

state. The ear of commerce was plied with redoubled vigour, and the implements of agriculture found employment in every hand. Trade, in all its departments, flourished with a rapidity which soon placed all former examples beyond the possibility of comparison. The fur trade, particularly, which always found its safest and most valuable depôt in Montreal, was resumed with a spirit and enterprise of the most promising character; and though it must be admitted that the endeavours, which were made by the commercial inhabitants of the city to penetrate into the Indian territories, and bring the natives into a regular system of traffic with them, were frequently attended with consequences both pernicious to the trade and unfortunate to individuals; yet the indefatigable exertions and invincible perseverance of some undaunted individuals served, in a very few years, to place this important branch of commerce on that lasting and respectable footing which it has since attained. It was during this period, that the merchants of Canada engaged in this trade, began to discover the necessity of conjoining their several interests, in order to enable them to pursue the traffic with greater certainty of ultimate success. This junction, formed with a degree of energy and liberality highly honourable to the individuals concerned, gave being to the North-West Company, which has since become so conspicuous in the local as well as commercial history of the country. All those animosities which are inseparable from commercial rivalry, and which might have formerly existed amongst the persons engaged in this trade, now totally disappeared; and their complete exclusion from the concerns of the company, contributed more than any other circumstance, to the fair dealing and general good conduct of the country partners, and to the integrity and respectability of those in the town. It was thus that Montreal received its primary character for commercial improvement. Its central situation in Canada rendered it of equal importance in forwarding the various views of commercial men throughout the country. Strangers and foreigners already began to look upon it as the only place whence the whole trade of Canada, of whatever denomination, should in future derive its energy and greatest encouragement. They did not fail to take advantage of those flattering expectations; and, aided by the melancholy and unsettled situation of affairs in the neighbouring colonies, an influx of emigration to Montreal and the surrounding country, took place, which was truly astonishing. At this period the whole population of Canada did not exceed ninety thousand souls, but in a few years, or about 1780, we are enabled to assert upon good authority, that the amount may be stated at nearly double that number. The population of Montreal, though we have no other data to go by than analogy, must have increased in a ratio commensurate with the rural districts of the country.

The British Government, ever alive to whatever tends to advance the prosperity of His Majesty's Dominions, and the true happiness of his subjects, wherever they may be placed, were not blind to the improving state of Canada, nor did they fail to take as early an advantage as circumstances could admit, of the prospect which was thus opened up, for the exercise of those judicious measures without which it is impossible that a nation can be great or a people contented. The Minister