
CHAPTER VIII

SCOTTISH FOUNDERS OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

THE chief promoters of the Hudson's Bay Company were Englishmen of London. The Hudson's Bay Company was founded in 1669, and resulted from the application of two Huguenots, Raddison and Groseilliers, who had been thrown off by the French and who applied to the London merchants for capital and support. These merchants first sent out an American—Captain Gillam—who sailed in the ship *Nonsuch Ketch*, and on his return gave assurance that a profitable trade could be carried on in Hudson Bay. That no Scotsmen were in the Company in which they became a prominent factor a hundred years afterward is not difficult to explain. The field for Scottish enterprise was fully occupied, as John Hill Burton shows, in other parts of Europe. The account of the part which Scotsmen took in the seventeenth-century wars on the Continent reads like a fairy-tale. Sir Walter Scott's wonderfully correct character Dugald Dalgetty, in his "Legend of Montrose," was based on a real person, Robert Munro, a Scotsman, and his remarkable adventures with "McKay's" Scots Regiment in Den-

Founders of the Hudson's Bay Company

mark. Scotland was a poor country with an ambitious and self-reliant nobility. They did not fight as mere mercenaries, but they fought chiefly on the side with which they sympathised. The great Protestant leader in Switzerland, Gustavus Adolphus, in the Thirty Years' War drew out their admiration and support. There were thirteen regiments of Scotsmen, besides many other regiments, in his army where the officers were Scotsmen. Such honoured Scottish names as Hepburn, Hamilton, Turner, Lumsden, Forbes, Ruthven, Grant, the Leslies, the Lindsays, and many other Scottish leaders of the army of the great Swedish Lion of the North, gained imperishable fame. But they had no one to spare for the help of the English traders of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Similarly afterward in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 broke out, there were still none to seek the Arctic for a sphere of action; but Scotsmen followed the fortunes of the rightful King of Scotland whom we call the Pretender, and found opportunities of service on Continental battlefields, choosing usually the side towards which their sympathies went out. No Scottish heart can fail to beat with pride at the military success of the Earl Marischal Keith, who, though a Protestant, entered the service of Spain, but after remarkable achievements of diplomacy made peace with the House of Brunswick, received back his forfeited estates at Kintore, and purchased other estates, but

The Scotsman in Canada

returned to spend his life among the brilliant courts of the Continent.

The career of his younger brother, James Keith, was still more remarkable. Of him Carlyle says : "A man of Scottish type, the broad accent, with its sagacities and veracities, with its steadfastly fixed moderation, and its sly twinkles of defensive humour, is still audible to us through the foreign wrappings." He was engaged in the service of Spain, then in that of Russia, in internal affairs, afterwards in Turkey. He had great promotion there, though he received a knee-wound. In 1747 he joined the service of Frederick the Great, and after gaining almost every honour possible, being made a Field-Marshal, he ended his life as the true soldier deserves, being killed by a cannon-shot at Hochkirche in 1758. Four other Scottish Keiths gained military distinction.

General Patrick Gordon was a Scottish soldier of fortune who set his mark on the history of Russia and of Europe. Another example of marvellous Scottish success was that of Samuel Gray, a skipper of Inverkeithing, who entered the service of Russia and died in the eighteenth century as Admiral Samuel Carlouch Gray, Governor of Cronstadt and chevalier of five orders. He founded the Russian Navy. "As Governor of Cronstadt he was the originator of the fortifications there, and as a French author remarks, the Scotsman built those walls which years afterward checked the career of his fellow-countryman, Sir Charles Napier."

Founders of the Hudson's Bay Company

We have surely shown why for a hundred years after the great Hudson's Bay Company was founded the thousands of Scotsmen engaged in the battlefields of Europe did not find their way to the service of the great Fur Company, which was suited to their ambition and temperament. But we shall see that, after all, in this period Scottish interest was not wanting in the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company. James the Sixth of Scotland on becoming King of England set afoot a scheme of trade and settlement, as has been shown in Volume I., in Nova Scotia under Sir William Alexander. New World ideas pressed in on him, and the colony of Plymouth Rock and other places were begun in his reign. Thus Charles I. and Charles II. were ruling in England when New World problems were alive. When the promoters of the Hudson's Bay Company were anxious for support and needed a charter they sought the one man of sympathetic mind and court influence who could assist them. This was Prince Rupert, the grandson of the Scottish King James VI. Prince Rupert was the son of the Elector Palatine of Bohemia, and his mother was Elizabeth, the daughter of James VI. This connection led to the sympathy of the Scottish nation with that people, and a considerable body of Scottish adventurers, under Sir Andrew Grey, went to Bohemia to assist the Elector in his struggles.

Prince Rupert was born in 1619, and in the course of events became a resident of Britain and a member of the courts of Charles I. and

The Scotsman in Canada

Charles II. When the Charter was granted through Prince Rupert's influence to the London merchants to trade into Hudson Bay, the vast region was called Rupert's Land, after its patron, a prince having Scottish blood. Prince Rupert was the first Governor. He was likewise a patron of science.

The name of Rupert's Land has now passed away, and only remains as the name of the senior diocese of the Church of England, whose centre is Winnipeg. It is notable, as we shall see, that the present Archbishop Matheson and his predecessor, Archbishop Machray, of this diocese have both been of Scottish blood.

Charles II., who granted the Hudson's Bay Company Charter, was a cousin of Prince Rupert, and was likewise of Scottish descent, and was still claimed by the Scottish people as their King. While generally looked upon as a man without a serious side to his life, it is not to be forgotten that he gave a distinguished help to science, and was the founder of what may safely be called the most notable of all English societies, the Royal Society of London.

That the Hudson's Bay Company was a distinct object of interest to the Court at the time of its establishment, and not looked upon as a mere commercial company, is shown by the fact that whenever a dividend was made it was carried and presented in guineas to the King as accruing to the £300 worth of stock standing to his credit. On one occasion this amounted to 225 guineas and on another to 150 guineas.

Founders of the Hudson's Bay Company

On the death of Prince Rupert, in 1684, the position of Governor was bestowed on Prince James, Duke of York, afterwards James II., who was also grandson of the Scottish James VI. Prince James of York was a man of excellent administrative ability, and remained Governor for three years until, on the death of Charles II., he became King.

To have had a kingly patron and a royal Duke as Governor (and both of Scottish blood) was certainly a great advantage to the rising Company. This was followed by the Governorship of Lord Churchill, afterward Duke of Marlborough. But this was not all. After the dethronement of James II. came the united Sovereigns—William and Mary—both of whom, being descended from James VI., were of "Scottish blood." King William had just returned from his victories in Ireland, when a deputation of the Hudson's Bay Company waited upon him to present a loyal address along with the "golden fruit," which is not objectionable even to kings. Their address expressed the prayer "That in all your undertakings your Majesty may be as victorious as Cæsar, as beloved as Titus, and (after all) have the long and glorious Reign and Peaceful end of Augustus."

That the kings and princes, all of Scottish blood, should have given their countenance to the adventurers to Hudson Bay was surely a great assistance to the Company, and in a time when such patronage meant much, no doubt gave a

The Scotsman in Canada

prosperity and success to the Fur Company which might not otherwise have been attained.

But the time of royal favour seems to have passed away with the death of William III., and others began to covet the privileges given to the traders to Hudson Bay.

The opposition came from a man of undoubted ability and courage, who belonged to the Scotch-Irish element in British life which is included in this history. This was Arthur Dobbs, eldest son of Richard Dobbs of Castletown in the county of Antrim, in the North of Ireland. He was born in 1689, and was noted as a man of great personal energy. In his extensive writings he revived in the memory of the British people the early voyages to discover a path to the riches of the East; and appealed to the English imagination by picturing the interior of the North American Continent, with its vast meadows, splendid cascades, rich fur-bearing animals, and numberless races of Indians picturesquely dressed, as opening up a field, if they could be reached, of lucrative trade to the London merchants. Dobbs quoted at length from the accounts of the early voyages, and asked for the opening up of the North-West Passage. His appeal greatly disturbed the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1720 he became High Sheriff of Antrim, and sat in the Irish Parliament for Carrickfergus in 1727-60, was appointed Engineer-in-Chief and Surveyor-in-General by Sir Robert Walpole. He was a wealthy, kind, and liberal man.

Dobbs, with the co-operation of the British

Founders of the Hudson's Bay Company

Admiralty, had sent out two vessels, the *Furnace Bomb* and the *Discovery Pink*, under Captains Middleton and Moore respectively, to winter in Hudson Bay and make every effort to find the North-West Passage to the Pacific Ocean. Dobbs was not satisfied with the conduct of this expedition, declaring that the Hudson's Bay Company had diverted it in some way from its original purpose.

He discredited Middleton, and then published a book which caught the attention of the English people. Parliament was thus driven to vote £20,000 for discovery, and Dobbs with characteristic energy raised £10,000 more, with the result that the *Dobbs Galley* and the *California* were sent out in 1746. Henry Ellis has given us an account of this expedition, which returned in 1747 without having found the passage, but giving hope that it might yet be discovered.

All this led to the appointment by the House of Commons of the Parliamentary Committee of 1749, and there ensued a battle royal. Dobbs, however, did not succeed in getting Parliament to grant a new Charter to him and his friends; but he certainly woke the Hudson's Bay Company from its slumber and caused it to penetrate to the interior of Rupert's Land, to cut off the supplies of furs from the French, and save the trade to Britain.

As we shall see, this new departure all came about within a quarter of a century.