

gentlemen of the Colonial Office, except their impenetrability. No definite answer could be obtained. Men might have said, as we do now say, "there ought to be no necessity to ask the question at all, for your principles of government ought to be known;" but they are not only not known, but cannot be discovered. The only answer received was, in effect, "tell us who you are? Show us you are able to effect your object, and we will *consider* your project."

Now, considering that it was necessary to know what the Colonial Office would do, as a preliminary step to bringing the project before the public at all, this answer was truly at once sensible and satisfactory. It was equivalent to this—and the reply had better have been straightforward at once—"It is no business of yours what we think; and we don't care whether there is a Colony in Vancouver's Island or not." But there was another representation lying on the minister's table when he gave this reply. The Hudson's Bay Company had asked for the Island.

We intend to say a few words about the Hudson's Bay Company. Perhaps it is difficult to speak of such a body without some respect. It is as if we were looking at some gigantic building: we are oppressed by the grandeur of the dimensions before we are capable of criticising the details. These rich and powerful associations are peculiar to the English system, and probably to the English race; and, after the East India Company, perhaps the Hudson's Bay Company ranks highest, in the extent of its operations and the greatness of its power—not, however, in the importance of its results. The Hudson's Bay Company was incorporated by royal charter, in 1670, for the purpose of prosecuting discovery in the countries within Hudson's Straits, especially of discovering a north-west passage to the Southern Ocean; for the purpose of making settlements in the country, of trading with the Indians, thereby spreading civilisation and Christianity among them, and extending the commerce of England. At the same time that the Charter proclaimed these to be the high and noble tasks allotted to the Company, it invested them with powers proportionate to the magnitude of the duties imposed. They were to have the exclusive lordship of the soil of all the country adjacent to all the rivers and streams which run into Hudson's Bay; that is to say, nearly to the Rocky Mountains. They had, besides, the sole privilege of trading with the Indians, to the exclusion of all others, not only over this inner tract of country, but also over all countries into which they might "find access, by *land* or *water*." The full extent of these powers have neither been appreciated nor acted on; but there can be no manner of question, that, if the Charter be good for anything at all, it gives the Company the right of exclusive trade over the whole of British North America, not at that time actually a province, as far as the shores of the Pacific Ocean. They were given besides the power of making laws and inflicting punishments, and of seizing the persons and property of all those whom they found interfering with these privileges, and of confiscating the property so seized, half to themselves and half to the Crown. Such were the powers with which they were invested; such were the objects for which such powers were granted. The powers they have exceeded; the duties they have neglected. The Hudson's Bay Company have no history but that