

time. The country is magnificent, and is varied with immense plains, woods, and mountains. It is watered by innumerable streams, and abounds in wild animals and fish. Its value for the purposes of colonization is therefore manifestly very great.

Now, it is argued by the opponents of the Hudson's Bay Company, that by their charter an inconsiderable number of fur traders are enabled to exclude British colonization and trade, and to shut them in within the narrow limits of the Canadas, while they exercise an usurped sovereignty over lands in which all Britons have an equal interest by right of birth. They further declare, translating diplomatic into familiar English, that King Charles II. made no such grant as that now claimed; that if he did, the land was not his to give; that even if the grant were legal, its conditions have not been fulfilled, and that it has consequently lapsed: that the Company are excluded by the terms of the charter from much of the territory they claim under it, and last but not least, that they (the Canadians) will not stand it any longer.

Looking at the question with the eyes of a dispassionate inquirer, it seems a hard thing that so extensive and magnificent a territory should be shut up as a hunting ground. The Hudson's Bay Company's charter was granted in 1670. At that time, France appears to have had at least an equal right of possession with England—that is, they both claimed it. France was first in the field, for Henry IV. in 1598 granted letters patent to the Sieur de la Roche, making him lieutenant-governor over the countries of Canada, Hochelaga, and Labrador; the last named of which is claimed by King Charles's grantees.

Again, in 1627, Cardinal Richelieu granted a charter to a society called the 'Compagnie de la Nouvelle France,' giving them a monopoly of everything—administration of justice, founding of cannon, trade in peltries, and many other curious rights. The limits of La Nouvelle France were to extend from the

Labrador coast to the Pacific, and from the Gulf of Florida to the Arctic Sea!

Charles II., who seems to have known as little as may be of the geography of the country he granted, and to have been somewhat uneasy in respect of his ownership thereof, while bestowing on the Company the sole trade of all the countries 'into which they shall find entrance or passage by water or land, out of the territories, limits, and places aforesaid' (which may be construed to mean all the world), expressly excepts those 'that are already possessed by or granted to any of our subjects, or possessed by the subjects of any other Christian prince or State.' If, therefore, the Crown of France had a right to the lands it granted away so royally in 1627, it follows that the English king, by the very terms of his grant, excluded the Hudson's Bay Company from the territory they now claim under it.

This question of ownership had been decided in the preceding reign. By the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, in 1632, Charles I. had resigned to Louis XIII. the sovereignty of New France,* Acadia, and Canada.

The Treaty of Ryswick, by which it was agreed that Commissioners should be appointed to decide the rights and pretension 'which either king of the said kings hath to the places situated on Hudson's Bay,' expressly gave back to the French certain forts which had been seized by the Chevalier de Troyes during the peace which preceded the war, and which had been during the war retaken by the English, implying clearly that the ownership of these forts was so well acknowledged that there was no need for the Commissioners to trouble themselves about them. The forts were those on James and Hudson's Bay, which had been built by the Hudson's Bay Company on the faith of Charles the Second's grant. The claim of France must have been indeed indisputable, if the aggression of the Chevalier de Troyes during a time of peace was recognised and justified

* The English who signed the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, must have formed a different idea of the limits of La Nouvelle France from that mentioned above, else why was it referred to the plenipotentiaries of Ryswick?