

34 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

This rule contributed to keep colonial morals at a high standard.

It will not be superfluous to quote Abbé Ferland in full on this point.

In order to strengthen the evidence furnished by contemporaries as to the morals of our ancestors, we shall produce an authorized statement. We mean the records of births and marriages wherein nearly all christenings of the Quebec government were registered, up to 1672. Out of six hundred and sixty-four children who were baptized, between 1621 and 1661 inclusive, only one illegitimate child is mentioned. It is important to observe that, during all that period, nearly all the children were brought to Quebec to be christened. From 1661 to 1690, only one child is noted as being born of unknown parents, so that during the space of sixty-nine years, amidst a population comprising soldiers, mariners, travellers, new colonists, two children only were born out of lawful wedlock.

These figures furnish an eloquent refutation of the slanders of men of the type of La Hontan.

Though the early efforts to colonize Canada gave but poor results as regards the number of settlers, we cannot but look with admiration on those pioneers of New France who, at the risk of their lives, paved the way for the success of future generations. Any man in Quebec coming from that stock of hardy and highly moral pioneers can claim a hero as his ancestor. The first period of colonization may well be called the age of chivalry of New France.

III

SECOND PERIOD OF COLONIZATION, 1665-72

WE have seen in the preceding chapter the hard conditions under which New France was opened to civilization. Before the settlers stretched boundless forests to be cleared, and it was their task to adapt home methods to colonial conditions; and what added to