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978-1-108-07937-2 - New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799–1814: Volumes 1

Edited by Elliott Coues

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New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest

During the 1890s Elliott Coues (1842–1899), one of America's greatest ornithologists, edited several exploration narratives about the American Northwest including Lewis and Clark's *Travels*. Coues tracked down the manuscript journals of two of Lewis and Clark's contemporaries, fur trader Alexander Henry (1765–1814) and geographer David Thompson (1770–1857), employees of the Northwest Company. Coues' abridged and edited version of Henry's text, accompanied by notes that draw heavily on Thompson's scientific records, appeared in 1897 in three volumes; in this reissue the index volume is included in Volume 2. Despite the deep prejudice evident in Henry's writing, Coues judged it a reliable account of his unscrupulous business dealings, and of the harsh realities he observed among many different First Nations peoples. Volume 1 covers the period from 1799 to 1808, when Henry travelled along the Red River and set up the Pembina River trading post.

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*The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry
and of David Thompson, 1799–1814*

VOLUME 1

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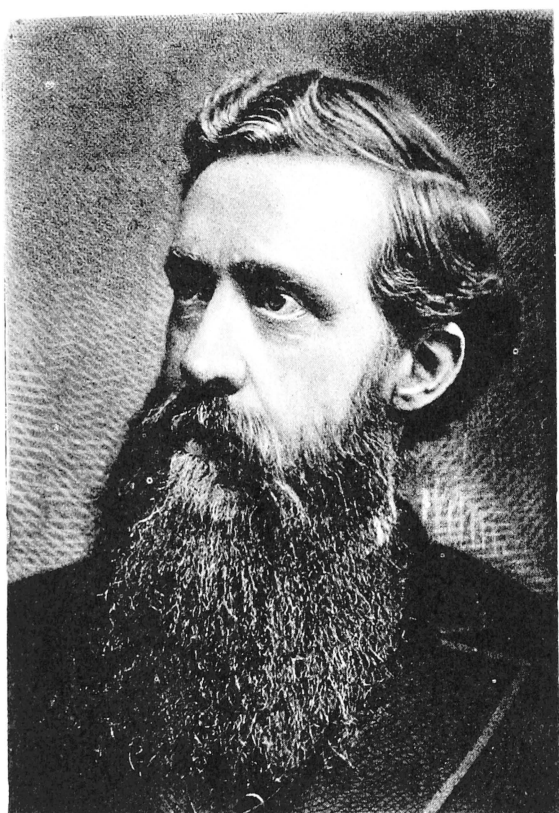
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*NEW LIGHT ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF
THE GREATER NORTHWEST*

THE MANUSCRIPT JOURNALS OF
ALEXANDER HENRY
Fur Trader of the Northwest Company

AND OF
DAVID THOMPSON
Official Geographer and Explorer of the same Company

1799-1814

**Exploration and Adventure among the Indians on the Red, Saskatchewan,
Missouri, and Columbia Rivers**

EDITED WITH COPIOUS CRITICAL COMMENTARY BY

ELLIOTT COUES

Editor of "Lewis and Clark," of "Pike," etc., etc.

VOL. I
The Red River of the North

NEW YORK
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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

ALLEXANDER HENRY THE YOUNGER, whose Journal of 1799–1814 forms the main body of the present work, is a person of whom hardly anything has been known hitherto, and one who therefore requires formal introduction to the readers he may reasonably hope to win on this, his first appearance in public, as an autobiographer.

The author of Henry's Journal must not be confounded with that other Alexander Henry—the Elder, as the latter may be called, now that there are two writers of the identical name—whose well-known *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760 and 1776* was published at New York by I. Riley in 1809, and who died at Montreal April 14th, 1824: see *Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository*, Vol. II., Nos. 10 and 11, April and May, 1824, for biographical data. The two men were related as nephew and uncle, and led similar lives in like scenes under identical occupations; but their respective narrations have no connection with each other. Like his elder relative, the younger Henry was a fur trader among the American Indians; and during the period over which his Journal extends he was one of the famous “Northmen,” as they used to be called—that is, one of the partners in the celebrated old Northwest Company of commercial adventurers, whose restless activities and indomitable energies covered a continent with the most formidable rivals the Hudson Bay Company ever encountered. The annals of American adventure may be searched in vain for more picturesque pages than those inscribed with the daring

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and thrilling exploitations of these pioneers in penetrating and occupying the vast region which may be styled the "Greater Northwest."

The most commanding figure among the Northmen is Sir Alexander McKenzie, whose double laurels are those of first reaching the Arctic ocean by way of the great river which still bears his name, and of first reaching the Pacific ocean overland through British America; and whose work, originally published in 1801, has become classic. In that year our untitled Alexander Henry was established as a winterer or *hivernant* in a post he had built on the Red River of the North, and engaged in the humble routine of traffic with the Indians, whom he cheated and debauched as a matter of course, with assiduity and success, upon strict business principles and after the most approved methods. Meanwhile, however, he fell into another habit, of which the Northmen were seldom guilty; for he took to the pen, and at his leisure—that is, when he was not serving his coppery customers with diluted alcohol or other articles they desired to secure at fabulous prices—he kept a journal. In this literary habit he persevered until the very day before his death; and this veracious chronicle, in which nothing whatever is extenuated, for aught there be set down in malice, is now before us. It may not be of the heroic order; but it mirrors life in a way Mr. Samuel Pepys might envy, could he compare his inimitable Diary with this curious companion-piece of *causerie*, and perceive that he who goes over the sea may change his sky, but not his mind. There is said to be a great deal of human nature in mankind; certainly our author had his share of it, and so had all the people in his book, to judge from the way that English, Scotch, French, American, and Indian characters are shown up under his unterrified hand.

In the course of the fifteen years during which Henry's journalistic devotion is witnessed in these pages he traveled from Lake Superior to the Pacific, with protracted intervals of residence at various points in his long voy-

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aging. His commercial ventures caused adventures through the Provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Assiniboia, Keewatin, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, in the present Dominion of Canada; and, in the United States, through Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. In the region of the Red river his dealings were with Ojibways and other Indians of Algonquian lineage, whilst his warrings were with Sioux; along the Saskatchewan he trafficked with Crees, with Assiniboines, with Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegans, Atsinas, and some of the Athapaskan tribes, especially Sarcees; on Columbian waters his commerce was with Chinooks, Clatsops, and many other aborigines of the Pacific slope. He was once on terms with the Mandans and their associates of the Missouri, and visited the Cheyennes in their company. So far from being peculiar to Henry's case was such an extensive acquaintance with Indians, this was the common fortune of the Northmen; but few of them have recorded their experiences, for the gun was oftener than the pen in the hands of even those whose souls soared above a beaver-skin. An always sordid and not seldom nefarious environment, during dreary months of isolation and desolation, alternating with periodical peregrinations of immense extent and arduousness—conditions of extreme personal peril from hunger, cold, and savagery—experiences whose deadening monotony was modified mainly by deadlier danger—such are not circumstances conducive to literary accomplishment. An Irving's easy-chair is an easier way of wooing the muse to exploit the romance of Northman or Southman, and the world applauds an Astoria. But what of the actors themselves in such stern realities, whose glamourless lives, as a rule, survived illusions only to find oblivion their finality? When one of these speaks for himself, we can but listen to his words; the world is never too busy to hear a genuine adventurer's own story of his adventures. So it happens that—to mention a few of those whose works in this special field of fur-trade literature do follow and live

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after them—McKenzie is perennial ; so are Samuel Hearne, Edouard Umfreville, Arthur Dobbs, Alexander Henry the Elder, Daniel Williams Harmon, Gabriel Franchère, Ross Cox, Alexander Ross, John Tanner. Among these worthies, and with others who could be named, all of them closely connected with our author, some of them his personal associates, Alexander Henry the Younger has hitherto failed to stand, not because he was no author, but simply because his work was born out of time and long seemed to have perished with him.

Henry's Journal has slept for nearly a century, during which his memory has been almost effaced. But I think it will now take its rightful place among the most important contributions ever made to the inside history of the fur trade in British America in general, and of the Northwest Company in particular—even McKenzie's hitherto unrivaled work may need to look to its laurels. Henry the Elder having been one of the first whites who penetrated to the plains of the Saskatchewan, after the French *régime* and before there was any Northwest Company, it is fitting that another of the same name, Alexander Henry the Younger, should take up the theme, and bring the same subject down nearly to the close of the Northmen's organized existence. The thread of his narration would doubtless have been spun to the end of that organization, had it not fallen short through the shears of inflexible Atropos.

The fact that, as already intimated, Henry's invaluable Journal has never before seen the light, would surprise no judge of literary material who should inspect the manuscript which has served as the basis of the present work. No printer could handle the copy as it stands ; no publisher would be justified in undertaking to bring it out ; and the task of redaction was clearly one which called for a combination of hardihood and hard work from which any editor might well shrink, hopeless of successful accomplishment. Piqued, perhaps, by the latent possibilities of this case, stimulated to the endeavor by a very genuine interest

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in all that relates to the history of American pioneering, and observing that the Henry period was precisely the one with which I had become most familiar in consequence of similar work done in other connections, I undertook to shape Henry's Journal for presentation to the public. It is not for me to say anything of the merit or demerit of my own performance; but the manuscripts upon which I worked are so nearly unknown that an account of them becomes a bibliographical necessity.

Of Henry's original notebooks or diaries, penned *manu sua*, I know nothing—not even whether or no they be still extant; I have never seen his handwriting, even to the extent of his signature. Henry's Journal, as we have it, is what is known as “the Coventry copy,” *manu aliena*, penned by George Coventry, about the year 1824; for the date “Montreal, February 20th, 1824,” is set as a sort of colophon at the end. This writing is furnished with a formal title-page, worded “Journal of Alexander Henry, Esq.,” and so forth, and signed “George Coventry.” A page of “Preliminary Remarks” speaks of Mr. Henry in the third person and notes his decease. The whole copy makes ostensibly 1,642 pages, as per pagination of the folios; the paper is of legal cap size, rather larger than is now usual, written for the most part on both sides of the sheets, and bound in two thick volumes now preserved in the Library of Parliament at Ottawa. By the official permission of the authorities, courteously granted at my request, and by business arrangements made by my publisher with Mr. L. P. Sylvain, the assistant librarian, I obtained a clerical copy of the whole of this manuscript, folio for folio, with the exception of certain insignificant portions, notably meteorological tables, which I did not care to use. The manuscript which I received is duly certified by Mr. Sylvain to be literally true to copy; and great care was taken to produce a faithful transcript.

The identification and authenticity of the Coventry copy are established beyond peradventure of a doubt. We can

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also settle the question which may arise in some minds whether these manuscripts represent exactly what Henry himself wrote, or are what Mr. Coventry wrote out for him, from original memoranda. The Coventry documents attest their own genuineness by internal evidence which enables us to form a safe and sure conclusion. Thus, for instance: as explained in a note on my printed p. 747, certain folios of the manuscript retrace identical dates, with duplication in substance of what is said, but in an entirely different style of composition. One of these duplicates agrees in every peculiarity of locution with the main body of the writing, and is thus presumptively Henry's own. The replica, which is obviously not Henry's, but Coventry's own, is of the nature of editorial rewriting, and agrees exactly with certain other writings known to be Coventry's, who must have been intending, when he penned these passages, to edit his Henry materials for publication—as the replica is fitted with chapter heads, furnished with something in the nature of a preface, and adorned with religious reflections on the goodness of God in drowning so estimable a man as Mr. Henry—in fine, it is editorially dressed for the press. None of *this* matter has proven available for my own purposes, and none of it has been used; but its existence is a boon, as it enables us to decide that the main body of this writing is a faithful and well-intended transcript of Henry's own Journal, made by one so profoundly ignorant of the whole subject of which it treats that he could hardly do anything else than copy what he found, in the most servile and wooden-headed manner imaginable; in other words, he did not know enough of what he was about to make other than clerical errors, and therefore could have manufactured nothing.

But the comforting assurance I felt, in handling these documents, that I had to do with genuine as well as authentic materials, in substance and practically in form Henry's own, did not resolve my fears regarding the outcome of my editorial enterprise. To begin with, there was

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too much copy for a book of reasonable dimensions ; it needed to be “boiled down” by at least one-third. In the second place, Henry in his writing used language such as no fur trader ever *spoke*—nor anyone else, unless English be indeed a grammarless tongue ; for solecism seldom failed to supersede syntax in his maze of verbiage, and sense was always liable to be lost in a wilderness of words. The composition seemed to me to be that of a man who knew what he wanted to say, and could talk to the point about it, but always wrote round about it, as if he had a notion that writing was something different from speaking, needing bigger words and more of them. Thus, our author went all over the country, but always “proceeded” in his Journal. He saw a great deal, in fact, but never failed to “perceive” or “observe” it when he wrote about it ; and whenever he had to get ready to go somewhere, he was likely to write : “I now once more found myself again under the necessity of being obliged to commence preparing for my intended departure immediately.” Imagining that few readers would have the patience to follow him to the end of journeys begun in that fashion, I concluded to take what grammatical liberties with the manuscript I saw fit. Deletion of simply superfluous words, and of sheerly tautological phrases, made it shrink about one-fourth, with corresponding increase in tensile strength of fiber. Another revision, in the course of which almost every sentence was recast in favor of such grammatical propriety as could be impressed upon the composition without entirely rewriting it, reduced the copy to about two-thirds of its original dimension ; and the upshot of all this “blue penciling” was a textual compromise between what I had found written and what I might have preferred to write, had the composition been my own. Literary elegance being clearly out of the question, however cunningly I might put in any little dabs and touches, I was perforce satisfied to make my author say what he meant to say in plain English, letting him go on with equal pace to the massacre of his

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mother-in-law or the setting of his yellow hen on thirteen eggs. Closely as the composition may resemble a school-boy's, the literalism is that of a mature mind. Henry took himself very seriously indeed, and we must take him at the foot of the letter.

The foregoing explanation, in the nature of semi-apology for the liberty I have taken with historical documents, will not be deemed superfluous if it serves to satisfy the mind of any would-be critic who, on comparing my printed pages with the manuscript in the Library of Parliament, observes with surprise or regret their wide discrepancy in language. I do not pretend to have printed that manuscript. On the contrary, I have used it as material to be worked up; and I have yet to state what further compression of the bulk of the original was required, and has been effected, to bring the whole within a desired compass. For I have condensed to the utmost some parts of the Journal, and even have canceled certain entries of little or no present significance. Such extremely condensed or omitted passages relate chiefly to trivial incidents of trade so much alike that one samples the whole, and incessant repetition would be tiresome; to details of game killed for the support of the posts; and to weather-reports. Even the most modern meteorological tables interest few persons, and I suppose none now care much about the weather as it was a hundred years ago. Yet I have set myself bounds against transgressing upon my author in this particular, for everything about the weather that seemed to bear upon the thread of his narrative, as affecting his movements, as influencing the fauna or flora, as touching acceleration or retardation of the seasons, has been piously preserved. Despite the very great reduction and other modification to which the manuscript has necessarily been subjected in passing through my hands, I do not think that I have omitted or obscured a single matter of fact of the slightest significance, or subordinated the author's individuality to my own. I have simply caused him to tell his own story as plainly as he evidently wished

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to tell it, and supposed that he was telling it ; and no doubt the resulting picture is all the clearer for the polishing. I can vouch for its inviolate fidelity to fact throughout. The trader and traveler can be followed with perfect confidence across the continent. There is not, to my knowledge, a single statement in the book that can be seriously questioned on the score of veracity. Devoid as he was of certain accomplishments desirable in one who aspires to authorship, and writing as he did for no eye but his own, Henry certainly produced a remarkable work, of solid and permanent value. It is one which should have appeared long ago, and taken its rightful place in contemporaneous literature.

Thus far in explanation of my connection with this work I have appeared simply as my author's literary censor—mainly in mere matters of grammar, but also with some further privileges of the blue pencil. But more agreeable and significant functions than those of the schoolmaster abroad attach to my editorial work in the present instance ; and how I have tried to do my whole duty as a critic and commentator remains to be said.

Intending to interpret Henry to a generation remote from his own, and remembering the measure of success attained in the similar cases of Lewis and Clark, and of Pike, respectively—for these American explorers were Henry's contemporaries, who cultivated in the United States a field of adventure which may be compared with that occupied by Henry in the British possessions—I undertook to put upon Henry's Journal an extensive critical commentary, from the standpoint of our present knowledge. This seemed even more desirable in the present case than in those of the American explorers just named, inasmuch as he was unknown, they were famous ; inasmuch as his work had never appeared, while theirs had already passed through many editions ; and I should therefore be plowing virgin ground instead of formerly cultivated soil that had long lain fallow. Satisfactory equipment for this undertaking could only be acquired by going over the whole field historically.

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At the conclusion of protracted and diligent study I found myself in the possession of some 4,500 memorandum cards, alphabetically arranged by subjects, and collectively constituting a sort of private cyclopedia of information concerning the Northwest Company, the X. Y. Company, the fur trade of those days, the bourgeois, their voyageurs and other engagés, their Indian customers, their trading-posts, their canoe-routes—and what not in the way of biography, geography, ethnography, and natural history. Most of this material was found to fit in with Henry's narrative to a nicety; and even the residuum, touching points which Henry did not happen to bring up, was available for incorporation alphabetically in the Index to the work. Most of my information was drawn afresh from its original sources; but I also utilized the labors of modern historical authorities, such as Masson and Tassé, each of whom has recently given us an invaluable work upon subjects germane to our present enterprise. It is not probable that the name of any person, either of the Northwest or of the X. Y. Company, which appears in either of these authors, has escaped me, and it is certain that many more than have ever appeared in print before are given in the present work; so that the result, in this one biographical particular, represents a closer approach to a complete gazetteer of the personnel of the two companies, from the humblest of their engagés to the most redoubtable leaders of those great enterprises, than has hitherto been given to the public. The difficulty of identifying personal names in these old records is well known to be very great, for various reasons; most of those concerned in these affairs were obscure individuals, whose memory is now but a name, oftentimes so unsettled in orthography that a dream of the shadow of smoke were scarcely more elusive; and in the records which reach us, furthermore, it is often only a surname that appears, though it may have been, and usually was, borne by several different persons. I have taken the utmost pains in this particular; but I am sure that in my notes, as well as in Henry's

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text, different individuals are sometimes confounded under the same name, and again, that the same person figures in some cases as two or more, under various versions of his proper name, to say nothing of nicknames or aliases. Yet I suspect that the alphabetical list of personal names which appear in my Index is at once the most extensive and the least faulty that has ever been published—though far from completion or perfection it certainly is.

To turn from biographical to geographical considerations, I may next allude to the great care I have exercised in identifying the localities named in Henry's travel or residence, and in giving the modern equivalents of the mostly obsolete nomenclature he uses. His list of place-names is remarkably interesting, the designations then in vogue being dominated by the influence of the earlier French *régime*, which continues to be felt to the present day, though of course less markedly than it was in his time. No Fort des Prairies now exists by such name, but the thing still flourishes in the shape of the H. B. Company's store at Edmonton, and the very gradual process of supplanting the old French terminology will probably never be quite completed. Geographical synonymy is a subject which for many years has occupied my attention; it is a field more fruitful of historical data than most persons would suppose, and one which has never been thoroughly worked out for any considerable area of Western or Northwestern America. The trouble seems to be that the best geographers have seldom been historians, while historians so good that they would blush to be caught afoul of a date wrong by a day are often found miles out of the way in the location of their events. Henry was no geographer, in a technical sense, and not much of an explorer, even; he never traveled for health or pleasure, but always on business, and made no actual discoveries. Yet he was a great traveler, who covered an immense area both by land and water, with a good eye for topography en route; he was also well able to say where he went and how he got there. Consequently, I have found

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little difficulty in trailing him through all the intricacies of his canoe-routes—that wonderful system of waterways, the like of which may be looked for rather in the myth of the Dædalian labyrinth than in the geography of any country but that which he traversed—over the limitless prairie of a Dakota, even into the treacherous sphagnum of a muskeg. Henry is not quite so easy to trail as Lewis and Clark are, but he is easier by far to follow than Pike, for example; and any knack of going by “sign” I may have acquired by former experiences has stood me in good stead in the present case. Henry’s routes may be recovered with almost absolute precision, and he made few camps in all his journeyings that I cannot now set with hardly any probable error.

Few men who have ever put pen to ethnographical paper have had more extensive, varied, and intimate personal acquaintance than Henry acquired with Indians in the course of his long experiences as a trader among many different tribes of distinct linguistic stocks, from the Algonquians and Siouans of his earlier experiences, through others of the Saskatchewan and Missouri, to the many different Pacific families he finally met. Intimately connected with his customers as he was, thoroughly versed in their characters, habits, and manners as he became, he had no sympathy with them whatever. They were simply the necessary nuisances of his business, against whom his antipathies were continually excited and not seldom betrayed in his narrative. He detested an Indian as much as he despised a Franco-Canadian voyageur, or hated a rival of the H. B. or X. Y. Company. How much of “sweetness and light” is likely to seep and shine through the private pages of a man whose prejudices were invincible and sometimes violent, of one who was quite out of touch with his own environment, the reader may judge for himself; as he may also observe how chary and wary I have been, as a rule, in expressing any opinion of the moral of a story which shows up the seamy side of things so persistently and sometimes so obtrusively. That is no *métier* of mine—who am I, that I should set up to

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keep my brother's conscience? I have left the *risqué* passages much as they stand in copy, only Bowdlerizing some expressions that were doubtless current in the blunt speech of the trading-post, but would hardly bear print now. The book is not *virginibus puerisque*, and I suppose few such, if any, will ever read it. Aside from any question of chaste taste, which after all belongs in the background of historical relations like the present, and need agitate no one unduly, I am persuaded that Henry's disillusionment, his practical pessimism, his entire lack of imagination, and his insistence upon bare fact through sheer infertility of invention, have conspired to a singularly veracious contribution to ethnology in all that he has to say of his Indians. They are the genuine aboriginal articles, not the mock heroes of Leatherstocking romance. Henry's is an absolutely unvarnished tale, in which no question of a fig-leaf is raised, for the reason that his Indians wear their breech-clouts or leave them off according to their own convenience, without regard to our own ideas of propriety. I could add nothing to such a picture as this, and would not if I could; should anyone desire a revelation of almost inconceivable and quite unspeakable nastiness, let him read, for example, the transparent pages of Samuel Hearne, and see how completely they corroborate Henry, as far as the latter goes—for he leaves unsaid much more than Hearne does; but with the impersonal and purely ethnic aspects of this case I have dealt from the standpoint of to-day, in giving the accepted classification and nomenclature of all the Indian tribes and linguistic families of which our author treats.

Henry was familiar, of course, with all the animals whose furs or pelts had any commercial value, or whose flesh was staple of food; but he was no naturalist, and there is little natural history in his book, aside from his extremely interesting accounts of the buffalo and other large game. In zoology and botany, therefore, there was little for me to do; but I have identified and supplied the technical names of nearly all the animals and plants mentioned in his narrative.

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No account of my connection with this work would approach desirable completeness did I not speak emphatically of the use I have made for the present purpose of the original manuscripts of DAVID THOMPSON, the celebrated astronomer, geographer, explorer, and discoverer—in a word, the scientist—first of the Hudson Bay Company, then, during the whole period covered by Henry, of the Northwest Company, and later still of the International Boundary Commission which ran the line between the British possessions and the United States. I have so effectually bound up Thompson's life-work in the Greater Northwest with that of Henry, that he becomes virtually co-author of the present publication, upon the title-page of which his name appears in simple justice to his share of the performance—albeit the main text consists solely of Henry's Journal, Thompson's contributions being, like my own, confined to the foot-notes.

The original Thompson documents, in his own handwriting, are preserved intact in the archives of the Surveys Branch of the Crown Lands Department of Ontario, at Toronto, where I was courteously given free access to and use of them, at different times in 1894 and 1895, by official vote of the members of the Cabinet of the Ontario Legislature. The whole span of these precious records is from 1784 to 1850, as represented by the extreme dates of the successive entries in the series of about 40 volumes, mostly of foolscap size, and for the most part averaging, perhaps, 100 pages to a volume; besides which there are sundry unbound pieces—I made a minute analysis of the whole, as a bibliographer, but that need not now detain us. There is also one very large map, *manu sua*, covering the region from the Great Lakes to the Pacific. Some of the most important volumes relate to Thompson's life after 1812, when he was engaged in highly responsible professional duties upon the Boundary Survey just named; but with these we have no present concern. Thompson's intimate connection with the scenes of Henry's Journal was in

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earlier years, say 1789–1812, during which he antedated or codated Henry on every one of the routes which the latter ever pursued. The Henry and Thompson trails, so far as the former's extend, are thus conterminous, and to some extent coincident in dates. Finding frequent mention of Thompson by Henry, I recognized the close relation of much of the Thompson manuscript with the whole of Henry's, and consequently made a careful study of the former in connection with the latter. Thompson's records from the winter of 1789–90, when he was at Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan, to Aug. 12th, 1812, when he left Fort William on Lake Superior for Montreal, thus ending forever his explorations in the Greater Northwest, are voluminous and almost complete; there is hardly a break in the day-by-day entries for these 23 years, and even in the few instances where the diary is interrupted for brief periods, we know by other evidence pretty well where Thompson was. I worked for several weeks at Toronto, in 1894 and 1895, studying these manuscripts and preparing a minute digest of Thompson's Journals for the period said—1789–1812. The net result of this research, in so far as it bears in any way upon Henry, will be found embodied in my notes.

It has long been a matter of regret among those versed in the history and geography of the Greater Northwest that this luminous record of the life-work of so modest, so meritorious an explorer as Thompson was—of so scientific a surveyor and so great a discoverer—has never seen the light, either under government patronage or by private enterprise. I had serious thoughts at one time of undertaking to edit Thompson, at least for the period down to 1812; and I reluctantly abandoned the idea only after examination of the materials had satisfied me that I could advise no publisher to bring out such a work, as it would be expensive beyond any reasonable prospect of reimbursement. The difficulty in the case is, that so much of the manuscript consists of astronomical calculations, traverse-

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tables, and other mathematical data, without which the matter would cease to be Thompsonian, yet with which it would be largely unreadable and quite unsalable. Even the ostensibly narrative portions are notably barren of incident beyond simple statements of arrivals, departures, and the like; consisting in the main of dated entries which cover little else than figuring on the formal courses and distances of the routes pursued, with an eye fixed on geodesy and geography. It is true that Thompson was a fur trader, and a partner of the Northwest Company, actively engaged in those commercial ventures upon which his livelihood depended in those days, exactly as Henry was; but, unlike the latter, he had no turn for trade, and never minded the shop. Business was Henry's religion, and science was Thompson's; each worshiped his own god and ciphered out his own salvation with equal method and precision—the one figuring out pelt from pelt, the other casting up accounts of geodetic points. The irony of the event is the world's revenge on David Thompson; but the world can never be allowed to forget the discoverer of the sources of the Columbia, the first white man who ever voyaged on the upper reaches and main upper tributaries of that mighty river, the pathfinder of more than one way across the Continental Divide from Saskatchewan and Athabaskan to Columbian waters, the greatest geographer of his day in British America, and the maker of what was then by far its greatest map—that “Map of the North-West Territory of the Province of Canada. From actual Survey during the Years 1792 to 1812,” as the legend goes. This map has never before, to my knowledge, been published as a whole or in any part; and I have therefore the pleasure of calling attention to the fact that three sections of it, covering most of the immense territory over which we now accompany Henry, have been traced in facsimile under my direction expressly for the present work, and should be found in the cover-pocket of Vol. III., together with a fourth sheet, which reproduces the original

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legend of the whole. These several pieces are reduced to about one-half the size of the original; in one or two cases, where the bold lettering of a name carried part of it beyond the sections transcribed, it has been independently reduced by the draughtsman; Mr. Harper's copyright of this imprint has been added to the legend; otherwise the facsimile is perfect, for no marks appear upon these sheets save those placed on the original map by Thompson's own hand.

With the voluminous official archives above described must not be confounded a small batch of Thompson's papers recently offered for sale by private parties in Toronto. This manuscript is authentic and genuine; being a summary autobiography which Thompson wrote very late in life, perhaps about 1850, apparently in hopes of being able to publish it. Thompson died Feb. 16th, 1857, at the very advanced age of nearly 87 years, having been born Apr. 30th, 1770. The handwriting shows painful evidence of senility, and I should hesitate to trust to his memory for dates and other details requiring precision of statement. The article is extremely interesting, and would prove very valuable should it be checked, as it easily might be, by comparison with his original Journals. I understand that this manuscript has passed into the excellent hands of Mr. J. B. Tyrrell, of the Geological Survey of Canada, well known for his own extensive and important explorations in the Dominion. Mr. Tyrrell has already given us *A Brief Narrative of the Journeys of David Thompson in North-western America*, which was read before the Canadian Institute Mar. 3d, 1888, and published in advance of the Proceedings by permission of the Council, as an 8vo pamphlet of pp. 28, Toronto, 1888. It is much to be hoped that this writing may appear under Mr. Tyrrell's very competent editorship.

To the statement made in opening this Preface, that Alexander Henry the Younger is an unknown man, excep-

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tion may be taken to the extent of recognizing the fact that extracts from certain early portions of the Coventry copy of the Journal were read by Mr. C. N. Bell before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, and published as Transaction No. 31, 8vo, pp. 9, Winnipeg, 1888. Beyond these extracts, relating to Henry's residence on the Red river in and before 1801, I am not aware that any portion of his manuscript has ever appeared in print before the present occasion. A copy of that part which relates to his Mandan tour was for some time in the hands of Rev. E. D. Neill of St. Paul, Minn., by whom it was made over to me unconditionally, a short time before his death. This fragment interested me so much that I immediately prepared it for publication, and had actually handed it in to Mr. Harper, when I was induced to undertake the whole work.

It will be to consult the convenience of most readers to give here a concise account of the three parts into which Henry's Journal is naturally divisible. Part I. is conterminous with Vol. I. Parts II. and III. together form Vol. II. The Index alone makes Vol. III.

Part I., which I have entitled "The Red River," runs from 1799 to 1808. After an opening fragment, Henry is found en route from Grand Portage, on Lake Superior, and we follow him closely along Rainy river, through the Lake of the Woods, down Winnipeg river, and through the lake of that name, to the Red river, up which he proceeds to the mouth of Park river, where he builds his trading-post for the season of 1800–01. Next year he establishes the Pembina post, which he occupies with various intermissions till 1808. During this period he has charge of the Northwest Company's interests throughout the region now included in Minnesota, Manitoba, and North Dakota; he establishes various outposts, and travels about a great deal. His doings are pictured to the life, with a realism that rivals a Zola's, and much that he has to say of the Ojibways and other Indians is of absorbing, even startling, interest. During this period we accompany him on many journeys,

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and see things as they were all over the country. The most notable of these travels is the Mandan tour of 1806, full of adventure, and full of curious information regarding the sedentary tribes of the Missouri.

Part II., "The Saskatchewan," shows our hero—our commercial traveler and mutual friend—in an entirely different environment. Having been ordered to take charge of one of the Forts des Prairies which were then operated on the North Saskatchewan, he leaves Pembina and proceeds through Lake Winnipeg to navigate the great waterway which reaches thence to the Rocky mountains. This journey is described minutely and graphically, enabling us to follow every stroke of the paddle, and inciting the editor to an extensive commentary upon the histogeography of an immense region. During 1808–11 Henry is in charge of three different Saskatchewan posts—Fort Vermilion, Terre Blanche, and the Rocky Mountain house; he makes long overland journeys, including one with dog-sledges in the depth of winter to the Continental Divide; there is not a single mile of the great river he does not navigate; and he lives in close relations with all the Indian tribes of Saskatchewan and Alberta, of whom he treats at great length and in due form, apart from his personal narrative.

In all these wanderings which occupy Parts I. and II. Henry is either shadowed or foreshadowed by the unique figure of the ubiquitous David Thompson. I have taken pains to collate my digests of Thompson's journals with Henry's text, and nowhere else do the two records so amplify and verify each other as throughout the upper Saskatchewan and Rocky Mountain region during the years 1808–11. These were exactly the times of Thompson's most energetic and furthest-reaching exploits. On the Atlantic side of the mountains the two men were repeatedly together, though they never seemed to fancy each other particularly; and on the Pacific side, the scene of travels and discoveries on Thompson's part which Henry did not share, and concerning which the least has been accurately known of all

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Thompson's movements and establishments, I have enjoyed unequalled facilities for supplementing Henry's narrative with an account of Thompson's operations in British Columbia, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

Part III., "The Columbia," opens after a break of about two years in the Henry manuscripts. Late in 1813, Henry has made a trans-continental journey and appears at Astoria—or Fort George, as it becomes shortly after his arrival. His Journal of 1813–14, minutely and precisely kept up to the day before his death by drowning in the mouth of the Columbia, is particularly valuable as a historical document. Most of his time was spent at his post, but he also made extensive voyages on the Columbia and Willamette. At this time Henry was personally associated with each one of the three men who have been until now our chief authorities upon the early history of Astoria and the affairs of the Pacific Fur Company, with which he became thoroughly conversant. His work is so important a concordance that if Franchère, Cox, and Ross be regarded as the three synoptical writers of Astoria, then Henry furnishes the fourth gospel. The extreme interest of this matter has induced me to go into great detail in my notes, and I have reason to believe that much new light has been thrown on Astorian history. Had Irving commanded the resources which Henry places at our disposal, his famous romance would have been no less entertaining and might have become more historical.

The amount of information which Henry and Thompson give us in these volumes, together with that which I have contributed to their joint work, may be appreciated by glancing through the Index, where the names of persons, places, and other things mentioned in these writings occupy more than one hundred double-column pages.

There only remains the pleasurable duty of making the acknowledgments due to those who have in any way facilitated my researches or otherwise contributed to the general result of these investigations. Authors whose published writings have been consulted are in each instance duly cited