

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Journal of Henry Kelsey, 1691-1692.* By CHARLES NAPIER BELL, LL.D., F.R.G.S., &c. (Winnipeg: Dawson Richardson Publications, Limited, for The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, May 1928. Pp. 43. With maps.)

Professor Bell describes Henry Kelsey as being "the first white man to reach the Saskatchewan River from Hudson's Bay, and the first to see the Buffalo and Grizzly Bear of the Canadian Plains," and in the 43 pages of the brochure proceeds to demonstrate the accuracy of the statement. In driving home his points, the learned author shows that he had searched diligently and painstakingly into the highways and byways of original sources, and the result is a comprehensive mass of information condensed in a remarkably small compass, much of it being made available to the general public for the first time.

Kelsey was an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company in whose service he was from 1683 until 1722, a period of thirty-nine years, most of it spent on Hudson's Bay. When he landed at York Factory, the Company was only in the thirteenth year of its existence. In 1689 he was put ashore north of Churchill River, with an Indian lad as his sole companion, with instructions to journey into the northern country with the object of persuading the natives to bring their trade to the Company. He journeyed two hundred miles into the wilderness, which, so far as known records go, had until then been untrodden by any European. Eighty-four years later, Samuel Hearne travelled over part of the same district on his voyage of discovery to the Coppermine River.

The following year, 1690, Kelsey was despatched by Governor Geyer of York Factory on a similar mission in a westerly direction. Until quite recently the available information respecting that journey was very vague. In 1926, however, a number of papers and journals of Henry Kelsey were presented to the Records Office, Belfast, by Major Dobbs of Carrickfergus, a descendant of that Arthur Dobbs, who, Prof. Bell points out, "was an enthusiastic believer in the existence of a northwest passage from Hudson Bay to the Pacific Ocean and China," and who "also organized a company which in 1746 sent out an expedition to the Hudson Bay with two ships," the *Dobbs* galley (180 tons)

under Captain William Moore and the *California* (140 tons) under Captain Francis Smith. Professor Bell might also have cited the previous expedition sent out by the admiralty in 1741 at Dobbs' instigation for the same purpose of searching for the North West Passage. Dobbs had obtained a fund of information about the Hudson's Bay from Capt. Christopher Middleton, a resident of Norton, a small village near Stockton-on-Tees, England, and who had been for years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. Armed with this information, which confirmed his belief in the existence of the North West Passage, Dobbs persuaded the Admiralty to send an expedition under the command of Captain Middleton. The *Furnace* bomb and the *Discovery* pink were put under his orders, and Captain William Moore (afterwards in charge of the *Dobbs* galley in 1746) was placed in charge of the *California*. Nothing came of the expedition and Dobbs openly charged Middleton with having taken a bribe of £5000 from the Hudson Bay Company not to make the desired discovery.

When or how these documents came into possession of the Dobbs family is not stated, Kelsey's Journal covering the years 1691-92, found among them, gives details of his western journey, and Prof. Bell, following the signs and tokens therein contained, traces the journey to the Saskatchewan River and to the region to the south of it as far as the Touchwood Hills. Kelsey thus anticipated Verendrye's journeyings in that direction by forty-seven years; he was the forerunner of British commerce in western Canada.

A most interesting reference is made by Prof. Bell to the memorial described by Ross Cox in the appendix to his book, "Travels on the Columbia River." Quoting from the original edition (1831). Cox says— "In the year 1800, Mr. Atkinson found the following inscription in a piece of seared wood\* about a foot square and five feet above the ground, on Old Factory Island in James Bay, about 30 miles to the northward of East Main Factory. All the letters were quite visible: "In the year 1692, wintered 3 ships at this island, with 127 men, under the Government of Captain James Knight. Then we erected this monument in remembrance of it."

Not content with reading this, Prof. Bell proceeded to investigate, and questioned old service men, but could learn nothing about it; they had never heard of it. In 1910, however, Com-

\*In the second Edition, 1832, Vol. II, p. 348, the words are "a piece of cedar wood.—M.S.W.

missioner Chipman showed Prof. Bell the identical memorial itself! He had found it in Hudson's Bay House, London, and brought it to Winnipeg with him. Prof. Bell deciphered the inscription without difficulty. When Mr. Chipman subsequently returned to England he took the memorial with him, and it has again been lost sight of!

Prof. Bell also refers briefly to the Journals of Samuel Black, who, it is now known, as demonstrated by Mr. J. N. Wallace in the March issue of the *Canadian Historical Review*, was the real author of the journals formerly attributed to John Finlay, and who made the exploration of the Finlay River and the country to the north of it in 1824. Mr. Bell makes the rather sweeping assertion that "The first white man to follow Black over the lower part of his route was Mr. F. C. Swannell, D.L.S., of Victoria, B. C., who ascended the Finlay to near its source in 1914," thus overlooking the fact that Mr. R. G. McConnell, of the Geological Survey of Canada, ascended the Finlay River as far as the Fishing Lakes," "near its source," in 1893 (Part C. Annual Report, Vol VII.), thus antedating Mr. Swannell's exploration by twenty-one years. It is not at all improbable, too, that Hudson's Bay men may also have followed in Black's footsteps long before either McConnell or Swannell.

In *The Beaver* for June this year, Robert Watson contributes an interesting article on Samuel Black in which he states that Prof. Bell has had in his possession, for almost forty years, an unsigned portion of a journal that is now attributed to Samuel Black. In 1927 Thomas Clouston, an old Company service man, gave to Mr. Watson a journal which he had picked up in 1891 shortly after the fire in the grandstand at Fort Garry Park, where many cases of old Hudson's Bay Company papers were stored. This journal bore the signature of Samuel Black, and proved to be the third and last portion of the journal recording the expedition of 1824. These discoveries have solved the Finlay-Black mystery, just as Prof. Bell's analysis of the Kelsey papers has solved the so called Kelsey mystery. With these examples before us we may hope for still further light upon obscure points in the history of Canadian exploration as a result of the research work now in progress.

Prof. Bell's little book is a valuable contribution and should be neatly printed and contains several useful and illuminative maps. It be read by every student of western history and exploration. It

M. S. WADE.