of this corporation seem to have been always rapacious and they became unscrupulous and bold. They sought every means to capture and secure the Indian trade in the northern part of the United States west of Lake Superior and as far south of the international boundary as possible. They supplied the Indian hunters freely with whisky, during the trading seasons, induced hundreds of them to come over to Canada to trade and even to sell their furs to the company’s servants at points within the United States. They frequently came upon trading excursions up the Red River and often were at Red Lake, always bringing whisky. They were not allowed under an English law to “sell” ardent spirits to the liquor-loving Indians, but it was held that “exchanging” these beverages for furs was not selling!

All along during the decade of 1840, and in the early part of that of 1850, Norman Kittson, Joe Rolette, and other American traders in this quarter had complained often and vehemently of the injuries done them by the Bay Company’s traders and hunters. They said that in addition to seducing the Indian trade away from them, the company’s men habitually raided what is now the northern part of North Dakota and killed and drove off so many buffaloes that often there was a meat famine among the Teton and Mandan Sioux and the Assiniboines, Crees, and Chippewas, upon whom the traders depended for patronage.

In the winter of 1849 Kittson and Henry M. Rice—the latter having a number of trading houses in the Chippewa country—made strenuous efforts to stop the predatory incursions upon their preserves. Kittson wrote to Delegate Sibley: “The traders of the Hudson’s Bay Company have, during a few months past, been engaged extensively in introducing liquor among the Indians within our limits.” Rice wrote to Gen. Fletcher, agent for the Winnebagoes:

“The agents of the H. B. Co. brought a large quantity of ardent spirits to their depot at Rainy Lake, and at the time the Indians were gathering their last wild rice crop they sent a quantity of liquor within our boundary and gave it to our Indians in exchange for rice. I have ample and positive proof of this. It is impossible to take provisions to these remote posts, and the traders and employees are compelled to live on wild rice and fish; the rice they purchase from the Indians. The object of the H. B. Co. was to secure all of the surplus rice so that my men would be compelled to abandon the country. They well know that, with the advantage of whisky, they can break down any opposition.”

And February 12, 1849, Gen. Fletcher wrote to Hon. Wm. Medill, commissioner of “Indian Affairs.”

“The object which the British traders have in supplying the Indians with ardent spirits is to break down the American traders. They annoy and discommodate our traders by purchasing with whisky all the surplus provisions the Indians have, but they injure our traders most by preventing them from obtaining furs. While the Indians can obtain liquor, they will not hunt and obtain furs, and having no money nothing can be made out of trade with them. About 20,000 buffalo are killed annually within the country occupied by the Sioux and Chippewa Indians south of our northern boundary by half breeds from the British side of the line. One-third of the Red River Canadians subsist on buffalo killed on the American side of the line. The destruction of the buffalo is a heavy tax on our Indians, especially the Sioux.”

These descriptions of conditions induced the authorities at Washington and the expedition of Maj. Woods and Capt. Pope, of 1849, was resolved upon. In his instructions to Maj. Woods for the conduct of the expedition, Adjutant General R. Jones instructed him, among other things, to observe and report upon the condition of the Indians at Pembina and the Red River Valley, and particularly to report “the influence exerted on them by the Hudson’s Bay Company by trade, present, and otherwise.” In asking President Taylor for the expedition, Hon. Thomas Ewing, Secretary of the Interior—which office had been newly created—stated that the great evils committed upon northern Minnesota by the Hudson’s Bay agents ought to be at once “corrected and prevented in the future.” Among other suggestions he proposed that a moderate portion of the then Indian country, near the boundary