

CHAPTER XVI

SIMPSON—THE SCOTTISH EMPEROR OF THE FUR TRADERS

WHEN Colonel Coltman made his able report on the troubles between the North-West Company, the Hudson's Bay Company, and Lord Selkirk's colonists, it seemed a hopeless thing to expect any reconciliation or pacification of the irritated feelings of the contestants. But in 1820, within twenty-seven days of each other, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who had been the silent but effective source of the opposition on the part of the Nor'-Westers to the colony, and Lord Selkirk, who, as we have seen, sought peace and rest in the South of France, both died and left the rival Companies leaderless.

Besides this, more than a decade of storm and anxiety and failing trade had taught the combatants that the beginnings of strife are like the letting out of water. Among the Nor'-Westers was a scion of one of the Scottish fur-trading families of the North-West Company named Edward Ellice. His father, his brother, and himself were known within the fur-trading circle as "the bear and cubs." If the names were

