

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

A survey of the municipal institutions of Quebec as a chapter in the government of the province leads us back but a few decades, certainly not to the period of *la domination française*. A decentralized administration would have been wholly incompatible with the autocratic sway of a Colbert or a Richelieu; to-day Quebec's local institutions are essentially democratic, resting upon the basis of popular representation and election. Unused to participate in their local affairs under the French régime the inhabitants were not prepared to undertake their own local government until well into last century, approximately 1840. Modern municipal government in Quebec thus dates back only a little over sixty years. But municipal history is to be considered also from the standpoint of practical administration. And, while in administrative machinery modern communities are much alike, old customs and methods are tenacious of life. In the present case it need not surprise us if many interesting features of the *ancien régime* are still discernible, well worth the attention of the student of local administration, not only from a comparative point of view, but also for an adequate understanding of the institutions existing to-day.

In considering the history of New France one is impressed by the vastness of the territory. In the midst of a country so immense it has occasioned surprise that the early pioneers selected sites so perfect for future cities and towns as those of Quebec and Montreal, Three Rivers, Tadoussac and Sorel. Champlain, we are told, founded Quebec (1608) and Maison-neuve Ville Marie or Montreal (1642), and their prescience not less than their heroism has been the frequent subject of eulogium. The truth is that these intrepid *fondateurs* merely adopted the choice of sites previously made by the Indian tribes. Quebec, for instance, was founded upon the site of Stadacona, Montreal upon that of Hochelaga; and although we are told in the narratives of the time that no trace of the old Indian settlements remained, the very statement implies knowledge of the fact of their previous existence. Besides this,