

CHAPTER II.

The Hudson Bay Company.

The story of this gigantic organization reads like a fairy tale. In 1720, Charles II, King of England, gave to Prince Rupert and his associates, 18 in all, the charter which gave them control of the greater portion of British North America. The privileges thus obtained were of the most sweeping character. Canada was then regarded as nothing more than a vast stretch of wild country, the home of wandering Indians, and only valuable for its wealth of fur and fish. It was the great hunting ground for the venturesome and sporting spirits of the Old Land. Had those in power ever dreamed that these wild lands would become the home of a great people, the granary of Europe, a land of beautiful homes, great cities and thriving industries, it is doubtful if they would have been so generous in their gift. They did not know what they were giving, and the recipients did not know what they were receiving.

According to this charter, the Company secured control of "the whole trade of all those seas, straits, and bays, rivers, lakes, creeks and sounds,