

tracts of rich and unsettled land, available for the permanent amelioration of the condition of this suffering people; and there were valuable and extensive fisheries in the neighbourhood, which might have supported it in comfort; yet no persevering attempt had been made to provide permanent relief by encouraging the population which was thus thrown on the legislature for support, either to adopt a better system of agriculture, or to settle on other portions of the country, or to avail itself of the fisheries. The Assembly met the evil by relieving the distress in such a way as to stave off its immediate results, and ensure its recurrence. It gave food for the season of scarcity, and seed to sow a crop even of wheat as late as the 20th of June, which was of course to fail in its turn; for it had thus relieved the same kind of distress, in precisely the same places, for several successive years; and its policy seemed to be to pension a portion of the people to sow wheat where it would not ripen.

Lost opportunities
for good legislation.

It is melancholy to think of the opportunities of good legislation which were sacrificed in this mere contest for power. No country in the world ever demanded from a paternal government, or patriotic representatives, more unceasing and vigorous reforms, both of its laws and its administrative system. Lower Canada had, when we received it at the conquest, two institutions, which alone preserved the semblance of order and civilization in the community,—the Catholic church and the militia, which was so constituted and used, as partially to supply the want of better civil institutions. The beneficial influence of the Catholic church has been cramped and weakened; the militia is now annihilated, and years must elapse ere it can be revived and used to any good purpose. Lower Canada remains without municipal institutions of local self-government, which are the foundations of Anglo-Saxon freedom and civilization; nor is their absence compensated by any thing like the centralization of France. The most defective judicial institutions remain unreformed. Alone, among the nations that have sprung from the French, Lower Canada remains under the unchanged civil laws of ancient France. Alone, among the nations of the American Continent, it is without a public system of education. Nor has it, in other respects, caught the spirit of American progress. While the Assembly was wasting the surplus revenues of the Province in jobs for the increase of patronage, and in petty peddling in parochial business, it left untouched those vast and easy means of communication which deserved, and would have repaid the application of the provincial revenues. The state of New York made its own St. Lawrence from Lake Erie to the Hudson, while the Government of Lower Canada could not achieve, or even attempt the few miles of canal and dredging, which would have rendered its mighty rivers navigable almost to their sources. The time which should have been devoted to wise legislation, was spent in a contest for power between the executive and the people, which a wise executive would have stopped at the outset, by submitting to a legitimate responsibility, and which a wise people would have ceased to press when it had virtually attained its end. This collision, and the defective constitution were, in conjunction with the quarrel of the races, the causes of the mischiefs which I have detailed. It will be a ground, I trust, of permanent congratulation, that the contest terminated in the destruction of the impracticable constitution, which caused the strife; nor can I conceive any course of conduct which could so effectually have destroyed the previous system of mismanagement, and cleared the ground for future improvement, as that continued stoppage of supplies which the Assembly in its intemperance effected. It broke down at once the whole of that vicious appropriation of public funds, which was the great bane of provincial legislation, and has left the abuses of the Colony so long unfed, that a reforming Government may hereafter work upon an unencumbered soil.

Thorough disorganization of Institutions.

The inevitable result of the animosities of race, and of the constant collision of the different powers of the State, which I have described, was a thorough disorganization of the institutions and administrative system of the country. I do not think that I necessarily cast any stigma on my predecessors in Lower Canada, or on the uniform good intentions which the Imperial Government has clearly evinced towards every class, and every race in the Colony, when I assert, that a country which has been agitated by these social and political dissensions, has suffered under great misgovernment. The blame rests not on individuals, but on the vicious system, which has generated the manifold and deep-rooted abuses that pervade every department of the public service, and constitute the real grievances of the Colony. These grievances are common to the whole people of
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