

of colonists, could alone be of any use to Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company may have no legal claim for compensation, but the blow would fall none the less heavily on those who have invested in the undertaking, believing it to be legal, if they were deprived of their rights without compensation. A compromise would be the fairest way of settling the matter, and doubtless the Hudson's Bay Company would be perfectly ready to accede to any proposition of the kind. The licence to trade might be renewed for a limited time, on the condition that any portions required by Canada, either for opening out facilities for trade or for purposes of colonization, were to be given up to her. As the licence expires in two years, the sum that could fairly be demanded by the Company for the surrender of two years' authority over the small portion of territory that Canada could require in that time, could not be very large.

There is another subject which has not been touched upon in these pages, because it involves the question of the truth or untruth of the accusations brought against the Company, respecting their ill treatment of the Indians. These questions are under the scrutiny of a Parliamentary committee, and should not be prejudged. At the same time, it is self-evident that good security should be demanded from the Company for their proper treatment of the Indian tribes, whom they are bound, by the charter under which they claim, to protect and educate; but who, to use the mildest language, are still entirely uncivilized.

Since the above was written, the dissolution of Parliament has put an end to the labours of the Hudson's Bay Committee. Do not let us prejudge the question, but, for the sake of our national honour, let not the people of England allow the accident of the dissolution to stifle inquiry into it.

Let us remember what the alle-

gations against the Company are. It is asserted that the people over whom it was, by the terms of its charter, to exercise a paternal sway, have been oppressed, tortured, and murdered. It is said that Indians have been shot and hanged by subordinate officers, after a mere mockery of trial, on mere suspicion of wrong-doing.* Missionaries complain that, far from being assisted in Christianizing the Indians, their labours are impeded, and themselves insulted.† It is said that the *employees* of the Company have taken advantage of the monopoly of supply which it enjoys, to make the Indians helplessly dependent upon it, and then, in order to compel obedience to some command, or to gratify some caprice of arbitrary power, that they have denied the commodities which they only could supply, and have starved families to death by wholesale.‡ The charter of the Company proves that it undertook, and was paid to perform, vast geographical explorations. It is stated that it has never so much as attempted to carry them out. The monopoly it enjoys was only given on the terms which the authorities above mentioned declare to have been disregarded. If these charges be true, the commerce of England has been crippled by the closing of these vast regions to her commerce, without any return whatever. It is stated, moreover, that the oppressed Indian is compelled to part with his furs for goods 'certainly under one-twentieth of the value of the furs in England.'§

I will conclude with a quotation from Mr. Fitzgerald:—'We were promised the salvation, if not the regeneration, of the Indian race; we were promised that missionary enterprise should take the place of commercial competition: but have these promises been kept?—not one fraction of them.' If these things be true, the great heart of the English people will rise against such wickedness; at any rate, let not inquiry die.

* McLean, vol. ii. 222.

† Rev. Mr. Barnley, missionary to Hudson's Bay (quoted by Mr. Fitzgerald); and Rev. Mr. Beaver, missionary, Fort Vancouver.

‡ *Life of Thomas Simpson*, Dr. King's narrative, vol. i. p. 169.

§ *Life of Thomas Simpson*, p. 427.