

Majesty, your Lordship will cause notice to be publicly given, that any of the tenants may commute the feudal tenure for a tenure in free and common soccage, on condition of the land or buildings being charged with a permanent quit-rent, equivalent to the rights which may thus be surrendered by the Crown. The terms of commutation should, however, of course be easy, especially at first. I should anticipate that the change would proceed slowly at its commencement, and advance with rapidity as experience might prove its advantages. Even, however, should the change be much more tardy, I cannot doubt that the general revenue might be improved. There can be no reason to apprehend its diminution.

It has been urged, that the Government would thus be taking upon itself an unrequited and invidious office, and, without augmenting its own revenue, would be placed in a disagreeable relation to the tenants of the estate. I answer, first, by totally denying that opposition or contrast between the interests of the Government and of the public at large which the objection supposes. I know not what other requital, or compensation for labour, or unmerited obloquy the Government can desire, than the satisfaction of advancing the general welfare of the province; nor how that object can be better promoted than by relieving the second city of Lower Canada from burthensome charges, and at the same time making a permanent provision for the religious and literary education of the youth of the province.

But though, with a view to ends of this magnitude, neither labour nor undeserved odium must be declined, there is certainly no reason why any unnecessary suspicion or ill-will should be incurred. I therefore think it right that the management of this property should be placed in the hands of Commissioners, to be selected without any reference whatever to their supposed political opinions or connexions, but exclusively with a view to their station in society, their established characters, and their qualifications for such a trust. The expense of management ought to be very inconsiderable, because the Commissioners would be able to avail themselves of the services of the Surveyor-general, and the officers of that department. Perhaps it might be practicable to place the Jesuits' estates under the management of the same body,—a subject to which, however, it is needless to advert any further at present.

Such are the objects which I am anxious to accomplish. It remains to notice the method of carrying them into effect.

It seems necessary to the final settlement of the question, that the extinction of the ancient Corporation and the title of the King to its possessions, should be ascertained by the judgment of a competent tribunal. With the concurrence of the existing members of the Seminary, an amicable suit might be commenced for that purpose, in which, by consent of all parties, judgment might be given for the Crown. That judgment, and the issuing of the new charter, might be strictly coincident and contemporary acts.

Should it be apprehended that a decree of this nature would have such a retrospective effect as to endanger titles holden under acts of the extinct Corporation, or as to involve the members in pecuniary or other responsibilities, I cannot doubt that the provincial legislature would indemnify the parties against every such risk. Acts which have been done in good faith would of course be thought entitled to such protection.

Until I learn the result of the offer which I have thus instructed your Lordship to make, I must of course decline to authorize any addition to the existing number of the members of the Seminary.

Should the proposal be declined, I shall on every account lament that decision. In that event, your Lordship will instruct the law officers forthwith to adopt the necessary measures for obtaining the judgment of the proper tribunal respecting the title of the Crown to the Seigneurie of Montreal, and respecting the right of the existing members of the Seminary to act in a corporate character. You will, however, apprise those gentlemen, that, even should the suit be successful, it will not necessarily follow that the offer I have now made will be retracted. It will remain for his Majesty to judge whether the interests of the province would be best promoted by the assertion of his rights to the Seigneurie, or whether my present offer should be renewed. I can, however, at present state, that the single object which will in either event be pursued by his Majesty's Government will be the advancement of education and religion in Canada. I trust,

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