

continent. Nor indeed did it hold out to the English emigrant any attraction to counterbalance that of the much nearer Atlantic settlements. It was reported to be not destitute of pastoral, and even agricultural lands; but it was overrun by furred animals, and the aboriginal tribes were not friendly. Without some preparation for their reception, there seemed little probability of settlers selecting its shores. Such a preparation the Hudson's Bay Company professed themselves willing to make, if placed in possession of the island; and, accordingly, in 1848 they received a parliamentary grant of it, — subject to the condition of successful colonisation.

Thus the Company came to hold their vast Possessions by three distinct tenures. These Possessions were, (1) their Chartered Territory, held by royal grant; (2) the Indian Countries, held by license for exclusive trade; (3) Vancouver Island, held by parliamentary grant. Vast, however, as were these territorial domains, the claims of the Company were by no means limited to them. To the north, they had rented that strip of Russian America which extends from Fort Simpson to Cross Sound. To the south, their forts were distributed over a very large portion of Oregon, and along the banks of the Columbia,—that stream, pending the International Boundary Settlement of 1846, being regarded as the dividing line between British and United States territories. The Company, too, maintained large herds of cattle in Oregon, and had brought a considerable portion of its soil under cultivation; and, encouraged by the markets opening throughout the South Sea Islands for their grain, cattle, and timber, had established a small offshoot there, known as the Puget Sound Company. Indeed, we may here mention that, from these operations within the Oregon territory, the Company have always considered themselves as entitled to large possessory rights within that neutral ground; on its annexation to the United States in 1846, they suffered no disturbance; and a Convention has been ratified within the last three months by the British and American Governments to determine what are the just claims of the Company in Oregon. Similarly on the Atlantic coast, the Company had established forts throughout a great portion of Labrador. And, on the Canadian frontier—never precisely defined—they claimed all lands watered by Hudson's Bay streams. Thus, at the close of the past half-century, the Company ruled supreme from the Pacific to the Atlantic,—from the United States to extreme Polar limits. Nor did sound policy appear to point to any near interruption to their reign. United States settlement