

tered into by the Company with the Government of the Russian Possessions in America.

By special agreement the Hudson Bay Company, several years ago, established a number of trading posts within the Russian Possessions. When the war between Russia and the Allies commenced, these posts, as well as some others in the neighborhood of the Russian Possessions, were at the mercy of the Russian authorities, while the Russian Possessions were at the mercy of the Allies. In this state of the case the Hudson Bay Company entered into a compact with the Governor of Russian America by which the rights of each were mutually guaranteed during the progress of the war. The possessions of the Company which were endangered amounted to only a few thousand dollars. The value of Russian America to the Allies it would be difficult to estimate. But such was the power of the Hudson Bay Company at home, that the Government of Great Britain acquiesced in the arrangement. The splendid fleet of French and English ships sent into the Pacific for the express purpose, doubtless, of seizing upon Russian America, was diverted from its destination, and crossing over to the bleak coast of Kamschatka made a descent upon the insignificant Russian post of Petropavlovski, the possession of which was of no earthly consequence whatever to the Allies.

There is something in this procedure entirely inexplicable to us in the present state of our information. Why the interests of a company, consisting of only some two hundred and fifty persons, should have been thus regarded by the Government of Great Britain, while its own interests, of infinitely greater magnitude, were unhesitatingly sacrificed, can only be accounted for on the hypothesis that there is something beneath the surface which the parties interested would not willingly have divulged. A writer in the *Montreal Gazette* estimates the probable loss to the Hudson Bay Company at from ten to twenty thousand pounds, had the English Government refused to sanction the compact. Had there not been some other cause than is patent upon the surface of the transaction, Great Britain would undoubtedly have indemnified the Company for its loss, and have seized upon the nine hundred thousand square miles of territory belonging to Russia, with its arsenals, towns, etc.

But our object in this article was mainly to call attention to the attitude in which the Government of Great Britain stands before the world in tolerating any longer the existence of the Hudson Bay Company. Here is an immense habitable domain, possessed of great natural resources, and eminently adapted to the abode of civilized communities, kept securely locked against settlement by a few individuals, whose original right there is more than questionable, and which right is said to have been forfeited again and again, if it were valid. And this is done through the agency of the government whose interests all seem to be upon the side of the speedy settlement and development of the country claimed by the Company.

During the continuance of the fierce rivalry which existed between the Hudson Bay and the Northwest companies, the former, that they might cut off the profitable trade which the latter were carrying on with the Indians on the Red River and about the head waters of the Mississippi, established a colony on the former river. This colony furnishes the only instance in which the Company have manifested

a willingness for the settlement of the country, and this exception to its general policy was for the sole purpose of harrassing a hated rival and driving it from the field. Since the union of the two Companies no further encouragement has been offered to immigration to this solitary colony; on the contrary the opposite policy has been pursued. Over those who are there the Company exercises an unchecked despotism, nor have complaints submitted by the colonists to the home government been followed by any relief. In every essential of sovereignty, it may therefore be said, the Government of Great Britain has surrendered its claims to the country to a commercial corporation whose interests are entirely adverse to its settlement.

There is some prospect that steps will shortly be taken whereby the claim set up by the Hudson Bay Company will be tested as regards a portion at least of the territory. There is an unsettled question touching the boundaries of Canada which the latter appears disposed to press to an issue. The jurisdiction which France ceded to Great Britain in 1763, it is claimed, included not only the Canadas, but that it extended westward over a large portion of territory now occupied by the Company. This subject is being discussed in some of the Canadian papers, and has excited some attention on the other side of the Atlantic. A writer in the *Montreal Gazette*, before alluded to in this article, is presenting a series of able and interesting papers on this subject, from one of which we quote the following passage:

There can be little doubt that, whenever the objects and acts of that corporation shall have been thoroughly inquired into and discussed, and have become thoroughly understood, by means of the Press, so unanimous will be the expression of opinion, both in England and Canada, against the Company, that the latter will be made to feel that power which they now apparently despise, and thus have cause to regret that their conduct and pretensions have been such as to arouse the attention of the Press and to obtain, as well as to merit, general condemnation. The English Press is awakening, as well as that of Canada, to a sense of the importance of bringing to an early issue the question of—whether the Hudson's Bay Company shall be permitted, for purely selfish objects, to condemn forever a portion of this continent, as large as the whole of Europe, to the darkest gloom? A question which must soon come before the legislatures of both countries, but which will be decided principally by the action taken upon it here.

We write on this subject in no spirit of national prejudice. The interests of humanity demand a wider and loftier sweep of thought than those of individuals or of nationalities; and those interests require that the giant monopoly which now holds the Northwest in its grasp, be driven out of existence, and the whole country thrown open to settlement. We stop not to inquire whether or not, in the course of human events, a closer bond of sympathy may unite us with the communities which will ultimately be organized there. That is a matter of small importance compared with the consideration whether communities shall be permitted to grow up there at all or not. Only let Great Britain see to it that this broad field for human enterprise is thrown open to occupation, and then let the future take care of itself. We hope to see this subject agitated until the desired results are obtained.