

status of the slave and rights of his master. A lengthy petition fully detailing their grievances, dated Montreal, April 1st, 1799, bearing numerous and influential signatures, was laid before Parliament on the 19th April following. It covers pages 122 to 129 of the Journals of the House of Assembly for that year. This petition was presented by Mr. Joseph Papineau, seconded by Mr. Justice de Bonne. It was held over during this session and that of 1800; but on the 17th Jan., 1801, Mr. James Cutbert, seconded by Mr. Justice Panet, presented a Bill "To regulate the condition of Slaves, to "Limit the term of Slavery and prevent the further "introduction of Slaves into this Province." I am ignorant of the text and provision of this Bill; it certainly did not mean emancipation. It was twice read in committee, then tabled, never to be reconsidered again. In vain have I searched through the Journals of the House up to 1816 for further action or enactments or even an allusion to Slavery. Time has not permitted me to search further. The question seems to have been forgotten—it had ceased to be a living consideration.

The slave owners had apparently become discouraged by the high handed and I think illegal action of the Chief Justice, (they had been bluffed), by the indifference of Parliament, by the impossibility of disciplining fractious slaves, of apprehending deserters—finally the lack of law to enforce their rights. For these reasons the custom of slavery seems to have fallen into abeyance.<sup>1</sup> At last in 1833 came the British act of general emancipation. Was this act ever accepted by our Provincial Legislature? Could it become law in the Province of Quebec without such sanctioning, in view of the articles of capitulation, and the legality of the Coutume de Paris in this Province? These are questions which our legal friends among the audience may assist us in elucidating later. (\*)

---

(\*) Mr. G. M. Fairchild informs me that he has seen advertisements concerning slaves in the columns of the Quebec Mercury as late as 1820 or 1821.