

INTRODUCTION.

This is but the first chapter of a work which will embrace a complete history of colonization in the Province of Quebec, since the cession of the country to England. The period of the English regime, from 1760 to 1791, although not characterised by remarkable events, is nevertheless very interesting to study, because, in it, we see the French-Canadians coming into contact with their new masters and gradually accustoming themselves to a new form of Government in nowise resembling the previous regime. In the following pages, we pay but little heed to the constitutional history of the country, and, if we point out the political changes that took place during that first period, it is chiefly for the purpose of making the various opinions they might give rise to among the French-Canadians, properly understood.

We may add without hesitation that these various fluctuations of Canadian politics had no great influence with the people in general.

On the morrow of the conquest, the inhabitants went back to their homes and to work in their fields, paying little attention to what was going on in the higher circles of the country. Counsell'd by their parish priests, they understood that they owed obedience to their new masters. The articles of the capitulation of Quebec and Montreal guaranteed them the free exercise of the Catholic religion; they did not dream for an instant that it was possible to strip them of their sacred patrimony, that there could be any idea of depriving them of freedom in speaking the language of their fore-fathers. Confiding in the generosity of their conquerors, they were happy to see peace reign at last on the banks of the St. Lawrence, and asked nothing better than to live in harmony with their new fellow-subjects. All the more so that the generous conduct of Governors Murray and Carleton largely contributed to dispel the fear that must naturally have filled their minds on finding themselves under a foreign domination.

If certain subordinate leaders, blinded by a spirit of fanaticism, sought at times to lay a criminal hand on the liberties granted them by treaties, they never believed that the British Government would consent to such an outrage, and they were not mistaken. Eminent statesmen such as: Fox, Burke, Lord Chatham and Lord Thurlow, were their strongest defenders before the British throne.

Those broadminded and highly intelligent men understood that, in order to govern with equity a people made subject by force of arms, it is necessary to leave it, within a certain measure, its customs, laws and original language.