

The terrifying war machine of the Iroquois confederation fell upon the Huron encampments and virtually destroyed them. The Jesuit missions, outposts of French influence, were reduced to ashes and the priests them-

selves were subjected to the agony of martyrdom at the stake. New France had depended for its economic life on the fur trade with the Hurons; now that trade was extinguished and the newly-established settlements were themselves menaced. The colony fought for its existence.

The saviour of New France was neither explorer nor trader but a coldly brilliant statesman, a draper's son named Jean Baptiste Colbert, the First Minister of Louis XIV. He swept aside the rule of the chartered fur companies in 1663 and established a Royal Government. The great Governor of New France, Comte de Frontenac, through a combination of military vigour and diplomacy, made peace with the Indians and won back

Benjamin West's Death of Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, Quebec, 1759. The original of this much-copied famous historical painting is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



the Acadian settlements on the Atlantic that had fallen into the hands of the English attackers from the south. The English recaptured Acadia in 1710, but the French settlers there continued to trouble them so much that after six decades of warfare the English felt it necessary to expel them and disperse them to the south. Newfoundland remained under English rule, although the French established a foothold in 1662 and tried to occupy the whole island. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 gave the island to Great Britain, but French subjects retained certain fishing rights.

The French regime in Canada lasted until 1760. The King himself ruled through a Sovereign Council whose chief officers were the Governor, the Intendant and the Bishop—the first responsible for defence, the second for trade and administration, the third for spiritual welfare. Although these authorities often quarrelled, the system worked. Settlers continued to arrive, land was cleared and cultivated, and small industries came into being. The first Intendant, Jean Talon, a man of immense ability, must be given much of the credit for this; under his immigration policy the population more than doubled.

All this time the fur trade flourished as those adventurers of forest and river, the *coureurs de bois*, roamed far into unexplored territory. By 1670 the French had reached James Bay in the north, the entrance to Lake Superior in the west, and the Mississippi to the south. And the Sieur de la Salle did not stop until he had reached the Gulf of Mexico. Thus France laid claim to half a continent.

Meanwhile, in 1670, the British founded the Hudson's Bay Company under the patronage of Prince Rupert, the King's brother, and began to compete with the French in the north just as other British colonies were competing along the coast of New England to the south. The fur trade of a continent became the great prize in a prolonged struggle—a struggle that became more bitter as Anglo-French rivalries increased in Europe.

Still the French pushed westward. In the 1730's de La Verendrye reached the prairies and his sons pressed as far west as the Black Hills of Dakota.

By mid-century France and Britain were poised for the final act of the drama. The climax came in 1759 at Quebec, the capital of the scattered French possessions and the symbol of French power. Beyond the city walls on the Plains of Abraham, the history of Canada reached a turning point. It is a dramatic and exciting tale: approaching up river under cover of darkness, Wolfe, the British general, led his men up the shadowed cliffs to attack the citadel; Montcalm, the great French commander, sallied forth at dawn to meet the challenge. Both leaders died in the bloody conflict that followed, but it was Wolfe who, even as he expired, was victorious. Today a single monument at the spot honours both generals, a symbol of mutual respect between two races whose destinies were linked at that moment.

There were sixty thousand French colonists at that time. Their descendants today number nearly 5,000,000 and form almost one-third of the nation.