

of France at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the colonization of New France was seriously contemplated, presented in respect of its political constitution, the characteristics of feudal subordination unmodified by any strong inclinations towards popular freedom. France, in common with the three other great states of Western Christendom—England, Spain and Germany—owed the leading principles which mark her constitutional history to Teutonic influences. These principles were developed in these countries, in various ways and with different results. In England, the dominant tendency towards popular freedom was never long repressed, but asserted itself among nobles and people alike, with unswerving persistence. The Feudal System, while permitting the king to control his barons, was so related to the people, that barons and people could unite to break the power of tyrannous kings. In France, however, the power of the feudatories was gradually absorbed by the kings. The increase of power was turned to the strengthening of administrative government in the personal interest of the possessor, despot succeeding despot, until the catastrophe of the Revolution was reached ¹

It is at the period when the kingly power in France is approaching its zenith, that the beginning of civil administration in New France may be traced. Above all rulers of modern times, Louis XIV was the embodiment of the monarchical idea. The famous words ascribed to him "*L'état, c'est moi*," were probably never uttered; but they perfectly express his spirit. "It is God's will," he wrote in 1668, that whoever "is born a subject, should not reason but obey." ²

¹ Const. Hist. of England, Stubbs., vol. 1, p. 3.

² Cited by Parkman, Old Régime, p. 172.