
CHAPTER XXI

GREAT SCOTSMEN ON THE PACIFIC COAST

THE men who grew up around Sir James Douglas were sure to be men of resource, and so became men of mark. Though Trader Douglas's superior officer, John McLoughlin, a Scoto-Irishman, was first in the field, yet he was a man who impressed the world much less by his personality than did Douglas. McLoughlin lacked the firmness and decision of character necessary for the protection of the great business interests entrusted to his care upon the coast. Being of an impulsive nature, he readily fell in with the interests of the American settlers who came to the Columbia when the territory was claimed by both the British and Americans. Being in charge of Fort Vancouver, he wavered in his allegiance, and so, it is charged, sacrificed the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. Miss Agnes Laut, a late writer, has sought to reverse the opinion of British and Canadian historians by making McLoughlin a hero, while they regard him as one who forsook his country and flag and profited by becoming an American citizen.

Like Sir George Simpson, McLoughlin had a

Great Scotsmen on the Pacific Coast

fondness for show and ceremony, but Sir George Simpson always had the iron hand within the velvet glove, while McLoughlin mistook the outward glitter for what was not gold. He would accompany his outgoing expeditions of traders with regal state for fifty miles from Fort Vancouver and dismiss them with his blessing before he returned to the fort. By his side rode his wife. Says one, describing this pageant: "Upon a gaily caparisoned steed, with silver trappings and strings of bells on the bridle reins and saddle skirt, sat the Lady (Bountiful) of Fort Vancouver, herself arrayed in brilliant colours and wearing a smile which might cause to blush and to hang its head the broadest, warmest, and most fragrant sunflower. By her side, also gorgeously attired, rode her lord, King of the Columbia, and every inch a King." McLoughlin retired from the Hudson's Bay service in 1845, after being many years a Chief Factor, and took up his abode in Oregon City.

Of an entirely different stamp of man was Roderick Finlayson. Born in 1818 in Ross-shire, Scotland, the son of a considerable stock farmer, young Finlayson came to Montreal in 1837 and entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. Like Douglas, he was introduced to the West by Chief Factor McLoughlin. Calling at all the chief Hudson's Bay Company's forts on the route across country, he and his companions at last arrived at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, and for the rest of his long life Finlayson was destined

The Scotsman in Canada

to become a man of the Pacific Coast. At the age of twenty-two he was one of Douglas's party which went north to take possession of Alaska under the lease given by Russia to the Hudson's Bay Company. Being left by the steamer *Beaver* at Fort Durham on the Taku, Finlayson was taken by the Indians to be a "Boston man"—*i.e.*, one of the Americans against whom the natives had a grudge. Having been besieged in his fort by the savages, he pointed out their mistake and demanded an indemnity for their baseless attack. He so impressed them that they gave him a valuable bundle of furs to placate him. Finlayson was afterwards put in charge of the new Fort Victoria, and proved himself to be a very Ajax of the fur traders. Though when at rest he was a peaceably disposed Scotsman, yet once in the fight he was regarded by the Indians as being little short of a demon. When placed in command of Fort Victoria he introduced Mexican cattle into Vancouver Island and subdued a number of these wild animals to be patient yoke-bearing oxen. The tribes of the island had two objections to these Mexican intruders. The first was that they should be refused free use of them when they desired a royal feast. Their second objection was that by the use of the oxen the Company could dispense with the labour of their squaws, who hitherto had profited by carrying burdens for the Company. Tsonghilam, chief of the Cowichans of the island, and Tsilaetchash, chief of the Songhies, and their braves came to the conclu-

Great Scotsmen on the Pacific Coast

sion to attack the fort, kill off the doughty Scotsman, and drive off his cattle as Finlayson's ancestors with great skill and Highland approval had done in days gone by with the cattle of the Sassenach. A fierce attack with a galling musket fire was made upon the fort by the Indians. It lasted for half an hour. Finlayson forbade any reply, knowing that soon they would have exhausted their ammunition to no purpose. At length when the fusillade ceased Finlayson appeared upon the parapet of the bastion of the fort and made sport of the peppery attack of their guns. Pointing to the cedar lodge outside the walls of the fort, he said, "Just as I can blow to pieces yonder lodge, so I can blow you all into the bay." At that moment the nine-pounder opened fire from the fort with astounding noise and with a charge of grape-shot blew the structure to pieces. He then, after warning, fired on the chief's lodge, which was blown to splinters. It is unnecessary to say that before sunset full damages in furs were paid to the man of the infernal machine, and the pipe of peace was duly smoked in sign of future amity. Fort Victoria now became the fur traders' capital, and ships began to sail direct from England to Vancouver Island. In 1859 Roderick Finlayson became a Chief Factor in charge of Fort Victoria. Afterwards possessed of a large property in the suburbs of Victoria City, he lived out a peaceful old age, and there the writer met him in 1887. Finlayson was of large and commanding stature and had about him the air of

The Scotsman in Canada

a man "born to command." Elsewhere the writer has said of him: "He lacked the adroitness of McLoughlin, the instability of Tod, and the genius of Douglas, but he was a typical Scotsman, steady, patient and trustworthy. Like an old patriarch, he spent his last days in Victoria, keeping a large extent of vacant city property; when urged again and again to sell it when it had become valuable, the sturdy pioneer replied that 'he required it to pasture his coo.'"

A contemporary of Roderick Finlayson in New Caledonia was John Tod, a clamant Scotsman. He belonged to the loquacious type of that race, and was the most bizarre of the fur traders. Coming out, as his own journal states, with Lord Selkirk's first party in 1811, he entered the fur trade. He appears upon the scene in the Hudson Bay and Red River districts, where his oddities attracted general attention. He was dashing and fearless, but excitable and imprudent. Wearied with his peculiarities in Red River Settlement, Sir George Simpson sent Tod to New Caledonia, which was sometimes looked upon as the penal settlement of the traders. In 1840 Tod became officer in charge of Kamloops, at the junction of the two branches of the Thompson River. On one occasion he showed his daring and resource by counter working an Indian plot to rob the traders on one of their journeys. Tod had heard from a friendly Indian of the proposed plot of three hundred natives. The plotters had already started on their expedi-

Great Scotsmen on the Pacific Coast

tion of plunder, when Tod followed and overtook them. Rushing at once, on his reeking steed, among the party he threw his weapons down upon the ground. Assuming the attitude of peace he announced that the deadly smallpox was upon them, and he had come with medicine for their protection. The Indians were cowed. With his tobacco knife Tod then began to vaccinate them, and it is said that when he came to a rascally Indian he made a more effective slash in his arm than was absolutely necessary. The vaccine ran out before one-quarter of the band were inoculated, but Tod gained the undying gratitude of his dusky patients. He was a prolific letter-writer. The writer has had the privilege of looking through his correspondence. With his correspondents, chiefly officers of the fur trade, he discussed the gravest questions of theology and casuistry, without, however, very much effect upon his distant acquaintances. While Tod was in New Caledonia in charge of Fort Alexandria, so called, it is said, after Sir Alexander Mackenzie, a fiery and determined Scotsman—Chief Factor Samuel Black—was in charge of Fort Kamloops. He was a daring and competent trader, but was surrounded by ignorant and dangerous Indians. Near by the fort lived Tranquille, a chief of the Shushwaps. The chief having died suddenly, the superstitious members of the tribe attributed his death to the magic or "bad medicine" of the white man. A nephew of the dead chief watched his opportunity and shot the trader. A panic prevailed. The

The Scotsman in Canada

Hudson's Bay Company officers far and near hastened to Kamloops to meet the frightened and conscience-stricken savages. John Tod came post haste from his fort. McLean immediately left his post of Fort Colville on the distant Columbia. Archibald McKinley and Edward Ermatinger came from Fort Okanagan. McLoughlin dispatched a band of armed men from Fort Vancouver, and Chief Factor Angus Cameron had full commission to act with Tod at Kamloops. All business in New Caledonia was at a standstill, and the greatest anxiety prevailed as to the safety of the whites throughout the whole country.

The Shushwaps summoned a great council, and Nicola, their chief and greatest orator, was there. The chief's speech before the council was a fine example of Indian eloquence. He showed the absolute dependence of the red man upon the white, he pointed out the dastardly character of the murder, and pictured all the earthly and heavenly bodies as gazing on in amazement. Speaking of the departed, he said, "He is dead and we poor Indians shall never see his like again. He was just and generous. His heart was larger than yon mountain, and clearer than the waters of the lake." After further speaking, he closed by saying, "And now you must not rest until you have brought the murderer to justice." The murderer was soon secured and put in irons, but on crossing the river he succeeded in upsetting the boat in which he was a prisoner and floated down the stream, but he perished, his death-song

Great Scotsmen on the Pacific Coast

being hushed by the crack of firearms from the shore.

A most competent and accomplished young Scotsman, born abroad in India and educated in England, was Alexander Caulfield Anderson, who entered the Hudson's Bay Company at seventeen and reached Vancouver in 1852. At the age of twenty he was appointed to an important district in New Caledonia, and soon after was in charge of Fort Alexandria, on the Lower Fraser River. Sent to the Columbia, he rose in 1854 to be for a time Superintendent of Fort Vancouver. In 1858 he went to Victoria in connection with the gold excitement. His constructive ability was brought into use in the building of a road, so much so that his fame and that of Old Scotland were made permanent by the opening of a great road over rock and mountain by way of Hope and Lake Nicola to Kamloops in British Columbia and on to the Upper Thompson River.

The name McTavish was, as we have seen, a famous one among the fur traders; and Chief Factor Dugald McTavish sustained well the tradition of capacity and success of the members of his clan. He was a ready accountant, and in time he was sent to York Factory, San Francisco, Honolulu, and other places where the Hudson's Bay Company did business, and where the business ability and uprightness characteristic of so many of his countrymen also made him prominent. After being in charge of the district of British Columbia, he was in 1858 taken to Victoria to assist in the

The Scotsman in Canada

business affairs of the Company during the excitement produced by the gold find of that year on the Pacific Coast. He was for a time in charge of Fort Victoria. Afterward his great financial ability led to his being sent to Washington to watch over the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company in its Oregon claims before the Commission arising out of the Brito-American Treaty of 1846. On his return to London, after a month's interval, McTavish was appointed by the Company in 1869 to succeed in Montreal Chief Factor Donald A. Smith, a noted Scotsman of whom we shall have much to say, on account of that gentleman having left Montreal to go as Commissioner in connection with the Riel Rebellion in Red River Settlement. McTavish died of heart disease in 1871, missed and regretted by many of his former associates and fellow-countrymen.

Along with Chief Factor Roderick Finlayson and Dugald McTavish was associated in 1861 on the Board of Management of the Hudson's Bay Company affairs on the Pacific Coast, Dr. William Fraser Tolmie, a Chief Factor and a worthy and respected representative of the Scottish race. Dr. Tolmie, residing in Victoria, continued to be one of the leading men connected with the Western Department of the Company's business, and long remained as one of the most intelligent and cultivated men of the "Old Trader Circle" of Vancouver Island.

Born in Edinburgh in 1825 and educated at the celebrated Edinburgh Academy, a bright

Great Scotsmen on the Pacific Coast

Scottish lad of eighteen, James A. Grahame had the pluck to sail through Hudson Bay to York Factory, proceed to Fort Garry (now Winnipeg) as an appreciative clerk of the Company, and to hasten on past Jasper House and thence overland to the Columbia River, and to reach Fort Vancouver. Omitting his eight months' stay at Fort Garry, young Grahame had accomplished by almost constant travelling a journey across the Atlantic Ocean, Hudson Bay, and the North American Continent. Thoroughly trained in the fur trade, Grahame's superior education gave him a great advantage in the service, although in excellence of temper and disposition he was surpassed by a number of his contemporaries. He became a Chief Factor on the Hudson's Bay Company in 1861. Being regarded as a faithful officer of the Company, he was an overseer at Norway House of the Company's affairs of the Northern District. After visiting London, Chief Factor Grahame was dispatched to British Columbia to superintend important affairs there. Recalled to London, he again came out to Victoria to have charge of the Western District. In 1874 he received his highest appointment of Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, with residence at Winnipeg. Here he remained for ten years, when he retired to live in Victoria, British Columbia, for the remainder of his days.

One of the most trustworthy Scotsmen ever in the Hudson's Bay Company was Alexander Munro. Born in Ross-shire and not far from Avoch, the

The Scotsman in Canada

residence of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, young Munro knew something of that noted family. Mr. Munro was Department Accountant of the Company's land upon the Pacific Coast. He retired to live in Victoria in 1890, and was not only the last of the Chief Factors stationed in British Columbia, but the Senior Chief Factor in the Hudson's Bay Company service. He continued to live for nearly twenty years in Victoria. He was a man thoroughly respected for his high character, business habits, benevolent disposition, and devotion to the Church of his fathers. Two of his sons-in-law, R. P. Rithet, Esq., and Captain John Irving, leading business men in British Columbia's business and public affairs, were long influential men in Victoria.