

to the extreme limits of Arctic exploration. The Hudson's Bay Company, under its new formation, now obtained its first Parliamentary recognition. There were many reasons why neither Parliament nor the Company should be anxious to inquire into the rights and privileges conferred by the original Charter. Successive law officers of the Crown have reported in its favour, and no steps have been taken to subject it to a severer trial. Doubts, indeed, have frequently been expressed: it was doubtful whether Charles had power to alienate territorial rights without the sanction of his Parliament: it was doubtful whether Charles or his Parliament had any territorial rights to alienate over the regions in question.* There were many other points which it was not difficult to raise. But against them all it might be urged that the Company had exercised those rights and privileges for nearly two centuries, and that their wise and most successful policy was interrupted only when they ceased to enjoy a monopoly. No interpretation, therefore, was attempted to be put upon the Charter, and it was tacitly left in the possession of the Company, for whatever it might be found worth. The Company of course limited their pretensions under it to all lands watered by Hudson's Bay streams; but, even on this interpretation, there were still the whole of the 'Indian Countries,' to the shores of the Pacific,—apportioned into Trading Districts, and now occupied by their forts. These districts were now secured to the Company from intrusion by an exclusive License to Trade for twenty-one years. In this manner, the Company came to rule supreme over the whole of the country from Hudson's Bay to the shores of the Pacific,—being made up of its chartered territory and Indian countries, without any declared line of demarcation. This License was renewed in 1838, for a like period.

Hitherto, efforts to colonise Vancouver Island had been ineffectual. Its distance by sea was immense; while none but the hardiest servants of the great Fur Companies—and these, not always with safety—had attempted the overland route across the

* 'Your petitioners further show that, up to the year 1763, when, by the Treaty of Fontainebleau, Canada was ceded to the British Crown, the whole region of country extending westward to the Pacific Ocean, and northward to the shores of the Hudson's Bay, had continued in the undisputed possession of the Crown of France for a period of two centuries, and was known as La Nouvelle France.' (*Petition of Board of Trade of City of Toronto, April 20, 1857.*)

On the other hand, it is contended that the French right was ceded by the Treaty of Utrecht, and therefore did not belong to the Crown of France at the time of the conquest of Canada.