

1713, relinquished to England a part of it, and its southern boundary was defined and fixed at the ridge, on the 49th parallel of north latitude, which separates the waters falling into Hudson's Bay from those flowing to the St. Lawrence. This ridge exists, but not at the 49th degree of latitude. It is at the 50th degree—from 83° to 88° west longitude, where it turns to the southward, along the northwestern side of Lake Superior, terminating near the sources of the Mississippi. Another ridge of high land, separating the waters falling into Hudson's Bay, from the affluents of MacKenzie's river and Lake Winnipeg, commences at 51° north latitude, 91° west of Greenwich, on the northwest side of Lake Joseph, and thence is continued north-westerly, to latitude 62°, longitude 103°, where it turns to the northeast, and terminates at the Victoria Channel.

If the Company could establish any claim at all under their illegal charter, this ridge would most decidedly be their boundary towards Canada.

By the treaty with the United States, in 1794, the name of the Company is incidentally mentioned, without allusion to their rights; but this—as well as the former treaty—was a Royal Act, and could convey no corporate privileges whatever.

The only Act of Parliament in which the Hudson Bay Company is mentioned by name is that of George II., c. 17,—passed to encourage attempts to discover a north-west passage,—which stipulates that it shall not be so construed as to prejudice any right or privilege claimed by the adventurers trading to Hudson's Bay, but does not explain what those rights consisted of, or what the nature of their claims was. But this simple allusion to certain "adventurers," in which their corporate name is not even mentioned, could never be made to imply the recognition of a corporation declared to be illegal by the Bill of Rights.

I have already pointed out the illegality of their original charter,—as well by its own stipulations as by the law of the land; the nullity of the assumed boundary of the ridge at the 49 parallel of north latitude,

supposed to lie east and west, when in fact its course, after a short distance, is nearly north, and, at any rate, never legalized by any Act of the Imperial Parliament.

Upon what other foundation, therefore, do they claim for themselves the empire of half a continent? is it by right of prior discovery and occupation? In both of these the French preceded them for nearly half a century. Did the French, or their British successors in Canada, silently permit encroachment beyond the narrow limits prescribed by the treaty of Utrecht? Certainly not. Previous to Lord Selkirk's seizure of the Red River territory by an armed force, they never were permitted to establish themselves in the countries watered by the lakes, rivers, or streams falling into the MacKenzie river and Lake Winnipeg. Was it by their patriotic endeavors to explore and survey the vast territory they laid claim to, or in civilizing and improving the condition of the wretched aborigines? We have seen or heard of no indications of the latter, and of the former—if any such were made—that, with all other local information, was sedulously withheld from the public. There is the single exception of Mr. Hearne's journey to the Coppermine River, in 1772, in company with a large body of Indians, who, in defiance of Mr. Hearne's threats, and regardless of entreaties, surprised and massacred the inmates of five Esquimaux tents,—men, women, and children. Public opinion had severely censured the Company for their inertness and lack of public spirit, either to explore the country themselves, or permit others. The solitary effort made by Mr. Hearne affords very little information of any value, and seems to have been undertaken merely to satisfy the British public.

It is with entire impartiality that I state my reminiscences of these two great companies. I am indebted to no member of either of them for any favor; and cannot complain of any injury. If local or national prejudices may be noticed, it must be in favor of the Hudson Bay Company; the majority of their servants are, like myself,