

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH this is a slim document by comparison with those previously chosen from the Hudson's Bay Company's archives for publication it has its own unrivalled importance. Apart from the Charter, it is the earliest document in the archives.

Taken at its face value, the first Grand Ledger would seem to challenge pride of place with this Minutes Book ; but it is clearly of later origin since it resulted from a resolution recorded in the Minutes, and its earliest information must have been copied from the lost papers of the first years. For the Company itself explained, in answer to Radisson's "Bill of Complaint" of May 22, 1694, that "all their bookes and papers which they kept att that time and for about the four first yeares of their Trade haveing been lost and carryed away by one of their Servants . . . these Defendants cannott give any account of any transaction or Trade for the four first yeares of their said trade and dealings."

The period covered is one in which historians are faced with the difficulty of reconciling "Old style" and "New style" dates. To adjust the dates of the Minutes scientifically would be to introduce into the Company's history complications which do not seem warranted. It would, for example, involve the dating of the Company's Charter as at May 12, instead of the traditional May 2, 1670. The dates in the text have therefore been left as they stand in the original, but

in the margins and on the page-headings the years have been adjusted so as to begin the year on January 1, instead of March 25, as was the custom before the introduction of the reformed calendar.

Dr. Grace Lee Nute, of the Minnesota Historical Society, has placed at our disposal as much as circumstances permitted of the knowledge which she has accumulated in preparation for her joint biography of Radisson and Groseilliers. She has read over the brief biographies of Radisson and Groseilliers which are included in Appendix G, and has much improved them from her special knowledge. The Society's warm thanks are due to Dr. Nute for her cooperation.

The duty of transcribing the document and preparing it for the press has again fallen on Miss Alice Johnson. She has also prepared the appendixes and the notes to the text and has afforded most valuable help to Sir John Clapham. Without Miss Johnson's work in the Archives Department, her knowledge and her enthusiasm, the difficulties of producing the Society's volumes under war conditions would be very appreciably increased.

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