

SLAVERY IN CANADA.

BY J. C. HAMILTON, LL.B.

(Read 3rd July. 1890.)

Mr. Hamilton presented the results of a study of existing records, and stated the facts relating to this subject so appearing.

He began with the origin of the institution of slavery in Canada, 202 years ago, in the reign of King Louis XIV., who was then busy aiding and advising his good friend and brother, James II. of England, and in watching the movements of William Prince of Orange, and preparing for war with Germany. The Secretary of State, however, as soon as he found a leisure moment, brought before his Majesty certain letters from high officials in the Province of Quebec. There were two, dated 10th August and 31st October, 1688, from Mons. de Denonville, and one from Mons. de Champagny, dated 6th November, 1688, to the secretary, their purport being, to represent that working people ("gens d'industrie") were so extraordinarily scarce, and labor so dear in Canada, that all enterprise was paralysed, and that it was thought the best remedy would be, to allow the importation of negroes as slaves.

The Attorney-General of Canada, then in Paris, assured his Majesty that such was also his conviction, and that if permitted, some of the principal inhabitants would purchase slaves as they arrived from Guinea. His Majesty finally got to a consideration of the subject. Perhaps he talked it over with King James, who visited Paris in December, 1688, having "left his country for his country's good," and the result was a royal mandate written early in 1689 stating that his Majesty had approved of the proposal, that his royal subjects of Quebec should obtain negroes to do their work. He added that he wished care to be taken, lest the negroes, coming from so different a climate, might not endure the rigor of Canada, and so the important project fail.

The *code noir* contains an ordinance of 13th November, 1705, making negroes movable property, and providing for their humane treatment. In 1709 an ordinance was issued by Raudot, intendant at Quebec, reciting the king's permission, and that negroes and Panis (Pawnee Indians)