

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

The American Fur Trade in the Far West; a History of the Pioneer Trading Posts and Early Fur Companies of the Missouri Valley and the Rocky Mountains, and of the Overland Commerce with Santa Fe. Map and Illustrations. By Henry Martin Chittenden, Captain Corps of Engineers, U. S. A., Author of "The Yellowstone," 3 vols. pp. 1029, New York. Francis P. Harper, 1902.

President Jefferson and the promoters of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had originally no object in view but the acquisition of New Orleans as a port for American commerce and trade, the restrictions upon which by Spain had been excessively burdensome. The part of the Purchase which lies west of the Mississippi river was then but little known, with the exception of the small settlements at St. Genevieve and St. Louis, and was deemed of little value. It was in possession of savage and warlike tribes.

The author says that "for forty years after the Purchase the people of the United States were at a loss to know what to do with their new possession, and that the single attraction it offered in a commercial way was its wealth of furs, the gathering of which became, and for a long time remained, the only business of importance in this entire region." This is an extreme statement in view of the facts that within the forty years named the State of Louisiana, more than half of which is west of the Mississippi river, and the States of Missouri and Arkansas were admitted into the Union, and the Territory of Iowa organized; they having within that time gained an American population of nearly a million souls, who were employed in opening the wilderness and in the production of cotton, corn, tobacco, hemp, and other commodities of commerce. The extension of slavery into the States named was also a "business of importance in a commercial way," as it proved of fearful consequence to the Nation in a later day.

By the "Fur Trade in the Far West," however, the author means that west of the Missouri river. Of this he gives a very full and interesting account. The work covers a wide field and is the fruit of large research. It is written in a clear and animated style, in the historical spirit of fairness and justice to all parties, and contains many fine descriptions of scenes, persons, and events. The author was the engineer of the construction of the Floyd monument at Sioux City, a notice of which is on pp. 148, 177 of this volume of THE ANNALS. His history may not survive as long as that noble monument, but it will tell many generations, who shall dwell in the vast area between the Missouri river and the Pacific ocean, of the traders and trappers who blazed the way for its civilization.

The exploration of the "Far West" by fur traders receives historical consideration in these volumes for the first time. Many narratives have been published about it, but they were mostly written to make good stories, and abound in exaggerations. Irving's "Astoria" and "Captain Bonneville," and Greggs' "Commerce of the Prairies," are the most valuable

books on the subject hitherto. While recognizing much of value in Hubert Howe Bancroft's volumes, Captain Chittenden regards his account of Astoria and his abuse of Washington Irving as "a disgrace to American history." The error of the United States in not supporting the commercial enterprise of its citizens in Oregon is deplored. An enlightened and vigorous policy by our government would have saved the whole northwest coast to the United States. The abandonment of the original plan of our government to keep the Indian trade in the hands of its own agents is also deplored, as having opened the trade to adventurers who exploited the Indians. It proved a fatal error. Had the original system been maintained, it would have led the Indians to a better destiny; it would have averted the long and bloody wars and the corruption and bad faith which have made a hundred years of our Indian affairs a "Century of Dishonor." The fur business was mostly conducted where the law did not reach. Throughout its whole career, says the author, "the American Fur Company was an object of popular execration, as all grasping monopolies are. Small traders had no show; desperate measures were resorted to in order to get them out of the way, as the Standard Oil Company today crushes any rival enterprise that dares to show its head in any part of the United States." Congress prohibited, July 9, 1832, the introduction of liquors into the Indian country. But the traders evaded the law by all sorts of devices. They built a distillery in the Indian country. Forbidden to sell, they gave liquor to the Indians.

While these volumes are devoted to the American fur trade, they notice the British trade as carried on by the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company of Montreal, and the rivalry and interference of those companies with the American companies. They show the action of British traders in exciting Indian hostilities against the United States in the war of 1812, as previously in the Revolutionary war.

Only scanty reference is made to the fur trade as carried on from St. Louis in the days of Spanish rule. Laclede and Auguste Chouteau, the founders of St. Louis, were in that trade. Captain Chittenden describes in a charming way the rise of St. Louis as an offspring of the fur trade, and the growth of the city for three-fourths of a century as mainly dependent upon it. THE ANNALS, iii, 649, 650, has a copy of Julien Dubuque's account with A. Chouteau, Nov. 12, 1804, in which Dubuque is to pay six hundred dollars "in deer skins." Manuel Lisa was an interesting character from that period. He was a Spaniard, born in New Orleans, Sept. 8, 1772; he was associated with William Morrison and Pierre Menard, of Kaskaskia, Ill., in the "Missouri Fur Company." From 1807 to his death in 1820 he conducted annual expeditions up the Missouri river, and spent seven or eight winters in the wilderness. When British traders were exciting the tribes of the upper Missouri against the United States, he withdrew his establishments, and concentrated them near the mouth of the Platte, where he built Fort Lisa, which became at that time the most important post on the Missouri river. Those Indians who were under his influence, he said to Governor William Clark, of Missouri Territory, "did not

arm against the Republic, but against Great Britain, and struck the Iowas, the allies of that power." At the time peace was proclaimed, forty chiefs had arranged with him to carry an expedition of several thousand warriors against the Sacs and Foxes of the Mississippi, who were at war with the United States, and silence them at once. Upon resigning his commission as sub-Indian agent, he wrote to Governor Clark: "In ceasing to be in the employment of the United States, I shall not be less devoted to its interests. I have suffered enough in person and property under a different government, to know how to appreciate the one under which I now live."

The fur trade in Iowa is not in the compass of these volumes. In the appendix, however, is a letter from Thomas Forsyth to Lewis Cass, Secretary of War, written the year before the Black Hawk war, showing how it was then carried on. The facts are of interest in Iowa history. We make an extract:

St. Louis, October 24, 1831.

The fur trade of the countries on the Mississippi as high up as above the Falls of St. Anthony, and on the Missouri river to the Sioux establishment some distance above Council Bluffs, continues to be monopolized by the American Fur Company, who have divided the country into departments, as follows:

Russell Farnham ("a Green Mountain boy, a typical frontiersman of the better class," died of cholera at St. Louis, Oct. 30, 1832) and George Davenport (ANNALS iii, 392) have all of the country of the Sac and Fox Indians up to Dubuque's mines, not including the Fox Indians at that place; also the Winnebago and other Indians on the lower parts of Rock river, and the Iowa Indians, who live near the Black Snake Hills (where St. Joseph, Mo., now is).

Joseph Rolette ("a leading merchant and trader at Prairie du Chien," died 1842) has all of the Indians from Dubuque's mines to above St. Anthony's Falls, and up St. Peter's river to its source, and the Indians on the Wisconsin and upper parts of Rock river.

John P. Cabanne's division has the Indians on the Missouri as high up as a point above the Council Bluffs, including the Pawnees of the interior. McKenzie, Laidlow and Lamont have the Sioux of the Missouri.

The American Fur Company send their goods from New York to St. Louis, which are sent up the Missouri river to the different posts in a small steamboat. At those places the furs are received on board, and brought down to St. Louis, where they are counted, repacked, and shipped to New Orleans and New York, where they are unpacked, made up into bales, and sent to Europe, except some of the finest, particularly otter skins, which are sent to China. Cabanne and McKenzie take up their goods in the American Fur Company's steamboats. Rolette procures his goods at Mackinaw, takes them via Green Bay to Prairie du Chien, where they are assorted and forwarded to the different posts. Farnham and Davenport take their goods from St. Louis to the Indian villages in keel-boats.

The traders take to the Indian country blankets, calicos, cottons, rifles, guns, powder, flints, lead, knives, looking glasses, vermilion, kettles, beaver and muskrat traps, bridles, spurs, needles, thread, wampum, horses, tomahawks, half-axes, etc., etc. They give credit to the Indians in the same manner as for the last sixty or eighty years, charging very high prices. The following are the prices charged the Sac and Fox Indians, whose present population exceeds six thousand. They are compelled to take goods at these high prices, for they cannot do without them, but would starve:

| | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Blanket..... | \$10.00, | cost..... | \$ 3.52 |
| Rifle | 30.00, | cost..... | 13.00 |
| Powder, one pound..... | 4.00, | cost..... | .20 |
| | <u> </u> | Expenses..... | <u> </u> 4.18 |
| | \$44.00 | | \$20.90 |

Thus if the Indian pays his debt, the trader is a gainer of more than 100 per cent. He takes for a dollar a large buckskin (six pounds), or two doeskins, four muskrats, and four or five raccoons; or allows three dollars for an otterskin, or two dollars a pound for beaver, and counts it a tolerable business if he receives one-half of the amount he gave credit for. The American Fur Company ought to be satisfied. There is a man now in this city (General William H. Ashley, founder of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company), who receives annually a sum from that company on condition that he will not enter the Indian country. They have monopolized the whole trade on the frontiers, together with the Indian annuities, and everything an Indian has to sell, and claim a large amount for debts due them for non-payment of credits given to the Indians at different periods.

In my intercourse with the Indians for forty years I never found that coercive measures had any good effect with them, but that conciliatory measures always tended to produce every purpose required.

THOMAS FORSYTH, Indian Agent.

Among the many graphic and vivid descriptions in these volumes we may refer to those on the Oregon Trail, pp. 460-3; the Rocky Mountains, pp. 725-31; the Mountain Valleys, pp. 743-50; the Great American Desert, pp. 754-5; Prairie Storms and Fires, pp. 755-6; the Missouri river, pp. 762-774; the Buffalo and the Beaver, pp. 809-822; the Sioux Nations, pp. 863-7.

Of the Iowa Indians Captain Chittenden says that they "sprang with the Otoes and the Missouris from a common stock which was closely related to the Siouan family. What their course of migration was is unknown, but they had crossed the Mississippi before they fell under the observation of white men. The pristine home of these Indians was what is now the State which bears their name. They were found within the historic period in almost every part of that region. Once a powerful tribe, they had been ruined by the smallpox and the Sioux, and were a small tribe of only 800 people when the American traders opened relations with them. They traded principally at Robidoux post at Black Snake Hills, where St. Joseph, Mo., now stands, and also to some extent at the Council Bluffs," p. 874.

The "Fort Croghan," which the author places "in Omaha," p. 950, was on the east side of the Missouri river, in the eastern part of what is now the city of Council Bluffs. It was built in 1839. ANNALS OF IOWA, first series, ix. 526, third series, v. 383.

WILLIAM SALTER.

History of the Constitutions of Iowa. By Benjamin F. Shambaugh, Ph. D., Professor of Political Science in the University of Iowa. Published by the Historical Department of Iowa, Des Moines: 1902.

The publication of a history is an event. Anybody with access to annals and history, with a knack of writing and with bread to eat while he

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