

## The Legal News.

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### A LEGAL CURIOSITY.

We have been shown an old document which in several ways is interesting. It is a deed of sale of a farm, near St. Johns, dated 8th November 1765, made by Isaac Bureau dit St. Jean and Marie Angelique Girard, his wife, in favour of "Messieurs Gabriel Christie, Ecuier, Lieut.-Colonel et Quartier-Maitre Général des armées du Roy, et Moses Hazen, Ecuier, l'un des Juges de Paix de Sa Majesté dans le District de Montréal."

The first point noticeable about this deed is that while in the French language, and prepared by a French Notary, M. Simonnet, it is in original form,—not in the form of minute, yet not in what under the French form is termed *en brevet*, and that the two N. P.'s sign as witnesses. This form was probably adopted, the purchasers being English, because of the contention then insisted on by the English inhabitants, that in all matters English laws had supplanted those of France. The purchasers, accustomed to English ways, doubtless insisted on having something to show for their money, and were not content to leave that for which they paid, in custody of a notary.

The second point is that it bears the celebrated stamp, which figured so largely among the causes of the American Revolution. This is for 27s sterling, and is an impressed or embossed stamp on the left hand top corner. The device consists of a heraldic rose displayed,—surrounded by the garter motto, surmounted by the crown,—above which is the word "America," while at the lower margin of the device is the amount, "II shillings VI pence." Another stamp in printer's ink indicates that the sheets were issued at "9 pence per quire."

This obnoxious Stamp Act was passed by the Imperial Parliament, on the 22nd March 1765, and came into force on the 1st November 1765, only eight days before the date of this deed. Both before the latter date and after it, the resistance to this system of taxation of the colonies by the home government was so sys-

tematic and strong, that the stamps were not allowed by the inhabitants to be issued in any of the American colonies, except Canada, Georgia, and the West India Islands. In some places, the stamped paper was seized and burned, in others, notably at Boston, the distributors were forced to resign their offices and ship the paper back to England. The Imperial Parliament yielded to the pressure of opinion and repealed the Act on the 17th March 1766, so that it was law for less than five months, and the field within which it really was allowed to have effect was very narrow. On this deed, then, we see one of the small number of these detested stamps which were used. From a return made to Parliament, it appeared that the Act had cost the Government for cutting stamps, for paper, stamping it, sending to America and expenses of distribution, £25,000, while the revenue received was about £1,300, got at the cost of the anger of the colonies. The first united action taken by the hitherto separate American colonies was in resistance to this Stamp Act. The first Congress of representatives from all the colonies, and since called the Stamp Act Congress, met at New York in 1765, to promote resistance to the act and its repeal.

The third point is as to the purchasers, whose original signatures appear. Colonel Christie, afterwards General Christie, was a well-known man in those days. He was in Canada officially as Quarter Master General, and afterwards as General for many years. He was one of those who embarked largely in the purchase of lands and seigniories from the French *noblesse*, who preferred to retire to France after the conquest. He acquired several seigniories in the neighbourhood of St. Johns, some of which still remain in the hands of his representatives.

Moses Hazen became a man of note on the invasion of Canada by the Americans, under Montgomery, in 1775. He apparently had come from the British Colonies, and when, in later years, the breach between the mother country and her colonies became *war*, he espoused the revolutionary side, (although, as appears by this deed, he had, in 1765, consented to use the hated stamped paper,) and on the arrival of Montgomery at St. Johns' he raised a battalion of Canadian sympathisers with the