THE HISTORY OF CANADA

FROM THE EARLIEST DATE OF FRENCH RULE.

CHAPTER I.

I have mentioned in the previous volume * that at the meeting of the council in November, 1778, owing to the extremely high price of wheat and flour, all export of these cereals after the first of December had been forbidden, unless permission were obtained. There was in reality no scarcity to justify this advance. The fact is clearly stated by Haldimand, who, when bringing the matter to the notice of the British government, † attributed the result to an express having been sent from Halifax to a known Canadian mercantile firm to enter into a combination to maintain it.

Aided by several of the traders in Canada, the parties addressed undertook as a commercial speculation to give an artificial value to wheat and flour, so that they would be obtainable only at a most extravagant price. As the government was the principal buyer for the supply of the troops, the object was to force the commissaries to submit to this exaction, in order that the firms active in the intrigue and their friends could make large sums of money. In less than a fortnight, wheat rose from four shillings to four and sixpence a bushel. With the advice of the council a proclamation against forestalling was published. The crop in the district of Quebec in 1778 had not been good ; but there was

* [Vol. VI., p. 487.]

† The narrative of these events is contained in the letter of Haldimand to Germain [Can. Arch., B., p. 354, 25th October, 1780.]

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