

After many years of fruitless negotiation between Canada and the Hudson Bay Company, in which England acted as a sort of go-between or mutual friend, it was arranged, in 1869, that the undefined country officially known as Rupert's Land, together with all the territorial rights appertaining to the Company in North America, should be transferred to the recently-established Dominion of Canada for the sum of £300,000. That was practically the arrangement; but there was a three-cornered ceremony to be gone through first, in accordance with which those vast outlying portions of the empire were to be legally transferred on paper to England, and then made over by royal proclamation to the Dominion.

The country had long been in the possession of the Hudson Bay Company, who had received a charter in 1670 from Charles II., granting them sovereign rights over a large proportion of the North American continent. In the days of that gallant monarch our geographical knowledge of the western hemisphere was but small, and consequently the description of the limits given over to their jurisdiction, as recorded in the charter, was very vague. It may be fairly assumed that this uncertainty of title was one of the chief causes why the Company had never been desirous of having its claims inquired into before the courts of law.

In 1783 a rival trading-company—the "North-Western"—was started; and in 1812 Lord Selkirk