

The nobility of the country was organized into an Order of Merit, and fiefs, or seigneuries, were bestowed on them. As an Order of Merit, none were allowed by the King to be enrolled in it and hold fiefs but gentlemen and those who had proved themselves meritorious in service of King and country (Lareau, Tome I, p. 154.)

By act of the King in May, 1664, foreign nobility might enter with recognition of their rank, provided they become "regnicoles," or subjects of the King of France. The same act decided that the Armorial Bearings of Canada should be a blue shield, sown with golden fleur-de-lis, having as supporters two Indians in war-dress, the shield surmounted by a Royal crown "trefle."

These all united were called "The Nobility of Canada," a gallant company of captains, explorers, administrators and historians, whose courtly manners, high sense of honor, refinements of education, valor and genius have left a record in this epoch of Canadian history that cannot be eclipsed by any other.

All the land on both sides of the St. Lawrence for three hundred miles had been divided into seigneuries or lordships, as rewards of merit to the members of this nobility. The ceremony of doing homage for the investiture of any fief took place once a year, at the assemblage of the Sovereign Council at Quebec, where the seigneurs sat according to rank in court-dress and with sword girded on.

The following is a verbatim copy of a seigniorial grant:

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting."

"His Majesty having always sought with care, and that zeal which is suitable to his title of Eldest Son of the Church, the means of making known in the most unknown countries by the propagation of the faith and the diffusion of the gospel, the glory of God and the Christian name, which was the principal object of establishing the French colony in Canada and accessorially making known into the parts of the earth remotest from the intercourse of civilized men, the greatness of his name and the strength of his arms, and having judged that there are no surer means to that effect than to compose this colony of people qualified properly to fill it up by their personal character, to extend it by their labor and application to agriculture, and to maintain it by a vigorous defence against the insults and attacks to which it may hereafter be exposed, has sent to this country a number of his faithful sub-

jects, officers in the Regiment Carignan and others, most of them agreeably to the great and pious designs of His Majesty, being willing to connect themselves with the country by forming therein settlements and lordships of an extent proportionate to their means. And the Sieur de la Valterie, lieutenant in Our Armies, having petitioned us to make him a grant of land, We, in consideration of the good, useful and praiseworthy services which he has rendered His Majesty, not only in Old France but in the New, since he came hither by order of His Majesty, and in view of those which he declares himself willing to render hereafter, and under and in virtue of power entrusted to us by His Majesty, have given, granted and conceded, and by these presents do give, grant and concede unto the said Sieur de la Valterie the extent of one league and a half by a similar depth to be taken on the River St. Lawrence, bounded on the one side by the islands belonging to the Montreal Seminary, and the other by unconceded land in front of said river, and in rear by unconceded lands together with the two small islands in front of said tract of land and the river St. John included. To have and to hold said tract of land in fief and lordship, himself, his heirs and assigns under the condition of paying fealty and homage, which the Sieur de la Valterie, his heirs and assigns shall be bound to do at the Castle of St. Louis de Quebec, of which he shall hold subject to the customary duties and dues and agreeably to the custom of the prevote and viscounty of Paris. . . and that the appeals from decisions of the judge who may be established at this place shall be before the Royal Court at Montreal. Subject also to the condition that he shall continue to keep house and home on the said grant and shall stipulate in the title deeds of his tenants that they shall be held to keep house and home within one year from the date of the grant of their holdings." etc., etc.

At Quebec, Oct. 29, 1672.

(Signed) TALON (Intendant.)

"By command of His Lordship,"

VARNIER.

Sometimes, as in the concession of Jacques Pothier, Sieur de St. Denis, at the same year, a clause is added like, "The same to have and to hold in fief and lordship with all the rights of high, ordinary and lower jurisdiction (haute, moyenne et basse justice)." And in all grants a clause is inserted, reserving the cutting of ship timber and the mineral