

tions might be readily certified. It was his aim to secure from France only a small portion of the supplies required for the colony, and to buy as much as possible in Canada. Most of the needed stores were purchased from the establishment of one Claverie at Quebec, a firm in which Bigot and many of his subordinates were silent partners and in the profits of which they shared largely. This establishment, popularly known as "La Friponne", had its branch at Montreal, and during the last ten years of French rule supplied goods to the amount of many millions of livres for the use of the troops. The stores were inferior and the prices charged were outrageously extortionate. The people of the colony were forced by intendant's ordinance to sell their grain to the Friponne at fixed prices, and the establishment then resold it to the king at famine rates. Bigot's dishonesty further appeared in his practice of letting contracts for the construction of public works, for the transportation of troops, and for various other public services, to favored contractors, who set their own prices and then disgorged part of their plunder to the intendant and his friends in high places. In fact, all the higher civil officials in the colony seem to have vied with one another in the work of turning public funds into private fortunes; and the amount of bills of exchange sent home annually ran up into the millions. The annals of colonial administration probably afford no parallel to the corruption of Bigot's intendency. It was, however, only after the loss of the colony, when the intendant and a score or more of his subordinates were placed on trial in France, that the enormity of their peculations was completely disclosed.<sup>1</sup>

An additional temptation in the pathway of an intendant lay in the fact that to him was committed general charge of the system of colonial currency. In the early days, funds to pay the expenses of the colony were sent out in coin; but in 1685 these annual funds failed to arrive, and Meulles, "not knowing to what saint to make his prayers", hit upon the expedient of issuing a temporary card currency to serve until the coined money should come to hand. The experiment proved so disastrously successful that from time to time later intendants made successive issues, until the card money became a permanent factor in the colonial stock of circulating media. These

<sup>1</sup> The proceedings in the trial of Bigot, Péan, and others were subsequently published at Paris. They consist of a dozen or more *Procès, Mémoires, Réponses*, and other documents, the most elaborate of which is that containing the defense of Bigot, which fills over a thousand closely-printed pages. It was from these that Parkman drew his lucid account of the ongoings at Quebec during the last decade of French dominion (*Montcalm and Wolfe*, II.). The interesting story of "La Friponne" is told in William Kirby's *Chien d'Or* (New York, 1878).