

# A FEW WORDS ON THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

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The Hudson's Bay Company is now the only survivor of the numerous exclusive bodies which at one time depressed almost every branch of British commerce ; and from the very peculiar conditions under which it holds even its present tenure of existence, is well worthy more than passing observation. Occupying a territory comprising a superficial area nearly one-third larger than all Europe, it reigns supreme over 50 native tribes of Indians, who are the slaves of its laws and policy, and scarcely removed but in name from being its actual bondsmen ; it is, however, not upon that point, we purpose to dwell, but rather upon a far more important and hitherto unpublished fact, namely, that although exercising commercial and territorial sovereignty over so wide a range of country, the Charter under which it claims this right of despotic sway is *illegal*.

This Company was incorporated in the year 1670, under a Charter of King Charles II., granting to them and their successors the sole trade and commerce to Hudson's Bay and Streights, with territorial rights and jurisdiction over all the lands and countries on the coasts and confines of the same, which were not actually possessed by the subjects of any other Christian prince or state, to be reckoned and reputed as one of the British plantations or Colonies in America, under the name of Rupert's Land. Of this territory the Company was constituted proprietor for ever, by free and common soccage, as such enjoying over it supreme jurisdiction, civil and criminal, with power to grant lands, pass laws, make war or peace with all nations not being Christians, and, in short, to enjoy, under the Crown of England, all the rights and powers of a commercial sovereignty.

This extensive grant, however, did not receive any parliamentary sanction or confirmation, and was, on that ground, held to be unconstitutional ; or, at all events, failed to secure to the Company the privileges intended. To prevent the intrusion of rival traders, whom the defective Charter could not restrain, the Company in 1790, were under the necessity of petitioning parliament to confirm

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