

A FEW NOTES ON CANADIAN MATTERS.

PART II.

A SEMICIRCLE drawn towards the south, with a radius of some eight hundred miles from a point about the centre of James's Bay, would indicate the general direction of a line of hills which forms the northern boundary of the Canadas. These hills rise gradually from the shores of Hudson's Bay, like the seats of a huge amphitheatre, of which its waters represent the arena. Their southern slope forms the valley of the St. Lawrence, which, with the great lakes, describe another and larger semicircle round their common centre.

Near the head of Lake Superior, the mountains run suddenly some two hundred miles towards the south, and touching the American frontier line, define the western limit of the Upper Province.

At this moment, when public attention is directed towards the Hudson's Bay territory, the country to the north of this boundary possesses an unusual interest.*

The press in Canada has raised an almost unanimous voice against the renewal of the privileges of the Great Fur Company. It has been stigmatized as a gigantic monopoly, as a cruel and inhuman despotism, exercising a 'Lynch Law' authority, and committing, in the name of an illegal charter, murder and wrong by the sole right of physical force. We have neither time nor inclination to recount a title of the horrors which are related as having been perpetrated by the officials of the Company; we can but take a hasty glance, first, at the subject of contention, and then at the contention itself.

The whole country from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and from the forty-ninth parallel of latitude to the North Pole, belongs to Great Britain. That portion which lies between the Pacific and the Rocky Mountains, for the most part unexplored, marches on the north with Russia, on the south with the United States.

The remainder naturally falls into three general divisions. The region between the Rocky Mountains and Hudson's Bay, extending towards the south as far as Peace River and Lake Arthabasca, is barren. From that point, as far east as Lake Winnipeg and the rivers which connect it with Hudson's Bay, and as far south as the frontier line, the country is a continuation of the vast prairies which are watered by the Mississippi and the Missouri. Eastward from Lake Winnipeg, and over the Canadian frontier to the shores of the St. Lawrence, there is a succession of impenetrable forests.

The desert portion is, on account of its climate and soil, of no use for the purposes of colonization. The character of the forest land may be guessed at by its analogy with Canada. But on the proper development of the prairie district depends the future greatness of British North America. A writer has observed—

It is quite true that only a small portion of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories is fit for colonization, and indeed for anything but the chase; but it may be, and is true, that that small portion is a country sufficiently large and fertile to support all the population of Great Britain and all her dependencies.

Along the valley of the Saskatchewan (which runs through fifteen degrees of longitude from the Rocky Mountains to Lake Winnipeg) at no distant period must pass the traffic from the West. If the Pacific is ever connected in British territory with the Atlantic seaboard, the track must pass through a gap in the Rocky Mountains near the head waters of the Columbia and of the Saskatchewan. These rivers, one of which flows westward into the Pacific, and the other eastward to the Atlantic, rise so near each other that Sir George Simpson was able to fill his kettle for breakfast from both at the same

* For full information on the anti-Hudson's Bay Charter side, see Fitzgerald's *Hudson's Bay and Vancouver's Island*.