

the rough but comfortable moccasin (*soulier de bœuf*). Any coin that once found its way into the habitant's purse (often a strong leather bag) seldom left that secure place ; it might almost be said that he saved all he earned. Shunning lawsuits, he tried to settle his disputes as often as possible through the medium of either the curé of the parish, the notary, or the doctor. How could a man so well protected against life's burdens be anything but happy ? He enjoyed a freedom that he could not have wished more complete, a full measure of the liberties that seemed to him essential ; he was free to practise his religion, to speak his own language, and to follow the customs of his forefathers.

How different was his fate from that of the peasant of the seventeenth century whom La Bruyère described as a mere brute, bent over the soil, drawing a mere pittance from his farm and working like a slave ! No doubt the labour of the habitant was arduous. The short duration of the summer season imposed upon him a continuous strain while it lasted, but his courage helped him to labour during that time from the break of day till dusk—*d'une étoile à l'autre*, as peasants say—from the last star that pales at daybreak to the first one that becomes visible after sunset ; but in August the habitant rested his eyes upon a plentiful harvest, the reward of his labours.

With the month of November labour diminished on the farm, and the threshing of the wheat and oats went slowly on. On market days the farmer would go to town to sell his produce and bring back supplies, and presents for his wife and his children, the companions of his labours, and a six-quart measure of Jamaica rum, which helped to liven up the long winter evenings.

Winter brought to the habitants a series of entertainments and feasts that broke the monotony of this season of loneliness and inaction. It was then that the gaiety of the French temperament revealed itself in numberless outbursts of merriment. It would seem that the first Canadian colonists, deprived by snow and ice of intercourse with France during eight months of the year, had felt the necessity of enlivening that lonely season by every means in their power. Hence