

But the discovery of gold within British territory, and the consequent peopling of our portion of the Pacific seaboard, are movements entirely beyond control. New communities—wilder-nesses to be subdued—neighbours whose ultimate destiny has roused the solicitude of the whole of the civilised world, now call on us to lay the foundations of a wise policy. Whether what we have already done has been well done, it is at least necessary that we should clearly understand the nature of our acts and the position in which they now place us on the American continent.

We propose therefore to pass under examination the whole of the inhabitable portion of country to the north of the United States' dividing line, known as British North America; and to inquire into the more pressing subjects with which it has of late become connected. A very rapid sketch, however, of the vast possessions of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the events which have now brought a large portion of them under the more immediate control of the Crown, may prove no uninteresting introduction to our task. 'There is a colouring of romance,' observes Mr. Gladstone*, 'over the whole history of this territory; and, although romance and law are not usually associated, yet I will venture to say that, turning from the wild life of these regions, and the pursuits of the people connected with the objects of the Company, to the legal points concerning its condition and status, there never was presented for the exercise of human ingenuity and intelligence a more interesting or more curious set of questions than are involved in the consideration of this matter.'

Few indeed were the projects which the impetuous cousin of Charles II. brought to a successful issue. Yet among them is to be numbered the origin of the Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay. While their first governor was blowing those glass bubbles in Spring Gardens, which have long amused children and puzzled philosophers, the servants of the new Company were laying the foundations of a policy which was wisely to exercise the most ample powers over the most enormous territories ever entrusted to an association of private individuals. 'Rupert's Land,' according to the charter of Charles II., was somewhat vaguely defined as 'all the lands and territories upon the countries, coasts, and confines of the seas, bays, lakes, rivers, creeks, and sounds, in whatever latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the straits commonly called Hudson's Straits.' And to the new pro-

* Debate on Hudson's Bay Company, July 20, 1858.