

of such admirable machinery for veiling in impenetrable secrecy their transactions, as well as the country in which they are carried on, they should have been able for so long a period to prolong their existence. The address, now pending, of the House of Commons to the Crown, for an inquiry into the legality of the powers exercised by the Company under their charter, will probably do much towards placing the administration of the Hudson's Bay territories on a better footing; and it is to be hoped that, among the subjects that will come under the consideration of parliament, the amelioration of the condition of the aborigines will not be overlooked. Apart from all considerations of humanity, it is seldom that the aborigines of any country have had so strong a claim upon our sympathy and protection. The trade created and sustained by their industry has already enriched this country by more than L.20,000,000 sterling; and yet, to this day, throughout the vast territories of Hudson's Bay, there is neither a church nor a school established by the Company where the Indian can receive the commonest rudiments of Christianity or education: he is still roaming about his forests and his lakes, shivering naked that we may be warmly clad, dying by starvation that the cup of our luxury may be filled!

Happily, there are still extensive tracts which the evils of over-hunting and overtrading have not yet reached, and where the Indian may still be found enjoying much of that savage independence, and displaying many of those traits of mind and character, with which fiction and romance have invested him. While the wretched and half-starved hunter of the north drags on a toilsome and cheerless existence, amidst his mazy wilderness of forests and wintry lakes, hanging in helpless dependence upon the white strangers who are making a market of his ignorance and necessities—the powerful and warlike Blackfeet, the Sioux, the Assiniboine, and other formidable tribes, are scouring the boundless prairies of the south and west, and revelling in the abundant produce of countless herds of buffalo and deer. Whatever of romantic interest attaches at the present day to the fur-trade of America, must be sought for here, or in the somewhat similar region on the west of the Rocky Mountains, which we have denominated the Columbia or Oregon Territory.

The Prairie Region, and the districts just alluded to on the west side of the mountains, have been for many years, or at least until the recent settlement of the long agitated 'Oregon Question,' between this country and the United States, a sort of debatable land or border territory between the British and American fur-traders; and this, added to the warlike and predatory character of many of the tribes inhabiting it, has caused a new species of traffic, and a new order of trappers and traders to spring out of the hunting and trapping competition carried on within it. The fur-trade of the United States is, for the most part, in the hands of two great trading associations—the Rocky Mountain Fur Company,