

which has ever since continued. The destructive industry with which this, when once begun, was followed up, soon brought into the ports of France and England vast quantities of furs, some of which were consumed there, and the rest disposed of in the neighbouring countries. Most of these furs were already known in Europe: they came from the northern parts of our own hemisphere, but in too small quantities to bring them into general use. Caprice and novelty, however, brought them more or less into fashion, since it was found that it was for the interest of the American colonies that they should be admired in the mother-countries.

THE FUR-TRADE IN CANADA UNDER THE FRENCH.

Whether from the favourable situation of their settlements along the banks of the St Lawrence, in the very heart of the fur countries, or from the congeniality of the pursuit itself to the character and habits of that volatile and restless race, it is certain that the French soon acquired, and for a considerable period retained, a superiority in the fur-trade over other European nations in America. From time to time, our own intrepid navigators, employed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the ineffectual search for the north-west passage, had brought home specimens of the valuable furs which the northern portion of the American continent contained. But the first regular and permanent traffic with the Indians, appears to have been opened up about the beginning of the seventeenth century, by the French colony, at Tadousac, a post situated on the St Lawrence about thirty leagues below the present town of Quebec. The large profits arising from this commerce, and the advantages to be derived from its more extended and systematic prosecution, did not escape the vigilant and sagacious eye of Cardinal Richelieu, then at the head of affairs in France. To give effect to the views he entertained on this subject, he originated, about the year 1628, under his own immediate auspices, an extensive association under the name of La Compagnie de la Nouvelle France (*New France*), being the name by which the somewhat indefinite possessions of the French in America were at that time distinguished. To this association, which consisted of 700 copartners, including in their number some of the most distinguished men of the time in France, various important privileges were granted. The king made a present of two large ships to the company, and twelve of the principal members were raised to the rank of nobility. They had the disposal of the settlements that were, or should be formed in New France, with the power of fortifying and governing them as they thought proper; and of making war or peace as should best promote their interests. The whole trade by land and sea, 'from the river St Lawrence to the Arctic Circle and the Frozen Ocean,' was made over to them for a term of fifteen years, except the cod and whale