

A SUCCESSFUL POLICY

Provinces. The change in the navigation laws took place in 1849, but it was not possible to obtain larger trade with the United States until several years later, as we shall see in a future chapter when we come to review the relations between that country and Canada.

Posterity has fully justified the humane, patient and discreet constitutional course pursued by Lord Elgin during one of the most trying ordeals through which a colonial governor ever passed. He had the supreme gratification, however, before he left the province, of finding that his policy had met with that success which is its best eulogy and justification. Two years after the events of 1849, he was able to write to England that he did not believe that "the function of the governor-general under constitutional government as the moderator between parties, the representative of interests which are common to all the inhabitants of the country, as distinct from those that divide them into parties, was ever so fully and so frankly recognized." He was sure that he could not have achieved such results if he had had blood upon his hands. His business was "to humanize, not to harden." One of Canada's ablest men—not then in politics—had said to him: "Yes, I see it all now, you were right, a thousand times right, though I thought otherwise then. I own that I would have reduced Montreal to ashes before I would have endured half of what you did," and he added, "I should have been justified, too."