

by treaty, on the ground that the country occupied by these forts then belonged to the French Sovereign, and that their English possessors had no business there.

It would seem, therefore, that the country did not belong to England, and was consequently expressly excepted from the charter as being in the possession of subjects of another Christian king.

The Hudson's Bay Company's charter must have possessed great vitality to carry it through so many dangers. During the eighteen years between the Treaty of Ryswick and that of Utrecht, its rights slumbered. In 1714 the whole country was made over to England; Hudson's Bay then became for the first time undisputedly a British possession, though not till many years after the date of the charter.

While the English were driving a precarious trade on the confines of Hudson's Bay, and possessing their small limits only by the sufferance of the Chevalier de Troyes, the Canadian *voyageurs* of their rivals were hunting furs through the length and breadth of the valley of the Saskatchewan. Thomas Simpson* records that 'agriculture was carried on, and even wheel carriages used; in fact, that they then possessed fully as many of the attendants of civilization as the Hudson's Bay Company do now after the lapse of a century.'

The Montreal Fur Company followed in the footsteps of the Compagnie de la Nouvelle France; and ultimately pushing their enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains, opened a prosperous trade to the Pacific coast with the Indian tribes in the valley of the Columbia.

That trade passed either by the Saskatchewan into Lake Winnipeg, or by the western trail, over the plains to the south of that river. The Hudson's Bay Company found themselves eventually unable to contend on equal terms with the French Canadian Company; their stock became a discount; and for the first time they bethought themselves of the charter. Lord Selkirk, a man of iron will and unscrupulous temper, governed the councils of

the Company. Boldly quitting the shores of the bay to which they had hitherto clung, he traversed the plains to the south, and at a distance of a thousand miles inland established a body of the trappers and servants of his Company at the Red River, in the direct route of the north-western trade.

The French Canadians, cut off from their supplies by this act of generalship, engaged in a long and sometimes bloody quarrel with their rivals. The contest ended in their shaking hands, and together defending their joint monopoly against all the world. The Montreal, thus became absorbed in the Hudson's Bay, Company. In 1838 an act was passed through the Imperial Parliament, by which the exclusive privilege of trading with the Indians in any part of British North America not previously granted to the Hudson's Bay Company by charter, was given to the united Companies for twenty-one years. That licence expires in 1859. As, therefore, it appears probable that the Hudson's Bay charter can be proved illegal, and as the renewal of the monopoly now enjoyed by the united Companies will be strenuously and no doubt successfully opposed by the Canadians, whose direct interests must of course suffer by its continuance, nothing very formidable will exist to fight about at the end of that time. But many vested interests are involved in the extinction of the monopoly. The large holders of Hudson's Bay stock would be ruined by such a proceeding on the one hand, and on the other the Canadians would not know what to do with such an enormous extent of country, supposing it to be forthwith annexed to the province.

The learned Judge whom Canada has sent over to represent the views of her people, will no doubt announce them in due time. Meanwhile we may speculate what would be most advantageous for her.

The possession of the prairie district from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains, through which will eventually run the Pacific railroad, and whose fertile plains are fit for the reception of large numbers

* *Life and Travels of Thomas Simpson.*