole winter in a wigwam, in the snow, hunting buffaloes northward, and sables southward, and when they felt themselves sufficiently hardened to fatigue and privation, they started for the Rocky Mountains, and tried, despite the obstacles in their way, to discover a direct route between Canada and the auriferous grounds of British Columbia.

The good times of a savage life are undoubtedly passed away. In the immense territory of the Hudson Bay Company, which is as extensive as the United States, there are but few of the Indian tribes left. Like the beaver, the Indian has lost his instinct by ceasing to live in company; and if you want to see real savages, you must go to those Indians who are still at war with the white men. But, on the other hand, Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle aimed at appearing like savages more than was really necessary, and in stripping off the garments of civilized life, they at the same time boasted of casting off all civilized notions and ideas. You must not, therefore, expect them to be acting the philosopher, because they drink the cool water of the forests with the Indians, or cocktails with the miners, but you will find in their book a very rare quality—that of relating facts without any mixture of comments, or allusions foreign to the subject. Being both gentlemen with money and leisure, they have been where learned men had never been before, and they relate things which politicians do not relate, and by the mere fact of their having passed through those remote regions they have removed the veil of mystery shrouding them. A new people, speaking French, have arisen from the remnants of different tribes, and inhabit the vast solitudes extending from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains. Before describing the heroic part of the expedition, it is advisable to be acquainted with these Indians who are no more savages, and with those half-castes who are still civilized, after which we will show the conditions of the struggle which is preparing between England and the United States, about a land so long protected by its distance and by silence.

I.

Our starting point will be Fort Garry, situated at the confluence of the Red River and the Assiniboine, in the territory of the Hudson Bay Company, north of the new State of Minnesota, and about half way between the mouth of the St. Lawrence, in the Atlantic Ocean, and the Island of Vancouver, in the Pacific. Fort Garry is far from being one of those solitary and lifeless settlements, such as are mostly met with in the Hudson Bay Territory, surrounded by a high picket fence, the four corners of which are fortified by small, square towers. If Fort Garry has had, for many years, no other communication with the rest of the world than through the convoy annually starting from Fort York, on the Hudson Bay; if it has only an irregular intercourse with the American State of Minnesota, it is, nevertheless, a large centre, and a city such as the Territory of the Hudson Bay Company may be proud of. Without counting the farms and hamlets scattered along the banks of the Red River and the Assiniboine, more than 8,000 people are gathered around Fort Garry—Englishmen, Scotchmen, descendants of French Canadians, half-caste Canadians and Indians. The two languages most used are the French and a mixture of Low Norman and Indian. The half-castes are predominant, and exercise the greatest influence. Living from hand to mouth, lively, gay, ready to endure any amount of privation and fatigue, they give themselves up to debauchery and intemperance in times of idleness, and nothing can be heard at Fort Garry but the joyful sounds of the violin, peals of laughter, and bouts of merriment. Twice a year, in the Spring and Autumn, the whole population leaves the city, followed by 1,500 or 1,600 carts, and encamps in the prairie, for the purpose of buffalo hunting. About 1,000 of these animals are shot in each expedition, and their meat is preserved and salted for the wants of the colony until another hunt takes place.

Since the introduction of immigrants by Lord Selkirk, at the beginning of the century, Fort Garry has seen several civil wars, and the people are far from being quiet. The colonists accuse the Hudson Bay Company of favoring the hunting interests more than those of agriculture. The Company defends the monopoly of the fur trade against an unlawful traffic. The Indian tribes are often at war, and the half-castes always take an active part in their conflicts, in which they display the superiority of a power of endurance equal to that of the Indians, coupled with the muscular strength of the European. Fort Garry is not a young colony: it is an old settlement, utterly opposed to a transformation which has become necessary. The Government would have been overthrown long ago, had it not been for the fact that a Government which keeps under lock and key all the provisions, can starve a mutiny and restore order very effectively. It is, besides, supported by the half-castes and Indians, that is to say, by all those who carry a gun; while its adversaries are the farmers and colonists, those who are engaged in agricultural pursuits.

It is sad to think that this race of hunters—Canadians, half-castes and Indians—is doomed to disappear. Before many years have passed, the traveler will cease to hear the boatmen on the Red River singing the old songs of the olden times of France. Instead of those beautiful forests—always the same, and always new—there will be proud cities, with straight, geometrical streets. But until that time comes, those who are fond of an adventurous life in the far west, must select their companions amongst men who have some French blood in their veins; and Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle accordingly secured the services of four half-castes, the leader of whom, called La Ronde, was an intrepid traveler and an unerring shot. They bought six carriages, made entirely of wood, for such only can be repaired in the forests, where no iron can be obtained. They procured saddle and draught horses, and started for Fort Carleton, 500 or 600 miles nearer the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

The Canadian Autumn was then in all its radiant splendor, and the country, gently undulating, was covered with lakes and woods of the most enchanting aspect. On the blue wavelets, flocks of water-fowls were playfully sporting, waiting for the season of migration to the southward; and at every step, bevies of quails would rise from the bushes on the prairie. The way from Fort Garry to Fort Carleton was a long and delightful pleasure excursion. They had hardly reached Fort Carleton when they were informed that bisons had been seen within two days' journey to the southward. The temptation was too great to be resisted, and they agreed to defer, for a few days, their preparations for winter quarters, to go and camp where the bisons had been seen. La Ronde was sent forward to reconnoitre, and soon discovered the animals, when he returned to his excited companions. After examining the saddles, girths and carts, they formed in a line, La Ronde being in the centre. The unconscious bisons, in scattered groups, were peacefully and drowsily eating the aromatic herbs of the prairie. The hunters stop; La Ronde imitates the bellowing of a buffalo, and all the huge animals gather in a compact mass and begin to gallop heavily. The hunters canter after them, getting nearer and nearer to their intended victims, who, seeing they are chased, hurry on in their rapid course.

When they had arrived within 500 yards of the buffaloes, La Ronde cried out: "Let go!" and every one spurred on his horse, eager to force his way through the thick, black line, in order to isolate the unfortunate animal he had doomed to an untimely death. Of all the hunts known, there is none so exciting, nor rousing so much the instinct of destruction, as that of the bison, or, as the half-caste Canadians term it, "ox hunting,"—to choose our words. There is danger enough to make it spicy, and not enough to check the hunter's spirits by exaggerated fears. The animals are hideously deformed; their short hind legs, and their immense and shaggy mane, through which two little, wistful, and wicked eyes are gleaming, are not prepossessing features.

When the chase was over, they returned to the camp, and on their arrival found that two of their companions were missing. One of them, a Canadian, found his way back in the darkness, but the other, an European who had joined the company some days before, did not make his appearance the whole night. He had wandered on the prairie, where he would have been lost, had he not reached a camp of Indians, the chief of whom shared with him his lodge and meal. Early in the morning he returned to the English settlement, followed, or rather led, by his new friends.

A Spirit Lover.

Some little while ago, a young lady connected with one of the highest families of the new regime, a dancing, flirting, graceful, light-hearted maiden of seventeen, was suddenly visited one night after retiring to rest with an unaccountable desire to rise from her bed and place herself at her writing desk, being called upon in peremptory tones by an invisible—and, what is more, an inaudible—visitor to write under his dictation. The feeling was so decided and uncontrollable that the poor girl obeyed, and, wrapping herself in her dressing gown, took pen in hand and proceeded to fulfil the command of this importunate master. To her amazement and dismay, the words flew from her pen as if by magic; page after page was written and thrown aside, filled to overflowing with long rhapsodies, of which the meaning was incomprehensible to the writer, who went on mechanically, with trembling hand and burning brow, never stopping even to read over the production which was growing beneath her pen, never heeding the chilliness of the dawn nor the fever and headache she was enduring. It was not till daylight that the obsession ceased, and then, wearied out with fatigue and watching, she gathered together the fragments of the manuscript she had been transcribing, and throwing herself on her bed, slept until midday so soundly and heavily that the family were in a state of consternation at its long continuance. The young girl hesitated not to tell the tale of her night's adventure. The manuscript was read, not only by the members of the family, but by many other persons. It contained naught but the most passionate declaration of love from an ardent admirer moving in the spirit world, who owned to the annihilation of every feeling connected with his former existence in this nether world save that of intense admiration and devotion toward the object of his uncontrolable love. The spirit gave his name and local habitation when in the flesh, a knight of the middle ages, who had been killed in combat by a blow from a battle-axe, which had cleft his skull in twain. Two neatly executed drawings of his countenance before and after the catastrophe adorned the margin of this part of the manuscript. The portrait of the dying hero is terrific, and the description of the wound elaborate. The knight owned to having watched her growth for years, to having waited until permission had been granted him to manifest himself to her through writing, and to his intention never more to leave her side until she too should be summoned to join the spiritual host to which himself belonged. The manuscript concluded with a beautiful landscape, evidently belonging to southern climes. Mountain and valley, lake and forest, were all portrayed. In the foreground a group of cypress trees, beneath which a mound overgrown with underwood and briars. This was announced as the spot where the hero had fallen, and where his bones lie buried.

The effect produced in the young lady's family may be better conceived than described. The reverend gentleman belonging to the Madeleine were called in requisition first, then doctors were summoned to quell this unquiet and unholy restlessness, which compelled the girl night after night to leave her bed and write under the dictation of this ardent spirit whole pages of amorous declaration addressed to herself. The reverend gentlemen advised prayer, the doctors counselled medicine, and both agreed that travelling and change of scene would be the only remedy, for an unnatural and exhausting persecution which was undermining the poor young patient's health, and reducing her from a robust and blooming maiden to a poor, pale, moping skeleton. The advice was taken; and the family, consisting of the father and two sisters, with an aunt, set out in search of health for their young charge. The whole party travelled together all over Italy, and to the great delight of the affectionate relatives, the young girl seemed gradually to be escaping from the influence of her tyrant spirit. It was wisely thought that travelling by night would dissolve the spell and during some weeks no further manifestation was displayed. It was a blessing indeed to behold the light returning to the poor girl's eyes and the color to her cheeks as they progressed through Italy, until at last, by the time the party had reached Naples, all danger seemed to be at an end. They crossed over to Sicily, in order to visit the mansion where dwelt an old school friend of the father, and the sea air seemed to revive the poor young creature into new life, for when they arrived at the old chateau she seemed to have become the light and life and joy of her fathers household once more.

On the very evening of the arrival she wandered out upon the hill opposite the windows of the chateau which had attracted her admiration when gazing on them from the balcony. The owner of the mansion insisted on bearing her company to the spot which, by the tradition of the peasants, was considered haunted, where a clump of cypress trees, hanging as it were on the side of the hill, gave a gloomy aspect to the place, which no doubt originated the tradition. The girl climbed gaily up the ascent, and presently stood among the trees. Suddenly, as if struck by some magic power, she exclaimed, "I know this place, I have seen it before—a brave and gallant knight has buried here. Look just where the mound arises beneath the second tree to the right. Let me go, let me go! I cannot stay," and sank exhausted into the arms of her companion, who tried to sooth her by relating the tradition, which he said had no sense, of a French knight having been invited to a banquet by the owner of the chateau they had just quitted, during the catastrophe of the Sicilian Vespers, of his having been attacked by the assembled guests, and having fought his way gallantly through his assailants until he had arrived at this very spot, where a blow from the battle-ax of the master of the domain had slain him at once. "And he lies buried here," said the narrator, carelessly, "to furnish an excuse for the rascally peasants to work this side of the hill, which is left as you see, uncultivated entirely." The girl listened no longer, but fled homeward and retired at once to her chamber. Her father stayed with her till she had fallen into a profound slumber, then withdrew. In the morning the poor girl was no where to be found. Upon the dressing-table was discovered a scrap of writing in the well remembered hand which had penned the manuscript, the words thereon more burning and impassionate than before, the knight insisting on her return to the mound beneath the cypress trees, and swearing all truth and love and loyalty to his bethrothed. Thither, then, did the relatives at once repair. The poor girl was found lying among the thorns and brambles beneath the cypress trees, stiff and cold, and apparently dead for many hours. The doctors declared that the exposure to the night air, the terror and agony of mind had killed her, but the "spiritists," of Paris triumph in the conviction that the wandering, wicked spirit of the knight had been endowed with sufficient power to execute the deed. Whatever the mystery, we are justified for once in expressing our amazement, and do not fail to greet each other with questions and with doubts, with assertions and denials, according to the temper of the moment.

The Panama Ship Canal.

The opening of the canal through the Isthmus of Suez, to connect Europe, Asia and Africa, will soon be an accomplished fact, and will deserve record as the greatest triumph of engineering skill yet achieved. The projector and engineer, DeLesseps, has fixed the month of August next for uniting the waters of the Mediterranean with those of the Arabian Sea. The brief time in which this gigantic undertaking has been accomplished astonishes the scientific world, and lynx-eyed financiers, comparing its cost, regard it as a remunerative undertaking.

The New York *Bulletin*, in alluding to the Suez Canal, mentions that a project of even greater importance has been recently revived. It is one in which the Pacific States are deeply interested. That journal mentions that President Johnson, in an interview with General Acosta, the Columbian Minister, urged upon the latter, the importance of bringing to the notice of his government the project of constructing a ship canal across the Isthmus of Panama. Surveys have established the practicability of two routes, and the commerce of the world is generally interested in urging its immediate commencement.

"Two routes have been proposed across the Isthmus. One of these, the Darien route, seems to be the most economical. The distance from navigable water to navigable water on the Atlantic and Pacific sides, is only 24 miles, and the cost is estimated at $50,000,000; the other line, from Panama to Aspinwall Bay, is better known, and perhaps, more popular with Americans. It is 45 miles from shore to shore, and would cost $80,000,000. Both of these estimates provide for a canal 150 feet wide on the bottom, sloping up to 272 feet on the surface, and 31 feet deep—equal to the capacity of first-class vessels."

The construction of this ship canal would enable our State to compete on more favorable terms than we now do for the grain supply of the Old World. It would immensely increase our exports beyond any ratio than we can suppose it would receive from reduced freights around the Horn. The saving in time, and the better condition of the cargo, as well as the lower freights and the insurance on the shorter voyage, would be constant advantages inuring to the benefit of the producer on this coast. For articles of value, our railroad would be the preferred route; but for our bulky staples, sea transportation, so much cheaper, must be the means of placing them in the market.

The estimated cost of the Panama route is eighty millions of dollars; that via Darien is much shorter. From the estimates, it could be speedily constructed, and that strongly urges its claims for preference. The policy of our government should be to invite all nations to co-operate in its construction. The Republics of Peru and Chili are largely interested, as their bulky articles of import and export are sent around the Cape, and all nations sharing in the carrying trade would be proportionably benefitted to the extent of their commerce.

The Suez Canal is estimated to pay a fair interest upon a cost of eighty millions of dollars. The tonnage that will pass through it in a series of years will not equal the amount that would certainly pass through the proposed canal at Panama. The States on the Pacific coast—American and foreign, possess the staples that require a larger tonnage for their transportation than is needed by the vast regions of which Suez will be the route of transit; and they also require, as consumers, the staples of the countries with which they trade, thus establishing a really reciprocal commerce.

The construction of the canal, whether at Panama or Darien, can be completed long before the end of the present century. If prosecuted with energy, it could be opened for the passage of the largest class within ten years, and its perpetual neutrality as a highway of commerce should be guaranteed by the Great Powers. Capital in abundance at a low interest could be procured for this great international work. So great will be its benefits to New York and California that those States alone could readily afford to repay the costs of its construction in less than fifteen years after its opening. Our State has suffered much from the exhorbitant transit rates on merchandise and passengers, exacted by the Panama Railroad Company.

The passenger movement which was so lively during the months of opposition is nearly suspended, and the rates of freight have advanced on flour one dollar per barrel, and grain in proportion. The proposed canal will establish a permanent opposition that cannot be bought off, and our producers of every class may count with certainty on having an outlet for their produce at rates that they can afford to pay. With the completion of this great work, the geography of the New World will be changed, and the credit of its commencement and completion will be due to the Government of the United States.—*S. F. Examiner.*

A few story of Robert Hall is going the rounds of the English papers, to the effect that one of his congregation took him to task for not preaching more frequently on predestination. Hall was very indignant. He looked steadily at his censor for a moment and replied:—"Sir, I perceive you are predestinated to be an ass; and what is more, I see you are determined to make your calling and election sure."